

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much.

Mr. President, I would like to thank Senator BLUNT for his work on this. This is an incredibly important moment. We are completely overhauling the sexual harassment policies of the Congress. This was an antiquated policy that literally required 30 days of forced counseling, 30 days of forced mediation, and 30 days of a cooling-off period. It was time for a change, and that is what we came together to do.

I wish thank our colleagues who have worked on this with us: Senators GILLIBRAND, MURRAY, MCCASKILL, HARRIS; our working group on Rules, including Senators BLUNT, FEINSTEIN, CORTEZ MASTO, CAPITO, and FISCHER; and of course the two leaders, Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER, who worked on this.

Senators ENZI and KENNEDY would always say: If you can agree on things 80 percent of the time, that is a good day. This is a good day for changing the rules so that the deck is not stacked against victims, who should be in a safe workplace.

Thank you, Senator BLUNT.

Mr. BLUNT. I certainly appreciate the opportunity we have had to work on this. Senator KLOBUCHAR and I work together on the Rules Committee, as well, where I am the chairman and she is the ranking member, and the daily activities of the Senate come to us often.

This was an action that created an opportunity where we looked at the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995. As Senator KLOBUCHAR has suggested, there are things that may have been well-intended at the time, but they really put too many obligations and too many restrictions, in our view, on victims. Those things are all eliminated.

Members of Congress, if they are personally involved in harassment, will be personally liable for the compensatory damages of that. I think it puts the responsibility where the American people think it should be.

Both of our leaders have been very supportive—both Senator SCHUMER and Senator MCCONNELL. Many of our Members were involved in drafting this legislation, and there were many more who, after they had time to look at the final product, cosponsored the legislation. I think approximately one-third of the Senate by the time this bill came to the floor were cosponsors of the bill.

We look forward to this bill further defining what we see as our responsibilities. I am pleased to see the action of the Senate today with the unanimous clearance of every Senator on both sides, which enabled this bill to come to the floor and now has been approved.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much.

Mrs. MURRAY. I want to thank my colleagues from Minnesota and Mis-

souri for all of their hard work on this issue. I would like to ask my colleagues through the chair about section 111 of the bill amending section 415 of the Congressional Accountability Act. A new subparagraph, which will become 415(d)(1)(D), describes certain violations for which reimbursement is required by a Member of the House of Representatives or a Senator. I am interested in my colleagues' understanding regarding how that language should be interpreted?

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I Thank the Senator for her question. The description of harassment in section 111 of the bill is only relevant to the determination of whether a Member is required to reimburse the Treasury and is not intended to be used in other contexts.

Mr. BLUNT. Section 111 of the bill includes a new requirement for Members to reimburse the Treasury in specific circumstances. The description of harassment in this section is only intended to be used during adjudicatory processes to determine whether a Member is required to reimburse the Treasury.

Mrs. MURRAY. Thank you. That clarification is helpful for my understanding and for my colleagues' understanding as we take important steps to better address harassment in the U.S. Congress.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Evans nomination?

Mr. CASSIDY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 111 Ex.]

YEAS—48

Alexander	Boozman	Cassidy
Barrasso	Burr	Collins
Blunt	Capito	Corker

Cornyn	Hoeven	Risch
Cotton	Hyde-Smith	Roberts
Crapo	Inhofe	Rounds
Daines	Isakson	Sasse
Donnelly	Johnson	Scott
Enzi	Kennedy	Shelby
Ernst	Lankford	Sullivan
Fischer	Lee	Tester
Gardner	McConnell	Thune
Graham	Murkowski	Tillis
Grassley	Paul	Toomey
Hatch	Perdue	Wicker
Heitkamp	Portman	Young

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Hirono	Reed
Blumenthal	Jones	Schatz
Booker	Kaine	Schumer
Brown	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Manchin	Udall
Casey	Markey	Van Hollen
Coons	McCaskill	Warner
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	
Harris	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—9

Cruz	Hassan	Moran
Duckworth	Heller	Rubio
Flake	McCaIn	Sanders

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LANKFORD. 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.

The Senator from Minnesota.

CONGRESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1995 REFORM BILL

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, Senator BLUNT and I were here on the floor earlier to talk about the bill that was just passed through the Senate unanimously. That is the bill dealing with sexual harassment and other harassment rules of the Congress. This was a joint effort, and I wish to take this opportunity, first of all, to thank everyone who was involved in this.

