

Forest Service budget was spent on fighting fires. This is not sustainable.

When Montana's communities are burning, I don't want a bureaucrat in Washington, DC, weighing the pros and cons of sending help to these communities. We want the fire to be contained. As Montana burns, Congress cannot afford to wait. We need to act and allow catastrophic wildfires to be treated as what they are—natural disasters. It is the least we can do for the rancher in Jordan who lost his cattle, the rancher in Sand Springs who no longer has a fence around his pasture, or any Montanan who is forced to leave the home they have known because a fire may be descending upon them.

Fire season is always a testament to the strength of Montana's communities. Everyone works together, they put aside their differences, and they play their part to achieve a common goal. Neighbors open their homes to displaced families; churches and community centers turn into places to get food and other essentials. Congress can learn a thing or two from these Montana communities. These communities and firefighters work around-the-clock. Now is the time for Congress to help out. We can do that by fixing how we fund firefighting.

In the meantime, I hope you all will join Sharla and me in sending thoughts and prayers to all the Montanans who have been changed by wildfire. Our thoughts and prayers are with those heroes on the frontlines.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### HEALTHCARE

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, it is unconscionable that the U.S. Senate will soon be voting on a measure that would force between 22 and 32 million people to lose their health insurance. This vote is particularly unconscionable when you consider that each Member of this Chamber has high quality health insurance that will be there whenever we need it—and we all will, as I recently found out.

I know as well as anyone that we are all one diagnosis away from a serious illness. When I was diagnosed with kidney cancer not too long ago, I had the peace of mind of knowing that I was covered and that insurance would make the cost of treating my illness more manageable. Many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have found comfort in having high quality health insurance as they confront serious illnesses and injuries of their own.

Every American deserves that same peace of mind. That is why I am fighting for universal healthcare that is a right for every American, not a privi-

lege reserved only for those who can afford it. This is something we can and should be working on in a bipartisan fashion. There are a lot of great ideas we could be debating and considering to move us toward this bipartisan goal.

Instead, the majority leader and his allies are forcing a vote on TrumpCare, a mean, ugly bill that will deprive tens of millions of people across our country of the healthcare they deserve.

Although some have argued over the past week that this vote is doomed to fail, we can't be complacent. We have to keep fighting because if TrumpCare becomes the law of the land, it would be devastating for tens of millions of people across the country, harming the poorest, sickest, and oldest members of our society. It would undermine protections for Americans living with serious and chronic conditions, who could face a reimposition of yearly and lifetime caps on their care. It would impose an age tax on people 50 to 64 years old, which would allow insurance companies to charge them up to five times more for insurance because of their age. I could go on.

For hundreds of thousands of people in Hawaii and tens of millions more across the country, TrumpCare is not an abstract proposal that would have no relevance to their lives. I have heard literally from tens of thousands of people from across Hawaii about the devastating consequences TrumpCare would have on their lives. Hawaii is a small State. To think that literally over 20,000 people in Hawaii have contacted my office to tell me the devastation that TrumpCare will bring to their lives—this is because insurance is personal. They have spoken out against this bill loudly and clearly because healthcare is personal.

Keith Moniz from Maui has a particularly compelling story to tell. Keith's brother, Lester, after working as a custodian for more than 40 years at St. Anthony School, lost his job and his health insurance. Only a few short months later, Lester had a debilitating stroke that left him permanently disabled. Fortunately, Keith's brother was able to obtain Medicaid coverage and is now a long-term resident at Hale Makua Health Services on Maui, where nearly 80 percent of all patients and residents rely on Medicaid to pay for their necessary care.

Keith was very clear about what would happen if TrumpCare succeeded in making large cuts to Medicaid.

I quote Keith:

It would be devastating. We had a difficult time taking care of him—

His brother, Lester—

when he was at home, and he's gotten the care that he needs at Hale Makua. It would be a big loss . . . I don't know what we would do, where we would be able to move him to.

Alvin, another resident at Hale Makua, was paralyzed in a car accident in 2006. Alvin lived with his aunt and uncle for a short time after his accident, but the complexity of his care was too much for them to handle on

their own. Alvin has lived at Hale Makua for almost 11 years now. He gets daily physical therapy and receives the supportive, life-sustaining care he needs. He would not be able to afford to live at Hale Makua without support from Medicaid.

