

I hope that, if confirmed, Mr. Tillerson will evaluate our policy toward Cuba objectively and in a manner that favors diplomatic engagement—as the overwhelming majority of Cubans and Americans want—over isolation.

I understand that nominees are often unwilling to take hard positions or unable to discuss in detail at this early stage all of the issues they will be required to manage in their new job. But we should expect a nominee for Secretary of State to be willing and able to recognize and condemn horrific violations of human rights and to speak out against actions by foreign governments and our own that are obviously inconsistent with our interests and values.

President Obama did not achieve every foreign policy goal he set out to achieve, nor did I always agree with President Obama's or Secretary of State Kerry's priorities. But we worked together, and with our international partners, we made notable progress over the past 8 years on human rights, climate change, reducing poverty, and many other issues—progress we must continue to build on. With nationalism and isolationism on the rise and democracy and fundamental freedoms under threat, we need a Secretary of State who has demonstrated a track record and commitment to more than economic enrichment.

If Mr. Tillerson is confirmed, which I expect he will be, I will continue my longstanding support for the funding to enable the State Department to carry out its vital mission to protect and promote U.S. interests and values abroad. When he and I agree, I will support him. When we disagree, I will be vocal in my opposition as I was during the Obama administration.

I hope Mr. Tillerson will also be a strong advocate for the State Department's budget and personnel, including by protecting the integrity of the Disent Channel to ensure that alternative views on important policy decisions can be expressed and considered without fear of retribution. Even the best policies in the world are worth little more than the paper they are printed on without the funds and the people to implement them.

We should always remember that the face of the United States is its people. Leadership is possible only through the hard work of the diplomats serving around the world to promote our values, defend our interests, and engage constructively with friends and adversaries. Their service, dedication, and expertise are the reason we are able to effectively confront an increasingly dangerous world. Our success at home is inextricably linked to their success abroad. That is why, just as we support the men and women of our military, so should we recognize and support the diplomats at the Department of State.

The State Department's indispensable role, made possible by its outstanding workforce, is recognized by the many widely respected senior U.S.

Armed Forces officials, current and retired, who have repeatedly called for increased funding for diplomacy and development. They know better than anyone that preventing wars is far less costly than fighting them and that wars rarely if ever turn out the way one predicts, as the past 50 years painfully illustrate.

Regardless of whatever differences of opinion we may have, I hope Mr. Tillerson will consult regularly with Republicans and Democrats, as has been the custom with past successful Secretaries of State of both parties. I have been here a long time, and I would be the first to say that we have had outstanding top diplomats from both parties. I put James Baker in that category, and I sincerely hope that Mr. Tillerson proves me wrong and joins their ranks. We all want what is best for the American people and the Nation, and we are stronger when we work together and with other nations to find a common way forward.

HONORING OFFICER DAVID FAHEY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, the city of Cleveland lost a committed public servant last week, Officer David Fahey. Officer Fahey dedicated his career to protecting our community and was tragically killed in the line of duty in a senseless hit-and-run.

A Navy veteran, Officer Fahey followed in the footsteps of his mother and his stepfather, both retired Cleveland police officers, and his brother Chris, an officer who joined the force in 2013.

At a memorial last week, his brother said that Officer Fahey “loved this neighborhood; he loved working for this neighborhood and he loved this city, and he loved working for this city.”

And our city has given his family an outpouring of support.

A crowd of some 200 people gathered outside the First District police headquarters for a vigil.

Fellow officers from the Cleveland Police Academy's 133rd graduating class came out to honor their classmate's memory. They prayed together, calling him their brother, their friend, and their angel.

That spirit of community represents the best in our city that Officer Fahey loved and served.

Connie and I extend our deepest sympathies to Officer Fahey's family and fellow officers. We pray that this outpouring of support and comradeship brings them comfort during this difficult time.

We join our fellow Clevelanders in thanking David Fahey for his service to our community.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES D. WISE

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, today I wish to honor a great man, a colleague, and my friend: Jamie Wise.

It was nearly 10 years ago that Jamie joined Team Montana. The passionate Representative ROSA DELAURO had toughened him up and groomed him for success in the world's most delibera-

tive body. As a newly elected Senator ranked 100 in seniority, one of the first decisions I made was to hire Jamie.

Some may say it is tough to break into Team Montana. We are few but proud, an independent but tight-knit family, a little unpolished, but persistent and most often underestimated. Jamie fit right in.

With his sharp wit and dry sense of humor, he quickly became a Montanan. Hailing from his adoptive hometown of Great Falls, it was a natural fit for him to tackle my veterans, defense, and homeland security portfolios. And tackle it he did.

