

agreed that there is a lot we can do to improve America's water infrastructure.

Basically, the bill comes down to three big things. It grows the economy and creates jobs, it cuts redtape by getting more control out of Washington, and it keeps communities safe.

The first way this legislation supports America's economy is by increasing water storage. That is a big concern in my home State of Wyoming and across the West. We have had a serious problem over the years where sediment builds up behind dams in the lakes where water is stored. That sediment limits the amount of water the lakes can hold. We are telling the Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies to develop plans to deal with this sediment at Federal reservoirs. That is a simple thing that Washington can do, and now it is going to get done.

We are also expanding water storage capacity by making it easier to get permits for additional reservoirs. We have a facility in Lincoln County, WY, that is called the Fontenelle Reservoir. We have been trying to expand the water storage at that reservoir for years. This legislation makes sure the expansion will finally occur.

Farmers, ranchers, and communities nearby will get a new, reliable supply of the water they need. Of course, the water doesn't do much good if people can't get it where they need it. So we fix the failing irrigation systems that are so important in rural areas.

We are also improving America's inland waterways, which people rely on to move products to market. On the coasts, we deepen some of the most vital ports, and we can ship goods from there around the world.

The pro-growth policies, like the tax cuts we passed last year, have helped America's economy take off. Now we need to make sure that we have the water infrastructure in place to keep it growing, to keep people working, and to keep American raw materials and American-made products moving.

The second thing this legislation does is to cut some of the burdensome and unnecessary redtape that does nothing but get in the way of economic progress that we need. We are going to make sure that these water projects reflect the priorities of the American people, not the priorities of Washington bureaucrats. That means more local control over which projects get built. Local leaders know what they need, and they know which projects will make the biggest difference.

Once we identify the best projects, then we need to make sure that they actually get built. Today, the permitting process can drag on for years, while people get more and more desperate for projects to be finished.

The America's Water Infrastructure Act will push the Army Corps of Engineers to complete all feasibility studies for new projects within less than 2 years. We also eliminate the need for multiple benefit-cost-ratio assessments

for a single project. These are expensive, and they take lot of time. Often, the Army Corps of Engineers will require new assessments several times for a single project. This legislation gets rid of these redundant studies. It is going to make a big difference in getting things built on time and on budget.

The third big thing that this legislation does is to help keep American communities safe. We are going to repair some of the old drinking water and wastewater systems across the country. We provide help for places that need to clean up pollution in their water and to keep the pollution from getting into the water in the first place. As a doctor, I can tell you that this is extremely important for the health of our families and for our communities. That is why it is a priority in this legislation.

We also take some important steps to reduce floods in rural areas. In my home State of Wyoming and in other parts of the West, this is a continual threat for many people. Every spring they have to worry about floods caused by snow and ice melting. We have dams and levees where maintenance has been put off for so long that people are anxious every time the water starts to rise. We are addressing the backlog of maintenance as well. We are looking for ways to permanently fix some of these areas where ice backs up along the rivers and cause serious damage.

Most people don't give a lot of thought to the water that comes into their home. They turn on the faucet, water comes out, comes into the house, and water goes out of the house. This legislation makes sure that people don't have to worry about that changing. Their water will be safe, reliable, and abundant so they will not have to worry about it.

For most of us in the West, water is always on our minds. It is vital to our way of life. We rely on irrigation and water storage for our livestock and our crops. We rely on water to transport our products to markets far away. We rely on dams and levees to protect us from floods. This legislation makes sure that people in rural communities can still count on the water being there when we need it.

That is good for all of us. Republicans and Democrats agree. We know there is a lot of work to be done to address America's water infrastructure needs. We know we need to get the job done right. We need to get it done faster, better, cheaper, and smarter. The America's Water Infrastructure Act does just that. This cooperative piece of legislation passed the committee 21 to 0. Now it is time for the entire Senate to act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I wish to start by congratulating my colleague from Wyoming on reporting out this legislation on water infrastructure

and, particularly, for the help he has given us with regard to the Great Lakes. What the Senator has done to help us to maintain and to protect the Great Lakes is very much appreciated. It is the No. 1 tourist destination in Ohio, and there is a \$6 billion fishing industry in the Great Lakes, with Lake Erie being the No. 1 lake for fishing.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative the Senator supported is incredibly important, as well as keeping the dredge material out of the lake and helping us with the Army Corps. We thank the Senator. We also hope to keep invasive species out of the lake, including bighead carp, which would ruin that \$6 billion fishing industry. We thank the Senator for his support. We look forward to getting that bill to the floor soon for a vote.

#### MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. President, today I wish to talk, as other colleagues have, about the men and women of our Armed Forces—the brave men and women in uniform who protect us every day and some of whom have made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us.

This coming Monday, of course, is Memorial Day. This holiday weekend is a time for all of us to kick back a little bit, spend some time with our families, relax, and be with friends. But let's not forget what Memorial Day stands for. It is first and foremost an opportunity to reflect on the service and sacrifice of those who gave their lives defending the freedoms we enjoy and sometimes take for granted as Americans.

I will be spending part of the day at a Memorial Day parade that I try to attend every year and have for many years in Blue Ash, OH, which is north of Cincinnati. It is an event that I think is as patriotic as any I have seen in my State. It is a wonderful parade. There are many veterans in the parade but also veterans who come to watch. It ends at a beautiful memorial for our veterans. It was constructed over time in Blue Ash, paying tribute to patriots from every single conflict we have been involved in as a country since our founding.

Across the country on Memorial Day, we will give humble thanks to those brave men and women in uniform who, during their lives, fought for the principles we hold dearest and who, in their deaths, sacrificed themselves in defense of those Americans ideals.

Freedom is bought at a price, sometimes a very high price—the price of lives, of limbs, of some of the veterans who gave the prime years of their lives for all of us. Part of the cost is the scars of war. Some of those scars are very visible, of course. Others are more invisible—those who are coming back with PTSD or traumatic brain injuries. Those scars can't be seen, but they are certainly felt. Servicemembers brave those risks because of their sense of duty and their sense of patriotism.

I am proud to be the son and the grandson of two Army infantry lieutenants. One is a World War I veteran, and

one is a World War II veteran. They instilled in me this importance of duty, hard work, the virtue of service, and the merits of servant leadership. They believed in these values and embodied them in their lives, as so many veterans do.

This weekend, as we pay thanks to the many men and women who were laid to rest under the flag they died defending, we should all take a moment to remember and thank all veterans as well—past and present—whose service also has made our way of life possible.

The men and women of our United States military represent the best in all of us, and they deserve the best from all of us.

#### VA MISSION BILL

Today, Mr. President, the Senate will vote on what is called the VA MISSION Act, which is a bipartisan bill that will reform the Veterans Choice Program. I have heard my colleagues speak about this legislation on the floor this morning and this afternoon, and I agree with them that this is a positive step forward. It will expand private care options and provide veterans in Ohio and around the country with more choices and fewer barriers to ensure they will have the best healthcare possible.

By the way, the bill has passed the House of Representatives already. It passed last week, and it received more than 370 votes. That is unusual around this place. That was out of 435, so it was a strong majority. I look forward to its passing the Senate with a sweeping bipartisan majority as well so it can be signed into law as soon as possible and begin to help the veterans I represent in Ohio and around the country.

We had another positive development for veterans last week when the Senate's Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed a bipartisan bill I introduced with Senator BROWN that would designate the spectacular new Veterans Memorial and Museum, in Columbus, OH, which is scheduled to open later this year in the fall, as the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. It will be a spectacular structure. More importantly, it will have terrific exhibits on the inside to allow for future generations to know about the selfless sacrifices that have been made by so many men and women of the Armed Forces.

The National Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus will be one important way we will commemorate not only brave Ohioans but all American veterans. This legislation will have been voted on by both Houses and will be signed into law by the President, I hope, very soon. In fact, I would love to get this bill through this body before Memorial Day as a way to pay tribute to our veterans again.

It is not something we are asking the taxpayers to support. This National Veterans Memorial and Museum is being supported by \$75 million that has been raised in the private sector. There is a philanthropist in the Columbus

area named Les Wexner, who has taken the lead on this issue, but it has involved a lot of the businesses in the Greater Columbus area as well as individuals from all around the country who have stepped forward to say we need to have a National Veterans Memorial and Museum and that Columbus, OH, is the right place for it.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation as we hotline it in the U.S. Senate and try to get it done even before Memorial Day.

On this Memorial Day, as we remember those who have sacrificed their lives for our country, let us also remember why they offered to lay down their lives. Why? It is that this Nation under God is worth fighting for. We are eternally grateful for their sacrifices and for the service of all military members—those in the past, those in the present, and those who will step forward to protect us and serve our great country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to confirm Brian Montgomery as Federal Housing Commissioner. The Federal Housing Administration or FHA plays an important role in today's housing finance market, promoting homeownership and ensuring access to affordable mortgage credit for millions of Americans.

When FHA operates in a safe, viable manner, it can help many deserving people gain a foothold in our housing market who otherwise would not have been able to do so. FHA also plays a countercyclical role in the mortgage marketplace, providing market liquidity in times when traditional sources of home financing dry up, as they did a decade ago.

Since 1934, the FHA has insured mortgages for more than 40 million families. Today, the FHA is the largest mortgage insurer in the world. It is also the primary facilitator of reverse mortgages and supports a nationwide network of housing counseling agencies. Yet for nearly 4 years it has not had a Senate-confirmed leader.

Fortunately, the time has finally come to fill this vacancy. I know Brian Montgomery will do a terrific job. Brian Montgomery is an ideal candidate to take up the mantle because he has done it before.

Mr. Montgomery provided steadfast leadership at the helm of FHA between 2005 and 2009, under Presidents Bush and Obama, during one of the most trying times the housing markets had ever seen.

His nearly unanimous support from housing stakeholders speaks to this

strong track record of experience and expertise. Once confirmed, Mr. Montgomery can hit the ground running, moving FHA forward in pursuit of its continuing mission.

I look forward to continued conversations with him on opportunities to improve America's housing finance system, which continues to be urgently needed. I also look forward to working with him on how we can make HUD programs more effective and more efficient, with better stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

Thirteen years ago, this body confirmed Mr. Montgomery on a voice vote to serve as FHA Commissioner. I ask my colleagues to once again confirm him to this critical role.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### VA MISSION BILL

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I come briefly to the floor to encourage all Members of the Senate to vote for the VA MISSION bill. It is long overdue, a lot of hard work went into it, and it had a great vote on cloture of 91 to 4.

I am sure we will have an outstanding vote today because it is a vote for our veterans, for the promises we made to them for better quality healthcare and a better VA. It would not have happened if it were not for a lot of people, but one of the most key persons in making sure this bipartisan bill passes with the overwhelming margin it deserves is JON TESTER, my ranking member on the committee. We worked together hand in hand for about 3 years. We had enough pitfalls to want to quit many times but never did because we knew the ultimate goal was to meet our veterans' needs.

Today, when we adopt this bill, and later on this month when it is signed, it will be because of the hard work of a lot of people but none more important than JON TESTER from Montana.

I thank my ranking member for encouraging everyone to vote for the bill, and I thank the Presiding Officer at this time.

I yield to the ranking member.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I thank the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Senator ISAKSON, for the leadership he has shown from the get-go. From the moment he took the gavel in the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, he has been wanting to work together in a bipartisan way, put aside our differences, and get things done.

This VA MISSION Act had a great vote yesterday, and people might say: