

we simplify the system, reduce complexity, and create certainty. Tax reform will bring relief to American families. Under the plan released by the Senate Finance Committee, middle-class Americans will see a benefit in the form of a lower tax bill, which means more money for households to bring home. In addition to keeping more money in the pockets of hard-working Americans, the Senate plan nearly doubles the standard deduction, increases the child tax credit to help families with the very real costs associated with raising a family, and preserves an existing tax credit to help care for elderly family members. This tax plan would also make it easier for individuals and families to avoid a time-consuming and expensive tax-filing nightmare by simplifying the Tax Code and eliminating deductions.

The aim of this entire exercise is to make the Tax Code simpler, fairer, and easier to comply with, reducing the burden on taxpayers and creating an environment that enables families and businesses to thrive.

Tax reform will help grow small businesses. As chairman of the Senate Small Business Committee, I have focused on highlighting small business issues in this tax reform process. The ranking member, Senator SHAHEEN, and I held a bipartisan hearing in June to talk about tax policies that would most benefit small businesses across the country. As a result, we sent a bipartisan letter to the Senate Finance Committee, which was drawing this bill, to outline the policies we determined were most important. The topline issue was the need to address the individual Tax Code along with the corporate Tax Code. Most of the Nation's small businesses are organized in a way that they pay taxes through the individual code. It is amazing they managed to create the majority of new jobs in America, despite facing this higher tax rate, with the added burden of spending time and money away from businesses to comply with this complex Tax Code. Thankfully, Ranking Member SHAHEEN and I are not the only ones who heard this message, and lower rates for small businesses is part of this conversation.

Small businesses have identified tax policies that work for them, along with changes that could be made to help more of them across the country. Two of the examples are the cash method of accounting and section 179 expensing. Cash method accounting is a simpler way for small businesses to keep their books, and section 179 expensing allows small businesses to immediately deduct the cost of investing in their business up to a certain amount. Both of these commonsense policies will reach more business owners in tax reform.

I am encouraged by the plan the Senate Finance Committee released last week and the process they are undertaking this week to move this bill forward. With tax reform, we have a real opportunity to make changes that will

have a tangible, positive impact on the American people and create an environment for our Nation's job creators to prosper. I am excited to see the kind of job creation that will result from the changes we are considering, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to make this a reality.

Thank you.

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

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

YEMEN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, my colleagues, cholera is a truly awful way to die. It is a manmade disease, a man-caused disease that this world could easily eradicate from existence. You become so dehydrated, you vomit so much liquid, your body dispenses so many nutrients, so much water through unending diarrhea, that your body is thrown into shock. You literally die from vomiting and diarrhea, sometimes over the course of hours, sometimes over the course of days, sometimes over the course of weeks.

Inside Yemen today, by the end of this year, there will be 1 million people diagnosed with cholera.

This picture I have in the Chamber is a hard image to see. I will replace it with this one.

One million people will be diagnosed with cholera. Thousands and thousands inside Yemen today are dying because of this disease. There is a humanitarian catastrophe inside this country—which very few people in this Nation can locate on a map—of absolutely epic proportions. This humanitarian catastrophe, this famine—one of four famines across the world today—is being caused in part by actions of the United States of America, and it is time that we do something about it as a body.

As we speak today, the Saudi-led coalition that has been engaged in an incessant 2-year bombing campaign in Yemen is blockading Yemen, not allowing any humanitarian relief, not allowing fuel or food or water to get into the country.

The coalition's blockade has grounded U.N. flights. It has prevented humanitarian workers from flying in and out of the country. It has barred ships from delivering lifesaving food, fuel, and medical supplies. A 25,000-metric-ton World Food Programme ship is currently, as we speak, being denied access to the port. As we speak today, hospitals and aid organizations inside Yemen are shutting down because they do not have enough fuel to continue operating. Vaccines will run out in the country by the end of the month. Prices for food and medicine are spiking such that they are unaffordable to

the majority of Yemenis. Because of cholera alone, 2,000 people have died. Thousands of other civilians have died because of other humanitarian nightmares, including a lack of access to the medical system.

I mentioned that the blockade is being run by the Saudi-led coalition. The United States is a member of that coalition. For 2 years, the United States has been aiding the Government of Saudi Arabia in a bombing campaign of the Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. That bombing campaign caused this outbreak of cholera. Why is that? The bombing campaign deliberately targeted the electricity grid of Yemen in and around Sana'a, the capital controlled today by the Houthis. The water treatment facility runs on the electricity from that grid.

As you can read in a lengthy story in the New York Times from 2 days ago, the country no longer has the ability to treat water that goes to its capital because the Saudi-led bombing campaign has knocked out electricity. The fuel that has helped temporarily run the water treatment facility is no longer available either because the Saudi-led bombing campaign has targeted the infrastructure that allows for fuel to be delivered. So today the water is undrinkable. It is toxic. Yet, because there aren't other supplies of water, millions of Yemenis are ingesting it. They are eating food that is also toxic because of the inability to treat water, because of the flow of sewage and feces throughout the capital city, and almost 1 million people have contracted cholera.

That bombing campaign that targeted the electricity infrastructure in Yemen could only happen with U.S. support. It is the United States that provides the targeting assistance for the Saudi planes. It is U.S. refueling planes flying in the sky around Yemen that restock the Saudi fighter jets with fuel, allowing them to drop more ordnance. It is U.S.-made and transferred ordnance that is carried on these planes and dropped on civilian and infrastructure targets inside Yemen.

The United States is part of this coalition. The bombing campaign that has caused the cholera outbreak could not happen without us. The official position of the State Department with respect to the blockade—which was imposed by the Saudis about a week ago—is that they should end it, at least for the purposes of allowing humanitarian resources into the country. That has not happened.

As I mentioned, there is literally a World Food Programme ship right now with 25,000 metric tons of food waiting to get into the capital to help families like this. So although that may be the official position of the State Department, we clearly aren't articulating that position to the Saudis because the Saudi blockade—which happens with U.S. military support—continues. Maybe that is because the State Department and the White House are simply operating on two different planets.

While on his trip to Asia, President Trump said that he has full confidence in the Saudi King, that he knows what he is doing. Let me tell you what he is doing. He is using starvation and disease as a weapon of war, which is in contravention of international human rights law. You cannot use starvation. You cannot intentionally cause this kind of disease in order to try to win a military conflict. So maybe the Saudis do know what they are doing, but what they are doing is a gross violation of human rights law.

It would be one thing if the United States were a mere observer, but we are a participant in this. This horror—I am sorry, it is hard to see—is caused in part by our decision to facilitate a bombing campaign that is murdering children and to endorse a Saudi strategy inside Yemen that is deliberately using disease and starvation and the withdrawal of humanitarian support as a tactic.

Last night, the House of Representatives passed a nonbinding resolution making clear that there is no legal authorization for U.S. participation in the Saudi-led campaign against the Yemeni people. Importantly, the resolution also made clear that there are multiple bad actors in Yemen today. The vast majority of cholera cases today—I think upwards of 80 percent—are in Houthi-controlled areas. But the Houthis do not have clean hands, and their patrons, the Iranians, do not have clean hands. There have been human rights abuses and attacks on civilian targets by the Houthi forces as well.

The Iranians should stand down immediately, as should the Saudis, as they continue to whip up this proxy war between regional powers that is killing civilians inside Yemen, but without U.S. leadership in the region, there is no hope for that stand-down to happen.

In the Obama administration, at least Secretary Kerry was actively, personally engaged in trying to bring some resolution to the civil war inside Yemen. But since President Trump took office and Secretary Tillerson became Secretary of State, there is zero U.S. leadership on this question. We don't have an Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East. We don't have any envoy for this crisis. All we have is a President who says that the Saudi Government knows what it is doing.

That kind of unconditional endorsement of intentional humanitarian pain is un-American. We have stood up time and time again for human rights all across the world. We have been the people who deliver humanitarian salvation to people who are at risk of disease and famine and death. And instead of rescuing the people of Yemen during this moment of blockade, we are contributing to the deterioration of the quality of life inside that country.

The Saudi blockade needs to end today. And a partial lifting of the blockade is not enough. This morning,

the coalition did say they are going to allow some humanitarian access to the ports they control, but we need access to the ports near where the majority of the population actually lives—Hudaydah and Saleef. Allowing access to the ports that the Saudis control—which are not the ports where the majority of humanitarian aid flows through—is not sufficient. It will not do the job. Medicine and vaccinations will continue to dry up. Price spikes will continue to go through the roof. The cholera epidemic will continue.

We have a responsibility as a nation to ensure that the coalition, of which we are a part, is not using starvation as a weapon of war. This will be a stain on the conscience of our Nation if we continue to remain silent. I hope the Senate takes the same action that the House did. I hope we make clear that there is no legal authorization for the United States to be part of a war inside Yemen. Congress has not given the authorization for this President to engage in these military activities.

By the way, the civil war inside Yemen has aided the enemies we actually have declared war against. Al-Qaida is getting stronger inside Yemen because, as more and more of the country becomes ungovernable because of this war, al-Qaida is moving into that territory. ISIS—against which we have not declared war, but we are engaged in active military activity in the region—is getting stronger there too.

So even if you don't believe there is a humanitarian imperative attached to U.S. withdrawal from this coalition, there is a national security imperative because we are just strengthening the most lethal elements of the extremist movement worldwide.

I know many other Members of this body on both sides of the aisle feel as strongly about this as I do. We are not going to get leadership on this question from the administration. They have given a blank check to the Saudis. They have turned a blind eye to this epidemic inside Yemen—an epidemic that is getting worse by the day since the Saudi blockade began. Leadership will have to come from this body.

We need to make clear to the administration that they do not have the authority to continue to participate in this military coalition. We need to press the administration to tell the Saudis to end this blockade. We need to start using our ability as appropriators and authorizers to send messages to the Saudis that this kind of conduct cannot continue. We have tools at our disposal to lead as a Congress on this question—the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe happening right now, as we speak, getting worse by the hour inside Yemen. This Congress, this Senate, cannot remain silent.

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.

Ms. HASSAN. 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. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to oppose Steven Bradbury's nomination to serve as general counsel at the Department of Transportation.

The general counsel position at DOT oversees and makes critical judgments about legal work that impacts public safety, development, and innovation that drives our economy. Unfortunately, Mr. Bradbury's previous actions during his time at the Department of Justice showed that he lacks the judgment and commitment to our shared values that are a prerequisite for any lawyer privileged to serve the people of the United States of America.

During his time as the acting head of the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel, Mr. Bradbury was one of three primary lawyers who helped lay the groundwork for the Bush administration's defense of what they described as "enhanced interrogation techniques." The so-called torture memos that Mr. Bradbury helped write were used to justify the Bush administration's decision to use torture that included extreme sleep deprivation, cramped confinement, and waterboarding. Mr. Bradbury helped find legal loopholes that were an affront to our American values. And he failed to fulfill the special responsibility all lawyers have to the quality of justice in our legal system.

Mr. Bradbury's past government service reflects a lack of sound legal judgment. In fact, a 2009 review by the Department of Justice raised questions about the objectivity and reasonableness of the conclusions found in the memos he authored. Rather than standing up for our values and laws, Mr. Bradbury deferred to the wishes and pressure of the President he was serving.

Furthermore, during his confirmation hearing, when referring to his legal justification for these so-called enhanced interrogation techniques, Mr. Bradbury stated: "If I had my druthers, I wouldn't have engaged in having to address those issues."

If Mr. Bradbury preferred to not engage in tough legal questions at the time, then he should not have been serving in the Office of Legal Counsel, and he should not be confirmed for a general counsel position now. By definition, the job of general counsel is to deal with difficult legal questions.

It is clear Mr. Bradbury is unwilling to provide the sound legal judgement and impartiality necessary for this role. He has demonstrated, in the past, that his legal analysis is flawed, he lacks a commitment to America's values, and his actions have had truly dangerous implications for our Nation.

I will oppose this nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

CONFIRMATION OF DEREK KAN

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to note last night's strong bipartisan vote of 90 to 7 to confirm Derek Kan's nomination. I am very happy that Mr. Kan is now able to take up the duties of Under Secretary for Transportation Policy at the Department of Transportation after a long, entirely unnecessary delay. As I stated on the floor last week, it is truly unfortunate that it took 4 months and the engagement of the cloture process to confirm this well-qualified nominee, who obviously has strong bipartisan support.

I hope that last night's vote will signal to those who are holding other well-qualified nominees to the Department—including the nomination of Ronald Batory to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration and the nomination of Adam Sullivan to be Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Legislative Affairs—over funding for the multibillion dollar Gateway Project in New York and New Jersey that their strategy is misplaced and depriving the Department of the very expertise needed to make progress on Gateway and a host of other critical issues.

Mr. President, I have also sought recognition to voice my strong support for the nomination of Steven Bradbury to be general counsel at the U.S. Department of Transportation. Mr. Bradbury has had an extraordinary legal career in both the private and public sector, and he is well prepared to address the many challenging legal questions that will come before the Department.

Mr. Bradbury is currently a litigation partner at the Dechert law firm here in Washington, DC, and his practice focuses on regulatory enforcement and investigations, rulemakings, and judicial review of agency actions, as well as appellate cases and antitrust matters.

From 2005 to 2009, Mr. Bradbury headed the Office of Legal Counsel at the Department of Justice, the office that provides essential legal advice to the President and the heads of executive departments and agencies.

In that role, he received the Edmund J. Randolph Award and the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service, among other awards. Before serving in the Justice Department, he worked in private practice for 10 years and clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas on the U.S. Supreme Court and for Judge James L. Buckley on the D.C. Circuit.

On June 28, 2017, the Commerce Committee held a hearing on his nomination, and we reported his nomination favorably on August 2. Last night, the Senate invoked cloture on his nomination.

At his nomination hearing, a number of our Democrat colleagues raised concerns over Mr. Bradbury's suitability for this position, mostly focusing on a number of opinions he wrote regarding interrogation policies while at the Justice Department.

I do not doubt the sincerity of those who question the Bush administration's approach to detainee treatment in the wake of the horrific attacks of 9/11. I know that these concerns are not limited to a single party.

Nevertheless, I would suggest that Mr. Bradbury has demonstrated a willingness to reexamine the difficult decisions made at that time in a manner that underscores the thoughtfulness he would bring to the position to which he has been nominated.

For example, after he became the head of the Office of Legal Counsel in 2004, he participated in decisions to withdraw and supersede previous legal opinions addressing interrogation policies that had been issued by his predecessors.

In response to questions for the record from some of my committee colleagues, Mr. Bradbury elaborated on this topic. Specifically, he said:

I support the McCain-Feinstein Amendment, enacted by Congress in 2015, which mandates that all agencies of the U.S. government are limited to use of the Army Field Manual in the interrogation of detainees and which prohibits the use of physical coercion. I believe the McCain-Feinstein Amendment represents a historic policy decision and a moral judgment for the United States, and it reaffirms America's leadership on interrogation policy and practice. The clear mandate of the McCain-Feinstein Amendment appropriately elevates and vindicates the compelling principle of reciprocity in the treatment of captured U.S. service men and women.

Mr. Bradbury went on to say:

Twelve years ago, when I was called upon to advise on the legality of proposed interrogation policies for use by intelligence officers, the McCain-Feinstein Amendment had not been enacted, and it was understood at that time that intelligence agencies operated under a different, less well defined, legal regime from the U.S. Armed Services. I did my best to pull back previous OLC opinions that were overly broad or otherwise flawed; to limit OLC's advice to the narrowest grounds necessary and avoid reliance on expansive interpretations of presidential power; to spell out very clearly the specific factual assumptions on which the advice depended, including the particular conditions, limitations, and safeguards that were required as part of the policies; and to describe in detail the specifics of those policies so that the senior decision makers on the Principals Committee of the National Security Council would be fully apprised of precisely what they were being asked to approve.

The OLC opinions I prepared on these issues are no longer operative, and the law has changed. I welcome the statutory changes enacted by Congress.

In sum, I believe that Mr. Bradbury has fully addressed these concerns.

It is also worth noting that Mr. Bradbury's nomination has received the endorsement of many bipartisan leaders. During his confirmation process, the committee received letters of support signed by more than 50 former government officials, including former Transportation Secretaries Rodney Slater and Norm Mineta; former Attorneys General Ed Meese, William Barr, and Michael Mukasey; former counsel to the President Fred Fielding; former National Security Advisor Stephen

Hadley; former Solicitors General Ted Olson, Paul Clement, Greg Garre; and many others. He also received the support of nearly 20 State attorneys general from across the country.

Finally, I would also like to address the concerns raised about Mr. Bradbury's representation of the U.S. subsidiary of Takata in connection with the airbag inflator ruptures before the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Mr. Bradbury has agreed to go beyond the requirements of his ethics agreement to recuse himself from all aspects of the Takata airbag inflator recalls for the duration of Mr. Bradbury's tenure as general counsel at the Department of Transportation.

Because Mr. Bradbury has agreed to go well beyond what is required by federal ethics laws and regulations, and well beyond the ethics agreement he signed with the Office of Government Ethics with respect to the Takata airbag inflator recall, I am satisfied that he has more than adequately dealt with conflict of interest concerns and recusals.

Moreover, as I have noted, Mr. Bradbury has received bipartisan support for his nomination, including from former Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater and former Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support the nomination of Steven Bradbury to be general counsel for the Department of Transportation.

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

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

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE GOALS OF NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY AND NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, Senator KLOBUCHAR and I are here to talk about National Adoption Month.

I think we started a little bit late, so by unanimous consent, I ask that we be allowed to extend our closing time by the same number of minutes.

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, it is good for both of us and our colleagues to be thinking this month about National Adoption Month, to recognize the celebration of National Adoption Day, which will occur this Saturday. I have had the great privilege of serving as co-chair of the Coalition on Adoption with Senator KLOBUCHAR from Minnesota. It is an opportunity not only for us to work together in a bipartisan way, but at an event we attended just the other