He wrote my first bill that was signed into law to more fairly reimburse veterans who are traveling to and from their doctors' appointments. It may seem like a simple thing, but it has been life changing for veterans all across this Nation who cannot afford a tank of gas but are facing debilitating medical conditions and need to see their doctor. This bill would set the stage for Jamie's long and incredible career in my office.

Jamie's dedication to Montana has taken him down into the silo of an intercontinental ballistic missile, from the embassy in Yemen, to the Port of Wild Horse on the border of Canada. Needless to say, his legislative chops are unmatched on the Hill. His ability to look 1 inch ahead while also calculating the roadblocks 100 miles away is a skill that can't be taught. It is instinctual.

Jamie worked hard, long hours and rose through the ranks from legislative assistant to legislative director and ultimately chief of staff. It was common to find Jamie sitting in his office into the wee hours of the night plowing through appropriations bills, making sure Montana got its fair shake. Those long hours produced real results for families and small businesses across the State. You can see Jamie's fingerprints on hundreds of letters, thousands of press releases, and the careers of dozens of young, aspiring staffers.

James D. Wise has left his mark on this world, and I can't wait to see what he takes on next.

So today, I wish to thank Jamie on behalf of this Nation, 1 million Montanans, and one grateful Senator.

STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY CONTEST FINALISTS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD some of the finalist essays written by Vermont high school students as part of the seventh annual State of the Union essay contest conducted by my office.

The material follows:

ZOE HOULIHAN, NORTH COUNTRY UNION HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN (FINALIST)

When you think of America, do you think of McDonald's, big cities, high-tech phones and computers, or do you think about violence, fear, and hatred amongst people? Although America seems like a great place full of opportunities and freedom, it is quite the opposite if you are not a white, straight, cisgendered male. There are many problems in America that need to be fixed.

Racism has been ongoing for hundreds of years. Blacks, Hispanics and many other

non-white groups have faced discrimination and hatred because of the color of their skin. Blacks are thought as more violent and lazy than whites. African Americans now constitute 1 million of the 2.3 million imprisoned population. They are also incarcerated at six times the rate of whites. NAACP says that 5 times as many whites are using drugs as Blacks, but they are being sent to prison at 10 times the rate of whites. Moreover, Blacks are getting shot at higher rate than whites. Although more whites are getting shot, there are about 160 million more white people than there are black people. While Whites make up 49% of those fatally shot by police officers, Blacks make up 24%, despite only being 13% of the US population. More than 250 blacks were killed in 2016. Furthermore, 47% of hate crimes have to do with race. Racism is such a big problem in America it's hard to say what an effective solution would be. One solution to this could be to get media stars that are POC to talk about racism. This could cause their fan base (which can be quite large) to change their ideas about African Americans. Another solution is to educate people on racism. Teaching young children in school about how racism started could lessen the number of people in each generation that feel negatively about people of color. Lastly, the government should make the policies about racism in schools and workplaces stricter. Telling kids "That is not appropriate" when they make a racist comment isn't doing anything. People need to be punished for making these comments because if they aren't it makes it seem like it isn't a big deal.

Another problem in America is sexism and sexual assault. Sexism makes it harder for women to get jobs and be well-off in life. According to the Huffington Post, well-off white men are three times more likely than women to be offered a job interview. Moreover, women that work 41-44 hours per week earn 84.6% of what a man working that same time would earn. Women that work more than 60 hours a week earn only 78.3% of what a man would earn. Similarly, in the House of Representatives only 19.3% are women, and in the Senate only 20% are women. In addition, when a woman claims to have been sexually assaulted, men usually blame the women. They ask what they were wearing, how "revealing" it was, and if they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol. One in four women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. Also, 683,000 adult women are forcibly raped each year. This is equal to 56,916 per month, 1,871 per day and 78 per hour. One solution to women not getting paid as much as men could be to make a policy that both women and men are to be paid equally. Furthermore, a solution to sexual assault is to teach kids about consent and to give longer sentences to people that have committed sexual assault. Another solution to sexism is to have more women representation in media and politics. This could help eliminate the thought that women are only made to have children, clean and cook. It would also give young girls more role models to look up to.

Finally, the last issue that needs to be fixed is hate and discrimination against the LGBT+ community. According to an analysis of data collected by the FBI, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are the most likely targets of hate crimes. An example of a hate crime against the LGBT+ community is the Orlando nightclub shooting. 49 were killed and at least 53 were injured. This shooting is considered the worst mass shooting in the United States and the nation's worst terrorist attack since 9/11. Additionally, LGBT+ people experience discrimination in the workforce. They actually have a higher unemployment rate than African

Americans (15% versus 12%). People of color that are also apart of the LGBT+ community face the most discrimination. A solution to this problem could be to educate young children about the different sexualities and explain that it's okay to feel attracted to whomever. Another solution is to create policies that would help protect people in the LGBT+ community. Lastly, there should be stricter rules about when a teacher hears a homophobic comment. Many kids say "That's so gay" when something that they don't like happens and i could make other kids feel unsafe.

