

ended discrimination against them by the health insurance industry—discrimination because of their gender. In particular, they are grateful that the Affordable Care Act includes maternity care and contraception among the law's essential health benefits.

This is Maura Fay of Exeter, NH. I talked about her last night when I was talking about the impact of this Republican bill on women's health. Maura wrote:

My husband and I are self-employed. Before the ACA, we were paying rates that were simply unsustainable for a middle-class family like ours. When I was pregnant in 2013, we were forced to pay a maternity rider of an additional \$822 a month. I'm worried about the rollbacks in regulations around essential health benefits, especially since so many of them impact women. Maternity coverage shouldn't come with an additional \$800 a month price tag.

Here in Washington, some folks seem to think that repealing the Affordable Care Act is all about politics, that it is about winning this debate. But for ordinary people in New Hampshire—people like Maura, like the McCabe family, like all the people I have shown pictures of this afternoon—for ordinary people in New Hampshire and across America, repealing the Affordable Care Act isn't about politics. For so many of them, it is about life-and-death. It is about the kind of lives they are going to lead. It is about whether they are going to be able to continue to afford healthcare, whether they are going to continue to pay their mortgage and buy prescription drugs. We need to listen to these ordinary people in each of our States whose lives and financial situations will be turned upside down if the Affordable Care Act is repealed.

This process has really not been in keeping with our democratic process in America. For the Republican leadership here in the Senate and before that in the House to pursue a partisan approach to healthcare, to deny Democrats and even deny many of my Republican colleagues the ability to engage in the writing of this bill—it is deeply misguided to deny the public access, to deny a hearing on this bill, legislation that we know is going to hurt tens of millions of Americans.

There really is a better way forward for both the Senate and for our country. If we put ideology and partisanship aside, if we work together, we can strengthen the parts of the Affordable Care Act that aren't working. We can continue Medicaid expansion so it can help people with substance use disorders, so it can help kids with disabilities, so it can help elderly people in nursing homes. We can fix what is not working, and we can improve on this law and make it better, but we can't do that if we continue to be divided up on our partisan sides, if we are not willing to talk about the issue, not willing to work together.

The American people want us to work together here in Washington to address their concerns. Well, it is time to respect their wishes. Let's strength-

en the Affordable Care Act so that it works even better for all Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

REQUESTS FOR AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I have six requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They do not have the approval of the Democratic leader; therefore, they will not be permitted to meet, but I ask unanimous consent that a list of committees requesting authority to meet be printed in the RECORD.

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

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Committee on the Judiciary

Committee on Intelligence

Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard

NOMINATION OF KRISTINE SVINICKI

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak in support of President Trump's nomination of Kristine Svinicki to continue serving as a nuclear safety regulator.

Ms. Svinicki has served as a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for more than 9 years. In January, President Trump designated Ms. Svinicki as the Chair of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. She is well qualified. In her time in office, she has proven to be knowledgeable, dedicated, and an outstanding public servant.

She also has been very responsive to Congress. Since becoming a Commissioner, she has testified 18 times before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Before becoming a member of the NRC, she served as staff in the U.S. Senate, as a nuclear engineer at the Department of Energy, and as an energy engineer for the Wisconsin Public Service Commission.

She has already been confirmed twice to serve on the NRC. In both 2008 and 2012, her nomination was approved by the Environment and Public Works Committee and by the full Senate, each time by voice vote. Earlier this month, the Environment and Public Works Committee approved her nomination for a third time, again by voice vote.

Her nomination has garnered support from groups like Third Way, which is a think tank once labeled as "radical centrists" by the New York Times. Josh Freed, who is the vice president of the Clean Energy Program at Third Way, said this: "Svinicki's work at the NRC has resulted in improved readiness to regulate small modular and advanced reactors that could provide enormous benefits for climate, American leadership, and domestic job creation." He went on to say that Chairman Svinicki's continued leadership at the NRC is needed now more than ever.

The Senate must act quickly to confirm Ms. Svinicki. Unless she is confirmed by June 30, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will no longer have a quorum of its members. We can't let that happen. The NRC has an important mission of regulating America's nuclear industry. The Commission serves to protect public health and the environment. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission needs a quorum of its members in office to meet its mission.

We need to confirm Kristine Svinicki, and I urge all Senators to vote yes on her nomination.

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. BARRASSO. 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. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I yield back all time.

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

Under the previous order, all postcloture time is expired and the question occurs on the Billingslea nomination.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Billingslea nomination?

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 65, nays 35, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 152 Ex.]

YEAS—65

Alexander	Fischer	Murkowski
Baldwin	Flake	Nelson
Barrasso	Gardner	Paul
Bennet	Graham	Perdue
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hatch	Risch
Capito	Heitkamp	Roberts
Cassidy	Heller	Rounds
Cochran	Hoover	Rubio
Collins	Inhofe	Sasse
Coons	Isakson	Scott
Corker	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kaine	Strange
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	King	Tester
Cruz	Lankford	Thune
Daines	Lee	Tillis
Donnelly	Manchin	Toomey
Duckworth	McCain	Warner
Enzi	McCaskill	Wicker
Ernst	McConnell	Young
	Moran	

NAYS—35

Blumenthal	Franken	Merkley
Booker	Gillibrand	Murphy
Brown	Harris	Murray
Cantwell	Hassan	Peters
Cardin	Heinrich	Reed
Carper	Hirono	Sanders
Casey	Klobuchar	Schatz
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Schumer
Durbin	Markey	Shaheen
Feinstein	Menendez	

Stabenow
Udall

Van Hollen
Warren

Whitehouse
Wyden

The nomination was confirmed.

Udall
Van Hollen

Warner
Whitehouse

Wicker
Young

NAYS—10

Booker
Cortez Masto
Gillibrand
Harris

Heller
Markey
Merkley
Sanders

Warren
Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Alexander

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 89, the nays are 10.

The motion is agreed to.

lies in South Korea and Japan. These threats are not just hollow words any longer. North Korea's capabilities are rapidly improving to meet their long-stated intent.

We thought that Kim Jong Il was bad, but in 6 years, his son Kim Jong Un has conducted as many as 75 ballistic missile tests. In comparison, over a 17-year period, his father conducted about 30. In other words, he has done over twice as many in a fraction of the time.

Additionally, Kim Jong Un has sped up North Korea's nuclear program since taking power in 2011. North Korea's nuclear technology is advancing at an alarming rate. For example, the bomb North Korea tested in its most recent test last September was 10 times more powerful than what the regime could have produced in 2006—10 times more.

At the same time, North Korea has actively worked on miniaturizing nuclear weapons so that they can deliver by way of a ballistic missile. Earlier this year, analysts detected activity at a North Korean nuclear test site, indicating another nuclear test may be imminent.

Intelligence and military experts have repeatedly argued that it is prudent to assume that North Korea has successfully miniaturized their nuclear weapons. That means the only technology they need to conduct a nuclear strike on the U.S. mainland—that is us; that is right here—would be a functional intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM.

In January, Kim Jong Un said North Korea is in the “final stage in preparations.”

Let's make sure we understand what we are talking about. We know that their capability is getting very close to it, and they have already said that they would send something over to the mainland United States.

Unfortunately, when you talk to people in the real world, they can't believe this could be true—that one guy who is mentally deranged could be heading up a country that has the capability of blowing up an American city. Yet we know this is going on right now.

Recently, in the Armed Services Committee—and I was in attendance at that time—the Defense Intelligence Agency Director, Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart, told the Armed Services Committee: “If left on its current trajectory the [North Korean] regime will ultimately succeed in fielding a nuclear-armed missile capable of threatening the United States homeland.”

That is a direct quote by the guy who knows more about this than anybody else. Lieutenant General Stewart added that “the North Korean regime is committed and is on a pathway where this capability is inevitable.”

I will say that again. Our intelligence experts assessed that, unchecked, North Korea will inevitably achieve the capability to strike the U.S. homeland with a nuclear missile.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Kristine L. Svinicki, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2022.

Mitch McConnell, Orrin G. Hatch, John Hoeven, John Cornyn, John Barrasso, John Boozman, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Chuck Grassley, John Thune, Mike Crapo, Bill Cassidy, James M. Inhofe, Thad Cochran, Steve Daines, Tom Cotton, Roger F. Wicker.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Kristine L. Svinicki, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “yea.”

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 89, nays 10, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 153 Ex.]

YEAS—89

Baldwin	Feinstein	Moran
Barrasso	Fischer	Murkowski
Bennet	Flake	Murphy
Blumenthal	Franken	Murray
Blunt	Gardner	Nelson
Boozman	Graham	Paul
Brown	Grassley	Perdue
Burr	Hassan	Peters
Cantwell	Hatch	Portman
Capito	Heinrich	Reed
Cardin	Heitkamp	Risch
Carper	Hirono	Roberts
Casey	Hoeven	Rounds
Cassidy	Inhofe	Rubio
Cochran	Isakson	Sasse
Collins	Johnson	Schatz
Coons	Kaine	Schumer
Corker	Kennedy	Scott
Cornyn	King	Shaheen
Cotton	Klobuchar	Shelby
Crapo	Lankford	Stabenow
Cruz	Leahy	Strange
Daines	Lee	Sullivan
Donnelly	Manchin	Tester
Duckworth	McCain	Thune
Durbin	McCaskill	Tillis
Enzi	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Menendez	

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kristine L. Svinicki, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2022.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for as much time as I may consume.

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

NORTH KOREA

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, as we begin the markup—that is what we are going to be starting on right away. We have already had an initial meeting with the Senate Armed Services Committee on the National Defense Authorization Act. I want to express my deep concern over the continued malign behavior by the overtly hostile nation of North Korea.

I often talk to people, and they shake their heads in disbelief about a country that is run by a mentally deranged individual who is rapidly developing the capability of hitting the mainland United States with a missile. I think it is important that we immediately get to our Defense authorization bill, so we can start addressing this and many other problems that we have.

It is important to us in the Senate to communicate to the American people the incredibly grave situation we are facing right now in North Korea. The Kim Jong Un regime has expressed a desire to destroy the United States of America. Normally that wouldn't be a concern because he wouldn't have the credibility, but right now we are seeing progress being made in their technology and their ability to actually hit major areas.

In April, North Korea's official newspaper relayed the threat of a preemptive strike to “completely and immediately wipe out not only U.S. imperialists' invasion forces in South Korea and its surrounding areas but the U.S. mainland and reduce them to ashes.”

That is a threat—a threat that has come directly from the leader of North Korea. This is the most recent in a long line of threats by that individual.

In addition, North Korean leaders constantly threaten our friends and al-