First and foremost is Senator BLUNT, who has been a true partner. We have worked on everything together, from adoption to tourism. Last month, when he took over from Senator SHELBY's able leadership of the Rules Committee, he and I worked together on changing the Senate rules, for the first time in the history of the Senate, to be more family friendly. We worked with Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH so that her baby will be allowed on the floor, as will other children of male and female Senators going forward.

The world is changing, and the Senate needs to change with it, and I would argue that the Senate should be in the lead.

It is no surprise, then, that we have had a number of women staff members take the lead and work with us on this bill. First is Lizzy Peluso, who is my lead and the ranking member's staff director of our Rules Committee. She was my chief of staff for a number of years and moved over to be our lead on the Rules Committee. She has done a tremendous job ushering in this legislation by listening to Members' concerns and working with people on the legislation.

There is also Stacy McBride, who has the same role working for Senator BLUNT and has worked with him on this. We thank her for her help as well.

I also want to mention Erin Sager Vaughn, who works with Senator SCHUMER and has really done a lot of work on this bill.

It just was a team effort.

To John Abegg, from Senator MCCONNELL's office, thank you for your help as well.

I want to thank Travis Talvitie from my office for his work on this bill.

This was a bill that was a long time in coming. I notice that there has been some excellent work over in the House. We want to thank Representative SPEIER and others who have been involved in their bill. We know it is a little different than our bill. We look forward to hearing them out and working with them as we move forward.

I did want to thank our colleagues in the Senate who supported this bill and worked with us. That would be Senator GILLIBRAND, who has been such a leader on this issue, Senator MURPHY, Senator MCCASKILL, and Senator HARRIS. Also, I want to thank our Rules Committee working group: Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator CORTEZ MASTO, Senator CAPITO, and Senator FISCHER. All are women who serve on the Rules Committee and know we had to change the rules.

I would say about this bill what Senator ENZI would always say about his work with Senator Ted Kennedy: You have to start with the 80 percent that you agree on.

We found a lot to agree on when it came to reforming the process in the Senate, which was literally staff against victims. It didn't include interns. It didn't include a number of people who had worked in the Senate. It was a very difficult process for people to bring claims.

Of course, our goal here is a safe workplace, not only in the Senate and in the House, not only in all of the Federal Government, but really across the country. So as much as this debate has been focused on people who serve in positions of power—as it well should be—we also have to remember the nurse on the frontline in the hospital and the factory worker on the poultry line in Minnesota, and we should have protections in place at all workplaces. I know

this discussion is going on across America, and we are more than ready to be part of that discussion.

So what is the problem? First of all, we have a situation where we had a 30-day forced counseling period. If someone were to bring a harassment claim in the Senate, they had to go through 30 days of forced mediation, even if they didn't want to mediate the claim. We had a 30-day forced cooling-off period before they could have access to a court. They could have been forced into a nondisclosure agreement. Interns had no protection at all, and there was no actual transparency around awards or settlement. It was literally set up to muzzle the victims in these cases.

So what have we done? First of all, Senator GRASSLEY and I worked on this last fall, along with Senator SHELBY and others, and on mandatory training. I appreciate the leadership of Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER in working with us on this and getting this done quickly so that every staff member in the Senate, including every Senator, now goes through sexual harassment training. That had to happen for the first time by the end of January, and that happened.

We also were concerned that victims weren't reporting incidents. After all, 75 percent of individuals who experienced sexual harassment at work didn't report it. So we wanted to make sure we improved the process so that would change.

What does this legislation do? First of all, as I mentioned, it overhauls the process. That was our first and major goal—to make it easier for victims. It allows a victim to immediately pursue an administrative hearing or file a civil action—none of these cooling-off periods that are mandatory. It maintains the option for an employee to go into mediation.

Secondly, there are immediate protections for staff. The bill that just passed the Senate provides employees with immediate access to a dedicated advocate who would provide consultation and assistance and figure all of the options that they have and work with them on that.

As I mentioned, it covers interns, detailees, and others who work in the Senate as unpaid staff. It provides opportunities for employees to work remotely or request paid leave without fear of retribution, after they have made a complaint. It requires that a notification of rights of employees be posted within every employing office of the legislative branch, including State and district offices. There are a number of other provisions, which I will put in the RECORD, that are put in to immediately protect staff.

Last, there is accountability for Members. This bill holds Members of the House and Senate personally liable by requiring them to repay awards and settlements stemming from acts of harassment that they personally commit and ensures that Members who leave office would still be responsible

for repaying the Treasury, including garnishing nongovernment wages and retirement annuities to ensure repayment.

It requires public reporting of awards and settlements, including identifying if a Member of the House or Senate was personally liable. It also requires claims to be automatically referred to the Committee on Ethics for investigation or further action when there is a final award or settlement.

Those are the top lines of the bill, but I think we know that it is more than words on a page. It is more than going back and forth about which provision would be better. This is really about the cases that we have seen in the Senate and the House—that they be handled correctly, and that we have a new and improved workplace going forward so that all people feel safe, so that the culture here feels safe, and so that we can be true leaders for workplaces across the country.

Again, this wouldn't have happened without the decision of many Members who work here to, one, go out of their comfort zone and, two, decide they were more interested in getting something done than having a messaging bill. That is what every Senator here decided—that it was more important to change this process.

A year from now—once we get this passed through the House, and we work with them and we get this done—I believe we are going to come back and have a different story to tell about the workplaces that we work in.

I wish to thank my colleagues for making that decision to concretely get something done instead of just pointing fingers at each other.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator KLOBUCHAR for her work on this. I think the Senate has done good work today.

TRIBUTE TO LORENZO D'AUBERT

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I rise just for a few minutes to do what we don't do often enough around here, and that is to recognize the extraordinary work of the people who actually labor in the trenches of the Senate.

Back in September of 2008, a young man came to work in my office as an intern. Now, almost 10 years later, he is an essential part of my life.

I am not sure that people understand what the beating heart of a Senate office is, but everything revolves around the schedule. This young man, Lorenzo d'Aubert, who came to work for me in 2008, worked his way up from intern to staff assistant, which means you answer the phones when everybody is upset. Then he became a legislative correspondent, and then he worked as a systems analyst and on all of the computer stuff in my office. Eventually, his talent was so obvious, that I said: Please come sit outside my office and make everything work right, and that is what he has done.

It is a really hard job because when you are the executive assistant and the scheduler, you have to say no to a lot of people, and you have to say it nicely. You have to make everyone happy, even when you are telling them that the schedule will not allow that to happen. You have to manage phone calls from all seven of my children and my husband, who is upset, and manage the birth of grandchildren, the birthdays, the schedule of when I can get there and when I can't. Is the plane delayed, or is it not? Can you get on Southwest? No, maybe you can make the American flight. On top of it all, he gets me to a million meetings and a million places all at the same time, with a smile on his face, with kindness in his heart, with a whip-sharp intellect, and with a work ethic that is astounding.

I am really upset because he has the nerve to leave and go to law school. I am proud of him for his determination to seek a degree in law. I know he will be an amazing lawyer because he has that touch, where even when he is giving you bad news, you know that he is delivering it with kindness. We need much more of that in the legal profession.

Lorenzo is really important to me, and I will miss him terribly. I think it is important that all of us around here—who crave the lime light, who want all the attention, and who want everybody to think that we are moving mountains—know that it is the people around us who are moving the mountains. We are just lucky to be on the ride.

We will all miss you, Lorenzo. Congratulations to you and to your parents, Linda and Sergio. I know they are here today. I know how proud they are of you. We will miss you terribly, and we will be really mad at you if you don't stay in touch.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

VA MISSION BILL

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I will start by congratulating Senator KLOBUCHAR, who was on the floor earlier to speak about the Congressional Accountability Act, and Senator BLUNT for their hard work to enact legislation that will make this place work better. It is a rare display of bipartisanship, coming together to improve our processes with regard to sexual harassment and other issues, and I thank them for that.

Earlier this week, some of us talked about the veterans bill that passed this Chamber—another sign of bipartisanship. It passed with a big vote, and it will help our veterans in Ohio to get the care they need, where they want it. Going into Memorial Day, I am very glad it passed.

We have heard a lot of concerns that my colleagues raised about veterans not being able to get the care they

wanted in their hometowns or the specialist they wanted or not being able to get reimbursed appropriately for care outside of the VA system, and now they will be able to do it.

