

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

#### DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, as the jet fumes swirl around the Halls of Congress and Members get ready to head to the airport to get home for the holidays, I rise to remind my colleagues that there are still hundreds of thousands of people in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico who are still hurting from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. They will be spending Christmas not in their homes but in a hotel or with family and friends or in temporary housing.

All across these regions, there are houses, businesses, schools, churches, and community establishments that still need to be rebuilt. They are waiting, counting on our help. It is wrong. Indeed, it is maddening to those in the affected regions that the Senate is not taking up legislation today to give them what they need to continue to rebuild and recover.

In my home State, there is no doubting that Texas's gulf coast communities suffered tremendous losses in Hurricane Harvey, but the hurricane also brought out the best in Texas. We saw Texans standing together and lifting up each other, first through rescue and response and now as we come together and rebuild our communities. The Nation witnessed our iconic moments, from the thousands of Texans who went out on boats to save their neighbors, to Houstonians of all ages lining up to volunteer at disaster recovery centers, embodying the Texas can-do spirit.

Texas has worked diligently since August on cleanup and recovery efforts from Hurricane Harvey, but I am sorry to say that the U.S. Senate is now leaving town without delivering on its commitment to help Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico recover.

Congress has already passed two disaster relief bills in the wake of these hurricanes. In addition, Congress passed a bipartisan disaster relief tax bill that I was proud to offer. But there is still much more that needs to be done.

Just hours ago, our colleagues in the House passed a bill to further provide for emergency rebuilding efforts. This bill represents progress, but much more work needs to be done to make sure that it does enough, especially for Texas, which was promised by both this Congress and by the administration that Texas would be given everything we need to rebuild. Early estimates from the supplemental bill that passed the House are that Texas would be eligible for only a small percentage of the \$81 billion in that legislation. That is unacceptable, and the Senate needs to fix it.

Texas experienced the worst flood event in U.S. history. Hurricane Harvey was unlike any other storm we

have seen before in Texas—the number of people impacted, the scope. It brought 250 miles of devastation to our Texas gulf coast as winds obliterated whole communities and rain flooded out parts of Texas that have never flooded before.

Due to the level of damage the storm caused to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, Hurricane Harvey was the costliest disaster this year and may well prove the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history. According to the Governor of Texas, the damage to our State from the hurricane is well over \$120 billion and could prove to be closer to \$180 billion. Any bill to provide disaster funding brought to this floor should recognize the unprecedented level of damage wreaked upon the State and should provide the level of assistance necessary to help Texas rebuild.

I spoke this afternoon with Governor Greg Abbott, and he expressed serious concerns that the supplemental bill coming out of the House does not direct nearly enough resources to the State of Texas given the magnitude of the damage, the magnitude of the suffering. Disaster relief needs to focus where the suffering occurred and where the disaster occurred.

I am hopeful that when this body returns in 2 weeks, we will work together in a bipartisan way to ensure that the promises made to the State of Texas are fulfilled and that the resources are there to help our State rebuild. The emergency response is over, but recovery and rebuilding efforts go on. As we keep working to keep our promises, I remain determined to keep fighting to ensure that Texas has the Federal resources to which the State is entitled under Federal law.

The spirit of Texas is strong. Some weeks ago, I tweeted out a picture that I think captured some of that spirit. It was a picture of a man in his living room. The Sheetrock was torn down from all the walls—nothing but studs on the walls and no carpet. The flooring was taken up. There was no furniture. He had a lawn chair. He had an Igloo ice chest as a coffee table and a TV screen, and he was wearing a Houston Astros jersey and cheering as the Astros won the World Series. The tweet simply said: “This is why it matters.” That is the spirit of Texas. We need to remember that spirit, and we need to make sure the disaster relief responds to the real damage and real suffering that Hurricane Harvey visited upon the State of Texas.

