Republican administrations. Previously, under President Reagan and the Bush administration, this policy applied only to family planning funding, but under President Trump's order, it applies to every program that falls under global health assistance. This means that it puts at risk 15 times more funding and millions more women and families. This targets some of the most effective health organizations that work in the developing world—organizations that are doing great work to provide HIV services and maternal health care and to counsel women on the risks of the Zika infection—and it ignores decades of research. We know that when family planning services and contraceptives are accessible, there are fewer unplanned pregnancies, fewer maternal deaths and child deaths, and fewer abortions. So if you want to prevent abortion—something I think we all agree on—then why not give women and their families access to family planning services? I don't think we can allow extreme ideology to triumph over the urgent practical needs of women and families across the world.

The facts make clear that when family planning services are accessible and contraceptives are affordable, rates of unplanned pregnancies and abortions go down. Here in the United States, the abortion rate has dropped to the lowest level since 1943—a success that is directly attributed to reduced cost-sharing for contraception under the Affordable Care Act. And what do we have? We have the leadership and Congress trying to reverse that assistance to women and families.

In recent days, we have been presented with a fateful choice. We can stand aside and allow the Trump administration to lead an across-the-board assault on women's rights—on women's access to health care, on programs that protect women from sexual assault and other forms of violence—or we can come together on a bipartisan basis to protect the important gains women have made in recent years and decades.

Back in the early 1980s, I chaired a committee in New Hampshire that was working on women's employment in the State. One of the conclusions we came to was when women are supported, their families are supported. So this is not just about women in this country; this is about families. It is about women and their children and their husbands and their brothers and their fathers and their mothers. This is about what is in the best interests of the American people.

Millions of Americans joined together on Saturday, peacefully and passionately, to urge Congress to make the right choice, to protect women's constitutional rights, to protect our access to health care. I urge my Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to listen to those voices, and I urge my colleagues to join with me in ending the global gag rule once and for all.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, this past Sunday was the 44th anniversary of Roe v. Wade. I wish to take a moment to reflect on how far we have come since the Supreme Court decision.

Because of Roe v. Wade, American women for the last 44 years have had the right, the freedom, the privacy to make their own decisions about their own bodies with their doctors and with their families, without the Federal Government barging its way into the conversation and telling them what they can or can't do with their own bodies.

Roe v. Wade was one of the most important Supreme Court decisions in the history of women's rights in this Nation, but it was only a start. In the 44 years since, we have made so much progress with women's health, and much of that progress has to do with what we accomplished in the Affordable Care Act.

Millions of American women now have access to health care coverage that used to be extremely difficult and expensive for a lot of women to get. Millions of American women now have access to affordable preventive health care services, including contraception, birth control, STD screenings, mammograms, breastfeeding support and supplies, and cervical cancer screenings, and since the Affordable Care Act was passed, the number of unwanted pregnancies has gone down, in part, because more women have access to affordable contraception.

There is no doubt that American women have better access to safe and affordable health care because of Roe v. Wade and the Affordable Care Act, but some of my colleagues are committed to turning back the clock on women's health and taking away women's access to this lifesaving care. They are doing everything in their power to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, and they are determined to see Roe v. Wade get overturned.

One of President Trump's first Executive orders was so extreme that it would take away funding for any international organizations that even talk about whether a woman might want to terminate a pregnancy. We should never let this happen. If we take away women's access to the health care they need, it would be devastating—even life-threatening—for millions of American women.

This weekend, a massive group of women and men and children joined together in women's marches across the globe. They were there to speak out, to be heard, to protest some of these issues that would deeply affect American families and women in particular. I was so proud to march with them. I was inspired by them—their passion, their determination, and their commitment to never give up.

The women's marches were truly the biggest outpouring of support and activism I have seen in my lifetime and certainly that we have seen in this generation. They were loud and clear statements that we will not let the government dictate to us how we should manage these most personal decisions—when you are going to have a family, how big your family is going to be. Those are decisions that are made by husbands and wives, by spouses all across this country about what their family is going to look like.

I urge all of my colleagues in this Chamber to listen to the millions of Americans, the millions of women who would like to make those decisions themselves, who would like to choose their health care, who would not like to be charged more just because they are women, who would not like to see their health care coverage dropped the minute they become pregnant, who would not like to be told: You have a preexisting condition and we will not cover you. That is what we go back to.

We have to fight for the Affordable Care Act, and we have to make sure the Supreme Court does not overturn Roe v. Wade. Listen to your constituents. These marches weren't just in New York; they were in every State across the country. These marches were real, they were powerful, they were determined, and these men and women want to be heard.

Members of Congress, I hope you are listening to them. That is our job, to represent our country. Their voices must be heard. We shall not ignore them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m., on Tuesday, January 24, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nominations en bloc: Executive Calendar Nos. 6 and 7; I further ask unanimous consent that there be 30 minutes of debate on the nominations en bloc, equally divided in the usual form; and that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc, with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and no further motions be in order; and that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

FUTURE OF THE EPA AND NOMINATION OF SCOTT PRUITT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, last week the Committee on Environment

and Public Works held a hearing on the nomination of Oklahoma attorney general Scott Pruitt to lead the Environmental Protection Agency. The hearing was really about the future of this Agency and how we can get it back to doing the job it was meant to do from the very beginning.

We are blessed in this country with enormous natural resources. Our goal should be to use these resources responsibly in ways that protect our environment and help make our economy strong.

Over the past 8 years, the leaders of the Environmental Protection Agency created broad and legally questionable new regulations that undermined the American people's faith in the Agency. The political leaders of this Agency have been reckless, irresponsible, and arrogant.

A course of correction is long overdue, and it is exactly what we are going to get.

If my colleagues have any doubts that the EPA lost its way, they can just look at two of the biggest environmental scandals we have seen in a long time. In the summer of 2015, there was what became known as the Gold King Mine disaster. The Environmental Protection Agency spilled 3 million gallons of toxic wastewater into a river in Colorado. This was water filled with toxic substances like arsenic and lead. It flowed to New Mexico and Utah, through the land of the Navajo Nation and the Southern Ute Indian tribe. There are 200,000 people who drink water from the river system that the EPA poisoned. Farmers and ranchers couldn't use the water for their crops or their animals.

The other disaster the Environmental Protection Agency helped to cause was what happened in Flint, MI. The EPA failed to do the proper oversight. As a result, thousands of children were exposed to high levels of lead in their drinking water. The Agency knew about the dangers to the public health and for months did nothing to warn the people.

These are just two scandals where the Environmental Protection Agency actually harmed people's health because the EPA was negligent. There are also many ways the Agency has harmed families and the American economy, not by accident but intentionally. It has issued thousands of pages of regulations trying to shut down the entire coal industry in the United States. Since 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency has come out with nearly 200 new regulations.

According to the American Action Forum, the total cost of all of this new redtape is about $340 billion. The Agency has piled enormous new restrictions and costs onto American families and businesses, all to produce miniscule benefits.

One of them was the so-called Clean Power Plan. States sued to block this destructive bureaucratic overreach. The courts had to step in and tell Washington not so fast.

We should be looking for ways to make American energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, without raising costs for American families. That is not what the Environmental Protection Agency did with its power regulations.

The EPA also put out a new rule that dramatically expanded its own control over what it calls waters of the United States. The Agency declared that it has control over things like irrigation ditches and backyard ponds all across America. Two different courts have blocked this rule from taking effect. Why? Because it goes far beyond the Agency's own authority.

For 8 years now, the leaders of the EPA have not had their priorities straight. They have been pursuing a political agenda instead of focusing on what should be the Agency's core mission. The Environmental Protection Agency was created for a reason. It was created because America needed someone to perform this mission. There is a right way to do the job. We can strike the right balance so we protect our environment while allowing our economy to grow.

My home State of Wyoming is one of the most pristine States in the country, one of the most beautiful places in the world, as well as one of the most energy-rich States in the country. Wyoming has struck the right balance. We have done it successfully and so have many other States. We can address threats to our environment best through the cooperation of States, towns, Indian tribes, and Washington—a cooperation.

The quality of America's air, water, and land are local concerns as much as they are national concerns. The Environmental Protection Agency should not try to dictate regulations from Washington without consulting its partners at all levels.

Much of the work of the EPA was intended to give States a chance to take action first. Federal regulators are meant to be a backstop, acting when States or communities fail to act. Restoring this proper order and restoring the partnership of States with the EPA is essential to making sure people see the Agency as legitimate once again. The Agency needs to learn to listen before it acts.

We can also restore the Environmental Protection Agency by restating its commitment to the rule of law. That is why the American people elect a Congress—because of the rule of law. The Agency must enforce the laws as they are written by Congress. The Agency cannot write the laws, cannot ignore the parts of the laws it doesn't like, although that is exactly what this EPA has been doing.

We all know the EPA used to do very good work. In the past, it protected America's environment while understanding that there need to be reasonable regulations that allow people to use our natural resources. Every American wants clean air, clean water, and commonsense protection for our species. That will not change. We need the EPA to do its job, and we need it to do the job right.

Through 6 hours of questioning before our committee last week, Scott Pruitt showed that he understands the need to return the Environmental Protection Agency back to its proper course. He showed he is committed to working as a partner with Americans all across the country to find the best ways to address the threats to our environment. His record as the attorney general of Oklahoma showed that he is committed to restoring and maintaining the rule of law.

I am confident that Attorney General Pruitt will be able to right the ship at the EPA. I am confident that he can restore the balance between the benefits the Agency can deliver for Americans with the costs that it imposes.

As chairman of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, I am committed to making sure the Senate exercises appropriate oversight to make sure that this happens.

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. WHITEHOUSE. 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.

REPEALING THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, Republicans in Congress have been on the warpath for a long time to repeal the Affordable Care Act. In fact, in this new Congress, their first order of business has been to pave the way for dismantling this law. Despite the fact that 20 million Americans have gained health insurance coverage thanks to this law, despite people no longer being denied coverage for preexisting conditions, despite big savings in health care costs, and despite everyone with insurance being able to access important preventive health services for free, my Republican colleagues have decided to repeal it. And, after 7 years to get ready, they have no replacement, not even a path to a replacement at this point.

Yes, they are set on repealing a law that has provided both health and financial security to millions of Americans, with no replacement in sight, just at this point some empty IOU for some future piece of legislation that may or may not be any good. It is a little like being asked to jump out of an airplane without a parachute and being told: Trust us. We will build the parachute for you before you hit the ground.

We don't know what this nonexistent Republican replacement would look