In conclusion, America has many issues with equal rights that need to be fixed. One of the main solutions to every problem is education. When people are educated, they can use their knowledge to base their opinions off instead of going with what the popular opinion is or what they are hearing around them.

GRAHAM JANSON, MONTPELIER HIGH SCHOOL
JUNIOR (FINALIST)

Whenever you ask someone the question, "What is the most pressing issue facing our nation today?" you will most likely get a different answer every time. An environmentalist might say, "Carbon emissions and global warming." A conservative activist might say, "The increasing national debt." There are many answers to this question. But there is only one answer that addresses an issue that lies at the center of our nation's existence. That answer is that the fundamental democratic principles on which the United States is based are being eroded by voter suppression and gerrymandering.

Efforts to suppress voting rights for many people have been around since the Constitution was adopted as the supreme law of the land, when only property-owning white men could vote. We have come a long way since then, with African Americans, Native Americans, and American women gaining the right to vote, but we still have a long way to go. Similar to during Reconstruction, when literacy tests were used to deny African Americans the right to vote, a now-overturned North Carolina voter ID law was in effect that, according to the federal appeals court that dealt with the case, deliberately "target[ed] African-Americans" in an attempt to suppress their voter turnout. Other states, such as Ohio, Kansas, and North Carolina, have had voter ID laws that have been overturned after being ruled discriminatory by a federal appeals court. The overturning of these laws is already a step in the right direction. A way to address voter-suppression efforts is to require a federal court review for every voter ID law to make sure that there is no discrimination or infringement of American rights. Another way is to restore the provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Additionally, the repeal of some of the key aspects of the Voting Rights Act in 2013, which allowed nine states to alter their election laws without the approval of the federal government, demonstrates how gerrymandered elections can serve to undermine basic democratic principles. Gerrymandering involves altering the areas of electoral districts to favor one party or another, and both Democratic and Republican politicians have engaged in gerrymandering in the past. There have been many cases in which a political candidate has won an election because of gerrymandering. This clearly undermines our nation's democratic principles because now a candidate can carry the minority of an electorate and win an election, and it needs to change now. Furthermore, because these same elected officials appoint and confirm federal judges, voter suppression and gerrymandering can also undermine the judi-

ciary's vital role in protecting democratic voting rights.

In conclusion, the restoration of equal voting rights and the elimination of gerrymandering would allow the United States to remain a true democracy. Indeed, the other pressing issues that face our nation today, such as global warming, economic development, immigration, healthcare, and gender equity, cannot be fairly addressed while our nation continues to utilize this flawed system that does not reflect democratic values.

IRA RICHARDSON, BELLOWS FALLS UNION HIGH
SCHOOL SENIOR (FINALIST)

When George Washington delivered his farewell address, he stated that "The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension . . . is itself a frightful despotism." Our first and only president who was not a member of a political party attempted to warn us of the threats they can pose to democracy. Today, however, the Democratic and Republican parties have become so powerful that one can hardly imagine the American democratic system without them. In a sense, this is one of the sources of their overbearing power: many Americans see them as an intrinsic part of our democracy rather than two organizations that were created long after the union to organize like-minded voters. Political parties are not inherently bad, but a system which creates a forced dichotomy by only giving voters two realistic choices for any given position has unquestionable negative effects on our nation. Firstly, it forces citizens who care deeply about specific issues to routinely vote for candidates whom they may not agree with in any other capacity so as to not violate their personal moral code. This, in turn, allows parties to cynically align themselves with these single-issue voters to win their votes without truly sharing their values. Additionally, two diametrically opposed political parties give rise to an us-versus-them mentality among citizens, eroding the mutual trust that is intrinsic in the formation of a nation.

To reduce the near-hegemonic power that the parties currently hold, it is imperative to make it more clear to the American public that both parties are private organizations, operating within their own processes and promoting goals that are not necessarily those of their constituents. The intention is not to cause Americans to stop supporting the party they belong to, but rather not to follow any party blindly, and to understand their complex histories and role in American democracy. Another step towards a system in which people could more consistently vote for politicians they truly support would be the implementation of an instant run-off (aka alternate or ranked) voting system. In such a system, a voter does not select a single candidate to receive a position, but rather ranks the order in which they support each candidate. If no candidate has over fifty percent of the vote, the candidate with the least votes is eliminated and every citizen who selected them has their votes moved to their next choice, and the votes are tallied again. This process is repeated until a candidate has a majority. This alternative would allow people to vote their conscience without fear of handing the election to a candidate on the opposite side of the political spectrum. It would not destroy the existing political parties (which would be destabilizing) but rather allow third-party and independent candidates to speak for portions of the population who cannot identify with either existing party. By reducing the power of the two major parties, the environment necessary to address the many problems facing America could be created.