Another part of that legislation that helps our veterans deals with an issue that is affecting all of the States in this body and sadly has become an epidemic in our country; that is, the opioid epidemic. It is an issue that some of our veterans are facing when they come back from service. Some have PTSD. Some have traumatic brain injuries and other injuries that require procedures. In response to the acute pain and some of these other conditions, they are given opioid medication. As a result, sadly, a number of our veterans have become addicted to opioids.

This legislation will help by, No. 1, cutting back on the overprescribing of opioids but also by using nonaddictive pain alternatives—medicines that do not have opioids in them—and other forms of therapy to help them deal with pain. These therapies will now be used more in our VA hospital system. That is a good thing for our veterans.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, talking about the opioid issue, sadly, this is gripping my State of Ohio in a way that has caused us to have more deaths by opioids than any other cause of death. But it is not just Ohio; it is an epidemic because now, nationally, it is the No. 1 cause of accidental death, and for Americans under 50, it is the No. 1 cause of death, period. This makes it the worst drug epidemic we have faced in this country—the worst since, we will recall, back in the 1980s and 1990s when we were very concerned about cocaine and other drugs. This has become the worst drug epidemic we have ever faced.

We had a tele-townhall meeting this week where I called several thousand Ohioans. We had about 20,000 people on the call at any one time. During that call, we had a survey question. Among other questions, it asked about opioids, and it asked a very simple question: Do you know someone who has been personally affected? Have you been or do you know someone who has been personally affected by this opioid epidemic? The numbers were shocking this week. Typically, over half of the callers say yes. That is how bad it is in Ohio. This week, it was 66 percent—two-thirds of the callers. Thousands of people in Ohio reported back from a tele-townhall. So it is not a self-selected group; it is people who have called in to talk about various issues, and 66 percent said they know someone who has been directly affected by this opioid addiction issue.

It has unfolded in three waves. The first wave was really prescription drugs, and this was back in the late 1990s and into the 2000s. There were pill mills in Southern Ohio and other

States. Kentucky and West Virginia were hit hard. This was medication that was being abused, in many cases leading to an addiction.

The second wave was the heroin wave. This was when heroine became more readily available and was actually less expensive than prescription drugs, and many people turned to heroin. That heroin led to many more overdoses and other issues, including diseases associated with the use of needles, hepatitis C and others.

Now there is a new wave, and the new wave, sadly, is even more deadly than the first two. It is what is called synthetic opioids or synthetic heroin. The one that you have probably heard of is called fentanyl, sometimes carfentanyl, which is even more powerful. It is truly at epidemic levels in my State, and it is being made worse by this new wave of synthetic heroin.

There are other drugs, as well, that are affecting us in our country. In my own State, in some regions of Ohio, crystal meth now coming up from Mexico is creating a bigger problem. Cocaine is certainly an issue. But as I have looked at the statistics and traveled the State, it is clear that our No. 1 issue is opioids and that synthetic opioids—50 times more potent than heroin—are the new face of the opioid epidemic.

Fentanyl was involved in about 37 percent of the deaths in Ohio as recently as 2015. By 2016, it was responsible for 58 percent of the overdose deaths. So it has gone from 37 percent to 58 percent in 1 year. We don't have all the numbers yet for 2017, but unfortunately the numbers we do have from various regions of the State indicate that 2017 is going to be just as bad, if not worse. Columbus, OH, as an example, has seen a staggering increase in opioid overdoses due to fentanyl. Two-thirds of the county's 2017 overdose deaths were due to fentanyl—two-thirds.

I am told by law enforcement that fentanyl—again, this drug that is so deadly that a few flakes of it can kill you—has also been sprinkled into other drugs. I have talked to recovering addicts who told me their stories about finding out that they were actually taking fentanyl when they thought they were taking another drug. It has been sprinkled into other street drugs, according to law enforcement and some of these recovering addicts I have talked to, including cocaine, even including marijuana, and including heroin.

Just last week, two men in the Toledo area were arrested for drug conspiracy with the intent to distribute. A little more than half a pound of fentanyl was seized upon their arrest. Half a pound of fentanyl would be equivalent to about 1 cup of fentanyl—small enough to fit into a ziplock bag in your kitchen. Yet that one drug seizure of 1 cup was enough fentanyl, according to experts, to kill 16,000 people. Remember, just a few flecks of it can