When asked, Alvin had a simple message for people in Washington, DC, who are trying to make huge cuts to Medicaid.

I quote Alvin:

I'm not a politician, but I know that these programs really help those who are in need. I really hope that they would take a longer look at it and realize that these are programs the elderly and disabled need.

People like Lester and Alvin are depending on us to keep up the fight against this mean, ugly bill until it is defeated for good. As we contemplate what is next, I hope we can come together across party lines to stabilize insurance markets and continue our work to provide universal healthcare for every American.

I should think that each and every one of us who represents some 800,000—well, our entire State. I used to be in the U.S. House. There, you have districts, and I represented about 800,000 people. Of course, as a Member of the Senate, I represent the whole State. I should think that all of us who represent literally the 300 or so million people all across our country would care about the healthcare of every single one of our constituents, and TrumpCare is not the way to ensure that.

The fight continues.

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

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

#### NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, it has been 2 months since Ambassador Lighthizer notified Congress of the administration's intent to enter into negotiations with Mexico and Canada on the North American Free Trade Agreement. During that time, I launched something called NAFTA 4 AZ, which is an initiative to allow Arizonans to share their stories about how NAFTA has changed their lives for the better.

I have heard from Arizonans across the State who work in a multitude of industries—from dairy farmers to call center employees—and the responses I have received are overwhelmingly positive. For example, Matt Mandel, who serves as chief operating officer for SunFed, a company based in Rio Rico, shared his personal story.

Matt wrote:

Fresh produce trade has kept my family working here in the State of Arizona for three generations. Arizona imports over 17

billion pounds of fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables—bilateral trade between the United States and Mexico representing over \$40 billion. Let's modernize NAFTA.

Mignonne Hollis with the Arizona Regional Economic Development Foundation tweeted:

NAFTA and our trade partners in Mexico have allowed us to grow the aerospace industry in southern Arizona, which is key to our economic development.

Dairy farmer Jim Boyle notes:

Most of our customers are local—right here in our State—but our biggest customer outside of Arizona is Mexico. We ship daily loads of cheese, powder, and tank loads of cream all the way through Mexico. Please, let's keep NAFTA working for the American farmer.

Other comments I have received through my website include statements like “I have enjoyed a constant supply of fresh fruits and vegetables in these years of NAFTA. I have also noticed . . . how relatively inexpensive many household items have been since” and “We supply parts that cross the border multiple times before they reach final assembly in the U.S. Free trade is vital to our success and the success of our customers who not only get us where we need to go but protect our shores and vital interests.”

The Arizona Chamber of Commerce noted in its comments on NAFTA:

Agreement is central to the State's economic prosperity.

The NAFTA agreement, that is.

Mexico is Arizona's leading trade partner. Canada is the State's second leading trade partner.

In an interview focused on the NAFTA renegotiation process, the CEO of Arizona's Hispanic chamber stated: “We know that Mexican nationals spend over a billion dollars a year in just Pima County.” That is just one county.

It is hardly surprising to hear such overwhelmingly positive support for NAFTA, considering the benefits it has had on Arizona's economy.

NAFTA 4 AZ has helped to put on paper what Arizonans know all too well: NAFTA plays a critical role in supporting jobs, opportunity, and economic growth. It has been great to hear from people all over the State talking about how NAFTA has helped them and asking the administration to modernize NAFTA, not to end it.

NAFTA 4 AZ submissions, as well as comments submitted to the USTR from Arizona stakeholders, share one common plea: Do not harm the trilateral structure and the reciprocal market access of NAFTA.

Earlier this week the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative made public its negotiating objectives for NAFTA. Based on what the USTR released, it appears the administration has recognized the importance of this central tenet of NAFTA. I am pleased that it appears that the administration will seek to modernize NAFTA along the well-worn lines of what was negotiated for the now defunct Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement.

I think we can all agree that addressing the issues of digital trade and intellectual property in the agreement, which is more than 20 years old, is the key to NAFTA's continued success. Let's modernize it, not end it.