JULIA STERGAS, BELLOWS FREE ACADEMY
FAIRFAX SENIOR (FINALIST)

Nearly 260 years ago our country endured a war over the rights of our states and the rights of its peoples. From this war came the first legislation to protect African Americans living in the United States. One-hundred years later, our country faced another revolution, resulting in new legislation that enhanced the ability for African Americans to participate in political and social life. Since then, many Americans have believed that racial equality has been achieved.

But here we are, fifty years later, struggling through yet another conflict over the divide between black and white. Tensions are high between African Americans and white authority figures in the United States. Distrust and anxiety separates black Americans from their government and onlooking citizens. In 2014, Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. That same year, a barrage of negative media emerged from an originally peaceful protest in Baltimore, Maryland, depicting unlawful rioters who looted and set fire to business, injuring six police officers. Now, we continue to watch video clips on nightly news highlighting the struggle between black and white. Through this our attention has been distracted from the true cause of continued racial conflict: the lack of recent successful intervention.

White authority figures are perpetually distrusted by the black community, and groups such as Black Lives Matter still believe inherent biases against African Americans are abundant in society. We must rebuild this connection. To achieve comprehensive change we must redirect our nation's path. The first step toward action is awareness. This issue must be introduced into schools, universities, and community centers. If we can enlighten young adults they will share their knowledge and work to obtain equality nationwide.

Educators would lead discussions on current and historic racial tensions in a non-partisan, open environment. Focusing on historic and current events and their social and political ramifications, these open debates would promote civic engagement and thoughtful problem solving. Prompts regarding the government's involvement and the responsibilities it should assume, the action we as the nation's youth should assume, and opportunities to develop individual solutions would be considered during discussion. Our young population is critical to the future of our nation, so it is necessary that we provide them with opportunities to immerse themselves in their political and social world.

Today's generation and the ones to follow will be our leaders and our visionaries. Incorporating awareness into education programs would introduce these leaders to the nuances of the world they will come to inspire, and allow them to develop an understanding of their political efficacy. Raising consciousness of this racial strain would encourage young leaders to take charge of their futures, and ours, and incite change. It is critical to the well being of our nation that we cultivate a generation of educated young adults who possess the skills to maneuver themselves in their political and social world. Addressing our nation's imperfection and coaching our youth will only be the start to a nationwide revolution of change and acceptance.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 46. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Ontario in the State of New York.

H.R. 339. An act to amend Public Law 94-241 with respect to the Northern Mariana Islands.

H.R. 374. An act to remove the sunset provision of section 203 of Public Law 105-384, and for other purposes.

H.R. 381. An act to designate a mountain in the John Muir Wilderness of the Sierra National Forest as "Sky Point".

H.R. 538. An act to redesignate Ocmulgee National Monument in the State of Georgia and revise its boundary, and for other purposes.

H.R. 558. An act to adjust the boundary of the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park to include the Wallis House and Harriston Hill, and for other purposes.

H.R. 560. An act to amend the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Improvement Act to provide access to certain vehicles serving residents of municipalities adjacent to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 1928a, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the United States Group of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly: Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia and Ms. FRANKEL of Florida.

The message also announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2903, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the Japan-United States Friendship Commission: Mr. TAKANO of California.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the British-American Inter-parliamentary Group: Mr. CICILLINE of Rhode Island.

The message also announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 3003, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Mr. HASTINGS of Florida and Mr. COHEN of Tennessee.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-653. A communication from the Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to spending limits; to the Committee on the Budget.

EC-654. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Changes to Certain Alcohol-Related Regulations Governing Bond Requirements and Tax Return Filing Periods" (RIN1513-AC30) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 18, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-655. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-656. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force, received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 19, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-657. A communication from the General Counsel, United States Access Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Standards and Guidelines" (RIN3014-AA37) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-658. A communication from the General Counsel, United States Access Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines for Transportation Vehicles" (RIN3014-AA38) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-659. A communication from the General Counsel, United States Access Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standards for Accessible Medical Diagnostic Equipment" (RIN3014-AA40) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-660. A communication from the Secretary of the Board of Governors, U.S. Postal Service, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-661. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) Quarterly Report to Congress; First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2017"; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC-662. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Exchange of Flatfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area" (RIN0648-XF010) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 12, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Ms. MURKOWSKI for the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

*Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

*James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.

By Mr. ALEXANDER for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

*Elisabeth Prince DeVos, of Michigan, to be Secretary of Education.

By Mr. RISCH for the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

*Linda E. McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration.