

agency that plays such a vital role in their communities. Here is what I heard from Chairwoman Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head—the Aquinnah—in Massachusetts: “This vacancy has created significant instability and negatively affects the already burdened IHS system.” She added: “Not only is it a failure on the part of the Federal Government to not adequately fund healthcare for Indians; the failure to appoint someone to lead this critical service area is considered by many Tribes as gross negligence.” The chairwoman says that the United States is failing to keep its word and failing to fulfill its “solemn responsibility” to the Tribes. I agree with the chairwoman.

Healthcare is a basic human right, and everyone in this country deserves access to quality, affordable healthcare. But the stakes are particularly high for Native people.

An American Indian or Alaska Native baby born today has a life expectancy that is almost 4½ years shorter than the U.S. average. These little babies are also more likely to die before they ever reach their first birthday. Native infant mortality is about 25 percent higher than for the U.S. as a whole.

Chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease hit Native Americans harder too. For instance, American Indians and Alaska Natives die from diabetes at a rate that is three times higher than that of the entire American population.

Mental health and addiction issues are also a very big concern. The opioid epidemic has devastated communities all over our country, but it is a particularly virulent problem for Native Americans, who have the highest per capita rates of opioid overdoses in the country.

Similarly, the alcohol-related death rate for Native Americans is about 500 percent higher than for the rest of the population.

Suicide rates are about 70 percent higher.

Everyone struggling with addiction deserves access to high-quality treatment, no matter who they are or where they live. That is the only way we are going to make progress in tackling this crisis. But right now, in a place where the need is great, the Federal Government is failing to provide adequate care.

With so much need, investing in improving the IHS should be a top priority for Washington. I am glad that the Trump administration's latest budget for the IHS includes a funding increase. Still, this government needs to do more—much more. A Senate-confirmed Director can serve as the advocate the IHS needs in order to get the resources it deserves. In fact, Federal law explicitly says that advocating good Indian health policy is one of the Director's job responsibilities. We should be doing that job.

We need a good person in this job, which means the nominee must be thoroughly vetted. But that is not an excuse for more delay or for the White House to drag its feet. It needs to work with the Tribes to find the right person for the job and then submit the nomination quickly.

The person who heads up the IHS should be knowledgeable and should have a vision for how to deliver better healthcare to Native Americans. The person should have the determination and commitment to push Congress to meet its treaty obligations in providing healthcare to Native communities.

The Trump administration doesn't have a stellar record when it comes to nominating the right people for important jobs. I often strongly disagree with the President's picks. But leaving hundreds of critical posts across our government vacant, including the IHS Director, has a devastating effect all its own.

It wasn't until just 2 weeks ago that President Trump finally named a nominee to be Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans.

Several offices in the Federal bureaucracy have an important role in running important programs for Tribes, and the President hasn't nominated heads for some of those offices—for instance, the Director of the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, which administers key grant programs for Tribal programs to combat domestic violence and sexual assault, and the Assistant Secretary of the Employment and Training Administration in the Department of Labor, which provides workforce innovation and opportunity grants to Tribes and Tribal organizations. These vacancies hit Native communities hard, and they represent one more broken promise to Native people.

There is no excuse for delay. I urge President Trump to move quickly to consult with Tribes and to submit a nomination for IHS Director. The Native community should not have to wait any longer.

I yield the floor.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

### ILLINOIS FLOODING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, rainstorms and melting snow caused flooding across Illinois, with more than 20 counties throughout the State placed under a flood warning. As

the water level of rivers continued to rise, several communities had to evacuate their homes for their own safety. Sadly, these storms were so severe that flooded roadways claimed the life of an Illinois resident after her car rolled into a rain-filled ditch. Multiple communities were evacuated, and in some areas, residents had to be rescued by boat.

Some of the worst impacted areas were in Iroquois, Kankakee, and Vermilion Counties. The Governor declared a State disaster for these counties, and the American Red Cross established shelters for evacuated residents.

These floods were not just limited to communities in east central Illinois. Counties in western and downstate Illinois were also among the most impacted. In Ford Heights, a suburb of Chicago, at least 100 homes were impacted and seven residents were rescued by boat. In north central Illinois, a nursing home in LaSalle County had to be evacuated, and the next day, parts of the county were placed under mandatory evacuation order.

Downstate, rain continued through the weekend, and crews from the Department of Corrections worked to install flood gates in Hardin County, and the Department of Transportation delivered pumps, hoses, and sandbags to aid in recovery. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources also provided boats to aid with flood patrols.

Some of the areas that experienced heavy rains and flooding throughout last week, like Freeport in northwestern Illinois, were also impacted by flooding just last year. Freeport was flooded in July 2017, and on Friday night, the Red Cross once again opened an emergency shelter there. Situations like this are the reason that communities that often experience flooding need more assistance, both to plan for emergencies and to quickly mitigate the aftermath.

With extreme weather conditions like these becoming more frequent and more severe, I have heard from many Illinois constituents who are concerned about their ability to recover from repeated flood events like these. I stand ready to assist at the Federal level to help these communities rebuild and recover in a way that will allow them to be more resilient when the next flood occurs.

As is often the case when a disaster like this occurs, I was so impressed with the residents, first responders, and local officials who worked tirelessly to protect their communities. I want to thank our local law enforcement—firefighters and police—who always do the best job to keep our communities safe and work long hours because of it.

I also want to recognize the hard work of the State and Federal employees that have pitched in at every level, including the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency.

Our thoughts are with the family and friends of the Illinois resident who lost her life and with all those who have experienced damage to their homes and other property. We will rebuild—as the people of Illinois always do—and will once again be stronger for it.