I look forward to working with my colleagues, hopefully from both sides of the aisle, to deliver on that commitment that Texans are owed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

#### PRESSING ISSUES AT YEAR END

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, as we know all too well, the Senate of the

United States has an annual job to do—to adopt a budget and then appropriate it; to lay out the framework for what to spend and then to make deliberate decisions in the Appropriations Committee and move forward by the end of the fiscal year.

This may not be well or widely known, but the Federal fiscal year begins October 1. It is by October 1 that we are supposed to figure out what we are going to spend and how we are going to spend it and why we are going to spend it.

As we all head home to celebrate the holidays on December 21, I just wanted to take a moment and go over the list of things that are unaddressed and unresolved at the end of this calendar year.

The way it is supposed to work here and the way it is actually working here are strikingly different. In my 7 years now in the Senate on both the Budget Committee and the Appropriations Committee, I have seen people of good will of both parties try mightily and so far consistently fail to get us back to regular order and to end this process of moving crisis to crisis, continuing resolution to continuing resolution.

While I didn't hope that tonight the Federal Government of the United States would shut down, it is depressing, concerning, even alarming to me that we head home having not resolved so many issues.

We have heard from other Members here about the pressing needs of their home States. We have concerns all over our country, such as the Children's Health Insurance Program, known as CHIP, which is a literal lifeline to 9 million low-income children. Authorization and funding ran out months ago. Some States are already notifying parents that their children's health insurance coverage will lapse. There are community health centers on which 26 million patients rely. There is the pressing need to fund a response to the opioid crisis, the need to fund veterans' care, infrastructure, shore up pension plans, invest in education, and, of course, respond to natural disasters. From Americans in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to Americans in Texas and Florida and Louisiana, to those in California and the West—whether it is hurricanes or forest fires, parts of our Nation are literally flooding and burning. Yet we head home having not addressed their challenges.

Of course, I feel concerned that we have failed to act to protect the Dreamers here in our country, the young men and women brought here who have never known any other country, men and women who reflect the best of our country. I met many in my home State of Delaware. They are high school and college students, members of our military, parts of our neighborhoods and communities. But given the Trump administration's decision, the President's decision to end an administrative policy allowing these young people to come out of the shadows and

live without fear of being deported, we wait for bipartisan legislative action to give them the security they deserve and the ability to participate wholly in the American Dream.

I believe we can pass a bipartisan Dream Act that both protects Dreamers and makes our borders more secure, but all of these issues seem to become more partisan and more difficult fights than they need to be. We should be able to work together to resolve our differences and not have to go home with yet another continuing resolution, keeping the government afloat while we head out to celebrate. Our constituents didn't send us here to fight endless partisan battles, to avoid the strictures of the Budget Act and the appropriations process, and when things get tough, to just kick the can down the road.

Before I leave the floor, I want to speak about one other pressing concern I have, and that is about the importance of maintaining the independence of the investigation currently underway under the leadership of Special Counsel Robert Mueller. I have heard concerning, even alarming attacks on the special counsel by colleagues in the other Chamber and by folks in the press.

I just want to take a moment to say that our Nation relies on a few key institutions and principles that protect this experiment in democracy, and none are more important than the rule of law and the institutions that make up our system of justice. As partisanship, gridlock, and distress have become more prevalent in our country and corrosive to our politics, these institutions that sustain our democratic system are more important than ever.

I have traveled to other countries that have on pieces of paper Constitutions and legal systems that literally mirror our own, but they are ineffective and their systems are nondemocratic because their courts are not independent and their national leaders are not held accountable.

Across our country for generations, from classrooms to courtrooms, in Congress and communities, we have affirmed to Americans of all backgrounds the importance of the principle that no one is above the rule of law. Our country has been able to grow and change and improve because we are a nation of laws—laws that can be debated and changed but must be followed and respected.

The Department of Justice isn't respected because of its role on a piece of paper, no matter how treasured and important, or because of its title engraved above the door of the building or its motto; it is respected, trusted, and relied upon because it has strived to uphold our highest ideals and to enforce the law.

It is easier to save an institution like the rule of law than it is to restore it once torn down. This is why I helped author bipartisan legislation that would seek to further affirm the rule of

law and the independence of the Department of Justice specifically by protecting special counsel investigations from unwarranted political interference.

We have spirited debates over taxation, immigration, our Federal budget, but this issue is too important for me to yield the floor before this end of the year without urging my colleagues to seriously consider the important task we face to maintain the independence of the Department of Justice and uphold the rule of law.

I hope folks in this Chamber will consider the importance of protecting this investigation and this special counsel and, frankly, of continuing to protect the independence and integrity of the Department of Justice and our system of courts and law into the future. It is part of the bedrock on which our democracy rests, a bedrock which we cannot afford to have shaken.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

#### CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN VOLLEYBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2017 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise this evening to call up and adopt a resolution recognizing this year's NCAA champions in women's volleyball—the Huskers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This is the program's fifth national championship and second title in 3 years.

During the NCAA tournament, Nebraska played remarkably well, winning 18 sets and finishing on a 19-match winning streak. They were so fun to watch.

The entire team contributed to the outstanding victory, and I want to acknowledge their extraordinary effort: Annika Albrecht, Mikaela Foecke, Hunter Atherton, Hayley Densberger, Allie Havers, Briana Holman, Kenzie Maloney, Kelly Hunter, Chesney McClellan, Sami Slaughter, Lauren Stivrins, Jazz Sweet, Anezka Szabo, and Sydney Townsend all had their hard work pay off and they worked together to win a championship.

The Nebraska coaches worked hard, helped train our athletes, and strategized this championship run.

Head coach John Cook won his fourth national champion as a Husker head coach. He was joined by assistant coach Tyler Hildebrand, assistant coach Kayla Banwarth, volunteer assistant coach Ryan Coomes, director of operations Lindsay Peterson, video coordinator Kelly O'Connor, and graduate managers Joe Klein, John Henry, and Bre Mackie. Together, as a team, they guided that outstanding group of women to another national championship. These coaches have created a foundation and a winning tradition—

winning the national championship in front of a record-setting crowd of Husker fans—the best fans in college football. Nebraskans couldn't be more proud of this volleyball team and the coaching staff.

The Huskers won this national championship the Nebraska way—with hard work, sportsmanship, and determination. They deserve to be saluted by the Senate, and I urge my colleagues to pass this resolution and recognize their outstanding accomplishment.

I congratulate them on their victory and know they will continue to be great role models to girls and athletes everywhere.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I thank my senior Senator for leading us in this resolution.

Nebraska volleyball continues to dominate. If there is any debate about the best volleyball State in the Union, there should be no more. Nebraska has proved, yet again, we have the best team, the best coaching staff, and indisputably the best fans in the country.

Two years ago, this team won the national championship at home in Omaha, setting records with the crowds that attended the games there, and last week in Kansas City, we set another alltime record with the most watched championship volleyball game ever at 18,516 fans, including my 6-year old who stayed awake at nearly 11 p.m. as we were finishing, and he was deciding to watch it upside down, hanging over the seats from the upper decks at the arena in Kansas City.

So I proudly join the senior Senator and Husker nation in congratulating these young women, saying “Go Big Red” on behalf of all 1.9 million Nebraskans.

Just two stats of note. First, in the earlier round at the final four, Nebraska beat Penn State. Those are the two winningest teams in the history of volleyball. Nebraska has the most wins at 1,308. Penn State has the greatest winning percentage. We have now won five championships in 22 years, as well as three runner-up, second-place finishes in the last 30 years.

Coach Cook, as Senator FISCHER mentioned, has won four championships at Nebraska over the last 17 years. The alltime record for the history of volleyball is five national championships, and we expect that Coach Cook will set that new record.

So I join my senior Senator in urging the Senate to pass this resolution for the University of Nebraska women's volleyball team.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 365, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution.