

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

COUNTERING IRAN'S DESTABILIZING ACTIVITIES ACT OF 2017

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 722, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 722) to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Pending

McConnell (for Crapo) modified amendment No. 232, to impose sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation and to combat terrorism and illicit financing.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017, which passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month by a vote of 18 to 3.

I would like to thank the members of our committee and the coauthors of this bill for working in a constructive, bipartisan fashion to craft this legislation. I think it is a good example of how the Senate can still work together to tackle complex and difficult issues.

I was in the SCIF recently—it is a place where Senators go to read classified information—reviewing intelligence. It truly is astounding—I know the Acting President pro tempore knows this well—what Iran continues to do around the world. For a people who are capable of so much, their foreign policy is shockingly counter to their own interests. We see destabilizing act after destabilizing act, from missile launches to arms transfers, to terrorist training, to illicit financial activities, to targeting Navy ships and detaining American citizens. The list goes on and on, and it is past time for us to take steps to protect the interests of the United States and our allies.

This bill is the first time Congress has come together since the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal, to do just that. For far too long the agreement—which I strongly opposed, as did our ranking member, as did our Acting President pro tempore—has dictated U.S. policy throughout the Middle East.

It is worth noting that the JCPOA is not unlike the Paris climate accord. I

don't think many people in our country nor many people in this body realize it is a nonbinding political agreement that was entered into by one man using Presidential Executive authority and can easily be undone by one man using Presidential Executive authority. In fact, in many ways it is easier than the Paris accords, considering the President doesn't have to take action to exit this agreement. I don't think most Americans understand that he doesn't even have to take action to exit the agreement. All he has to do is decline to waive sanctions. I think that has been missed. I know the Acting President pro tempore is very aware of that. I know the ranking member is very aware of that. No matter what the President decides, this bill makes it clear that Congress intends to remain involved and will hold Iran accountable for their nonnuclear destabilizing activities.

What the nuclear agreement failed to do was allow us to push back against terrorism, human rights issues, there are violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions relative to ballistic missile testing, and to push back against conventional arms purchases which they are not supposed to be involved in. As many of us predicted at the time, Iran's rogue behavior has only escalated since implementation of the agreement, and this bipartisan bill will give the administration tools for holding Tehran accountable.

Let me say this. I don't think there is anybody in this Chamber who doesn't believe the Trump administration—and I know there has been a lot of disagreements recently about foreign policy issues in the administration—but I don't think there is anybody here who believes they are not going to do everything they can to push back against these destabilizing activities. What we will be doing today and tomorrow with passage of this legislation is standing hand in hand with them as they do that. It also sends an important signal that the United States will no longer look the other way in the face of continued Iran aggression.

I want to recognize the important work of my colleagues in making this legislation possible. Senator MENENDEZ has been a champion for holding Iran accountable in this bill but also in decades of work on this issue. He is truly an asset to the Senate, and I thank him for his commitment to many issues but especially this one. Senators COTTON, RUBIO, and CRUZ all played an important role in crafting this legislation as well.

Finally, let me say this. This would not have been possible without the support and tireless effort of the ranking member, Senator CARDIN, and his great staff. It has truly been a pleasure for me to work with him on the Russia bill that we will be voting on today at 2 p.m. but also this legislation—we have come from two very different places, representing two very different States,

and yet are joined by the fact that we care deeply about making sure the foreign policy of this country is in the national interests of our citizens and that we as a Congress and as U.S. Senators are doing everything we can to help write positive foreign policy. I thank him for that, and I am proud of the strong bipartisan momentum behind this legislation, which his leadership has helped to happen, and I look forward to passage of this bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, let me return the compliment to Senator CORKER.

Senator CORKER announced in his opening remarks about the bipartisan vote in our committee on the Iran sanctions bill. In the last Congress, we were able to get a unanimous vote on the Iran bill. We, under the leadership of Senator CORKER, fully recognized that particularly on foreign policy, our country is much stronger when we speak with a united voice, so bringing Democrats and Republicans together is in our national interest.

Senator CORKER has listened to different views. He and I do have different views on many issues concerning foreign policy, but in almost every one of those cases, we have been able to reconcile those differences. That is true and it was very clear on the Iran sanctions and it is also very true on the Russia sanctions amendment that we will be voting on later today.

To Senator CORKER, I just want my colleagues to know we have a leader on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who puts America's national interests first and has respected the rights of every Senator, not only in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee but in the U.S. Senate, that can add to the richness of our discussions and debate. I think we are much stronger today because of that. This is a good example of that, and I am very proud to be supportive of all these efforts and supportive of how this came about because I think it is important for our colleagues and the American people to know about that.

CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. President, Senator CORKER and I both want to express, before we start our debate on this issue, our concerns for our colleagues who were victimized by the shooting that took place in Virginia—an outrageous event—and for our security people as well as the innocent bystanders who were struck by the gunfire. Our prayers are with those who are recovering. We hope they will have a complete recovery. We are committed to making sure we keep our Senate and congressional family safe, and we will do everything we can to make sure that takes place. We will continue to work to make sure we preserve the democratic ideals of this Nation and the free society we live in. We know there are rifts, and we know we can do service and stand by those democratic commitments but also keep America safe.

I think the work on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had those goals in mind, and Senator CORKER, through the Chair, I thank you for your attention to those details.

Mr. President, let me talk for a few minutes about S. 722, the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act. This bill will impose new sanctions on Iran for its nonnuclear violations. I want to make that clear—nonnuclear violations. Their responsibilities on the nuclear side is now judged by the nuclear agreement that was entered into. We had a great debate about it last year, and we are not going to rehash that debate. I think every Member of this Chamber wants to make sure Iran complies with its nuclear obligations, but that is a separate debate.

The debate we have here is on the nonnuclear activities of Iran that violate international norms and international agreements. We saw, for example, ballistic missile tests that violated their U.N. obligations that took place in January and in March.

We have seen a significant increase in illicit arms shipments being done by Iran, causing destabilizing activities in many parts of the region. We see it in Bahrain. We see it in Yemen. We see it in Iraq. We know they are supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon. We see they are supporting Hamas in Gaza, and we know about their activities in support of the Assad regime in Syria. This all violates international norms.

Iran today has violated, in an incredible way, human rights issues that violate international norms. Yesterday we saw a part of the impact of that as we had a debate on the Saudi arms sale, and we can argue the Saudi's culpability with what is going on in Yemen, but there is no question about Iran's activities supporting the Houthis in Yemen causing atrocities in that country. They are clearly very actively engaged in violating internationally recognized human rights. We also see cyber attacks on the United States that have come from Iran, and they are detaining at least five U.S. citizens today illegally.

There are increased activities in Iran in relation to the nonnuclear side of their activities. For that reason, S. 722 looks at strengthening the sanctions regime so we can make it clear, yes, we will comply with the JCPOA, the nuclear agreement, but we need to have better activities—improvement on the nonnuclear side.

Basically, the bill increases the sanctions menus that are available for ballistic missile violations, for support of terrorism, for human rights violations, and for violating the arms embargo. Those who knowingly do those violations or materially assist will be subject to additional sanctions by the United States.

We codify the IRGC, that was done by Executive order, and we codify some of these other Executive orders as it relates to Iran. We coordinate. This is done in a way that it coordinates with

what Europe is doing and making sure it is a consistent approach that we have taken in the past.

We ask the administration to develop a regional strategy so the Congress and the American people know our policies in the Middle East. That provision was drafted before the Trump administration. This is a desire by Congress to have a better articulated regional strategy, recognizing the dangers in that region. Iran is a major player in the region against U.S. interests, and we need to know what our strategy is in confronting those challenges. Quite frankly, with the Trump administration, we haven't heard that coordinated strategy, and this legislation will require that report be given not just to Congress on a regular basis but to the American people.

I want to underscore how this agreement is totally consistent with the nuclear agreement that was entered into 2 years ago—the JCPOA, as it is referred to. I want to go through quickly how this came about. Senator CORKER talked a little bit about it.

Senator CORKER is absolutely correct. Senator MENENDEZ has been a leader on Iran sanctions way before this Congress. He was very much involved in the original sanctions legislation passed by Congress. That led to putting enough pressure on the international community to join us, which ultimately led to Iran having no choice but to negotiate. Senator CORKER and Senator MENENDEZ had introduced legislation that was out there, and we had a chance to review it, which is how the process should work. As a result of that review, both Senator CORKER, Senator MENENDEZ, and I—all three of us—reached out to interested groups to understand what the Congress has done. Many of the people we talked to were involved in the negotiations with Iran who had different views than we did on the final outcome of that agreement, but we wanted to make sure we weren't violating any of the provisions of the JCPOA so we sought their input. As a result, there was revised legislation that was offered known as Corker-Menendez-Cardin, which incorporated the ideas of all three of us, but really the outside groups working with us, to make sure it was totally consistent with the JCPOA and consistent with the intent of the original bill. I think that bill was well scrubbed. I think it did not violate the JCPOA, but we went through another process, another review, another opportunity for those who could perhaps see things we don't see quite as clearly when it comes to Iran and our European allies. We went through a second scrubbing, and we had a managers' amendment that was offered in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that tightened the bill up even more dealing with those issues.

I think I can state very confidently that there is nothing in the underlying bill that violates the U.S. commitment under the JCPOA nuclear agreement. It is my intent, and I think the intent

of almost every member of this committee that the United States should comply with the JCPOA. Even though I didn't support it, I think it is important we comply with it today.

The other aspect I wanted to go through is that—and I don't want to give the wrong impression. There are people who are involved in the negotiations of the nuclear agreement who would state—some would say they oppose the bill, some might say it is not helpful, some might say Iran might take it the wrong way. Any one of those arguments aside, I do not think you will find anyone who says that it violates the JCPOA.

I want to give a little bit of history here because this was anticipated, that we would need this bill, when we acted on the JCPOA, by those of us who supported and opposed the nuclear agreement.

As the chairman will recall, shortly after the failure to reject the JCPOA—that action—I filed additional legislation that I thought was necessary, along with many of my colleagues, who voted for and voted against the JCPOA. I voted against it. Those who voted for it thought it was necessary. It included the regional strategy so that we would know what the administration was doing. We expedited procedures to deal with nonnuclear violations if Iran used the sanction relief they got under the nuclear agreement to increase their terrorist activities or ballistic missile activities or human rights violations. In fact, they have done that, and that is why we filed the bill right after the action on the nuclear agreement.

This is consistent with what we thought would be necessary. Yes, we had hoped Iran would change its activities, but we were not naive about it. We knew that this was going to be a long road. We knew that Iran did not respond to niceties and that we were going to have to keep the pressure up for them to be able to take the action that was needed.

I know many of us were encouraged when we saw the votes a couple of weeks ago in Iran whereby the Iranians voted for a more open society, a more transparent society. I must say that Iran has a wonderful history of very talented people who want democratic principles, and I am sure that is true among many of the people in Iran today. It is their leaders with whom we have an objection, not with the people of Iran. The people of Iran want a more open, democratic society. This legislation will help get to that point by making it clear to the leaders in Iran that they must change their behavior as it relates to terrorism, as it relates to human rights violations, as it relates to their other international obligations. That is the reason this bill has become so important.

Let me give one more example on the consistency.

There are many provisions that we have changed. One is that we all acknowledge that the United States and

our partners are fully at liberty to take action against Iran for terrorist activities, which is not part of the nuclear agreement, but there is some confusion as to how that is done in relationship to the sanctions relief that is provided under the JCPOA. In listening to their concerns, we will set up an independent review process within the next 5 years that will resolve that issue before we hit the 8-year mark so that we are not jeopardizing thwarting a crisis in the future that might occur. I really just want to point that out because this bill is totally consistent with the obligations of the United States under the Iran nuclear agreement.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

I talked briefly yesterday about the amendment that is pending. I want to spend just a moment, if I might, in underscoring some of the details of the amendment that is passing.

I am for S. 722, and I am for the amendment that was crafted in the same spirit as was the underlying bill—in a bipartisan agreement. It involved not just the Senate Foreign Relations Committee but the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee because the jurisdictions on sanctions do overlap between the two committees.

As I said yesterday, I thank Senators CRAPO and BROWN—and Chairman CORKER has already mentioned this—as they were extremely helpful in making sure that we tailored the financial sanctions in a way that is workable and consistent with that of our European partners so that we can make sure we have collective strength.

I am sure the Presiding Officer has been in meetings with our European friends and knows how they feel about Russia. He knows how they feel—that they are the direct bull's-eye with regard to what Russia is doing. They want the United States to be strong, and they want the United States to provide leadership, but we need to provide it in a manner that is consistent with their security interests. With regard to the way this bill has evolved, I think we have a better bill that is consistent with those concerns.

With Russia, we know their activities. We know their cyber activities against our democratic institutions. As we have said frequently, all countries collect cyber information, but the use of that cyber information to attack our democratic institutions is an attack on our country. That cannot go unchallenged. We have to protect ourselves and take action when we have been attacked. This bill does that.

We also know, not just recently but historically, that Russia has been very aggressive in its interfering with the sovereignty of other countries. Today, in Moldova and Georgia, you see the consequences of Russia's aggression. Of course, in Ukraine, with the annexation by Russia of Crimea and its continued activities in eastern Ukraine, Russia has violated every single com-

mitment of the OSE's Helsinki Accords and has violated the sovereignty of other countries.

We also know about Russia's activities in support of the Assad regime in Syria and, by the way, in other countries in that region. It has assisted in horrible human rights violations—just terrible. We have seen some of the videos of the tragedies of innocent children as a result of Mr. Putin's support of the Assad regime.

In January of this year, Senator MCCAIN and I introduced legislation that would have imposed new sanctions on Russia because of these activities. We wanted to make sure that this was bipartisan, so we had 18 Senators cosponsor the bill with us—10 Democrats, 10 Republicans—to make it clear that this was not an attack on one administration but that this was America and that we had to be together in a strong message against the Putin regime. That bill included sanctions on cyber activities. It included sanctions on their Ukrainian activities. It included sanctions in regard to their Syrian activities. The legislation also incorporated what has been known as the Democracy Initiative, which provides ways in which we can provide a more unified front with our European allies in defending against the cyber attacks we have seen coming from Russia.

At the same time, Senator GRAHAM filed a bill, with my cosponsorship, that would require congressional review before the President could give sanction relief to Russia. The review was patterned very similarly to the review we had under the Iran nuclear agreement.

So those two bills were pending, and there has been a lot of debate about them.

We then received a draft bill from Senators CRAPO and BROWN as it related to the sanctions. It was focused—I would not say exclusively but primarily—on the financial and energy sectors in order to make sure those sanctions were drafted in the proper way, and we went through considerable negotiations. Senator CORKER, as I pointed out before, brought additional text to the discussion in an effort to try to bring this together.

Although I am mentioning Senators' names, we know it is the staff. Our staffs have been working around the clock to try to make sure we get this done right. So I thank the majority and minority staffs on the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee and on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

There are many parts to the amendment that will be voted on at 2 p.m. One part codifies additional sanctions against Russia. I have already mentioned Senator MENENDEZ's role in Iran. He was very instrumental as it relates to Russia. Senator DURBIN has been very active. I must tell you that there has been no Member on the Democratic side who has been more vocal than Senator SHAHEEN on the

need to take action against Russia. There are many Members on our side who were active on this. I thank my colleagues for their contribution.

We do codify the Executive orders that were issued that were related to both Ukraine and cyber attacks. With the adoption of this amendment, we would be codifying—giving congressional support for what took place by President Obama.

It expands the list of where sanctions can apply to the energy projects and foreign financial institutions that facilitate such projects. For actors who try to undermine cyber security, it provides for their being subject to sanctions, and it provides secondary sanctions for those who materially assist those actors in undermining our cyber security. It provides sanctions against suppliers of Russian arms to Syria. It goes after the actors who are involved in the corrupt privatization of Russia's governmental assets. We do not support those who are supporting Mr. Putin's corrupt regime. It deals with sanctions against Russia's activities on pipelines, the Russia railway, metals, mining, and shipping. So it is comprehensive, and most of these sanctions are mandatory. It is not “may”; rather, it is that the President “shall” in most of these circumstances.

As is the tradition, the President also has the ability, if there is a significant national security issue, to weigh whether that sanction should be applied. Yet we use a different standard in most of these sanctions that requires the President to certify before he issues those waivers that there has been, basically, significant progress made by Russia in removing these sanctionable activities. So we have a pretty strong hand that we are giving President Trump in his negotiations with Mr. Putin.