However, these negotiating objectives mark the next step in a long process that will have tremendous impact on Arizona's economy, for better or for worse. Unfortunately, the path forward for NAFTA remains uncertain and there is a long road to travel before we get to a place where the United States, Mexico, and Canada can all agree to an updated NAFTA.

From the vegetable fields of Yuma to the warehouses in Nogales, to the small retailers along the southern border, to the hotels throughout the valley, to the ranches up north where I grew up in Snowflake, NAFTA is important to all Arizonans.

I will review the administration's objectives closely as I continue to talk to Arizonans about what they need to ensure vibrant cross-border trading.

I look forward to continued consultation between Congress and the administration as this process to modernize NAFTA moves forward.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to speak this evening in support of the confirmation of David Bernhardt to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

The Deputy Secretary is the department's COO, or chief operating officer. This is the individual who holds the position to really execute the strategy and oversee the initiatives that are undertaken by thousands of employees as they carry out their statutory duties and the administration's agenda. It is a very key position.

I believe very strongly that Secretary Zinke has chosen a strong individual for this position of Deputy Secretary. Mr. Bernhardt is a fellow westerner. He comes from the small town of Rifle, CO. He understands the management of Federal lands and how it affects those who live near them, the implications of Federal policies, and the need for balance between conservation and development.

David is an avid sportsman. He likes to hunt. He likes to fish. He likes to get outside and enjoy the outdoors.

Mr. Bernhardt also has extensive experience at the Department of the Interior. He previously spent several years as its solicitor, and this is a position for which he was confirmed by this Senate Chamber by voice vote. So he has gone through this process before and was endorsed strongly at the time.

Throughout his time at the Department of the Interior, Mr. Bernhardt gained expertise about a range of Alaska and western issues. He also has a strong reputation as a manager which, of course, is critical for a Deputy Secretary.

Mr. Bernhardt's nomination is supported by dozens of Members of this Chamber and by dozens of stakeholder groups. He has been endorsed by a broad coalition of sportsmen's groups as well, including Ducks Unlimited, the Safari Club, and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the National Water Resources Association, the Family Farm Alliance, NCAI, or the National Conference of American Indians, and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe are just a few more that have weighed in favorably on his behalf.

Mr. Bernhardt also fared well throughout the confirmation process, proving again that he is a good choice for this role. We held a hearing on his nomination on May 18. We reported him favorably from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee with bipartisan support. We moved that out on June 4. So we have had about 6 weeks now where others have had an opportunity to review him and review his credentials. It is unfortunate that he has had to wait 6 weeks. I know that Secretary Zinke is anxious to put him to work. He is now ready this evening to be confirmed by the full Senate.

I would like to thank David Bernhardt for his willingness to return to Federal service. I think he will be a very capable second-in-command for Secretary Zinke, helping to steer the Department in a positive direction. Alaskans, especially this one, are looking forward to working with him.

I urge my colleagues to support Mr. Bernhardt's confirmation.

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. DAINES. 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. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to complete my remarks.

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

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, David Bernhardt is a well-qualified nominee to serve as our next Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

The Department of the Interior is charged with managing our wildlife, our public lands, including our national parks and refuges, and our Nation's rich natural resources, which are key to American energy independence. They are charged with the sacred responsibility of protecting the Federal Government's trust responsibility to Indian Tribes.

Managing the Department of the Interior is a complex balancing act. We need someone who is able to balance these competing interests, and we need someone who understands the importance of our public lands.

David Bernhardt has spent his life balancing competing interests, weighing the stewardship of our natural resources and wildlife with the letter of the law. His relationship to our lands and the western way of life is not second nature; it is first.

Mr. Bernhardt was confirmed unanimously by the Senate in 2006 as the Solicitor of the Department. As Solicitor he proved he was capable of upholding the law, even under difficult situations. My colleagues may remember that he wrote the opinion that decided to list the polar bear and drafted a workable rule. As we know, Secretary Salazar then upheld this rule.

As Solicitor, he prioritized establishing a robust ethics team at the Department. That ethics team still exists today.

Mr. Bernhardt has proven to have the highest level of integrity and work ethic. For heaven's sake, he is a westerner. He is from Rifle, CO, and the importance of our public lands and wildlife flows through his veins like a lot of us who live out West. I have confidence that he will be a dedicated servant to our western way of life, where we love to hunt, to fish, to hike on our public lands. I have confidence in this because I know he loves this way of life as well.

