

brought here through no fault of their own, who are working in our factories and offices, who are going to our schools, and who are serving in our military. Right now, every morning they wake up with a pit of fear in their heart that they will be deported and separated from their families. There is a very strong urgency there, and we have to get the Dreamers taken care of as well as these other needs.

So our language, our proposal on this budget deal is to take care of the middle class in terms of pensions and opioids and veterans, take care of disaster relief, take care of the healthcare problems we face—we all know about CHIP, community health centers, and healthcare extenders—and take care of both the border and the Dreamers. We can do it all. We should do it all.

It is no secret that in each of these areas right now there are sticking points, but there are potential points of agreement. All five parties continue to have discussion groups on these four circles of areas—and to do them concurrently and come up with solutions quickly so we can meet that January 19 deadline because nobody wants sequestration to go into effect for the military or nonmilitary side of the budget. Our goal should be a global agreement on all these issues by January 19. That is the best way to resolve the issues we face.

I see my dear friend from Georgia waiting, and I yield the floor to him.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Walter David Counts III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA BULLDOGS FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the tradition of New Year's Day, the beginning of a new year, our great country, and many of its great traditions.

I am sorry the minority leader left so quickly because I wanted to brag about how great the New York City Police and law enforcement were on New Year's Eve. Millions of Americans gathered to watch the ball drop in New York City and the new year to start. We all enjoy doing that in the warmth

of our homes, particularly on days like today, but there is also the warmth of America.

There is a second great tradition that takes place on New Year's Day as well. It is called the college football season, which is capped off by the Rose Bowl, which is played in Pasadena, CA. This year, the Rose Bowl was played between the University of Georgia, my home State, and the University of Oklahoma. It was one of the greatest football games, I think anybody would admit, that has ever been played in that game before, and I am proud of both universities.

I am equally proud of the University of Alabama and Clemson University—the other two teams that played for the right to play in Atlanta, GA, on Monday night of next week, on January 8, to decide the collegiate national championship. My Bulldogs of Georgia will be one of those two teams. They defeated Oklahoma 54 to 48 in a great football game in California. Alabama made a decisive victory over Clemson in New Orleans, LA, in the Sugar Bowl. The two will meet this coming Monday night in the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, GA.

I don't know which is going to win. I know which one I am pulling for. I know which one I am on the floor bragging about tonight, but I am equally bragging about all of our collegiate athletics in this country and the great men and women who make it work—the coaches, athletic directors, and people who make it go.

In particular, with Georgia's victory, it prompts me to come to the floor and talk about Kirby Smart. Kirby is the head coach of the University of Georgia. For 9 years preceding his coming to Georgia, he was assistant to Nick Saban, coach for the University of Alabama. They will play against each other on Monday night for this year's national championship. It is ironic that the coach and his pupil will be the two coaches in that great game.

Kirby is a University of Georgia graduate. He was a great University of Georgia football player in his own right. He came to the University of Georgia with high hopes as an alumnus, hoping that he could be the person to take Georgia to new heights.

It took him only a year. The first season was 8 and 5. The second season was this year, 12 and 1—now 13 and 1—winning the Rose Bowl and playing for the national championship on Monday night.

Kirby Smart is not just smart because he knows football; he is smart because he knows how to be a leader. You saw an example of a man in the Rose Bowl who never took credit himself. He always gave it to his other coaches and to his other players. He never tried to be the winner. He always tried to be in the background. He put others ahead of himself, but deep down inside—and behind the great victory that was won that night—it was his spirit, his encouragement, his living

the dream that all the Georgia players followed.

I want to talk about a couple of them. Sony Michel was the offensive player of the game, one of the greatest running backs ever to come out of the University of Georgia, and we had some good ones—Frankie Sinkwich, Charlie Trippy, and Herschel Walker. On defense, Roquan Smith, the Dick Butkus Award winner, played a great defensive game. Then, with the combination of leadership they brought to the team on the field and the quiet leadership and confidence Kirby Smart brought to the team as its coach, they won that game 54 to 48 in a double-overtime elimination of the University of Oklahoma.

My congratulations go to Oklahoma and their quarterback Baker Mayfield, who was the Heisman Trophy winner, on playing a great game.

I wish Alabama a lot of luck on Monday night, but not enough to beat my Bulldogs. This is going to be our chance to win a national championship for the first time in 38 years of football. We are going to be in my home State of Georgia in our newest athletic facility, the Mercedes-Benz Stadium. I think it is an appropriate place for us to win, so I am going to say “Go Dawgs” from the floor of the Senate.

On Monday night, I hope Kirby Smart remembers the reason I am bragging about him today on the floor is that he is going to be our leader Monday night. He is going to carry us to victory one more time. I am counting on him, just like all the Georgia graduates all over the country who watched with joy on January 1, and we will be looking on Monday night with anticipation and, hopefully, satisfaction.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. President.

I have to add, coming from Arkansas, that I wish to congratulate the Southeast Conference for being the championship teams. It is going to be a great game.

FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS, BICENTENNIAL

Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the bicentennial of Fort Smith, AR.

On Christmas Day in 1817, Army troops established a western frontier military post on the confluence of the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers. MAJ Stephen Long named it Fort Smith, after GEN Thomas Smith, commander of the U.S. Army rifle regiment.

To recognize the significant milestone, the community is organizing a year-long celebration that highlights its rich history, its citizens, and its future. While Fort Smith was abandoned by 1824, the community that sprung up around it continued to grow and played a unique role in westward expansion and the preservation of law and order in our developing Nation.

Judge Isaac Parker paved the way for bringing order to Indian Territory, and

great lawmen like Deputy U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves helped lay the foundation that shaped Fort Smith's role in the history of the U.S. Marshals Service. Reeves was one of the most well-respected lawmen of all time. To recognize his efforts, the Bass Reeves Legacy Initiative raised money to honor him with a monument in the community's downtown.

Reeves' career is well documented, as are the stories of Fort Smith during this period. In 1968, Charles Portis depicted Fort Smith's role in taming the West in his book "True Grit," which portrays a teenage girl's efforts to avenge her father's death with a U.S. Marshal by her side.

The bond between the community and the U.S. Marshals Service is strong and continues today, as Fort Smith will be the home of the future U.S. Marshals Museum scheduled to open in 2019. Part of its collection will include a gun and badge that belonged to Bass Reeves.

The national historic site and other organizations have done an exceptional job of keeping the community's history alive. Promoting its history in this way will also have positive benefits for the future. Fort Smith is a city with an incredible story to tell in its faith communities, its schools, its industries, its arts, and its culture.

The community is marking its bicentennial with events throughout the year that include an attempt to break the world record for a lip dub video at the Old Fort Days Rodeo Parade and the city's first fort building competition for kids.

I was pleased to contribute to the time capsule, and I am looking forward to seeing many old friends at our high school reunion. A lot has changed since my days at Northside High School as a Grizzly, but the steadfast resilience and spirit of the citizens of Fort Smith have remained.

I am proud to be a native of Fort Smith and look forward to the events during this year-long celebration. It is home to a growing university, new medical school, and vibrant new industries.

I know Fort Smith is starting the 21st century on a solid foundation. We have much to celebrate from the past, but even more to look forward to in the future. We are forever grateful to the men and women who have encouraged the community's progress and implemented their ideas to shape the city for the next generation.

Dr. Jerry Stewart is one such leader, who led a life dedicated to public service. He had a successful career as a pulmonologist and served as CEO of Cooper Clinic, leading the growth and development of one of the region's top medical care providers. After his retirement, he helped underserved patients at the Good Samaritan Clinic in River Valley Primary Care.

He was well respected in the medical community and admired for his influence beyond the walls of the clinic. His

influence was felt across the community as a leader in civic organizations and community boards, including serving on the Fort Smith Public School Board and as chairman of the board for the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce and the Fort Smith United Way. Truly, the list goes on and on.

Dr. Stewart passed away December 26, but his legacy will live on. I appreciated and valued his friendship and, like so many others, will greatly miss him.

Fort Smith was blessed with Dr. Stewart's leadership and his guidance. It continues to be fortunate to have talented leaders with a vision and dedication to make this great city even better.

Congratulations to the members of the 200th anniversary committee for all of their hard work in planning to celebrate 200 years of Fort Smith history. I am excited for the community as it comes together to recognize and commemorate this historic milestone and wish all the very best as the events take place throughout 2018.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Connecticut.

PUERTO RICO RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here to talk about our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico. Even as the Northeast is gripped by a storm of impressive proportions, Puerto Rico is still recovering from the hurricane that hit that island 106 days ago.

I visited Puerto Rico with my friend and colleague, Senator MURPHY, yesterday and the day before, to bring back to my colleagues a fact-based report on how the recovery effort is going and how ample Federal support has been.

I come to the floor today furious and frustrated. The people of Puerto Rico have a right to be furious, as well, because they have been denied the basic help and relief that this great Nation—the greatest in the history of the world—owes to all Americans.

Let there be no doubt that the people of Puerto Rico are our fellow Americans. They have fought in our wars. They have come to the mainland and gone back, contributing to our communities, as well as theirs.

They are in our communities in Connecticut, which has the highest concentration of people from Puerto Rico and their descendants of any State in the country. We are proud of the Puerto Ricans in Connecticut and of the Puerto Rican families and people who are coming from the mainland in an exodus unmatched in recent history.

The reason for that out-migration is that Puerto Rico is in the midst of a

humanitarian and economic crisis. Let me repeat that. Puerto Rico is in a humanitarian and economic crisis 106 days after Hurricane Maria.

It is still in triage. Half of the population lacks reliable electricity. Almost half lacks drinkable, healthy water. The tourist industry—the lifeblood of its economy—is shrinking and struggling. About half the hotels still are not open, and the unemployment rate is well above 10 percent—double the rate of unemployment here on the mainland. Housing continues to be a major problem. Of the homes that need temporary relief, only half of them have been provided the blue tarps because they have not been delivered.

I want to pay tribute to the first responders, the Corps of Engineers, and FEMA workers, as well as the National Guard from Connecticut and elsewhere who are on the ground serving and sacrificing for their fellow American. They lack the support they need in resources and commitment from the administration and from this Congress. Resources and support have been denied them because of a lack of will, not a lack of money.

Many of the schools there are shuttered, and students have been denied the privilege to continue their education. The healthcare system of the island is still in shambles. Primary care is struggling to recover because of the lack of electricity. A doctor's office simply cannot run without electricity, nor can manufacturing plants be operated without a reliable source of power.

In restoring power, the Corps of Engineers has provided generators in places where formerly there were plants actually producing power. Generators are a temporary source of power, not a reliable permanent source. Transmission is still down in many parts of the country.

To add insult to injury, Puerto Rico is stuck with a tax as a result of the action of this Congress and the administration—a tax imposed only on manufacturing in foreign countries. Puerto Rico is treated as a foreign country for purposes of the 12.5 percent tax on certain manufacturers. That is simply unconscionable. Manufacturing plants will soon be facing the decision of whether to stay or go, and many of them will go, adding to the unemployment situation there.

It is heartbreaking and gut-wrenching to visit this island and to walk in a neighborhood, as Senator MURPHY and I did on Wednesday night, and find darkness after the sun goes down—total darkness, except for a few isolated lights here and there. How can students study? How can parents care for children?

On that Tuesday night, we walked through a neighborhood in downtown San Juan that was dark because of the lack of electricity. There simply are not enough generators for every home to have one. Generators, themselves, are only a stopgap source of power.

The human faces and voices are gripping and riveting from the suffering