In addition, this bill provides for congressional review. We talked about that—a bill that was originally introduced by Senator GRAHAM and me. As I indicated, it is very similar to the Iran Review Act. I think this is very important in that it puts a lot of transparency into the negotiations between the Trump administration and the Putin administration.

As Senator CORKER was talking about earlier as to how one President can do something by himself—and I hope that the amendment is adopted and that the bill passes the House and becomes law—the President cannot by himself remove a sanction until he has given Congress notice and an opportunity to review that. We can have congressional hearings. We can put a spotlight on it. Then we will have an expedited process whereby we could reject the President's decision to give relief, and all during that process the sanctions will remain in place.

It is a very strong congressional review, and it is our responsibility to do that, but it also brings in the American people and brings in a more transparent process. What we have found is

that, with that transparency, it is a much stronger hand than President Trump has in his negotiations, knowing that he has to go through this process at the end of the day in his negotiations with Russia.

Sometimes we call it the strength of our independent branches of government. The executive branch can say "Look, we would like to move faster, but we have to do this with the legislative branch" or "We would like to do this, but we cannot get it through Congress." Use the independence of the Congress. We are certainly very strongly against what Russia is doing. Use that to increase the pressure on Russia to do the right thing. That is what this bill does. This is why it is helpful to the President of the United States to have this congressional review.

It would reply to anything from cyber sanctions that had been imposed under the Obama executive order to the attempt to return the compounds that are located in Maryland and New York. All of that would be subject to a congressional review before the action by the President could become effective.

I mentioned earlier that the bill does include the authorization of democracy funds, as I call it, that assist our allies in their fight against Russia's aggression, particularly in cyber. It authorizes \$250 million, and it applies to our work with the EU member states, the NATO member States, as well as with candidate nations. It is a pretty strong opportunity for us to work together.

I have had many meetings with our European colleagues and friends. Yes, every country recognizes that it is vulnerable against Russia's attacks—believe me, they do—and they are doing everything they can to protect themselves. What I find disappointing is that there is not enough coordination. We know how they acted in the United States and how they acted in France and now how they are likely to act in Germany and what they did in Moldova. We know how they are likely to proceed, but do we have a common strategy to prevent this type of manipulation by Russia of our democratic institutions?

This authorization and the funding—I thank Senator GRAHAM and Senator LEAHY for putting money into the fiscal year 2017 budget to start this process going forward. We have approved that, and that is now in the budget. It allows us to coordinate those efforts among the United States and our European friends to protect against what we know is going to be continued activity by Russia.

There are obviously investigations going on. Part of the investigation is to understand what Russia is doing, quite frankly, so that we can protect ourselves. I think that will be very helpful, this information, and the role of the United States in working with our European allies to protect against certain continued malicious activities by the Russian Federation.

There is a provision in this bill that deals with Ukraine. We make it clear that we will not recognize Crimea's annexation of Ukraine, that we will continue to stand with the people of Ukraine in regard to their sovereignty, and we ask for a plan to reduce Ukraine's dependence on Russia energy imports.

We know that Ukraine is vulnerable because of energy, and we know that we have to develop a plan to deal with that. There are many Members involved in that, and I wish to acknowledge my friend from Ohio, Senator PORTMAN, for his work in regard to the Ukraine provisions.

There are new counterterrorism financing provisions, which are pretty comprehensive, so that we make sure that we have all the tools we need in order to track the financing of terrorism activities. That is in there.

So let me just tell my colleague how proud I am to be associated with the underlying bill as well as the amendment that we are going to vote on at 2 o'clock. Both the underlying bill and the amendment were developed in the best of the bipartisan manners of the U.S. Senate.

I wish to thank, again, all of those who were involved to give us this opportunity to speak with a strong, united voice against the activities that Iran is doing globally and that are destabilizing so many countries through their terrorism and ballistic missiles and human rights violations and arms embargo violations, and to make it clear to the Russian Federation that we are not going to let them attack our country, that we are going to stand up to that and work to be sure to keep our allies safe.

With that, Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I was in Maine over the weekend, and people said: How do you feel about healthcare? What do you think we ought to be doing? I said: I like the President's plan. I think President Trump has it just right. He says we need healthcare that will cover everyone, low premiums and low deductibles, no preexisting conditions. That is the right formulation, and I hope that is what we can work toward, and that is what we should be working toward.

He also said yesterday that the bill that passed the House was mean. Well, a couple of weeks ago I said it was cruel, but I will accept mean; both mean the same thing. It is a terrible blow to literally millions of people across this country and thousands in my State of Maine.

By the way, the problem with the House bill is that it is so bad that some kind of compromise has developed here that is halfway, and it is still mean or cruel. Now people are talking about a "soft landing." That is a euphemism for stretching out the crash. It is not a soft landing. Whether we take Medicaid and healthcare coverage away from people in 2 years, 4 years, or 7 years, it is still going to happen, and it is a crash. It is not a soft landing. That is just stretching it out into beyond the next couple of elections, but it doesn't really get to the core of the issue, which is taking healthcare and health insurance away from millions of people.

CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. President, before I began, I meant to acknowledge what happened this morning to our colleagues across the way at the baseball practice—tragic, inexplicable, horrible, and just inexcusable. My heart goes out to the Capitol Police who, I understand, were incredibly brave and met their responsibilities admirably to Representative SCALISE and to any others who were injured—a terrible incident and one that we hope we never see the likes of again.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Going back to healthcare, I think it is important for people to understand the big picture of what is going on with this issue that is now before both the House and the Senate.

What we are really talking about is a massive tax increase on middle-class and lower middle-class people and a massive tax cut for the wealthiest Americans. It is as simple as that. It is a gigantic transfer of wealth—probably one of the greatest in a short time in recent American history—where we have millions of people across the country who have health insurance under the Affordable Care Act and are protected under Medicaid and Medicaid expansion, and we are taking that away. The Affordable Care Act exchange policies are a tax credit. So when you take that away, you are increasing people's taxes; you are increasing the taxes of people who are making between \$15,000 and \$45,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 a year, and you are decreasing taxes in a huge way only for people who make more than \$200,000 a year.

The 400 highest taxpayers in the country will get a tax cut of \$7 million apiece. That makes no sense. We are taking resources away from the people who need it—the middle class—and we are giving it to the people who don't need it. It is Robin Hood in reverse.

That is the fundamental point of this legislation. It is all about that big tax cut for the rich—for the really rich—and I just don't understand why we are even thinking about that, because the American people need help with the cost of healthcare. If you divide the total healthcare bill in this country by the number of people, you come up with about \$8,500 a year per person, on average, or \$35,000 a year for a family

of four. That is the cost of healthcare. That cost has to be paid, and I would argue that people who are in the middle income can't afford it. They can't afford to pay those costs, and they need some help, and that is what the Affordable Care Act does. But, instead, we are talking about repealing it—knocking those millions of people off.

In Maine we have 75,000 people on the exchanges. And then, of course, we have hundreds of thousands on Medicaid. We are talking about severely constricting their access to healthcare. That is just wrong, ethically, morally, and in any other way. We are taking healthcare away from people so we can give a massive tax cut to the people who don't really need it.

In Maine, if the House had taken a blank sheet of paper and said "How can we design a healthcare plan that would really hammer the people of Maine?" it would have been the AHCA—misnamed the American Healthcare Act; it ought to be the anti-healthcare act because that is what it is all about—taking healthcare away from people. It could not be more tailored to harm people in Maine.

We are the oldest State in the country. We have more people in the older age brackets—50 and up—than any other State in the United States as a percentage of our population. We also are a relatively low-income State. You put those things together, and you really get hurt. Also, in Maine, as in the Presiding Officer's home State, we have a lot of hazardous occupations—logging, agriculture, fishing, the iconic Maine lobsterman.

This is a guy named David Osgood from Vinalhaven, an incredibly beautiful island off the coast of Maine. Lobstering is an essential part of the Maine economy. It is a part of our way of life. Vinalhaven, where Dave lives, has a population of about 1,200. It is really hard work. It is all-weather, and it is dangerous. You have to haul tracks, repair them, be out on the water in the wintertime, which is no fun. David Osgood has been lobstering since he was 13, like his father and grandfather before him.

As of this spring, all three of David's and Elaine's children have finished college. That is amazing. That is a real achievement for any family, but fishing is challenging and tough.

The Osgoods are really thankful for the fact that they can get affordable health insurance through the Affordable Care Act. Once, they weren't covered, and David had a back problem that required surgery. Like a lot of people in Maine, he paid it off, month by month by month. But the ACA, according to Elaine, has given them some comfort and peace of mind.

I don't think those of us who have pretty much had health insurance all of our lives realize the importance of that peace of mind, of not being anxious about a health problem that could wipe you out, make you lose your house—an illness or an injury. Elaine said: We will be OK.

The deductibles are a problem. They are too high. I agree. What we ought to be working on is how to get the deductibles down, how to work on the premiums, how to work on the cost of healthcare.

All of this debate about the Affordable Care Act and Medicare and Medicaid and a public option and single payer—all of that is about who pays, when a big part of the problem is how much we are all paying. We pay roughly twice as much per person for healthcare than anyone else in the industrialized world. That is a real problem that we have to start debating. We have to start talking about that because, whoever pays, whatever the insurance plan is, if the underlying cost is something that people just can't afford, then we are going to be arguing about who pays, how much, and what part. We have to get at that \$8,500 per person.

People say: Yes, but we have the best healthcare system in the world. Yes, we do, for the people who can afford it. But for the millions of people who don't have health insurance, who get treated only in emergency rooms or more often don't want to get treated at all because they don't want to go in because they know they can't pay for it, the healthcare system does not deliver for them.

By all objective measures—longevity, infant mortality—we are not first in the world. We are like 20th in the world. We are way below our colleagues, and yet we are paying much more. We have to address high deductibles, high premiums, and high costs, but also, in the meantime, we have to keep people covered.

Another couple in Maine, Jonathan Edwards and Jennifer Schroth, live in Hancock County. It is another coastal county. They are farmers, and they raise vegetables.

Here is a great Maine story. I have known Jen's mother for about 40 years. I just met Jen at a healthcare forum in Bangor a few weeks ago, but I knew her mother way back. Everybody in Maine knows everybody else. I suspect it is like in Alaska. We are a big small town with very long roads.

Jonathan and Jennifer own and operate a farm. By the way, this farm is in a town called Brooklin, but this is the real Brooklin—Brooklin, ME. They grow potatoes, vegetables, strawberries, raspberries, and asparagus. They make maple syrup. They could never afford healthcare until the ACA came along because they were essentially a small business, but they were not a big enough business to have a group plan. They didn't have employer-based health insurance. They just didn't have it.

They are both in their fifties, and one of the changes made under the Affordable Care Act was that the ratio between the premiums for younger people and older people can't be more than three times. It reflects the reality that older people have more healthcare

needs and cost the system more. So there is a reflection. It is allowed to be a three-times basis. The House bill changes that to five times. That is a huge shift directly toward people in their fifties and early sixties.

When Jen was pregnant with each of their two boys, they had no insurance. They paid the hospital. Just like my friend David Osgood, they paid the hospital. That is what Maine people do. But what if there had been complications? They were pretty straightforward births, but what if there had been complications? They would have been wiped out because they had no health insurance. Jen says she doesn't feel it is responsible to go without health insurance, especially when you have a family.

It is critical to them that the ACA is affordable, and it is because of the tax credits. They also appreciate that they have real insurance that really covers things. There are no exclusions. People say: Well, I have this really cheap insurance policy, but it doesn't cover anything. It may not even cover hospitalization or it doesn't cover doctor visits or it doesn't cover drugs. It doesn't cover what you really need. That is not insurance. That is illusory. But now, Jen says, they have peace of mind because they have coverage. She told me that face-to-face not long ago.

Running a small business is tough. It is tough because you generally can't get group policies. Sometimes you can join a small business association, but generally you can't. This is a way to have coverage that people can afford.

Imagine if somebody came to this body and said: I have a great idea for a bill. I am going to raise taxes on the middle class and give a great big break to hedge fund managers. We wouldn't even think about it. It wouldn't even get out of committee. Yet that is essentially what this is all about.

How much of a tax increase is it on somebody? Well, in Hancock County, where these folks live, for a 60-year-old making \$40,000 a year—these are real numbers from the Kaiser Family Foundation—under the Affordable Care Act the premium is \$4,080 a year, about 10 percent of your income. That is still substantial. But under the bill passed by the House, that would go to \$17,090 on a \$40,000 gross income. It is ridiculous to go from \$4,000 to \$17,000.

Where does that difference come from? It is going back to the people who don't need it. It is going back to the people who make \$200,000, \$400,000, \$800,000, \$1 million, \$5 million a year—a 300-percent increase in out-of-pocket costs for healthcare. In Knox County—I think David is younger than 60, but if he were 60—his premium goes from \$4,080 to \$10,590, more than doubled.

This just doesn't make sense to me. This whole discussion doesn't make sense to me. I agree that we need to talk about healthcare, and I agree that we need to do something about it, but we are doing the wrong thing. We are making it worse.

There are two problems with healthcare in this country. We can boil it down to two issues—cost and access. The Affordable Care Act, although it dealt somewhat with cost, was mostly about access—allowing people who don't have health insurance to get it, whether through Medicaid expansion or through the exchanges.

Cost is a bigger issue, and it is one that we also have to deal with. But that is not what is on the floor now, or will be soon, and it is not what is being considered in Congress. But I would argue that we really have to pay attention to that issue as well.

So all of this and taking coverage away from my friend David or Jen and John and thousands—we know the number from the House bill, 23 million people in America—to give a massive tax break so a guy making a couple million dollars a year can buy an extra Maserati just doesn't pass the straight-face test for good public policy.

I am the first to agree that the Affordable Care Act is not perfect. I think there are things about it that need to be fixed and adjusted, and we need to work on how we do the deductibles, how we improve that, and how we broaden the coverage and maybe make it more of a sliding scale. All of those things are things we can discuss and work on, and I am absolutely willing to do it—but the idea of repealing it just to check a box to meet a campaign promise and to be so divergent from what the President has said over and over in the campaign and since that time—that he wants coverage for everyone, no preexisting conditions, and lower premiums and deductibles. I am for it. But what we are doing is the exact opposite—the exact 180-degree opposite.

So let's take a breath. There is no deadline here of next week or the July 4th recess. Let's take a break and back off and start talking about it as Senators and Representatives from all over the country and all parties. I think we ought to be able to come to some agreement here.

Now, if there are people who are just hell-bent to provide a tax cut to multimillionaires, then, there isn't an agreement to be had. If that has to be part of the deal, include me out. But if we can start talking reasonably about how we can improve the Affordable Care Act—I don't care if we improve it, change it, tinker with it, and call it TrumpCare or McConnellCare or RyanCare. Call it what you want, but let's provide health insurance, which is so important to the American people.

I have told this story a couple of times, but I am going to conclude with why I am so passionate about this. Forty years ago, I worked here. I was a staff member, and I had insurance. For the first time in my young life, I think, I had health insurance. Part of the health insurance was a provision for preventive care, which is also required under the Affordable Care Act. So you could have a free physical. I was 28, 29

years old and immortal. We all were at that age. But I said: What the heck; it is free. I guess I will have a physical.

So I went in and had a physical. The doctor looked me over, looked at my eyes, and down my throat. But he happened to notice that on my black I had a black mole. He said: I don't like the looks of that. That ought to be taken off.

I didn't even notice it. I didn't even know it was there. He took it off, and it turned out to be something called malignant melanoma, which is one of the most virulent and serious forms of cancer. The thing about malignant melanoma is that, if you catch it in time, you are good. Here I am, 40 years later. If you don't, you are gone. I have had friends in Maine and in other parts of the country who have died of melanoma. It has always haunted me to this day that the only reason I caught it and my life was saved was because I had health insurance, and somewhere in this country there was a young man who also had a mole on his back or on his arm or on his neck and who didn't have health insurance, didn't have preventive care, didn't go to the doctor, and he is gone. That is not fair. That is not right. In a country as advanced and wealthy as this is, it is not right that that guy died and I am here.

So don't ever tell me that health insurance doesn't save lives because it does. There is no doubt that it does. That is why it is so important for us to get this right and not just cavalierly and blithely rip health insurance away from people—many of whom have gotten it for the first time, many of whom are small business people—the very people we all talk about wanting to help.

We can't do it. It is a dereliction of our duty to serve the American people.

We need to figure out how to do it right. We need to figure out how to do it effectively and efficiently. In the end, we are here to help our fellow citizens. I am here for Maine, and I can't let my people suffer under a law that would take something away which they have come to depend upon and that has saved lives and means so much to them. We can do better. I am sure of it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I have just been informed that the alleged shooter at the Republican baseball practice this morning is someone who apparently volunteered on my Presidential campaign. I am sickened by this despicable act.

Let me be as clear as I can be. Violence of any kind is unacceptable in

our society, and I condemn this action in the strongest possible terms. Real change can only come about through nonviolent action, and anything else runs counter to our most deeply held American values.

I know I speak for the entire country in saying that my hopes and prayers are that Representative SCALISE, congressional staff, and the Capitol police officers who were wounded make a quick and full recovery. I also want to thank the Capitol Police for their heroic actions to prevent further harm.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I understand Senator MCCAIN has come to the floor. I will yield to him as the chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I rise in support of the Countering Russian Aggression and Cyber Attacks Act, an amendment to the Iran sanctions bill currently under consideration.

In just the last 3 years under Vladimir Putin, Russia has invaded Ukraine, annexed Crimea, threatened NATO allies, and intervened militarily in Syria, leaving a trail of death, destruction, and broken promises in his wake. And of course, last year, Russia attacked the foundations of American democracy with a cyber and information campaign to interfere in America's 2016 election.

It has been 8 months now since the U.S. intelligence community publicly concluded that the Russian Government had attempted to interfere in our last Presidential election. Since then, the intelligence community has concluded that it is confident that the Russian Government directed a campaign to compromise emails, American individuals, and political organizations; that Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign to undermine public faith in the democratic process; and that Moscow will apply lessons learned from this campaign to future influence efforts worldwide, including against U.S. allies and their election processes.

Months of congressional hearings, testimony, and investigative work have reinforced these conclusions that Russia deliberately interfered in our recent election with cyber attacks and a disinformation campaign designed to weaken America and undermine faith in our democracy and our values. Vladimir Putin's brazen attack on our democracy is a flagrant demonstration of his disdain and disrespect for our Nation. This should not just outrage every American; it should, at long last, compel us to action.

In the last 8 months, what price has Russia paid for attacking American democracy? Hardly any at all: Modest sanctions against a few Russian individuals and entities, some Russian diplomats and spies sent home to Russia,

two spy compounds closed, at least for now—and all of this is reversible at the discretion of the President.

We must take our own side in this fight, not as Republicans, not as Democrats, but as Americans. It is time to respond to Russia's attack on American democracy with strength, with resolve, with common purpose and with action. So I am proud to support this amendment, which would begin to do just that.

This legislation incorporates some of the best ideas from different pieces of legislation already introduced in the Senate, ideas that have broad bipartisan support. The amendment would impose mandatory sanctions on transactions with the Russian defense or intelligence sectors, including the FSB and the GRU, the Russian military intelligence agency that was primarily responsible for Russia's attack on our election.

The amendment would impose mandatory visa bans and asset freezes on any individual who undermines the cyber security of public or private infrastructure and democratic institutions, and it would impose mandatory sanctions on those who assist or support such activities.

The amendment would codify existing sanctions on Russia by placing into law Executive orders signed by President Obama in response to both Russian interference in the 2016 election and its illegal actions in Ukraine, and it would take new steps to tighten those sanctions.

The amendment would target the Russian energy sector, which is controlled by Vladimir Putin's cronies, with sanctions on investments in Russian petroleum and natural gas development, as well as Russian energy pipelines.

We also need to put additional pressure on the ability of Putin and his cronies to move money they have looted from the Russian state. So this amendment would mandate that the Secretary of the Treasury establish a high-level task force within the Department's financial crimes and enforcement network that would focus on tracing, mapping, and prosecuting illicit financial flows linked to Russia, if such flows interact with the U.S. financial system. The task force would also work with liaison officers in key U.S. embassies, especially in Europe, to work with local authorities to uncover and prosecute the networks responsible for the illicit Russian financial flows.

Finally, recognizing that Russia seeks to undermine not just American democracy but Western democracy altogether, this amendment would provide support to the State Department, Global Engagement Center, and USAID to help build the resilience of democratic institutions in Europe against Russian aggression exerted through corruption, propaganda, and other forms of political interference.

Importantly, the legislation also mandates congressional oversight of

any decision to provide any relief from these sanctions. Administrations cannot waive or lift these sanctions without certifying that Russia is making concrete steps toward changing its behavior on the international stage. In particular, Russia needs to begin adhering to the Minsk Protocol, roll back its occupation of Crimea and destabilizing efforts in Ukraine, and cease its cyber operations aimed at undermining democracy in the United States and Europe.

We need a strong Russia sanctions amendment, we need it now, and we need it on this piece of legislation. We need this amendment because we have no time to waste. The United States of America needs to send a strong message to Vladimir Putin and any other aggressor that we will not tolerate attacks on our democracy. There is no greater threat to our freedoms than attacks on our ability to choose our own leaders, free from foreign interference, and so we must act accordingly and we must act now.

I would like to thank my friend and colleague on the other side of the aisle—one of the really great remaining members of the Communist Party—who has allowed me to speak and give this statement.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

MR. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I appreciate my colleague's sense of humor.

TRANSPARENCY IN BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Madam President, the United States of America has suffered an unprecedented intrusion into our American Presidential elections. In January, our intelligence agencies disclosed that agents of Russia, on the orders of President Vladimir Putin, engaged in a massive election influence campaign throughout 2016.

This effort strikes at the very heart of our representative democracy. All Americans should take this attack deadly seriously. Congress had to act against such interference decisively. By strengthening economic sanctions against the Russian gangster state, we hit them where it hurts, right in the oligarch. I am glad to see that Republican and Democratic Senators came together to do this.

Now the question will shift to the White House. Last July, as evidence of Russian election meddling began to emerge, then-candidate for Vice President **MIKE PENCE** said: "If it is Russia and they are interfering in our elections, I can assure you both parties in the United States government will ensure there are serious consequences."

Well, it is Russia, and they were interfering, but there has been little sign of consequences so far from the Trump White House.

Michael Flynn, as adviser to the President-elect, had illicit communications with the Russian Ambassador, about which he then lied. Trump appointees at the State Department

alarmed career officials with their rush to craft a pro-Russia program. President Trump held an unprecedented, cozy meeting with Russian envoys—all smiles in the Oval Office—a meeting for which Putin says he has a transcript. In Europe, Trump, dropping the assurances about article 5 protections from his NATO speech, gave the Russians joy.

The Trump administration has been reportedly trying to return two compounds used by Russian intelligence to Russian control—compounds here in the United States. Former FBI Director James Comey told the Senate last week that President Trump never spoke to him, not even once, about defending against Russia's acts of aggression.

Well, the threat from Russia is severe. Chairman **GRAHAM** and I held hearings in our Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism, exploring the Russian toolbox for interference in democracies across the globe—how Russia exploits the dark shadows of other countries' political and economic systems.

One tool is campaign money. Russia is reported to have funneled money to French far-right party Presidential candidate, Marine Le Pen, for instance, as part of a reward for her support of Russia's actions in Crimea. Ken Wainstein, Homeland Security Advisor to George W. Bush, cited Russia as a threat of that kind of foreign financial infiltration here in the United States. "It is critical that we effectively enforce the campaign finance laws that would prevent this type of financial influence by foreign actors," Wainstein told our subcommittee. But that task proves difficult in a system like ours that permits the free flow of dark money.

Since the Citizens United decision, we have seen unprecedented dark money flow into our elections from anonymous dark money organizations, groups that we allow to hide the identities of their big donors. We don't know who is behind that dark money or what they are demanding in return. Despite this risk, Congress has been unwilling to push back against the tide of dark money. Too many are too in tow to the big American dark money emperors, like the Koch brothers, but once you permit big money to flow through dark money channels, cash from Vladimir Putin is no more traceable than cash from Charles and David Koch.

"The Kremlin's Trojan Horses" is a study of Russian influence in Western Europe done by the Atlantic Council. Russia takes advantage of nontransparency in campaign financing and financial transactions, the report says, to build political alliances with ideologically friendly political groups and individuals, as well as to establish pro-Russian organizations in civil society, creating a shadowy web of political networks which help to propagate the regime's point of view.

Corruption is the grid on which the electrons of Russian influence flow. In

the foreword to the “Kremlin’s Trojan Horses” report, Radoslaw Sikorski, former Foreign Minister of Poland, who has seen a lot of this up close, described what he called “the financial networks that allow authoritarian regimes to export corruption to the West.” He warns:

Electoral rules should be amended, so that publically funded political groups, primarily political parties, should at the very least be required to report the sources of their funding.

He continues:

The Kremlin’s blatant attempts to influence and disrupt the U.S. Presidential election should serve as an inspiration for a democratic push back.

Well, we should certainly push back by requiring political entities in this country to report their sources of funding.

Another of our witnesses, Heather Conley at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote about “The Kremlin Playbook.” The CSIS report, “The Kremlin Playbook,” calls corruption “the common thread” among these various drivers of Russian influence. It is, the authors write, “the lubricant on which this system operates.” She testified just today in the Helsinki Commission that “corruption is a systemic weakness within a country that is exploited and influenced by adversaries and from which no country is immune, including the United States.”

Where Russia can work in darkness, Russian agents systemically exploit democratic institutions to acquire influence over politicians and political systems using corruption. Russia has done this in the former Soviet Union and in Europe for decades, and we should be prepared in the United States, Ms. Conley says, for them to keep doing it here.

“The Kremlin Playbook” warns that to fight the corruption that gives Russia this channel of influence, “enhancing transparency and the effectiveness of the Western democratic tools, instruments, and institutions is critical to resilience against Russian influence.”

Ms. Conley echoed the widespread warnings that the United States is particularly susceptible to Russian influence via dark money channels in our politics. That is widely agreed.

She and others have warned of a second vulnerability: lax incorporation laws that hide the true owners of shell corporations. In the same way that dark money channels can hide the hand of foreign influence, so can shell corporations, which obscure the hand of the entity behind the corporate screen. Interestingly, USA TODAY just reported: “Since President Trump won the Republican nomination, the majority of his companies’ real estate sales are to secretive shell companies that obscure the buyers’ identities.”

Our lax incorporation laws have made the United States a destination for drug traffickers, terrorists, corrupt

foreign officials, tax cheats, and other criminals from around the world. Former FBI Director Comey testified before the Judiciary Committee that the United States is becoming the last big haven for shell corporations—sickening but true. These crooks come here to America to form shell companies to hide assets and obscure illegal activities. For added safety, a foreign gangster or a crooked despot or an agent of Putin could put a shell corporation behind a shell corporation with another shell corporation behind that.

There are few safeguards in place to prevent foreign actors from funneling money into our elections through faceless shell companies. We actually already see shell companies used to hide the identities behind big political spending. This is not a potential. This is happening now. We just don’t know whether foreign influence is behind it. Nothing prevents agents of Putin from being behind those hidden entities.

Part of the Kremlin’s playbook is to use shell corporations and other devices to establish illicit financial relationships with prominent local figures. The shell entities allow Russian money to flow anonymously into crooked deals. The crooked deals give rise to corrupt relationships, and these corrupt relationships give Russia leverage, either through the carrot of continued bribery of the prominent local figure or the stick of threatened disclosure of the crooked deal imperiling the prominent local figure. The prominent local figure in the crooked deal is well and truly on the Russian hook. For what it is worth, Donald Trump is the very model of the Russian mark in this sort of scheme.

To close this avenue of foreign political influence, Ms. Conley told us: “Building and strengthening financial transparency requirements and beneficial ownership will go an extraordinary way to prevent these corrupt practices to further Russia’s influence.”

We really ought to be able to agree that we need to prevent these corrupt practices to further Russia’s influence.

The answer to the problem of shell corporations is simple: Have each state track the actual owners of companies they charter and make that information available to Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies through proper process. That is what Ms. Conley means by that phrase she used, “beneficial ownership.” It is the term of art for a simple concept, knowing who the real owner is.

The True Incorporation Transparency for Law Enforcement, or TITLE, Act, which Chairman GRASSLEY and I will reintroduce soon, would require States to identify the actual human beings who own the company they incorporate. The bill would provide funding to support the maintenance and retrieval of this information, which would be available to law enforcement officers who present valid, court-ordered subpoenas or search war-

rants. The bill has bipartisan support and has received strong endorsement from the law enforcement community, banks, and anti-trafficking organizations.

Transparency in business ownership is ever more vital around the world. The European Union understands very well the shadow of Russian influence that has been cast over it, and every member of the European Union has committed to ensuring incorporation transparency. The United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Italy, and France have already enacted incorporation transparency laws. The light of corporate transparency is about to shine throughout Europe to help defend them from Russian influence. This means that money from those shell companies and schemes committed through those shell companies will be looking for new, dark homes, likely in American shell corporations. Again, we are supposed to be an example to the world. We are supposed to be the “City upon a Hill,” not the place where the world’s most corrupt and criminal evildoers come to hide their cash and their assets.

We know the Russian playbook for election interference exploits opaque incorporation laws. We know criminals and even terrorists view the United States as a haven to hide illegal activity and its proceeds. We even know, weirdly, that lax incorporation laws are affecting our real estate market. Some American cities are so loaded with real estate held by shell corporations that it is actually driving up the prices for real American home buyers. Of course, there are not a lot of people in the corner store when the property is held for a foreign owner as the safeguard for his illicit gains.

We must take commonsense steps to stop these activities and bring wrongdoers into the light. The measures that we will take against Russia are welcome and, as Senator MCCAIN has said, even overdue, but we must remember that this is an ongoing battle and we have systemic weaknesses that have already been clearly identified to us over and over by bipartisan experts in this field and renowned think tanks and study groups here in Washington. To quote Ms. Conley again, “the battle of Western democracies to defeat corruption” must be seen as “a matter of national security.”

Testifying before our Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper agreed and urged Congress to act. He said:

I believe [the Russians] are now emboldened to continue such activities in the future both here and around the world, and to do so even more intensely. If there has ever been a clarion call for vigilance and action against a threat to the very foundation of our democratic political system, this episode is it.

I hope the American people recognize the severity of this threat and that we collectively counter it before it further erodes the fabric of our democracy.

This week the Senate takes strong steps to punish Russia for its disruptive meddling in the past, but we must do more. Dark money and the shell corporations that allow Russian influence are identified known vulnerabilities in the future. Every warning is that the Russians are not going away and that future elections will be marked by Russian mischief. We have to close both avenues of foreign influence and corruption: dark money and shell corporations. They are no good in any event. They are no good in any event, and now they bring the added contamination of Russian election manipulation. I hope we can work together to remedy that contamination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, there are some days that are noisy in DC and in the Nation. It seems as if the disagreements and the discourse have paused for just a moment, and we remember again that we are all Americans and that there are issues we are facing as a nation.

Earlier this morning a group of baseball players who are also Members of Congress were getting together to practice for a congressional baseball game happening tomorrow night. It is a friendly game, a great competition for charity, and a few Members, Republicans and Democrats, from both the House and the Senate get together and practice and then play the game.

This morning at the Republican practice, a man walked onto the field and opened fire on guys just practicing baseball.

STEVE SCALISE, who is the majority whip, was hit, two members of his detail, Capitol Hill police, were injured, and other individuals who were there were injured as well. The Capitol Police saved many lives this morning. They were prepared and they returned fire and were able to stop the person who was shooting over and over again at everybody he could see on that baseball field.

What has been interesting today—since I have come out this morning, as I have walked through the hallways heading back and forth to different meetings, I have been interested to see many doors that I have walked by, and when those doors were open, I could hear people inside praying. There have been at least three organized prayer meetings on the Hill today, specifically related just to that, and others spontaneously occurring. Just for a moment we have the opportunity to be able to reflect and say to God: Thank You so much for protecting the people on that field.

Thank you again to the Capitol Police, who literally put their lives on the line to protect the guests and the Members and staff here every single day.

Once again, we remember that we are a nation that solves things by conversation. We disagree, and that is OK.

We have said for two centuries that we can disagree. We don't solve it this way, and we cannot.

I would like to be able to join what is happening all over this Hill for just a moment in this room—for us to be able to pray for a moment, as well, for the people who were there and for the people who are going through surgery right now and for their families. For every single staff member who is here, every single Member who is here, every member of the Capitol Hill police, their families are calling them and texting them and saying: Are you OK? These families are scattered all over the country, and they are worried.

We can help lead. We can set a tone to tell the Nation that we should disagree on things, but we don't ever do this. So I would like to ask for us to be able to take a moment of privilege and just be able to pray.

Father, thank You for the way that You have protected—for those individuals who are in surgery now and recovering now, for the Capitol Hill police, STEVE SCALISE, and for other individuals who were affected today, God, we pray that You would bring them healing.

We pray that You would take care of families who are worried and the Nation that is worried. We pray that You would cause something good to come out of something that is very evil. Help us to know how we respond as a nation.

I ask this in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Madam President, we have a lot of issues that are moving right now and a lot of issues that we are discussing. Currently we are discussing sanctions. The sanctions for Russia are entirely appropriate.

I have no question in my mind that Russia has tried to interfere with our elections. I have no question in my mind that Russia did work to interfere with the elections across Europe, especially Eastern Europe. There are individuals in Russia that mean to do our Nation economic harm, political harm, and to cause turmoil. For whatever reason, they believe they can strengthen their nation by trying to cause chaos everywhere else.

As Americans, we believe we strengthen our Nation by helping others to succeed. For whatever reason, the Russians believe they can strengthen their nation by trying to cause others to fall. It reminds me a lot of bullies on playgrounds and in middle schools. For whatever reason, they do not advance to the level that they find great joy in helping others; they find their pleasure in trying to diminish others. There is an appropriate response we can make back to that as a Nation; that is, to continue sanctions and to be able to press that.

With the sanctions conversation we have about Russia, we also have an ongoing conversation about sanctions on Iran, and that is one of the reasons I want to visit with this body today to

put this word out. For whatever reason, the way sanctions are being organized right now against Russia and Iran, there are two different platforms for how to unwind those sanctions. The way this bill is currently offered, the sanctions against Russia cannot be unwound except by congressional action, but it is not so against Iran, and I am trying to figure out why.

This Congress came to this floor just about a year and a half ago with a bill called the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, which passed 98 to 1 in this body. It was to be able to take authority back so that Congress should be able to vote on sanctions being lifted, in case there is ever a time that any President wants to be able to lift sanctions. Obviously, that debate was circling around the Iran nuclear negotiation at that time, and this body voted 98 to 1 that there should be accountability on any President, regardless of who it is, on the lifting of sanctions against the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world, which is Iran. So we added in those sanctions, but for whatever reason on this particular vote, those aren't there, and I have an issue with that.

I would say to this body: Can we learn our lesson? When Congress creates sanctions on nation-states and on individuals, we should also have the authority to determine whether they are lifted or not lifted. Because of that, I have filed simple language to be able to take the bill we have currently and to be able to add in simple language that says something very straightforward: The President can, for national security reasons, lift sanctions on the nation or on individuals for 120 days but cannot renew that until it comes back to Congress. If it is truly for national security reasons, there will not be any problem convincing this Congress, either body, that it is essential to be able to do that. But if you can't convince this body that it is for national security reasons, you certainly are not convincing the American people of that.

It is simple, straightforward language that I believe we should have in all of our sanctions bills. Whether it is North Korea, Iran, Russia, or whatever it may be, we should simply say that the American people, through their elected Representatives, say that this group of individuals should be sanctioned, and no individual can pull that back unilaterally without it coming back to the American people again to be able to turn it off. That is how we work as a Nation. I believe that is how we should work in the days ahead.

This is not a hostile amendment. This is an amendment saying that we have learned our lesson as a body. We should actually apply this. This is not a partisan issue. Whether it is a Republican or Democrat President is irrelevant in this issue. If Congress creates sanctions, Congress should not release the authority to make decisions on and off. What we turned on, we should be

able to turn off. That is the way our system works.

I look forward to the open debate on this simple issue, and I look forward to our determining as a body how we handle sanctions for any nation or any group in the days ahead.

With that, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to engage in a colloquy with my colleague from Missouri.

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

CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I come to the floor today, along with my colleague the Senator from Missouri, as the cochair of the bipartisan Law Enforcement Caucus. We have come to express our concern and our gratitude.

This morning our colleagues and our friends, including Congressman STEVE SCALISE from Louisiana, were senselessly attacked while at a practice in Alexandria for tomorrow's annual bipartisan congressional baseball game.

Our deepest thoughts and prayers are with the members of the Capitol Police and Congressman SCALISE and everyone who was injured, as well as their families.

While we still don't know all of the details of this morning's event, one fact is true. Were it not for the skill, bravery, prompt response, and professionalism of the Capitol Police and Alexandria police, this tragic event would have been much, much worse.

For those of us who serve and work every day in Congress at the Capitol, we see the men and women of the Capitol Police. They protect the Members of Congress, our staffs, and the Capitol itself, but that doesn't begin to describe the vital and noble work they do, because the Capitol Police don't simply protect the people in the buildings on the Capitol campus. They protect, they serve, and they honor our Capitol, our country, and our democracy itself. They sacrifice and they risk their lives each and every day to ensure that this Capitol is a Capitol for the people, a Capitol for every man, woman, and child in the United States. It is the Capitol Police, in close and important partnership with local police, who ensure that everyone and anyone can come to this place to make their voices heard and to take part in our democracy.

They make these sacrifices and take these risks every day, and this morning's events are a sobering reminder of what the men and women of law enforcement all across the country—and yes, today, here among the Capitol Police—take on each and every day.

I urge everyone who works and serves here in the Capitol to take a moment to pray for and be grateful for the men and women of the Capitol Police, the men and women of the Alexandria police, and the men and women of law enforcement all across the Nation.

With that, I yield to my colleague from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I thank my colleague for yielding.

When Senator COONS and I came to the Senate about 6 years ago, it was about the time we formed the Law Enforcement Caucus. Over that 6 years, we have been continually reminded of how those who run toward danger when others run away protect us. They don't know on any given day what they may be dealing with that day, and their family doesn't know either. They are here to protect those who might be the victims of crime.

What we saw today was a horrific and cowardly attack at baseball practice—someone who takes a weapon and decides they are going to harm people they don't know for whatever cowardly reason that person had.

Of course, we continue to pray for the swift recovery of those who were injured and for the caregivers who are helping them right now.

Every day, when I come to the Capitol grounds, the first person I see is almost always a member of the Capitol Police. No matter how late it is when I leave at night, the last person I see is almost always a member of the Capitol Police. They have a hard job to do. They do it with the highest level of professionalism and dedication. Their families see them leave for work at whatever time of the day their assignments have them leaving for work and are hopeful that those they love will come home. That accounts for all of our law enforcement officers all over the country—the law enforcement officers and other first responders—who rush into dangerous situations not knowing what could be there.

We were very fortunate today. Our Members of Congress were there—Members of the House, Members of the Senate—and the people who were volunteering to make that game work the way it needs to work in order to have a bipartisan annual event to look forward to and to use that event to raise money for charity. There were staff who were there, supporting. Fortunately for all of them, STEVE SCALISE, who is the majority whip in the House, was there, which meant that there were Capitol Police and security people there with him. It is hard to imagine what might have happened if they had not been there. The Alexandria police would have done a great job and gotten there as quickly as they could, but we have these people who are committed to providing for the safety of Members of Congress, people who are visiting the Capitol, and people who are in the area of the Capitol when anything might happen. Over and over again, Senator COONS and I and others have seen the Capitol Police have to step forward.

I hope we will all remember to not only be grateful every day for those who are willing to serve but will also continue to pray today for the families of the people who were impacted today—the families who sent their sons

and daughters here to be Members of Congress as well as to be staffers in the Congress. The first news they heard this morning was of some senseless attack that appeared to be an attack because people were Members of Congress.

No act of violence, no matter how evil or senseless, will ever come close to shaking the foundations of our democracy, but in moments like this, we are always brought back to the important recognition that we are Americans first. That is why our country will always be a beacon of freedom.

The things we debate every day are not nearly as big or powerful as the things that unite us every day, and moments like this bring that sense of unity and concern and commitment of maintaining a society that is free and secure and bring a greater appreciation for those who spend all day, every working day, with that as their principal obligation. We owe them a great debt of gratitude.

Today, we owe the Capitol Police, followed up by the Alexandria police, because of the countless lives that might have been taken if the Capitol Police had not been there at the instance this cowardly attack started.

Once again, Senator COONS and I are reminded of how important it is that the Law Enforcement Caucus really, truly respect those who serve and the families of those who serve.

Senator, I am glad to yield back to you for a final comment.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for the chance to work together to lift up in a bipartisan way the men and women of law enforcement and to express our prayers and our gratitude for the men and women of law enforcement—for the Alexandria police and everyone who serves in our entire Nation to help keep it safe and secure.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. CANTWELL. 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. CANTWELL. Mr. President, this side of the Capitol is obviously sending our thoughts and prayers to colleagues in the House of Representatives—particularly, to Congressman SCALISE—and to the other wounded law enforcement individuals and staff. Certainly, our hearts and prayers go out to those individuals too.

These men and women who protect us every day here in the Capitol do an outstanding job. We really want to make sure they understand how important it is and how much we appreciate their protection of us and the security they provide to everyone here in the Capitol.

(The remarks of Ms. CANTWELL and Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 1352 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I would like to express the sentiments of all of us who were stunned and saddened to learn first thing this morning of the attack on our colleagues and their staff on the House side as they practiced for the Republican team for the annual Congressional Baseball Game.

Senator RAND PAUL, who was present, told us at lunch about what happened. He emphasized time and again the absolutely heroic behavior, the extraordinary bravery of the Capitol police officers who were part of Representative SCALISE's detail. He said that, without these two police officers, he has no doubt that many more people would have been injured and likely killed.

So I think it is important for us to pause and express our gratitude to the men and women of the Capitol Police Force, and, indeed, to the first responders and law enforcement officers everywhere, who, day after day, put their lives on the line for our country. Without their help today, the terrible attack would have been far, far worse. So I thank them.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am here this afternoon to speak about the amendment to address sanctions on Russia, but I want to preface my remarks by saying, like all of us here in the Capitol today, that my thoughts are with Congressman SCALISE and with the staff member, the two Capitol police officers, and others who were part of the terrible tragedy this morning. In particular, I want to salute the officers involved, whose courage and professionalism undoubtedly saved many lives, and I join with the entire Senate family in hoping for a full recovery for everyone involved.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Mr. President, in a few minutes, we will vote on a bipartisan amendment to strengthen sanctions on Russia and to mandate rigorous congressional review of any effort to loosen the sanctions regime. I am pleased to cosponsor this amendment, which has real teeth, including provisions that I advocated for to prevent sanctioned individuals from using family members to circumvent sanctions.

I am also pleased that the amendment includes congressional review of any decision to restore Russia's access to non-Embassy compounds that were seized at the end of last year in the United States. I think this is not the time to grant Russia such privileges, especially given that it would bolster their intelligence-gathering capabilities.

I am pleased that this is a bipartisan amendment, thanks to the leadership

of the chair and ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, on which I serve, Chair CORKER and Ranking Member CARDIN, as well as the chair and ranking member of the Banking Committee, Senator CRAPO, who is here, and Ranking Member BROWN. They worked very hard to come up with a bipartisan agreement.

I also want to recognize Senators MCCAIN and GRAHAM, whose work on the underlying bill gave us a foundation to come up with this amendment.

Again, on a personal level, I want to especially thank the chair and ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee. Senator CORKER had made a commitment to get this bill done after we got back from the break. He has been good on his word, and we have a bipartisan agreement.

I think these measures are necessary because the United States has been attacked by a hostile foreign power. As a result, we have a responsibility to respond in a way that punishes the attacker and that strives to prevent a recurrence in the future.

In January, the Director of National Intelligence released a declassified report on Russia's interference in our election. I think it is important to reiterate what that report said. It states:

We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine faith in the US democratic process.

While recently we have learned more about the scope of their interference, a classified National Security Agency report, prepared prior to the November election, concluded that Russian military intelligence executed a cyber attack on at least one U.S. voting software supplier and sent spear-fishing emails to more than 100 local election officials. Yesterday, Bloomberg reported that Russia's cyber attack on the U.S. electoral system included incursions into voter databases and software systems in as many as 39 States.

We are learning more and more about the extent to which Russia attacked our voting system and tried to undermine our elections. That is exactly why the Senate stands united behind this bipartisan amendment to stiffen sanctions. We must not allow this kind of interference in our elections to become a normal process.

What we have heard from experts in the intelligence community—they have warned us that if Russia gets a pass on this, that it will interfere in future U.S. elections. We have seen it in Europe and other Western democracies.

In testimony last month before the Judiciary Committee, the former Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, said:

I believe [the Russians] are now emboldened to continue such activities in the future both here and around the world, and to do so even more intensely.

He goes on to say:

I hope the American people recognize the severity of this threat and that we collec-

tively counter it before it further erodes the fabric of our democracy.

Russia's interference in our electoral process should outrage every patriotic American. We need a bolder, more aggressive strategy for deterring Russia. This bipartisan agreement to stiffen sanctions is a critical step forward.

In concert with this legislation, we need to be focused on bolstering NATO and our European allies, and we need to demonstrate more vigorous support for Ukraine's efforts to strengthen its democracy and independence.

We need to be more aggressive in countering the Russia propaganda and disinformation campaign, including the Russia Today empire.

Finally, I want to again applaud the leadership of all of our committees who were involved in coming up with this bipartisan agreement. Also, I applaud the bipartisan leadership of Majority Leader MCCONNELL and Minority Leader SCHUMER because without their negotiations, we would not be here today.

I certainly urge all of my colleagues in both Houses of Congress to promptly approve this legislation, and I hope the President will sign it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Ohio speak next for 2 minutes, the Senator from Idaho speak after that for 5, and I will conclude with 5 minutes. The vote will be held thereafter.

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

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank the Democratic leader. I thank my friend, the chairman of the Banking Committee, and also Senator SHAHEEN.

Hardly a week goes by that we don't learn more about the efforts of the Russian Government to sow the seeds of dissent around the world. Apart from oil and gas, this seems to be Russia's primary export. One administration after another has tried to reason with President Putin, but appeals to reason clearly don't work.

Vladimir Putin needs to know he will pay an increasing price for his hostile actions. He needs to know we will stand up for our allies in Ukraine and throughout Europe. He needs to know we will not tolerate his interference in our democratic process, whether in the last election or the next election.

Instead of providing a firm, clear message that we will not tolerate Russia's bad behavior, this administration has been all over the diplomatic map—and that is just in its public pronouncements. Frankly, we don't know exactly what the Trump administration is doing privately with the oligarchs, the oilmen, the Kremlin, or even with President Putin himself.

This amendment sends a firm, clear message we need right now: The United States of America will not accept continued Russian aggression. We will put tough measures in place to punish past

actions and to deter future aggressions. We will stand by our allies.

I commend Senators GRAHAM and BLUMENTHAL for their amendments. I thank Chairman CRAPO for his leadership. I thank Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN and all the Senators who have put time and effort into this issue.

On behalf of the Ukrainian community in my State, on behalf of fair play, and on behalf of the integrity of the American election system, I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President. I rise to speak on behalf of the Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin Countering Russian Aggression and Cyber Attacks Act of 2017. This is filed as amendment No. 232 to the pending Iran sanctions bill, and as has been indicated, we will vote on it in just a few minutes. This amendment is the result of a partnership between the Senate Banking Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Amendment 232 ratchets up pressure against the Russian Federation for its illegal invasion and annexation of Crimea, its continuing escalation of violence in eastern Ukraine, and its malign cyber activities against businesses and citizens of the United States. It also provides Congress with strong oversight over almost any termination or suspension of these sanctions.

I spoke yesterday about the hard work of Senators CORKER, BROWN, CARDIN, and their staffs. I thank them again for their leadership. I also thank Senators MCCAIN, GRAHAM, and SHAHEEN, who contributed to these efforts. I recognize our latest cosponsors, Senators PERDUE, MENENDEZ, WARREN, RUBIO, SCOTT, HEITKAMP, REED, and TOOMEY. I appreciate their cosponsorship and support as well. We appreciate the leadership of Majority Leader MCCONNELL and Democratic Leader SCHUMER, who helped ensure we could move a good Russia sanctions package. The need for this legislation is underlined by the fact that many Americans have deep concerns about Russia's behavior over the past few years.

Since coming to power, Russian President Putin has become increasingly belligerent, nationalistic, and autocratic. Americans are concerned about Russia's behavior in Ukraine and Syria, and they are concerned about Russia's increased cyber intrusions.

Many of us on both sides of the aisle feel the United States needs to be much stronger in its response to Russia. Americans want to see the United States stand firm in defense of our long-held values, which include respect for territorial integrity, human rights, and liberty.

The Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin amendment signals to the world that the United States has unflagging commitment to the sanctity of territorial integrity, human rights, and good governance. Our amendment also dem-

onstrates our resolve in responding to cyber attacks against American citizens and entities and against our allies.

In summary, the Crapo-Brown-Corker amendment does the following things: It escalates and expands the current sanctions regime against Russia, it creates new sanctions against Russia, it engages Congress at a higher level than before by providing a mechanism for Congress to vote before lifting any sanctions on Russia, and it increases the Treasury Department's ability to track illicit finance, including illicit flows linked to Russia.

The amendment will result in some very powerful and new sanctions. Amendment No. 232 includes Congressional Review Act language to ensure Congress exerts proper oversight over the use of these powerful sanctions. It also requires the creation of a national strategy for combating the financing of terrorism and related forms of illicit finance. This strategy ensures that the United States pursues a coordinated and effective fight against illicit finance at all levels of the Russian Government.

As we move forward with this amendment, we must engage all of our allies and our trading partners. It is important that we work together to minimize collateral damage and unintended consequences.

This is a strong bipartisan measure that, in important respects, represents the next step forward. Even though unilateral actions are not the best option, America must lead on the issue now and encourage others to follow. The times call for clarity of purpose and a correct amount of pressure. We have that in this amendment.

Again, thank you to Senators CORKER, BROWN, and CARDIN for your hard work and support, and all of the other Senators I have mentioned. Thank you to our cosponsors, and especially to Leader MCCONNELL and Democratic Leader SCHUMER for all of your help and your support. I look forward to passing this measure in short order.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in a few minutes, we will vote on an amendment that consists of a package of Russia sanctions. I would like to endorse the amendment in the strongest possible terms and hope we can get all of our colleagues to vote for it.

It was negotiated by a bipartisan group of Senators who did a great job: Senators CORKER and CARDIN, CRAPO and BROWN, with a great deal of help from Senators SHAHEEN, DURBIN, MENENDEZ. Leader MCCONNELL and I worked extremely well on this issue together, which I hope portends future things we can do together in a bipartisan way. This amendment is as bipartisan as it gets, and rightly so because this is an issue that should unite Members of both parties and concern Americans of all political stripes.

Over the past several years, President Putin and his allies and the Rus-

sian oligarchy have committed several sanctionable offenses. President Putin has violated the sovereignty of its neighbor, Ukraine, by annexing Crimea. He is guilty of human rights abuses, including propping up the brutal Assad regime in Syria, and stifling political dissent and the human rights of his own people. In Mr. Putin's Russia, elections are neither fair nor free. The media is controlled by the state, and the political opposition is hardly tolerated.

This is a regime that has routinely flouted international norms and agreements; that severely and brutishly pursues its own self-interest without regard to legitimate rights of other nations and peoples. For that, the U.S. Congress passed a series of economic sanctions to squeeze Putin and his allies and show them that the United States strongly condemns these actions, and that was before Russia conducted a high-level campaign to interfere in the American election.

The Russia sanctions legislation we are about to vote on would address these two critical issues. By codifying existing sanctions and creating a process for congressional review of any decision to weaken or lift them, we are ensuring that the United States continues to punish Putin for his reckless and destabilizing actions. It is particularly significant that a bipartisan coalition is seeking to reestablish Congress, not the President, as the final arbiter of sanctions relief, considering that this administration has been too eager—far too eager in my mind—to put sanctions relief on the table. These additional sanctions will send a powerful bipartisan statement that Russia and any other nation that might try to interfere with our elections will be punished.

There is no process more sacred in our democracy than the guarantee of free and fair elections, no principle more enshrined in our system of government than the people participating in our noble democratic experiment at the ballot box. That bedrock principle, the fundamental right was attacked by Mr. Putin. If we did nothing—or we reduce sanctions, as the President sometimes has talked about—we would eat at the wellspring of our democracy. Foreign powers influencing whom we elect is something the Founding Fathers feared, and we are doing everything we can in this body to try and stop.

With the upcoming vote, the U.S. Senate is saying to President Putin: You will be held accountable for your actions. Foreign interference in our democracy has been a concern since the founding of the Republic. It is the origin of the emoluments clause in the Constitution. In Federalist 68, Alexander Hamilton writes that “these most deadly adversaries of the republican government [come] chiefly from the desire in foreign powers to gain improper ascendancy in our councils.” Every “practical obstacle,” Hamilton

said, “should be opposed to [such] cabal, intrigue, and corruption.”

We cannot let Russia's meddling in our elections go unpunished, lest they ever consider such interference again, nor any other nation in the world. They must know that if any future attempts are made to degrade our democracy, the retribution of the U.S. Congress will be sure and will be swift.

I urge a “yes” vote on the amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 232, as modified, offered by the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. McCONNELL.

The yeas and nays have previously been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 144 Leg.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Flake	Murray
Baldwin	Franken	Nelson
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Bennet	Gillibrand	Peters
Blumenthal	Graham	Portman
Blunt	Grassley	Reed
Booker	Harris	Risch
Boozman	Hassan	Roberts
Brown	Hatch	Rounds
Burr	Heinrich	Rubio
Cantwell	Heitkamp	Sanders
Capito	Heller	Sasse
Cardin	Hirono	Schatz
Carper	Hoeben	Schumer
Casey	Inhofe	Scott
Cassidy	Isakson	Shaheen
Cochran	Johnson	Shelby
Collins	Kaine	Stabenow
Coons	Kennedy	Strange
Corker	King	Sullivan
Cornyn	Klobuchar	Tester
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Thune
Cotton	Leahy	Tillis
Crapo	Manchin	Toomey
Cruz	Markey	Udall
Daines	McCain	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warren
Duckworth	McConnell	Whitehouse
Durbin	Menendez	Wicker
Enzi	Merkley	Wyden
Ernst	Moran	Young
Feinstein	Murkowski	
Fischer	Murphy	

NAYS—2

Lee Paul

NOT VOTING—1

Van Hollen

The amendment (No. 232), as modified, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

AMENDMENT NO. 240

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 240.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Tennessee [Mr. CORKER], for Mr. GRAHAM, proposes an amendment numbered 240.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To reaffirm the strategic importance of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty to the member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its contribution to maintaining stability throughout the world)

At the end, add the following:

SEC. 13. SENSE OF SENATE ON THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF ARTICLE 5 OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Senate makes the following findings:

(1) The principle of collective defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is immortalized in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty in which members pledge that “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all”.

(2) For almost 7 decades, the principle of collective defense has effectively served as a strategic deterrent for the member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and provided stability throughout the world, strengthening the security of the United States and all 28 other member nations.

(3) Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, the Alliance agreed to invoke Article 5 for the first time, affirming its commitment to collective defense.

(4) Countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have made historic contributions and sacrifices while combating terrorism in Afghanistan through the International Security Assistance Force and the Resolute Support Mission.

(5) The recent attacks in the United Kingdom underscore the importance of an international alliance to combat hostile nation states and terrorist groups.

(6) At the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, the member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization decided that all countries that are members of NATO would spend an amount equal to 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024.

(7) Collective defense unites the 29 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, each committing to protecting and supporting one another from external adversaries, which bolsters the North Atlantic Alliance.

(b) SENSE OF SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate—

(1) to express the vital importance of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the character of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as it continues to serve as a critical deterrent to potential hostile nations and terrorist organizations;

(2) to remember the first and only invocation of Article 5 by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in support of the United States after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001;

(3) to affirm that the United States remains fully committed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and will honor its obligations enshrined in Article 5; and

(4) to condemn any threat to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom, or democracy of any country that is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

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

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

CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise to express my deepest sympathy for the victims of this morning's shooting, including for my good friend, Representative STEVE SCALISE. I pray that he, the congressional staff, and police officers who were injured in this horrific event can recover quickly.

Today is not a day to reflect on our differences but on our common commitment to upholding the Constitution and doing the work of the American people. This Chamber is often divided on matters of policy, but in the face of tragedy, we are united as one. Today, we are together, and together we recognize the local law enforcement officials who responded quickly and professionally to this morning's attack.

Each and every day, police officers across this great Nation risk their own well-being to ensure the safety of others, and they do so with little fanfare or recognition. In light of today's events, I recognize, in particular, the special sacrifice of our U.S. Capitol police officers—the selfless men and women—who, each and every day, assume significant risk to keep all of us safe.

I shudder to think of what may have happened this morning had it not been for the quick action taken by Representative SCALISE's security detail. These courageous special agents returned fire to apprehend the perpetrator of this senseless and appalling act of violence. Through their heroic actions, they prevented a massacre and saved the lives of dozens of elected Members of Congress and congressional staff. Today I wish to pay special tribute to these humble heroes.

As far as I am concerned, our Capitol Police officers are the finest professionals this Nation has to offer. We wave to them each morning as we walk in to work, we say goodbye to them each night as we leave, and we interact with them each day. Yet how often do we thank them for their service? How often do we reflect on the weight of their work? How often do we recognize them for their sacrifices? In my opinion, not often enough. Because these police officers are such a common presence here on Capitol Hill, I worry that all too often we take them for granted, but we should never take for granted the men and women who would willingly give up their lives to protect ours.

This morning's attack reminds us all of the thin line between peace and violence, and our Capitol police officers are the first to respond when that line is crossed. Today and every day, these selfless men and women deserve our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

In paying tribute to our Capitol Police, I would be remiss if I were to fail to recognize the 23 members of my own

security detail who work around the clock to keep Elaine and me safe. These men and women are like family to me. Over the past 2½ years, I have built a special bond with each of them.

Today I would like to recognize each of them individually:

Supervisory Special Agent David Rib, who leads the detail with assistance from team leaders Jason Marcello and Shane Powell; in addition, Special Agents Eric Boggs, John Britto, Jacqueline French, Eric Holzer, Eric Love, Paul Martin, Ronald Munar, Benjamin Odell, Richard Philius, Luis Pimentel, Ryan Rayball, Austin Reinshuttle, Henry Smith, John Whittle, Micah Harrison, Muhammed Khan, Gideon Maran, Arnold Pierre, Robert Schultz, and Charles Snead.

In all of my years of public service, these are among the most honorable men and women I have ever worked with. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

The fact that these special agents are willing to put their lives on the line to protect all of us speaks to their selflessness, their bravery, and their love of this institution and of country. Elaine and I love each of these special agents deeply, and we love their families too.

In these photos, you can see one of the team leaders, Jason, hard at work. Jason hates this photo, which is why I blew it up for national TV. The other photo is of the trip I took to all five of Utah’s national parks last year. During this trip, my security detail was with me every step of the way. These men and women never leave my side.

Today I wish to thank them with all of my heart for their service and their sacrifice. These are really great people, and we have enjoyed being together. At least, I have enjoyed being with them. I will put it that way.

As Members of Congress, we stand united in the aftermath of today’s attack. Thanks to our brave Capitol Police officers, we also stand protected from those who would do us harm. Because of them, we can confidently carry on the work of the American people.

These are really great human beings—men and women—who literally sacrifice a lot to serve us, back us up, strengthen us, and help us in times of need. They are people whom I really, really admire. All I can say is, I admire those who stood up this morning for Congressman SCALISE and the others who were there and especially for those who were wounded.

This is a wonderful institution, and we have wonderful people working with us—heroic people, people who care for this body, people who care for our country, people who care for us. I think we ought to all thank God every day that we have these good people around us and that we ought to all take the time to be kind to them, to show them how much we care, and to show them the friendship we truly have for them.

I am grateful that I know a number of these people—quite a number. I am grateful for them and for what they do for all of us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, let me join my friend, the senior Senator from Utah and President pro tempore of the Senate, in his remarks about the U.S. Capitol Police.

All of us who work on Capitol Hill, all of our visitors who come here—our constituents from around the country—are in their debt because they literally do keep us safe and secure here on Capitol Hill. I do think the events this morning give rise to some additional concerns of what happens off the Hill, when ordinarily there might not be the sort of security measures in place that are necessary.

I think this is another wake-up call to all of us to be vigilant, to be aware of our situations, and to exercise concern for our own safety. Of course, we do need to continue to look at what the needs are of the Capitol Police, in terms of training and equipment and staffing, to make sure they can continue to do the outstanding job they have done here, yet again, this morning.

It is safe to say that without the Capitol Police being present, as a result of Congressman SCALISE’s location there at the Congressional Baseball Game practice, the results of this might have been much more serious—much more tragic—than they already were.

Of course, we are continuing to keep Congressman SCALISE in our prayers. I was looking at the TV screen on the way out. It looks like he is out of surgery but is still in critical condition. Of course, we continue to think about him and his family and offer them our support and our prayers.

While there is a lot we do not know about this morning’s incident, it is clear that this is a new environment we are living in, and we need to do everything we can to keep our constituents safe when they visit us on Capitol Hill as well as to keep safe all of the staff and everybody involved.

Mr. President, at a time when people do not believe anything bipartisan happens here in Washington, DC, I know we have seen a remarkable vote on these Iran-Russia sanctions with the vote of 97 to 2. Virtually every Republican Senator and virtually every Democratic Senator voted in favor of these sanctions which target two of the most aggressive regimes in the world.

The first is the Iranian regime, the No. 1 state sponsor of international terrorism. The second is the Russian regime, which, as we all know now, was so aggressively involved in trying to sow discord and chaos in the days leading up to the 2016 election.

It is staggering, really, to see the extent to which Russia has raised its game when it comes to disrupting core, democratic undertakings like elec-

tions. We know they are doing that in the United States, and we know they have attempted to do that in France. This is the way they operate. This is part of their tradecraft. Through a combination of cyber espionage, propaganda, the use of social media, and then unfortunately sometimes too glibly a mainstream media, we know false stories have somehow been elevated to a level at which people actually begin to believe them and cause them to distrust their own government. This is a real threat to the United States and to our democratic institutions.

The talk of the Russian collusion that led up to the election is fading because, as so many people have said, including distinguished Democratic leaders like Senator FEINSTEIN, who served with distinction as chair of the Intelligence Committee and who serves on the Judiciary Committee and Intelligence Committee now, there is no evidence of there having been collusion in the election. What we need to turn to now is how we can countermeasure what Russia tried to do when it came to the so-called active measures, which was a combination of cyber espionage, the use of social media, and propaganda right here in our homeland.

We are a country that believes in freedom of speech and the First Amendment, and sometimes that makes us more vulnerable than perhaps others who have state-owned media because we let anybody who has a point of view express it freely. That is part of our DNA. It also means that aggressive, hostile regimes like Russia can take advantage of our open society and our freedoms to try to sow discord and distrust in our own country.

I hope, now that the allegations about collusion are fading, we will take a serious look at how to respond appropriately with countermeasures to this sort of aggressive action on the part of Russia. I am really pleased that with a vote of 97 to 2, we have voted to impose sanctions on the rogue nation of Iran and the rogue nation of Russia.

PROTECT OUR CHILDREN ACT

Mr. President, in turning to another topic, earlier this year, with the Senator from Connecticut and the Senator from Nevada—Senator BLUMENTHAL and Senator HELLER—I introduced a bill that was called the PROTECT Our Children Act. I am proud to see it is moving through the Senate this week.

This is an important piece of legislation that most people will not hear or read much about because it is not particularly controversial, but that does not mean it is not important, which is why I want to talk about it briefly. This bill helps to stop the exploitation of children across the country and over the internet by reauthorizing the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program.

Years ago, when I was attorney general of Texas—from 1999 until the time I came to the Senate—we created in the Texas attorney general’s office

something we called, quaintly, the Texas Internet Bureau, which was cutting edge for the time. Now it is more of a cyber crimes unit that deals with, frankly, a lot of the same subject matter—child exploitation, child pornography, and other crimes—which are committed using the medium of the internet. I had a chance to see, sadly, how vulnerable children can quickly become victimized at the hands of some truly despicable individuals as well as the resources it takes to stop and to prosecute these predators.

One of the things we did at the Texas Internet Bureau back in the 1999 to 2000 timeframe was to link up, of course, with local law enforcement officials, but what we learned is that every municipal police department or county sheriff's department has the kind of expertise and has the sort of equipment they need in order to combat this new type of crime.

Through a national network of 61 coordinated task forces that represent 3,500 Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, we have now been able to comprehensively investigate and prosecute child predators. These task forces develop victim support programs, and they provide training and technical assistance and advanced forensic methods, which are very important when trying to track the online fingerprints or footsteps of these predators who operate online.

Through this legislation, these task forces will also help continue to facilitate community education, for example, by helping to inform parents and legal guardians what they can do to help protect their own children or the people for whom they are responsible.

Tragically, in this day and age, the internet's vast scope provides a dark, deep harbor for predators. Without the proper training and equipment, it can be difficult for our law enforcement officials to track down these child predators. This legislation ensures that they will have the resources they need to fight cyber crime and keep our communities safe by reauthorizing these important programs until the year 2022.

Last week's passage through the Judiciary Committee was the first key step. I am thankful for the work of my colleague from Connecticut, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and one of our principal cosponsors, Senator HELLER from Nevada. I am hopeful we can keep moving forward with this legislation so we can get these essential programs reauthorized by passing this in the Senate and then moving it on through the House and swiftly to the President's desk for signature and enactment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, today we are shaken and encouraged. My prayers remain with my friend STEVE SCALISE and his family; as well as with Zach Barth, the congressional staffer; Matt Mika, who was volunteering at the

baseball field; and the two brave police officers, Crystal Griner and David Bailey.

I have played on the Republican baseball team. I have practiced on that field. I am sure that no one woke up this morning imagining this tragedy was possible, not a single player who woke up this morning and who wanted to make sure they invested their time and their energy in such a way to help nonprofits around the area benefit from drawing a crowd together to watch Republicans and Democrats play baseball for the express and specific benefit of helping those who cannot help themselves.

I am also encouraged today. I am encouraged specifically by law enforcement and, more specifically, the Capitol Police who, because of their swift action, saved lives this morning at the baseball field. Thank you to the men and women who put on the uniform to keep others safe and, as we can tell by the injuries of Crystal and David, put themselves in harm's way.

I am also encouraged that in the midst of this crisis, we have seen our country come together. We have seen this body come together. At noon today, we had a prayer vigil led by Senator COONS, a Democrat, and Senator LANKFORD, a Republican. We are no longer in the midst of a crisis—Black Americans and White Americans or liberal Americans or conservative Americans, Republicans or Democrats. We are not even swayed by the current environment of sensationalism. No, sir. We are simply Americans, blessed by God to be a part of the American family.

The polarization that pulls on the fabric of this great country is very, very dangerous. Too often, we find ourselves splitting into smaller factions. We stop listening to others' points of view. We react immediately with hostility, doubting the very intentions of folks who do not agree with our perspective. This is very dangerous for our future. We seem to have forgotten how to disagree without being disagreeable, and today's shooting is one of the manifestations of that.

This weekend marks 2 years since the massacre at Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, SC—my home—where a racist who wanted to start a race war decided that he could take advantage of the cracks in our foundation, that he could drive to Charleston, SC, and take advantage of those cracks. But the families of the victims, understanding and appreciating the notion of Matthew 5:44—loving those who seem to be our enemies—did not allow their grief and their anger to overpower their senses. They believed in the power of love. They believed that love is more powerful than hate. They believed in each other. And because of their conviction, my city and my State stood together, Black South Carolinians and White South Carolinians, and said to the world: Not in my place, not in my city, not in my State, and not in my

houses of worship. We stood together. We did not allow this spirit of oppression and division to separate us. We allowed the power of love to unite us.

So whether it is race or politics, whether it is gender or any other number of ways that we could be divided, we have to—I implore all of us—remember that we are first Americans.

As I think back to the funerals, to the vigils, I think of my good friend from Hawaii. She is not a Christian; she is of another faith. She is not a Republican; she is a Democrat. But she flew down to South Carolina only a couple of days after the massacre because two of her friends—myself and TREY GOWDY—were attending the funerals, attending the first major events. She wanted to worship with us. She wanted to be there with us. This is a classic example of when and how our Nation pulls together, setting aside our differences.

We must work together, ensuring opportunity for all, not profiting from the division in this Nation, not looking for ways to get more clicks on our pages. And why is that? It is simple—because America is stronger than this. America is better than this. We are the American family, and we must let love be the light to show us the way.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I have some remarks to make with respect to healthcare that I will offer in a moment.

First, I want to address the events of this morning. The shooting that took place in Alexandria today was a horrendous, despicable act of violence. The victims—including Congressman SCALISE, two Capitol police officers, and two others—are still undergoing treatment. There is much that is still not known about what happened.

There are a few things that are known. First, it is thanks to the extraordinary heroics of the Capitol Police and first responders on the scene that this shooting did not become a massacre. Each and every one of us who comes to work in these buildings every day is profoundly grateful for our Capitol Police, our first responders, and the incredible service and protection they provide.

Second, I think all of us know that this violence has visited too many of our communities. It has cost and ruined too many lives.

Finally, we know that the game our colleagues were practicing for—a charity game between rival parties that is held to benefit disadvantaged kids—is going to go on as planned. The game is

a show of friendship. It is a show of bipartisanship. It is an indication that, as there are strong differences of opinion on the policies that we debate on the floor of the Senate, we still come together at urgent times like this. The game, which shows our commitment to friendship and bipartisanship, has never been needed more than it will be tomorrow.

Our thoughts are now with those who are injured. It seems that everyone you run into at the Capitol has said they are praying and they are rooting for a full and speedy recovery. It is one of those moments when people understand that there is legislation here—their bills, their amendments. Sometimes there is a lot of process—an amendment to the amendment to the amendment, as my wife calls it. Then there are other times like this morning, which are life and death.

As we reflect on those who did so much to keep it from being even worse—a massacre—we have our prayers for those who are injured. Once again, it puts into perspective what is so very important.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, to the topic at hand, there have, obviously, been dramatic headlines in the news pertaining to ties of the President with Russia. I want to be sure that what is happening here in the Senate with respect to healthcare doesn't get drowned out.

The fact is that here in the Senate, behind closed doors, 13 Senators—all from the same party, all of them men—are updating the Republican healthcare plan. The House passed its TrumpCare bill by the slimmest of margins just a few weeks ago.

The public has seen it, and, based on everything I can tell, it has gone over about as well as a prolonged root canal surgery. I have heard about every imaginable concern about that House bill from Oregonians. I have had 46 townhall meetings thus far this year, including 4 over this past weekend.

When the bill came to the Senate, my colleagues on the other side got out in the press, tamped down expectations, and claimed that everything would be starting over. They are starting from scratch. Now the public knows, because it is what Members of the majority party have said, that the Senate version isn't going to be all that different from what barely made it from the House this spring.

When the bill is finalized, we know it is going to be rushed to the floor, and it will not be long before debate is cut off and final votes are cast. It is a plan that relies on speed, forcing a devastating blow to American healthcare through the Senate before our citizens can actually catch on to what is happening.

This political process on this bill makes what the House has been up to look positively transparent. The basic framework of the Republican healthcare plan isn't going to change. Millions and millions of Americans will

lose their health coverage. It is not my view. It is the view of the independent Congressional Budget Office. Costs are going to go up, especially for those who are elderly and sicker, and those who are the fortunate few are going to get an enormous tax break.

The basic framework isn't changing, and what that means is that the social safety net—led by Medicaid, which is a lifeline for kids and seniors and the disabled—is going to be under attack. The public health system in America has stood on two twin pillars since 1965. Those pillars are Medicare and Medicaid. The Republican majority has a plan to knock one of them out beginning this year.

Today, Medicaid comes with a guarantee that if you are sick, if you are injured or if you spend every day walking an economic tightrope, you are going to be able to get care when you need it. You will not be denied benefits. But TrumpCare ends that guarantee.

The plan Republicans have on offer would dismantle Medicaid as it is known today, putting hard dollar limits on the program. That puts caps on care. That is what it means—that there will be caps on care. It is a scheme that puts Medicaid in a vise, squeezing its funding year after year. The plan makes budget targets a bigger priority than real-world healthcare needs for some of the most vulnerable people in our country.

Seventy-four million Americans have health coverage through Medicaid. That includes 37 million children. It provides comprehensive care to millions of pregnant women. It is a leader in the fight against the opioid epidemic, and there is treatment for those who are dealing with mental health and substance abuse disorders.

Medicaid is a lifeline when it comes to helping kids and adults with disabilities. Then there is the nursing home benefit, something I know from my years as codirector of the Oregon Gray Panthers. This is a benefit that is a bedrock protection, built into Medicaid to help pick up the tab for two out of three nursing home beds in America. If you roll that benefit back, I don't see how seniors across this country are going to avoid living in squalor. Maybe their kids can take them in, but the kids of the parents I am talking about have told me they are working on an economic tightrope, trying to balance food against the fuel cost, the fuel cost against the rent cost.

So my guess is, if you squeeze the Medicaid Program tighter and tighter and States are forced to cut benefits and access to care, as will be inevitable under TrumpCare, I just don't see where you can ensure that seniors in nursing homes are going to be protected.

My own view—and this goes back to the days when I worked with seniors—the challenges with older people have evolved over the years. Back then, you had Part A. That was hospitals. Part B was doctors. That is not Medicare any

more. Today, more than 90 percent of the spending deals with chronic illness—cancer, diabetes, heart disease, strokes. It is a very different program, but we are still going to need nursing home care for so many of our older people who have done everything right in life. They are our mothers, our fathers, our grandparents, our friends. They fought our wars. They started families. They built careers. They raised kids. They scrimped. They saved. They never went on that special vacation. They never bought the boat they would have loved to have, and they did it because they always wanted to pay for essentials and see if maybe they could set aside what they could for schooling for their kids and retirement for themselves.

But, as I have said, what I have seen over the years since those Gray Panther days is that growing old in America just keeps getting more expensive for so many older people. The bills don't stop coming when you retire. And most older people still live on a limited, fixed income. I saw that with my full-time work at the legal aid office for older people and the Gray Panthers, and I saw those seniors having to stretch every last penny, and even then, it was a struggle to cover the basics. So what happens—and I am afraid we are going to see a lot more of it—is seniors eventually spend down their savings. When they face challenges, they spend down their funds.

Today, when it comes time to pay for long-term care like nursing homes and home-based care, Medicaid steps up. It is the backstop, a guaranteed backstop to protect our senior citizens. I don't want to undersell how much that means to people in my State and across the land. Medicaid is the barrier that keeps millions of seniors from falling into isolation and utter destitution.

There was a time in our country when seniors were cast aside. They were sent to poor farms, what were called almshouses. The wealthiest Nation on Earth said goodbye to those poor farms with the creation of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Under the Republican healthcare plan, unfortunately, Medicaid would be slashed so deeply, States are going to be forced into cutting benefits. Seniors could be nickel-and-dimed for basic everyday services. Nursing homes could be shuttered. Home-based care that allows seniors to live independently could be no more. I think you are going to have lots of seniors living in squalor, and some could be out on the street.

So in my view, the people of our country are owed answers to key questions about this Republican plan.

First, how are families supposed to support their loved ones if they lose the guarantee of Medicaid?

One year in a nursing home costs more than \$90,000 on average. That is two or three times the cost of a year of college tuition. Are families going to be forced into choosing between educating their kids and supporting their

elderly parents? Is it going to be a fact of life for working Americans that they have to cram two or three or four generations of one family into the same house simply because they can't afford nursing home care?

Second, what is the backup plan for vulnerable, isolated seniors, particularly those who live in rural areas?

I recently held a series of eight healthcare roundtables in rural communities across Oregon just over the last few days, in Pendleton and Condon. The message I heard from healthcare providers again this past weekend throughout rural Oregon was that TrumpCare cuts could hit seniors in rural America especially hard.

Seniors in rural communities have higher rates of chronic illness, like heart disease and diabetes. The healthcare they need requires more attention and more services. They count on getting top-notch care in nursing homes and from home-based providers. Losing these benefits could mean being alone in a home that is unsafe, cut off from the care and the connections they need.

Colleagues, in the last few weeks of this debate, I heard Members flatly deny that gutting Medicaid by more than \$800 billion will mean anybody loses access to healthcare services. That is just untrue. Anybody who says that they can slash our healthcare programs by close to \$1 trillion without having a negative impact on access to healthcare services is just plain wrong.

Furthermore, I think it is time to recognize what the end goal of this debate appears to be. My Republican colleagues haven't put forward a proposal to protect seniors who can't get the Medicaid nursing home care they need or kids with disabilities who lose the services they depend on. What Republicans have on offer is not a plan that swaps one vision of healthcare for another.

These massive cuts to Medicaid and other health programs are going to pay for equally massive tax breaks for the fortunate few. Members of this body are going to have to decide whether it is worth gutting Medicaid and endangering essential care, like nursing home care and important home-based services, to pay for these big tax breaks for the fortunate. In my view, it should be an easy choice.

My colleagues on the other side ought to drop this partisan approach—what is called reconciliation—that it seems the Senate is headed toward. At a minimum, the majority party ought to bring this process out from behind closed doors and give it a little bit of sunlight. There ought to be hearings convened in the Finance Committee and the other committees of jurisdiction, as there were again and again in 2008 and 2009.

When you are talking about one-sixth of the American economy and what is the premier issue and always will be, which is people and their loved ones having their health, I don't see

how you make an argument for not having a debate out in the open. There has to be a public debate. The legislation ought to be written in the light of day, and then our people ought to have ample time to review it before it goes up for a single vote, either in committee or here on the floor.

I am going to close with something that I think about especially today—the big challenges of our time. You have to deal with them in a bipartisan fashion in order to, one, get them right, and two, make them sustainable. The Presiding Officer of the Senate knows this. He and I spent many months working on key economic issues and recently put together a bipartisan bill on infrastructure. Healthcare is particularly important because when you are talking about providing care for over 300 million Americans, you have to really think through what the consequences are. Often, when you take a step over here, it ripples over there. That is why it seems to me that it is so important that the Republican majority set aside this partisan “our way or the highway” approach and get back to working together to find common ground.

I had a piece of legislation when we were debating healthcare in 2008 and 2009—eight Democratic Senators and eight Republican Senators. That was the first time in the history of this body that we had that. There are Republicans and Democrats who continue to serve in this body who are cosponsors of that legislation. It is called the Healthy Americans Act.

We got some of what we thought was important into the Affordable Care Act—in particular, a provision that I think the American people really want to think about in the days ahead, and that is, in our bill with the 16 Senators, we had airtight, loophole-free protection for those with preexisting conditions. There wasn't any way to hit them with extra costs or discriminate against them because they had a preexisting condition. We said that we wouldn't stand for that because if you allow discrimination against those with preexisting conditions, you take America back to the days when healthcare was for the healthy and wealthy. If you are healthy, you don't have a preexisting condition, and if you are wealthy, you can pay for care. We can't go back there. But the House bill basically allows States to get waivers so they can start unraveling that and punch big holes into that guarantee of airtight protection for those with preexisting conditions.

If the majority will set aside this partisan-only, “we are doing it our way” kind of approach, what you heard from colleagues on my side is that there is very significant interest in working together to deal with the key challenges. One of them, obviously, is more competition in the insurance markets, particularly as it relates to individual insurance. You do that, and you will take the insurers off this roll-

er coaster so they have some certainty and predictability. You can stabilize the private insurance market.

We ought to work together on bringing down prescription drug prices. Our people tell us every time we are home that these prescription drug price increases are hitting them like a wrecking ball. I have introduced approaches that I think can get bipartisan support, and there are others who have as well. But that is how to do it right. That is how you find common ground: You take time to take each other's good ideas.

Bipartisanship isn't about taking each other's lousy ideas. Bipartisanship is about taking each other's good ideas, and there are good ideas on both sides of the aisle to stabilize the private insurance market, to hold down prescription drug prices. But this idea of reconciliation, where we are all just going to do it our way—that is the Republican approach, the partisan approach, and featured in that approach are devastating cuts to Medicaid. That is a nonstarter.

So I come to the floor this afternoon, particularly given years of interest in trying to find bipartisan common ground on healthcare, to urge my colleagues to abandon this approach that is being pursued behind closed doors, that nobody knows anything about, and that really seems unprecedented in terms of dealing with one-sixth of the economy. I urge my colleagues to abandon the partisan approach of reconciliation and work with colleagues on this side on a bipartisan basis.

I will close simply by way of saying that I wanted to come to the floor today, and I will try to be back tomorrow to outline other challenges ahead in healthcare. I urge the American people across this country, in every corner of our Nation, to make their voices heard.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I am here today to urge support for the act that counters Iran's devastating and destabilizing activities. I am proud to be a cosponsor of the bill. This bill would expand sanctions on individuals who are contributing to Iran's ballistic missile program, supporting international terrorism, or violating the arms embargo against Iran.

Iran is one of the key principal state sponsors of terrorism in the world. In fact, the Obama administration said it was the No. 1 sponsor of state terrorism in the world. It is a destabilizing force for its neighbors, and it is

a destabilizing force for a more peaceful world. The Iranians provide financial and material support to groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, militias in Iraq, and a host of other terrorist groups. They have threatened to wipe out our closest ally in the Middle East, Israel. They said they would wipe them “off the map.” They continue to violate international restrictions by advancing their ballistic missile program.

Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, when he testified in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee in February of 2016, said: “Iran’s ballistic missiles are inherently capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, and Tehran already has the largest inventory of ballistic missiles in the Middle East.”

By one estimate, Iran may have conducted as many as 14 missile tests since the Obama administration’s nuclear agreement, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, went into effect. Apparently, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action meant that Iran could take any action it wanted, if you look at what Iran is doing today. They have violated multiple legally binding arms embargoes established by the U.N. Security Council.

On a trip to Saudi Arabia in April, Defense Secretary James Mattis noted that Iran continues to violate multiple arms embargoes, saying: “We see Iranian-supplied missiles being fired by the Houthis into Saudi Arabia.” I think that, at one point, Secretary Mattis said that anywhere you look in the disrupted Middle East, Iran is there. This action and others directly violate what Iran agreed not to do when they agreed to the behavior that they said would be their future behavior.

As to their ongoing support of international terrorist organizations, the Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, testified in front of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in an open hearing on May 11, 2017. Just to double down on what his predecessor said, Director Coats said: “Iran continues to be the foremost state sponsor of terrorism.”

If Iran is the principal state sponsor of terrorism—the foremost sponsor of state terrorism—certainly, we should take some action. This bill does that. Whether it is action supporting the rebels in Yemen or the brutal dictator Bashar al-Assad in Syria, Iran is clearly there and clearly a force for bad, not good.

The legislation the Senate is considering this week would go a long way toward holding Iran accountable. The Countering Iran’s Destabilizing Activities Act codifies sanctions that are directed at all three categories of illicit activities and behavior that we should condemn from Iran—ballistic missile tests, arms embargo violations, and support of terrorism, as well as Iran’s own systemic abuse of human rights in

its own country. There is no way to criticize that government without fear of abuse or worse.

Specifically, the bill directs the President to impose sanctions on any person who knowingly engages in any activity that materially contributes to the Iranian ballistic missile program activities or to any other program for which a system to deliver weapons of mass destruction is involved or any person who contributes to the transfer of certain arms to or from Iran. The bill also directs the Secretary of State to submit to the appropriate congressional committees a list of people the State Department has determined to be responsible for gross human rights violations against individuals who seek to promote human rights. The bill further provides that the President may block any property these human rights abusers have in the United States.

This measure also addresses Iran’s continued support for terrorism. Executive order 13224, issued soon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, sanctions entities determined to be supporting international terrorism.

Let me remind the Presiding Officer that the last two Directors of National Intelligence have both said that the No. 1 supporter of international terrorism is Iran. Several Iran-related entities have already been sanctioned under that order, but not, surprisingly, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. This bill makes a finding that that corps is responsible for supporting terrorism and requires that the sanctions of the Executive order that I mentioned be applied.

This bill does not violate the nuclear agreement with Iran. As the Obama administration said repeatedly, the nuclear agreement was about providing Iran “relief from nuclear-related sanctions.” I may come back to that later, but this nuclear agreement does not require the United States to look the other way as Iran continues to violate international norms on ballistic missile testing and violates the arms embargo.

Let me also say that the Iran nuclear agreement was just an agreement between the leaders of the two governments. It isn’t a treaty. The President never tried to defend it as a treaty. The Congress didn’t approve it as a treaty. It is no more of a binding treaty than anything else that the President on his own would decide they would enter into, hoping that the next President would also agree with their decision.

Secretary of State John Kerry, in the final days of his service as Secretary of State said: “We still have serious differences with the Government of Iran, and will continue to push back on its support of terrorism, disregard for human rights, and destabilizing regional activities.”

This bill delivers the pushback that Secretary of State John Kerry called for.

Despite the hopes that the previous administration had for moderation—re-

member that debate about how, once we entered into this agreement, it would strengthen the forces of moderation in Iran?—Iran has increased its destructive activities since the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Strengthening sanctions on Iran is an appropriate response in Iran’s continued aggression. Again, because these sanctions are directed only at actions outside of the nuclear sphere, the legislation in no way violates the letter or spirit of that agreement. The Iran sanctions regime is the best tool we have to hold Iran accountable and one that we should continue to keep at the forefront of our policy.

In April, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson sent to Congress, as required by the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, the latest certification that Iran is implementing the nuclear agreement. In his message, Secretary Tillerson pointed out that “Iran remains a leading state sponsor of terror.”

How could we ever have put a leading state sponsor of terror on a path to having a nuclear weapon? All the things we are concerned about in North Korea we have guaranteed in Iran, unless some future President—President Trump or some future President—decides that this is not the direction in which we can continue.

Secretary Tillerson also said that President Trump has ordered an inter-agency review to evaluate whether suspension of sanctions related to Iran, pursuant to the JCPOA agreement, is vital to the national security interests of the United States.

He concluded by saying that, when this review is complete, “the administration looks forward to working with Congress on this issue.”

This is a positive step. That review need not constrain the use of sanctions to hold Iran accountable for its other bad behavior.

I would just like to remind everyone that under President Obama’s nuclear agreement, Iran has already gained access to more than \$100 billion in sanctions relief, some of which is likely to be fueled to terrorists aligned with Iran. Remember the delivery of cash to Iran and where our government said that some of that cash would likely go—what an outrageous thing for us to be a part of.

The No. 1 sponsor of terrorism in the world deserves to be sanctioned. Individuals who are part of those activities deserve to be specifically sanctioned. This bill will do that. I urge my colleagues to support the bill and the amendment that was voted on today, and look forward to that action being taken later this week.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has been more than 6 months since a major foreign adversary undertook a cyber act of war against our election.

The Russian attack sought to undermine faith in our democratic system and favor one candidate over another—

in this case, one seen as more favorable to the Kremlin's interests.

This was truly a historic event—one that requires a response of equal magnitude—not only to deter any such attacks on our future elections and those of our Western allies, but to make sure our election infrastructure is secure from any future cyber threats.

Unfortunately, President Trump has refused to even acknowledge the Russian act of cyber war and the Republican-controlled Congress has similarly refused to act to retaliate against Russia or strengthen our cyber defenses.

All the while, Russia has predictably continued its belligerent military and cyber actions against our NATO allies and Ukraine, as well as ongoing cyber attacks on the election of our democratic allies, most recently in France.

This should come as no surprise. We were warned by our own experts and our allies about the danger of American inaction.

For example, last month, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper warned, "An American citizen should be very concerned about a foreign government, particularly our primary adversary, interfering with the most important foundational process that we have in this country, which is free and fair elections." And former FBI Director James Comey also recently warned about the Russians "They're coming after America . . . They will be back."

I heard the same warnings in Eastern Europe, where our allies starkly warned that Russia would feel emboldened to continue its attacks if the United States did not even respond to the attack on its own election. So I am understandably pleased that, at least this week, we are taking action to maintain and toughen sanctions against Russia.

This bill takes a number of long overdue steps, including codifying existing sanctions against Russia put in place by the Obama administration, adding new sanctions on Russia, and making it harder for President Trump to lift any sanctions on Russia without congressional review.

I think these are important steps we must take to respond to Russia and to protect our democracy, but they are not nearly enough.

We must also pass legislation to help protect against any such future attacks on our election and to safeguard our electoral infrastructure.

We must get to the bottom of questions regarding possible collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russians.

We must be prepared for President Trump to use the waivers and designation authority granted to him in this bill to ultimately do little to nothing to toughen sanctions against Russia.

You see, the way we usually write sanctions language is to instruct that the "President shall" take such action as described and then provide a national security waiver.

Well, this President has spent more time trying to endear himself to the Russians than warning them to never attack our Nation again. In fact, this President continues to deny that there was a Russian attack on our election. What can we expect this President to do with the discretion given in this bill dealing with these exact issues?

I hope he does the right thing to protect our national security and democratic system from foreign attack, but I and others will be watching to make sure he does and ready with additional measures if he does not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, Republicans continue to come to the floor to talk about the urgent need that we have to reform America's healthcare system. The reason we continue to do this is because the pain of ObamaCare is getting worse.

We are seeing it all across the country. The healthcare system in this country has been devastated by a law known as ObamaCare. Every weekend, at home, I hear, as Republicans all around the country hear, about the costs that have been spiraling out of control—double on the ObamaCare exchange, we hear across the country, but in many States even more than that.

In Wyoming it has gone up 107 percent over the past 4 years. We also hear from people at home about their specific premiums on the exchange and how they are worried about them going up even higher next year. Not only have they doubled, but they are worried about them going up again. Just this past week, we have heard stories about numbers that have been requested for increases in New Hampshire, New York, and Maine. We are hearing it all across the country. I hear it every weekend in Wyoming.

People are very concerned about the impact that ObamaCare has had on their lives personally. Many will tell you that they believe that the insurance they bought under ObamaCare has been of less value than they would have liked, and many people are not buying because they see that the value is not there.

When we hear about these increasing rates and we hear about the fact that it is going to only get worse, people are saying: The cost has gone up; maybe we ought to try to shop around, and maybe we can find more choices.

The problem is the choices are going down as well. Insurance companies are continuing to drop out of the ObamaCare plan. So people around the country are having fewer and fewer choices under ObamaCare.

Last Friday, a headline in the Wall Street Journal read: "Another Area Loses Last ACA Insurer." It is not just that they have fewer choices. Now we are looking at places in the country where there are no choices.

In Wyoming we had two. One of the companies went out of business. We are

down to one. That company has lost money. The question is, How long will they stay? How much higher will they have to raise rates under ObamaCare? Will we be at a point where the counties in our State, instead of having one, have none?

This article in the Wall Street Journal last week says: "Washington state has no insurer willing to offer Affordable Care Act plans next year," in some of its 39 counties.

A few days earlier, we heard the news from people in a similar situation in Ohio. There are 18 counties in Ohio next year with no plans offered. So with ObamaCare you are going to get a subsidy, but there is no place to use the subsidy. You have no choices. But we warned from the beginning about the ObamaCare death spiral, and we are seeing it happen here. For those people living in those counties in Ohio and those counties in Washington, the insurance death spiral is complete. There is no insurance market. There is no one offering to sell insurance because of the damage done by ObamaCare to the insurance market in the United States.

We have millions of people across the country who have been harmed by the higher costs and the fewer and fewer choices available under ObamaCare. They have lost the coverage they had. Care is not available to them in the sense that their insurance is not available to them. The options are shrinking all across the country and have completely gone away in certain places.

Now, someone who is living with a preexisting condition is so much of the debate, and I hear my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who come to the floor, talk about preexisting conditions. If you are someone in any of these counties and you have a preexisting condition and the company you buy your insurance from goes out of business and there is no one to sell you insurance in the county in which you live and you have a preexisting condition, under ObamaCare, you are out of luck. You may get a subsidy, but you cannot buy a policy. Under ObamaCare, preexisting conditions are not covered if there is no one available to sell a policy, and we are seeing more and more counties falling into that situation.

There was almost a full-page map in the New York Times earlier this week of the number of counties across the country in which there are only two insurance companies selling or one or none at all. That is the problem we have all across the country.

We predicted this. This disaster of ObamaCare was entirely predictable. Republicans came to the floor as it was being debated, as it was being discussed, as Democrats were voting on it, and we continued to point out that we would be in a situation of free fall, and we are now in that situation with ObamaCare.

Republicans know what we need to do. We are trying to stabilize the market. We want to protect people with preexisting conditions. We want to lower the cost of premiums. We do not want the rug to be pulled out from anyone, and we are trying to reform Medicaid in a way that provides long-term stability to that program.

Finally, after all of these years of talking about the problems with ObamaCare and with so many Democrats having blinders on, wanting to just apply a blank check to the problem and say: "More money. More ObamaCare," finally, now some Democrats are saying, yes, that there are problems with ObamaCare. The problem is that their solution is the wrong solution.

What they want to do is make the problem even bigger, and we have seen it in California this past year. Actually, just a week ago, the California State Senate—and it is a Democratic-controlled Senate—after calls from people throughout their political party and at their political convention a couple of weeks ago, said that we know what to do—single-payer healthcare. That is what they proposed, and it passed along party lines.

Who is that single payer? It is the American taxpayer. The Democratic-controlled Senate in California passed a single-payer healthcare bill. From cradle to grave, everyone is covered. Anything you need, you have it, says California.

I served in the Wyoming State Legislature—and I served at the Presiding Officer's level in the legislature—where we did something called a fiscal note. What is something like this going to cost? They did the same thing in California. The fiscal note was \$400 billion a year. Put it in perspective. How does that fit into the State budget? The general fund for the State of California for a year, when they have just passed a bill for \$400 billion, is only \$190 billion. The total cost of what the State Senate of California passed is twice the entire general fund for the State of California. In other places, when they have said that they have needed a single-payer plan, as they have done in Canada and England, what has happened is that it has led to longer lines, waiting periods, and the rationing of care. That is not what the American people want, but it is what the Democratic Party is proposing and actually voted for in the State of California.

This was a headline in the New York Times just the other day, "The Single-Payer Party? Democrats Shift Left on Health Care."

The article goes on to read in terms of the Democrats:

Cast out of power in Washington and most State capitals, Democrats and activist leaders seeking political redemption have embraced an unlikely-seeming cause: an actual government takeover of health care.

This was from the New York Times about what has passed in California and what Democrats around the country are proposing.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, which is right down the hall of this building, a majority of the Democrats has cosponsored legislation to go to a single-payer healthcare plan—for the majority of the Democrats in the House, a single-payer healthcare plan.

That is not what hard-working Americans want. That is not what struggling small business owners want. That is not what the people of Wyoming want. The people at home already cannot afford to pay for the insurance that has been mandated that they buy under the Obama healthcare law. They cannot afford the penalties. They cannot afford the insurance, and they want healthcare—care they need from doctors they choose at lower costs.

How in the world is this country going to afford higher taxes to pay for the Democrats' single-payer fantasy? Yet that is what they are looking at in California. To double the cost of the State's general fund, you are talking about raising taxes as well as, probably, eliminating some services. Would you have to eliminate teachers, firefighters, public safety workers? Those are the things that you have to wonder about when they make such an irresponsible decision in the California State Senate.

Ronald Reagan, I think, said it best when he said that you cannot be for big government and big taxes and a big bureaucracy and still be for the little guy. Ronald Reagan had it right. Now Washington Democrats want to ignore that.

Small business owners know what Democrats in Washington, DC, and in California refuse to acknowledge right now. The small business owners know it, and the Democrats will not acknowledge it. People around the country realize ObamaCare is not working. It is why they elected a Republican House, a Republican Senate, a Republican President—because of the pain caused to the American people under the Obama healthcare law, which mandated that everybody buy a government-approved product. The costs have gone up, and the choices have gone down. People have been left in a state in which this is not what works for them.

So here we are. We are on the cusp of coming out with a Republican plan. We are trying to do it with our legislation. We are writing a reform plan to reduce healthcare costs and improve access to insurance without the mandates and the restrictions we have seen under the Obama healthcare law.

I think Democrats should join us in finding the best solutions for the American people. The time to act is now because we see that, from week to week, more of those who sell insurance are pulling out. People with preexisting conditions who lose their coverage will have nowhere to turn under ObamaCare. We continue to fight for our patients. As a doctor, I know what patients need, and it is the care they need from doctors they choose at lower costs.

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

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

CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, like all of us here on Capitol Hill, I am still reeling from the attack on our colleagues this morning. My thoughts and prayers are with everyone who was injured, and with their families.

My friend and colleague STEVE SCALISE remains in critical condition right now, and I am praying for a full and swift recovery.

I am grateful to hear that the young congressional staffer who was shot—a legislative correspondent for Representative ROGER WILLIAMS—is expected to make a complete recovery.

Legislative correspondents and the other young staffers who work in our offices don't get a lot of media attention, but not one of us could do our jobs serving our constituents without them. We are grateful for their work and dedication.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Most of us have never been in a situation where we have a need to consider such a great sacrifice. But, every day, the men and women of the United States Capitol Police, and every police force in this country, get up and go about their jobs, knowing that they may have to lay down their lives, and they do so willingly. When others run from danger, they run into it. When bullets fly, they advance.

Today, violence threatened, and officers of the Capitol Police stepped up to meet it. Had it not been for the efforts of the heroic officers who were on site, today's attack could have been much, much worse. As it is, their actions have brought many safely home to their families tonight.

Events like today remind us that there is evil in the world, but they also remind us that there is good. Around every act of evil and violence, 100 acts of good spring up. The officers who risked their lives to defend those at the scene, the colleagues who hurried to provide medical care to STEVE SCALISE, the Alexandria police officers who came running to help, the Democratic congressional baseball team who united in prayer for their colleagues, the injured officer who went to check on the Member he was protecting before he thought of seeking treatment for himself—these are the things that endure.

Good endures. Sacrifice endures. Heroism endures. Long after the names of evildoers are forgotten, these things remain.

Again, my thoughts and prayers are with the injured and with their families. And, as always, my gratitude is with the Capitol police officers who defend us every single day.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

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

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, this morning, an unbalanced individual carried out a cowardly attack, not only against Members and staff of this Congress but against democratic institutions. This terrorist—and he is a terrorist—desired to destroy our democratic institutions. We as a country cannot allow this to happen. If anything, this must strengthen our resolve to do what is right for our country and for each other. We cannot let this shooter defeat good.

I have known STEVE SCALISE for decades. I served with STEVE in the Louisiana Senate, then in the U.S. House of Representatives. I called his wife Jennifer and will be available to help his family in any way I can.

STEVE is a man of good character. He loves the United States and Louisiana, loves the LSU Tigers, which, of course, is our mutual affection as well. It is a privilege to serve with someone who cares so deeply about the people whom we are both honored to represent. My prayers are with STEVE, Jennifer, and their children.

We also think of Zack Barth, Matt Mika, Agent David Bailey, and Agent Crystal Griner. We think of them, are gratified that they were able to receive medical treatment quickly, and ask that everyone join in keeping them and their families in our prayers as well. To all of them—we want them to know that we in the United States and in Louisiana support them.

I specifically commend the Capitol Police for all they do, and, again, Agents Bailey and Griner for their bravery and quick actions to protect those in danger. We are blessed by the service of the Capitol Police and fortunate they were there to prevent this attack from being even more tragic.

Where do we go from here? Frankly, we as a country need to come together to try and reinject civility into our political rhetoric. We can disagree on policy. It is that disagreement and our ability to discuss and debate these differences that makes democracies successful.

The key word here is “debate.” There is a difference between debate and attacking the motives and good faith of another. Debates are healthy, productive, and you respect those in opposition. You discuss ideas, not perceived intentions. When respect and good faith in the intentions of the other are lost, though, perhaps it does more to hurt than to heal.

We as individuals need to look at how we use rhetoric—rhetoric that can cause someone who is unbalanced to

commit an act of violence, as we saw this morning. Anyone saying things to vilify another or portray them as evil, we have to recognize that can drive some, again, to acts of violence. Let's do what we can to move this country to the era of respectful debate.

Now let me end where I began. We cannot let political terrorism win. We must stand firm in support of our democracy and democratic institutions. We must carry on, not letting evil triumph. We do that by recognizing that we are all, first, children of God, then all Americans. We come together, stand united, doing that which is best for our country and for each other.

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. KENNEDY. 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. KENNEDY. Mr. President, Congressman STEVE SCALISE; Special Agent Crystal Griner; Special Agent David Bailey; Zack Barth, a legislative aide to Congressman ROGER WILLIAMS; Matt Mika, who works for Tyson Foods—those five individuals were shot today, and I am asking and saying to every American who happens to be listening to the Senate at this time: If you believe in God, please pray for them as I have and as I do. If you don't believe in God, this is America, and that is your right. Send positive thoughts their way.

Like most Americans, I feel awful, I feel sad, and I feel mad.

I have known STEVE SCALISE a long time, I don't know, 20, 25 years. He is a political friend, but he is also a personal friend. STEVE works all the time. He loves his family. He will do anything for his constituents. I know that is what we always say about each other, but it is true with STEVE. He loves this place. I have never seen him in a bad mood. I know he must be; he is human. But I don't think I have ever seen STEVE in a bad mood. He is positive; he is can-do. Every time I go to a function, STEVE is there. I don't think he ever sleeps. He does an extraordinarily good job of representing the First Congressional District of Louisiana, and this is so unfair. I wish I understood why bad things happen to good people.

My thoughts and prayers, as all of our thoughts and prayers should be, are with Jennifer, STEVE's lovely wife. STEVE and Jennifer have two great kids, Madison and Harrison. I can't imagine what his family is going through right now. I am just so sorry.

We are also praying and hoping for a quick recovery for Matt and for Zack.

I thank Special Agent Griner and Special Agent Bailey. There were 30, 40, 50 Congressmen and Senators out there today. It was an open field. But for the

bravery of these two special agents and other members of the Capitol Police, it would have been a turkey shoot: no cover. You have a person—that is as charitable as I can be right now—a person armed with an assault rifle and a handgun. I just want to tell those two agents and all the other law enforcement officials who support them and who keep us safe every day: Thank you so much for doing your job.

We have heard—and I hope it is not true—that this was a political shooting; that this person who decided to commit these despicable acts did it because he didn't like the political persuasion of the people at whom he decided to shoot. I hope that is not true. I hope members of the media come back tonight after the Secret Service investigates and tell us that is not true. Because if it is true, this represents a new low for America.

Reasonable people disagree, and you have the right under our Constitution to disagree. This is America. You can believe what you want. Within reason, you can say what you want. And most of us—I dare say, all of us in Congress—would do anything we could to protect that right.

I guess you have a constitutional right to hate, if you want to. But I don't understand people who hate other people just because they don't agree with them politically. It is not only nonsensical, it is un-American. If the reports are true, it breaks my heart that this is what we have come to. I think many of us have probably seen that attitude. It has not become prevalent in America, but it certainly has become more than just a mere occurrence. I will put it that way.

The internet has been an extraordinary thing for commerce and for the quality of life of all of us, but sometimes I read what people write on Facebook and I read comments. The worst are the ones where people can comment anonymously on newspaper articles. The vitriol, the hatred—I would hate to live with that much hate in my heart.

Our thoughts and prayers are with STEVE, Jennifer, Madison, and Harrison, and they are with Special Agent Griner, Special Agent Bailey, Zack Barth, and Matt Mika. My personal thoughts and prayers are with every American today who feels as I do, that this is just a sad, sad day for this great country.

I don't know if there is any good that can come out of this, but if there is, I hope the good that does come out of this is that we will all stop and think about the things that divide us and understand it is OK to disagree. I will say it again: Reasonable people do. But you can disagree with somebody without hate.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COTTON. 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. COTTON. Mr. President, I want to add to the voice of so many Senators today who expressed their prayers and concerns for the five Americans who were wounded today in a terrible shooting in Alexandria, VA: STEVE SCALISE, a friend of mine from the House of Representatives, someone who took a bet on me early in my first campaign, as a neighboring State, aspiring young candidate, and with whom I served for 2 years; Matt Mika, who represents the Tyson Foods, a great Arkansas institution, and whom I have known since the beginning of my days of politics; Zack Barth, a young House staffer; and Crystal Griner and David Bailey, two brave Capitol police officers who were on the scene.

We don't yet know all of the details of what happened this morning. Here is what we do know: If it weren't for the bravery of those Capitol police officers—not just Crystal and David but the others present—there might have been many more killed.

We all sit here safely engaged in the great debates of American democracy—whether we are a Senator or whether we are Americans watching it—because there are brave men and women literally standing guard at our doors with guns, willing to put their lives on the line to defend all of us.

I want to join so many other Senators today to express my gratitude to the Capitol Police, not just for protecting us—535 elected Members of Congress—but also for protecting all of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who come here every single day of the year to see their Congress and their Representatives doing the people's business.

HONORING PRIVATE FIRST CLASS LARRY ROBERTS

Mr. President, speaking of men who guard us with guns, I want to turn our attention to Arlington National Cemetery. After 74 years, an American patriot has finally come home.

PFC Larry Roberts, of Damascus, AK, was only 18 years old at the time of his final mission. It was November 1943—the height of World War II. Private Roberts had been assigned to the Special Weapons Group, 2nd Defense Battalion, Fleet Marine Force. U.S. forces were making their way across the Pacific, island by island. That month, those marines landed on tiny Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. The mission? Take the island and advance on to Tokyo and victory. Private Roberts and his battle buddies performed brilliantly, but the fighting was fierce. One thousand marines and sailors were killed and 2,000 were wounded. The Japanese fought to the last man standing. In the end we won but at steep cost.

Private Roberts, like so many others, was killed on November 25, 1943. In the

2 years after the war, the 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company tried to recover all of the remains on the battlefield, but they never found any sign of Private Roberts. In 1949, a military review board declared his remains nonrecoverable.

Just 2 years ago, the nonprofit History Flight discovered an until-then unknown burial site on the island and recovered remains of 35 marines who had died there. It took 2 years, but thanks to the amazing work of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, we were able to identify the remains of Private First Class Roberts. It was heartening news, especially to the Roberts family.

I am happy to say he has been laid to rest on American soil on our most hallowed ground—Arlington National Cemetery. I had the honor of attending his funeral earlier today. Now he rests amid the rolling green hills and the ghostly white crosses of that cemetery. I think it is more than fitting because his burial there is a symbol of what this one person, this young man so far away from home, did for our country. He gave his all-too-brief life in service to something greater than himself. He gave his life and service to his country. He gave all his tomorrows so you could have today and tomorrow.

I wanted to recognize him and his service on the Senate floor tonight. Standing here, I think of the words of the great British Parliamentarian William Gladstone: “Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals.”

To the men and women of our Armed Forces, I want you to know that if you are ever separated, captured, missing, or killed in action, our country will spare no expense and will suffer any burden to bring you back too.

PFC Larry Roberts died fighting for that highest ideal, that of freedom. He would have been 92 years old this year. It is because of him and his bravery and millions of Americans like him that our country is still here, still standing, still free, as it has been for 241 years.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SULLIVAN. 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. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, we are on the Senate floor today, yesterday, and tomorrow, and we will be continuing the debate on the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017. This is actually a very important bill, and I want to commend Senator CARDIN, Senator CORKER, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee,

and many others on working hard to put this bill together in the Foreign Relations Committee.

There is a lot of interest in this. I am a cosponsor of the bill, and I think it is an important bill.

Let me just give a quick overview of what its core purpose is. There was a lot of discussion last year about the JCPOA—what it was going to do and what it wasn't going to do. I think a lot of us, even those who supported it—and I certainly did not support it. As a matter of fact, I thought it was a very misbegotten agreement that was going to undermine American interests and the interests of our allies in the region. But a number of us were concerned about what it didn't cover. The bill we are debating today does close some of those loopholes. For example, the core purpose of S. 722 is to impose sanctions on Iran for its ballistic missile program, which continues to violate U.N. Security Council resolutions, and its support of terrorism.

It is still listed by our State Department as the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism in the world. As to its transfer of illicit weapons, which it is not supposed to do under U.N. Security Council resolutions, it continues to do that, and, of course, there is its continuing and widespread abuse of human rights. That is all still happening with regard to this Iranian regime, which the previous administration spent so much time negotiating with to get this nuclear deal that, I think, undermines our interests.

The bill we are focused on is very bipartisan. It sets to close some of these loopholes and impose sanctions for these kinds of violations. It does not violate the JCPOA. I think Senators CORKER and CARDIN worked hard to make sure that would not be the case in order to get bipartisan buy-in. I think it is an important bill, but it could have been stronger. Unfortunately, a number of us had provisions and amendments that were meant to strengthen it. Some of us don't sit on the Foreign Relations Committee, but we have a lot of interest and experience with these issues. What we could have done was to actually make this bill stronger by looking at some of the other amendments that Members of the Senate brought to the floor on this very bill.

Let me give you one example. I had an amendment that was a very simple amendment. It essentially stated that Iranian banks and financial institutions would not be able to use the U.S. financial system—our banking system, which is critical to global commerce to conduct any business around the world—until Iran was taken off the list of countries that sponsor state terrorism—very simple: not using the American financial system until you are not a terrorist designated by our State Department. This is important. These kinds of sanctions are important because Iran and other rogue nations—you see it all the time—want access to

our financial institutions and the dollar, the world's currency. Roughly 43 percent of international financial transactions and more than 60 percent of total allocated global floor exchange reserves are denominated in U.S. dollars.

We have tremendous leverage over other countries, even if we are acting just as the United States, with regard to accessing the U.S. financial system. When you have these kinds of sanctions, when other countries are not allowed to access our financial system, it puts a real strong bite on their economy.

We wanted to bring this down to the floor. Again, there is bipartisan support for this amendment. Unfortunately, not many but just a few of my colleagues wouldn't want to accept this. They didn't even want to vote on the amendment. They believed, incorrectly, that somehow this would undermine the JCPOA. Well, it wouldn't. As a matter of fact, former Secretary of the Treasury Jack Lew stated that under the JCPOA, the Treasury Department was still going to prohibit Iranian banks from being able to use U.S. dollars through New York or to hold correspondent account relationships with U.S. financial institutions. He testified that the JCPOA would continue to bar Iranian financial institutions from using our financial system. So that is happening right now.

What we wanted to do with this amendment was to say that we are going to make that legislation; we are going to make that a statutory prohibition, and the biggest sponsor of terrorism in the world shouldn't be able to use our financial system until they are no longer a sponsor of terrorism—very simple. But we couldn't get that through the Senate. If we voted on it, I believe there would be a strong bipartisan majority of Senators who would agree with us, but there are a few who don't.

The JCPOA was sold in many ways as helping to ensure that Iran would moderate its behavior, that Iran would become part of the "community of nations" again.

Well, of course, despite claims by the former President and the former Secretary of State that this is what the agreement would do, that hasn't happened. To the contrary, the opposite has happened. Iran has undertaken activities to undermine U.S. interests, the interests of Israel—our sacred ally in the Middle East—and the interests of our gulf Arab allies in the Middle East on almost a daily basis.

Look at what has happened since that agreement was signed. Moderating behavior did not happen; much more aggressive behavior did. It is really important for people to remember that this isn't just the largest state sponsor of terrorism. This is a country whose activities have led to the deaths and wounding of thousands of American soldiers and marines. The Iranian regime was supplying very sophisticated

IEDs to Iraqi Shia militias that were killing, maiming, and wounding our troops in Iraq. That is a fact. This is a regime with the blood of U.S. soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen on its hands. This is not a regime we should trust. This is a regime about which we should do everything we have in our power to use our leverage to help undermine their nefarious activities around the world that they have been conducting for decades.

So again, my congratulations and I am going to vote for the bill. My congratulations go to Senators Corker and Cardin for this important bill, but it could be stronger. We need to look at ways to make this stronger. This was a missed opportunity, simply bringing an amendment like this to the floor for a vote. Let's see where people stand. It would be strongly supported by the American people, strongly supported by our allies, strongly supported by Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle.

Unfortunately, there are a few in the Senate who seem more interested in protecting the legacy of the JCPOA than in really putting the screws to Iran and really limiting their ability to fund terrorism or their illicit businesses around the world. That is disappointing. These Senators will not say they are doing that, but that is what is going on here. The legacy of the JCPOA is not worth safeguarding if it means missing the opportunity to further leverage and undermine Iranian terrorist activities around the world. So that is a disappointment we have seen today.

I am going to continue to keep pushing to do more to make sure we take every action, every bit of leverage that the United States of America has to push back against the nefarious activities of the biggest sponsor of terrorism in the world—the Iranian regime and its leadership. I know that most of my colleagues—Democrats and Republicans—are interested in doing so today. We made a good start with this bill that hopefully is going to pass the Senate floor, but we can do much more. We need to do much more. I am going to continue to press my colleagues to do so.

I yield the floor.

(Mr. DAINES assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, notwithstanding rule XXII, to withdraw the cloture motions on the committee-reported substitute and S. 722; that the only further amendment in order be the Gardner amendment No. 250, as modified with the changes at the desk; further, that following leader remarks on Thursday, June 15, the time until 11 a.m. be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, and that at 11 a.m. the Senate vote in relation to the Gardner amendment No. 250, then vote in relation to the amendment No. 240; finally, following disposition of that

amendment, the committee-reported substitute amendment, as amended, be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time, and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 250, AS MODIFIED

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 250, as modified.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Colorado [Mr. GARDNER] proposes an amendment numbered 250, as modified.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide an exception for activities of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.)

In Section 236, at the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . EXCEPTION RELATING TO ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—This Act and the amendments made by this Act shall not apply with respect to activities of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this Act shall be construed to authorize the imposition of any sanction or other condition, limitation, restriction, or prohibition, that directly or indirectly impedes the supply by any entity of the Russian Federation of any product or service, or the procurement of such product or service by any contractor or subcontractor of the United States or any other entity, relating to or in connection with any space launch conducted for—

(1) the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;

or

(2) any other non-Department of Defense customer.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote No. 144 on Senate amendment No. 232 to S. 722. Had I been present, I would have voted yes.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY AND VACANCIES

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, last week the Senate passed the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, but this legislation does nothing to address one of the most critical problems at the VA. To improve the healthcare our returning heroes receive, we need a VA that is fully staffed with the best healthcare professionals we can find, and in many VA facilities throughout the Nation, including in Ohio, that is far from the case.

Across the U.S., there are more than 49,000 VA vacancies that this administration has yet to fill. In Ohio, as of