I am not the only one who has this confidence. Listen to this list of support from groups across our country that support his appointment: the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership; Ducks Unlimited; the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Boone and Crockett Club, and others that many Montanans are members of, including the Mule Deer Foundation, the NRA, and the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

While the U.S. Senate confirmed Ryan Zinke as Secretary of the Interior, he became the first Montanan, my friend Ryan Zinke, to serve on the President's Cabinet since our statehood in 1889. It sent a message that the Department of the Interior would have our Montana values and our western values, and the confirmation of David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary would make good on that promise.

While Montanans and westerners highly value access to our public lands and wildlife, Montanans are also pleading—pleading—for our land management agencies to be better partners, to work alongside our States, and to work alongside our landowners.

Secretary Zinke needs a right-hand man to make sure we uphold our commitment to Indian Nations. Secretary Zinke promised to rebuild trust in our Federal land and wildlife management agencies and strengthen the government-to-government relationship with Indian Tribes. He needs a deputy in place who can help implement this vision to restore trust and balance to the Department of the Interior for Montanans.

My colleagues, it is time Secretary Zinke has a Deputy we can all count on, and I look forward to casting my vote for David Bernhardt.

**PRESIDING OFFICER.** Under the previous order, all postclosure time is expired. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bernhardt nomination?

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITTO), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

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

The **PRESIDING OFFICER** (Mr. LANKFORD). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 166 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Barrasso	Flake	Murkowski
Bennet	Gardner	Paul
Blunt	Graham	Perdue
Boozman	Grassley	Portman
Burr	Hatch	Risch
Cassidy	Heitkamp	Roberts
Cochran	Heller	Rounds
Collins	Hoeven	Rubio
Corker	Inhofe	Sasse
Cornyn	Isakson	Scott
Cotton	Johnson	Shelby
Crapo	Kennedy	Strange
Cruz	King	Sullivan
Daines	Lankford	Thune
Donnelly	Lee	Tillis
Enzi	Manchin	Wicker
Ernst	McConnell	Young
Fischer	Moran	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Harris	Reed
Blumenthal	Hassan	Sanders
Booker	Heinrich	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Markley	Udall
Coons	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warner
Duckworth	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden
Franken	Nelson	
Gillibrand	Peters	

NOT VOTING—4

Alexander	McCain
Capito	Toomey

The nomination was confirmed.

The **PRESIDING OFFICER.** The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to the Bernhardt nomination the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 175, H.R. 2810.

The **PRESIDING OFFICER.** The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 175, H.R. 2810, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The **PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Montana.

MONTANA WILDFIRES

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, as I speak, wildfires are blazing across Montana. In fact, as of this moment, we have 21 active fires, with just about 300,000 acres burned, which has turned our big sky into gray smoke. In fact, the Lodgepole fire in Eastern Montana alone has burned over 250,000 acres, and there are 300-plus heroes bravely working to tame those growing flames.

I was on the phone a couple of times with our county commissioner from Garfield County, and we talked about how to get more resources for these devastating fires. I just got word an hour ago that the Sunrise fire on the western side of our State, near Superior, MT, was just elevated in the last couple of hours as the No. 2 national priority fire in the Nation.

Montana is hot, Montana is dry, and there is a long way to go yet in this fire season. The status quo is simply unacceptable. With these fires blazing and the ground cracking beneath us, we are reminded of how fragile the way of life in Montana is.

Our No. 1 economic driver in Montana is agriculture. Montana ag supports our economy in seasons of plenty, as well as in seasons of drought, including physical drought and unseasonable rains. We have seen both in Montana, and farmers and ranchers have risen to the occasion each time. As they have supported us, we must support them.

The historic drought conditions in Eastern Montana warrant relief from regulations that limit the producers' abilities to use our land in the best ways possible. I was pleased by the decision of Secretary Perdue and the USDA to allow impacted producers to best use the Conservation Reserve Program acreage for grazing, but I believe Montana producers are not able to sleep at night for fear of losing their family farms. They deserve more support from those who benefit from their legacy of hard work.

I have held and will continue to hold USDA's feet to the fire, urging additional emergency relief for farmers and