#### HONORING COMMANDER PAUL BAUER

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to Commander Paul Bauer, a 31-year veteran of the police force who was fatally shot on Tuesday February 13, 2018, while in the line of duty. Commander Bauer had a remarkable career with the Chicago Police Department and will be remembered by his colleagues as a model police officer. Commander Bauer made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting our city and its people, and I am thankful for all of his years of service. He leaves behind his wife, Erin, of 16 years and his 13-year-old daughter, Grace. May his service, sacrifice, and kind spirit serve as an inspiration to us all.

#### TRIBUTE TO HEIDEH SHAHMORADI

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I wish to express my gratitude to Heideh Shahmoradi, who since 2011 has served as clerk for the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, or THUD, for her many years of distinguished public service.

Heideh's 24 years of public service have included time on both the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Environment and Public Works Committee, as well as the Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, where she first started as a part-time employee at the age of 16.

In her 7 years with THUD, Heideh has played an instrumental role on a host of issues. Her programmatic knowledge and technical expertise have been critical in policy-making decisions that ensured air traffic controllers were able to get back to safely managing our Nation's air traffic control system following the across-the-board spending cuts in 2013. Heideh has also worked to make groundbreaking transformations in how we address youth homelessness, which afflicts far too many young people each year. Thanks to Heideh's dedicated efforts, we have successfully created targeted programs that are designed to meet the unique needs of teenagers through the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, in ways that our traditional approach to homelessness was unsuccessful in addressing.

Heideh is truly a consummate professional, a brilliant expert, and most importantly, one of the kindest and friendliest people in the Senate. She is known by her colleagues as being an honest broker who is able to work in a truly bipartisan fashion in order to help us advance important legislation.

As Heideh leaves the Senate after years of hard work and dedicated public service, she leaves behind an impressive list of accomplishments and colleagues whose lives she touched because she was such an exceptional role model and mentor. I wish her continued success and much happiness in the years to come.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO DAVID COUSENS

• Mr. KING. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize David Cousens of South Thomaston, ME, who will soon retire from being the president of the Maine Lobstermen's Association after a tenure spanning three decades. Dave's skills as a leader and savvy as a lobsterman have steered the organization and members of the industry it represents with a strong and steady hand through a period of increased landings, innovative conservation, and improved regulatory structure. Dave's hallmark over his entire career was an ability to listen to and foster respect between a diverse crowd of harvesters, regulators, scientists, and other members of the industry.

When Dave became president of the Maine Lobstermen's Association in 1991, great change was afoot. Then, with annual landings in the range of 30 million pounds, lobstermen were not limited in the number of traps they fished, draggers were permitted to land large quantities of lobster, and, despite a vast majority of it taking place in State waters, the fishery was managed federally. Furthermore, many of the conservation measures that we now identify as integral to the fishery were, at the time, only practiced voluntarily by Maine lobstermen.

Over the past 27 years, while running one of the most prominent industry groups in the State, Dave has not backed off his primary occupation, that of a lobsterman. The time he has spent behind the wheel of his truck getting to meetings up and down the coast of Maine, in meetings from Washington, DC, to Nova Scotia and everywhere in between, and on the phone with anyone and everyone has not stopped him from continuing to fish a full complement of traps—800 these days. This commitment, personal and communal, to an iconic Maine way of life is a significant reason why the fishery, which recently landed a record annual catch of 130 million pounds, is today both a crown jewel of Maine's coastal economy and a shining example of sustainability envied around the world.

For generations, Maine lobstermen like Dave have known that to ensure their future livelihood and that of their children—(his three sons are also lobstermen)—they must responsibly shepherd the resource. Under Dave's leadership, the Maine Lobstermen's Association successfully helped transi-

tion management of lobster fishery from the Federal New England Fishery Management Council to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and, as a result, expanded the Maine practice of marking egg-bearing females and returning them to the water so they may continue to breed to other States and Canadian provinces. He also oversaw successful efforts to significantly reduce the large amount of lobster that was being caught in the Gulf of Maine as bycatch in draggers' trawls, limit the total number of traps that lobstermen fish and increase the size of escape vents that allow juvenile lobsters to escape a trap. Most recently, as the fishery moves further offshore amidst warming ocean temperatures and concerns about its implications on whale population have arisen—Dave's trademark leadership style has set the stage for meaningful exchange and beneficial compromise on an issue that will likely get a lot of attention in the coming years.

As Dave looks forward to spending a little more time with his family and friends, I wish to commend him on the exemplary leadership over the years—listening, learning, and always keeping a clear, insightful, and good-humored eye on the horizon.●

#### RECOGNIZING ADVANCED WELDING AND STEEL

• Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, setting out to start a small business in America is not for the faint of heart. In many cases, it takes a great deal of self-sufficiency and perseverance, and, for most, success does not come easily. Success is often built through years of hard work, sacrifice, and dedication.

Today, I would like to recognize a small business from my home State of Idaho that exemplifies these very traits. As chairman of the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I am proud to recognize a Grangeville, ID, small business, Advanced Welding and Steel, as the Small Business of the Month for February 2018. This small business demonstrates a dedication to producing quality goods while providing a unique service. Their story reminds us that, with hard work and dedication, Americans can accomplish almost anything to which they set their minds. With over 20 years in business, Advanced Welding and Steel has served as a great example of the determined entrepreneurial spirit found all across Idaho.

Advanced Welding and Steel's story is the quintessential story of American entrepreneurship. Ryan Uhlenkott grew up in a hard-working entrepreneurial family. He learned valuable traits such as a strong work ethic, timeliness, and honesty while working on the family farm, splitting wood for the winter, and helping out at the family water well drilling business. While a college student, he worked part time sweeping floors in a welding shop, which led to a full-time welding job.