

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:37 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WICKER).

ENERGY AND WATER, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, AND MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I think we are going to have a couple of votes shortly on amendments. Senator ALEXANDER and I will offer one to the underlying bill. I think Senator COONS will offer another one along with, I believe, Senator ROUNDS.

AMENDMENT NO. 2920 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2910

As Members are returning from their caucus lunches, I will kick it off and lay the groundwork for the amendment Senator ALEXANDER and I will be offering. I believe we have Senate amendment No. 2920 at the desk on behalf of Senator ALEXANDER and myself.

I ask unanimous consent that amendment No. 2920 be called up and made the pending business.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Delaware [Mr. CARPER] proposes an amendment numbered 2920 to amendment No. 2910.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To direct the Secretary of the Army to submit a report on the status of returning to non-Federal project sponsors excess non-Federal funds)

On page 14, between lines 18 and 19, insert the following:

SEC. 106. Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Army shall submit to the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report that—

(1) includes a list of all cost-shared Corps projects that, as of the date of enactment of this Act—

(A) are physically and fiscally complete; and

(B) for which excess non-Federal funds have not been returned to the non-Federal project sponsor; and

(2) with respect to each project listed under paragraph (1), describes the status of—

(A) returning the excess funds to the non-Federal project sponsor; and

(B) providing the non-Federal project sponsor a final accounting of the project.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, the amendment Senator ALEXANDER and I are offering is a bipartisan effort, as you can tell. It is the result of discussions between Senator ALEXANDER's Appropriations Committee staff and the staff who works for us on the Environment and Public Works Committee.

The amendment would require the Corps to report to Congress on the status of Corps project expenses. The amendment would allow project sponsors to receive a final cost accounting of project dollars so that they understand how those dollars are spent and know whether there are excess unspent funds and whether those funds are being returned to State and local government or to the Federal Government.

As many of our colleagues know, the Senate is getting ready to address soon—probably, if not this month, then next month—the water resources development legislation that Senator BARRASSO, our chairman on Environment and Public Works, and I and other colleagues have worked on. It was reported unanimously out of the Environment and Public Works Committee. That bill, which is called America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, makes investments in updating and expanding water infrastructure systems throughout the country. Along with reauthorizing the ongoing work of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, our legislation addresses a wide variety of priorities. Again, it was reported unanimously out of our committee about a month or so ago, 21 to 0.

In the drafting of this legislation, several concerns were raised about how the Corps selects and prioritizes projects for construction, as well as what happens to excess local cost share dollars at the end of a project. For example, in my home State of Delaware, our State agency that sponsors the beach renourishment and other shoreline protection projects has been asking the Corps for a detailed balance sheet for years to understand how funds are being allocated on various projects and how local tax dollars are being spent. Unfortunately, that material has never been provided despite repeated requests.

Delaware is not alone in this. The Senator from Kansas, Mr. MORAN, has brought to my attention an issue of malfunctioning radial arm gates—also called Tainter gates—on a reservoir in his home State of Kansas. The local irrigation district was billed for the repairs of the gates, which was added as an additional cost to their annual share of the operations and maintenance of that project.

Although the irrigation district has been paying on this bill, they never knew how much it actually cost to repair the gates. It took my staff and Senator BARRASSO's staff to find out that the total cost of repairs was \$31 million. This means, according to the Corps, that the remaining local cost share is about \$5 million. However, because there is not a detailed account-

ing, the question has been raised about whether the Corps billed the irrigation district correctly. If the Corps had accounted for this program correctly, the cost share should have been about \$1 million. That difference of \$4 million may not sound like a lot to us here in the Senate or in the Federal Government, but \$4 million to a local rural irrigation district is a lot of money.

Sadly, as I said before, this data has not been provided to many cost share partners, as is the law, and we need to get to the bottom of why and where it is happening.

Senator ALEXANDER and I believe that this report that is being requested sets the stage for more transparency and better budgeting at the Corps, which is also a theme in the America's Water Infrastructure Act that we will be addressing, I hope, next month.

Let me conclude by once more thanking Chairman ALEXANDER and his staff for working with my staff and me and also with Senator BARRASSO on the water resources development legislation and on this amendment. It truly is a bipartisan amendment and a good one to start off the discussion on the underlying bill. We are pleased to be a part of this, and we look forward to passing this important piece of legislation that is critical to funding a central piece of our Nation's economic infrastructure.

I encourage support for my amendment.

I yield the floor to Senator ALEXANDER and look forward to working with him as we go forward.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Delaware for his customary leadership. He has been wise to come up with this idea.

In some cases, the Corps of Engineers has completed projects under budget. The Corps had excess non-Federal funds paid by the project's sponsor.

His amendment, which I am happy to cosponsor, requires the Corps to provide a list of all the projects that have been completed and have excess non-Federal funds that have not been returned to the project sponsor put on that list. It also requires the Corps to provide a final accounting for each project and the status of the Corps' plan to return the excess non-Federal funds. It does not increase Federal spending. It is intended to ensure that the Corps returns excess non-Federal funds to project sponsors in a timely manner.

Let me thank the Republican and Democratic staffs for working with us through the morning in the customary smooth way to get an appropriations bill on the floor.

This is the first vote on the appropriations bills this week. We will vote on the Coons-Gardner amendment first and then on the Carper-Alexander amendment second. We have several other amendments waiting for consideration. Senators THUNE and DURBIN

have one that should be filed shortly; Senators HATCH and UDALL, the same. We hope to have more votes later this afternoon, hopefully in the area of 5 o'clock. That will be up to the majority leader and the Democratic leader, but we will let Senators know about that.

Senators BOOZMAN, DAINES, and I, and our Democratic colleagues hope that Senators and their staff will file today any amendments they wish to have included in these three appropriations bills.

AMENDMENT NO. 2914 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2910
Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to call up amendment No. 2914 and ask that it be reported by number.

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

The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

(Purpose: To express the sense of the Senate regarding the need for funding for innovative scientific research)

At the end of title III of division A, add the following:

SEC. 30 . SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING INNOVATION.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—
(1) the United States leads the world in innovation through scientific research;

(2) many technologies making major contributions to the United States economy were created through Federal support for scientific research, including nuclear power, the laser, the personal computer, the internet, and Global Positioning Systems; and
(3) in recognition of the importance of innovation through scientific research and development, Congress increased appropriations for Department of Energy research and development programs for fiscal year 2016 and each fiscal year thereafter.

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that—
(1) to maintain the position of the United States as a world leader in innovation, Congress and the Secretary of Energy should continue to support innovative science research and development at National Laboratories and institutions of higher education, along with private partners and nonprofit research organizations, through sustained robust and reliable funding in specific research areas, including—

(A) exascale computing and supercomputing;
(B) quantum and photonic information sciences;
(C) biological and environmental research;
(D) energy; and
(E) materials and manufacturing; and
(2) Congress should continue to increase scientific research and development funding—

(A) to ensure future technological advances continue to spur innovation;
(B) to help companies create good paying jobs; and
(C) to strengthen national security.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be 10 minutes of debate and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote in relation to the Gardner amendment and the Carper amendment and that there be no second-degree amendments in order to the amendments prior to the votes.

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

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, earlier when I spoke about the amendment with Senator COONS as the lead Democrat, I mentioned the wrong cosponsor. I would correct myself to say it is not Senator ROUNDS, who does great legislation, but in this case, it is Senator GARDNER.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, Senator COONS has already spoken.

I yield back all time on this side.

Mr. CARPER. I yield back our time. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 2914.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. McCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 3, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 130 Leg.]

YEAS—93

Alexander	Flake	Murkowski
Baldwin	Gardner	Murphy
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Murray
Bennet	Graham	Perdue
Blumenthal	Grassley	Peters
Blunt	Harris	Portman
Booker	Hassan	Reed
Boozman	Hatch	Risch
Brown	Heinrich	Roberts
Burr	Heitkamp	Rounds
Cantwell	Heller	Rubio
Capito	Hirono	Sanders
Cardin	Hoeven	Sasse
Carper	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Casey	Inhofe	Schumer
Cassidy	Isakson	Scott
Collins	Johnson	Shelby
Coons	Jones	Smith
Corker	Kaine	Stabenow
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	King	Tester
Cotton	Klobuchar	Thune
Crapo	Lankford	Tillis
Cruz	Leahy	Udall
Daines	Manchin	Van Hollen
Donnelly	Markey	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Warren
Enzi	McConnell	Whitehouse
Ernst	Menendez	Wicker
Feinstein	Merkley	Wyden
Fischer	Moran	Young

NAYS—3

Lee	Paul	Toomey
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NOT VOTING—4

Duckworth	Nelson
McCain	Shaheen

The amendment (No. 2914) was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2920

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on agreeing to Carper amendment No. 2920.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. McCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 131 Leg.]

YEAS—96

Alexander	Gardner	Murphy
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murray
Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Bennet	Grassley	Perdue
Blumenthal	Harris	Peters
Blunt	Hassan	Portman
Booker	Hatch	Reed
Boozman	Heinrich	Risch
Brown	Heitkamp	Roberts
Burr	Heller	Rounds
Cantwell	Hirono	Rubio
Capito	Hoeven	Sanders
Cardin	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Carper	Inhofe	Schatz
Casey	Isakson	Schumer
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott
Collins	Jones	Shelby
Coons	Kaine	Smith
Corker	Kennedy	Stabenow
Cornyn	King	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Klobuchar	Tester
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Leahy	Tillis
Cruz	Lee	Toomey
Daines	Manchin	Udall
Donnelly	Markey	Van Hollen
Durbin	McCaskill	Warner
Enzi	McConnell	Warren
Ernst	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Fischer	Moran	Wyden
Flake	Murkowski	Young

NOT VOTING—4

Duckworth	Nelson
McCain	Shaheen

The amendment (No. 2920) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, the Legislative Branch bill, as advanced from the Committee on Appropriations, provides \$4.79 billion for Congress and its support agencies. That is \$90 million above the fiscal year 2018 enacted level of \$4.7 billion.

This bill provides just over \$1 billion for Senate-only items, which is an increase of \$5 million from last year; \$1.4 billion is included for House only items, and \$2.3 billion is provided for joint Senate and House items, which in total meets the \$4.79 billion legislative branch allocation for fiscal year 2019.

We have made thoughtful decisions about how to prioritize investments for this fiscal year. Resources are allocated in a responsible way to maintain existing services and allow for critical investments in numerous needed areas.

For example, this bill will strengthen security on the Capitol campus and ensure that the men and women who protect our visitors, our staff, and Members have the support and resources they need to do their jobs. And \$453 million is included for the Capitol Police, which is a \$26.5 million increase from last year.

In fact, just 1 year ago last Thursday, we witnessed tragedy strike on a baseball field in Alexandria, where the lives of our colleagues and their family and friends were put in imminent danger. Last week's Congressional Baseball Game was a reminder of the bravery demonstrated by my friend, Representative STEVE SCALISE, our Capitol Police officers, and all those tragically affected that day. The unfortunate reality remains that the Capitol Complex and its occupants face an evolving and growing threat environment, and this bill will help address these needs.

This bill also addresses cyber security threats by providing funding for the Sergeant at Arms Senate network cyber security initiatives. Further, this bill demands a rigorous review before any telecommunications equipment from companies linked to Russia, China, Iran, or North Korea can be acquired by legislative branch agencies.

This bill also promotes transparency for the American people by including a provision called e-file, which streamlines the process for Senate campaign filings, requiring Senate candidates to follow the same standard of transparency required by all other Federal candidates. This provision enhances government transparency, reduces unnecessary bureaucratic redtape, and would save hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars by having candidates—Senate candidates—file directly with the Federal Election Commission, instead of the current paper-based practice.

This bill provides \$933 million for the Senate, which is \$13 million above last year. I want to specifically note that \$5 million is designated for the sole purpose of voluntary compensation of Senate interns by Senate offices. This additional funding will help ensure that the broadest possible pool of intern candidates have the opportunity to serve. Washington, DC, is a very expensive place, and it is good to see this provision in the bill.

There is also \$1 million provided to support ongoing Congressional Accountability Act reform efforts to increase compliance and support training of legislative branch offices and agencies on harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

These are just a few of the many highlights of the bill. I want to thank my ranking member, Senator MURPHY, for working with me to craft this bipartisan legislation. I also appreciate the support of the Committee on Appropriations in favorably reporting the Legislative Branch appropriations bill unanimously for consideration by the full U.S. Senate.

I respect Chairman SHELBY and Vice Chairman LEAHY for their efforts to work in a bipartisan manner to bring bills to the Senate floor and end this path of yet another year-end omnibus and more CRS. It was good to see a couple of amendment votes just before I started speaking. That is a healthy sign of stronger bipartisanship and getting the Senate back to regular order—executing, blocking, and tackling, as we should, for the American people.

It has been almost a decade—listen to this—it has been almost a decade since a Legislative Branch appropriations bill has received consideration on the floor outside of a large year-end spending bill. It is important for us as a body to return to regular order on appropriations bills and fund the government in a timely and more transparent manner.

I urge my colleagues to support the adoption of the package of appropriations bills before the U.S. Senate. I look forward to working with Senators on any amendments they may have to the legislative branch division.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am here to join Senator DAINES in recommending the Legislative appropriations bill to our colleagues. I note his history lesson—10 years since we passed a Legislative Branch appropriations bill on the floor of the Senate. During none of those 10 years was Senator DAINES chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee on the Legislative Branch. Things are changing here, and it has been a real pleasure and honor to work with Senator DAINES on this bill, which we bring to the floor in a bipartisan manner.

Let me be brief in not trying to cover the ground that Senator DAINES has already covered, but I agree; I think this is a good bill, one that we can all support.

Let me add a few pieces to some of the highlights my colleague laid out for you. The first of those is the fact that this bill commits us to finally restoring GAO staffing to its 2011 levels. This is really important because every dollar we appropriate to GAO gets about a \$128 taxpayer return because of the efficiencies they recommend that then get adopted. GAO lost about 343 staff from 2002 to 2003 during the sequester. We are putting them back to the place where they can do important work for us.

Second, let me reiterate the important investments we are making in the Capitol Police. The threats that we face and our staff face and visitors face aren't imaginary. Again, it was a year ago last week when a gunman came after our colleagues in the House and the Senate at a baseball practice off campus. It is important that this bill recognizes the threats we face are not just on campus but are in other places around the Capitol and has some resources to make sure that both the Capitol Police and the Senate Sergeant

at Arms are making sure that Members and staff are protected not only on campus but also at events off campus that may come with certain serious risks.

In this bill, CRS is put on a path to restore its 13-percent staff loss. Again, over the course of sequester, a lot of the agencies that serve us took some pretty serious hits. They don't make that up in this bill, but they are set on a path where they can get back to the kind of footing we are putting GAO on in this legislation. A long-needed modernization of the copyright office is kicked off in this legislation. Again, that is a long-term plan, but we are kicking it off. It is very, very much overdue.

We are also beginning another process that I think will be really important to the campus. We are beginning the process of exploring options to expand the size of the Senate childcare center. Pretty much every large employer in the country offers some level of childcare services to employees. The Senate barely does that. We have 6,200 employees and just 68 childcare slots. There are actually only nine infant slots in the Senate. Over the course of the last few years, the House has tripled the size of its childcare center. We are going to begin taking a look at what the options might be to expand our capacity as well.

Let me end by highlighting, again, this small fund in the bill that will allow Senators to begin paying interns. It is important to note that this is totally optional, so any Senator who wants to use this fund can, only for the purpose of paying interns. If they don't use it, it goes right back to the Treasury.

Each of us has our own unique journey as to how we got to be a U.S. Senator; mine started as a Senate intern. I was an intern for Senator Chris Dodd, but there is no way I could have taken advantage of that opportunity had my family not had the resources to be able to send me to Washington for a summer, had I not had the family resources to be able to pay rent for a summer.

The fact is, that experience is foreclosed to far too many American children because many Senate offices—not all but many Senate offices—do not pay their interns. This would at least give the option for Senate offices to do the same.

Let me again thank Senator DAINES—we worked really well together on this bill—and Chairman SHELBY and Vice Chairman LEAHY. It is good that we are bringing back regular order, at least for now, on the appropriations process.

My view is that the default position on these bills should be to allow amendments to come to the floor and to have a vote; that we shouldn't have to twist so many arms in order to get votes on amendments; that we shouldn't be afraid of putting our vote down on any particular amendment, whether it be an easy one or a tough

one. We are beginning to start exercising those muscles on this minibus.

I thank Chairman DAINES, Chairman SHELBY, and Vice Chairman LEAHY for their work in allowing us to bring this product to the floor.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. KAINÉ. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the accomplishments the Senate was able to achieve yesterday with the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act. In doing that, I want to highlight a couple of items as a member of the Armed Services Committee that I worked on that I am very proud of but that I think also demonstrate our ability to work in a bipartisan fashion because the three items I will mention were heavily bipartisan. They also give some illustration of the breadth of the defense authorization act—this act which we pass every year that is hundreds of billions of dollars to support the American military and contains so many different kinds of provisions to try to help defend the Nation and protect those who serve it.

What I would love to do, after I say a word about our chair, Senator MCCAIN, is talk about military families, talk about shipbuilding, and talk about smart power.

Let me first just give a shout-out to Senator MCCAIN. He was sorely missed as our chairman during the month of May when we were in crunch time in the committee around this bill. It was bittersweet to see its passage yesterday without having him in the Chamber to lead the discussion and be here at passage. Yet I give great credit to Senator INHOFE, who stepped into the chair's shoes for purposes of the markup and the floor action; to Senator REED, the ranking member on the committee; and to Senator MCCAIN's staff, who peppered us with advice from the boss when calling in from Arizona during the whole process. We missed him, but he was definitely there, and we were encouraged to do our best work as we thought about him during the process.

With regard to military families, when I was elected to the Senate in 2013, we had a scandal in the country. I viewed it as a scandal. The unemployment rate for veterans was dramatically higher than the national average, especially for Iraq- and Afghan-era war veterans who were enlisted. They would serve the country and be deployed, often repeatedly. They would come back home and not be able to find jobs.

I worked together with colleagues on the Armed Services Committee and with many great employers in the private and public sectors and am proud to tell you that from 2013 to today, the veterans' unemployment rate has gone down dramatically. It is now less than the national average. When we focused on it, we tackled the problem, and we made progress.

Yet, in recent years, as I have been traveling around Virginia, a new problem has emerged, and that is the unemployment rate for military spouses. It is even hard to know the number. Do you know why? It is that when we do the monthly studies, the Department of Labor asks a person: Are you a veteran? Yet it doesn't ask if one is a military spouse. So, to get at the number, when you hear story after story after story, you have to take some fairly broad surveys. Blue Star families will take these surveys every year.

What we find is, the unemployment rate for military spouses is anywhere from three to five times the national average. One can immediately grasp why—moving to a new place in the middle of the year, having to get adjusted, maybe having to find a place for school. If you are moving and you have a job that has some kind of a license or credential—it could be as a cosmetologist, as a real estate agent, as an attorney, as a teacher—sometimes the credential doesn't automatically transfer. Sometimes it will only transfer if you pay a big fee, money which you may not have.

As I have traveled around Virginia—a military State—and as I have talked to my own son, who is in the Marine Corps and who has a wife who is a military spouse, and have heard about their challenges, I have suddenly realized we need to do something about unemployment among military spouses. It is fair for these spouses who sacrifice—and they have so much to offer—but it is also the case that if you do not try to help support military families, then members of the military will leave. Our brass will always tell us it is the individual's decision to join, but it is usually the family's decision to stay. Unless we can support military spouses, people who might want to make careers out of the military service leave prematurely. So we are destined to and really need to do this.

This year, I introduced two bills—the Military Spouse Employment Act and the Jobs and Childcare for Military Families Act—after hearing from spouses in Virginia and elsewhere. I acknowledge Senators PERDUE, MURRAY, BOOZMAN, TESTER, ROUNDS, GILLIBRAND, CARDIN, and WARREN—a very bipartisan group of Senators who worked with me on these two bills. I am proud to say the overwhelming number of provisions of both of these bills is part of the National Defense Authorization Act, which passed last night. After we introduced the bills in the Senate, companion bills were introduced in the House that made it into the House's version as well. As we conference, we ought to be able to take a big step forward for military spouses.

The bills do a number of things that are all responsive to the concerns raised by military spouses.

They make it easier to get more childcare workers on or near bases so people can find childcare if they work.

They make it easier for Federal agencies to hire military spouses. Some-

times the best jobs are on or around military bases or are at other Federal agencies. The preferential or expedited hiring preferences for military spouses is part of this.

We allow military spouses to take advantage of something called the career advancement account, which would enable a military spouse to take a course. What if you are done with your coursework and what you really need are the dollars to get a license or to transfer your credential? The career advancement account should be able to be used for that.

The bill allows military spouses to go to transition classes with their servicemember spouses before they transition out. The transition from Active to veteran status is a family thing, and spouses have every need to participate in transition planning as the servicemembers do.

Finally, to help in that transition process, the bill will allow military spouses to take advantage of counseling and career coaching for up to a year after the servicemembers leave Active-Duty service.

Again, this is bipartisan—supported in both Houses by Members of both parties—and it will be part of the NDAA. God willing, we will conference, and it will go to the President's desk. My goal is that we start to make the same progress in bringing down the unemployment rate for military spouses as we were able to do with respect to veterans.

The second is shipbuilding. Virginia is a shipbuilding State. If anybody ever tells me American manufacturing is dead, I say: Come with me to the Huntington Ingalls shipyard in Newport News, VA, and I will show you American workers manufacturing the most complicated items on planet Earth—nuclear aircraft carriers and submarines.

The shipbuilding budget deal that is in the works now is strong. Last year, in the NDAA, we made a commitment to go from a 270-ship Navy to 355 ships. This would be a multiple-decades-long commitment. We did that last year. This year, together with the budget deal, we are making that strong budgetary investment in growing our shipbuilding capacity. We owe it to our shipbuilders, and we owe it to our military to stay on this path and give them some certainty so we can have these important assets with which to protect the Nation.

Two Fridays ago, I held a symposium at Hampton Roads—the future of a 355-ship Navy—that focused on workforce needs. Some of the shipbuilders that will build these ships are in prekindergarten right now. We need to have an education system that teaches them about the opportunities that will position them for success in technical fields and that encourages and incentivizes them to do it.

The shipbuilding and ship repair provisions of the NDAA are the best in any of the years I have been on the Armed

Services Committee in the Senate, and that is good news for the defense of the Nation and good news for shipbuilding communities, like Hampton Roads or Bath, ME, or Portsmouth or the gulf or Puget Sound or Hawaii. These shipbuilding and ship repair communities will benefit.

Finally, there is smart power. Sometimes the best power is not military power. Sometimes the best power is diplomacy or the USAID, the Agency for International Development. We have to use the right tool to accomplish the right objective. In both of the last two NDAA's, I offered amendments that allowed the Department of Defense to transfer its resources—if there is a checkoff by the Secretary of Defense—to other Federal agencies if they will do a better job with the task at hand. Let me give you an example.

Our military has done a great job in the battle against ISIS, in beating ISIS on the battlefield. Yet, once you have beaten ISIS on the battlefield, how do you stop it from coming back? How do you hold onto territory and not allow the reemergence of terrorist organizations? One way is by developing local economies and strengthening local institutions so the urge or the tendency for terrorist groups to move into a power vacuum is dampened. Sometimes the military is good at that, but the military would acknowledge that sometimes the best way to build institutions and stabilize communities is to grow their economies—that is what the U.S. Agency for International Development does—or to build civilian institutions. The State Department does that.

In this year's NDAA, as in last year's, in a pile of projects so we can assess how it works, we have given the Department of Defense the ability to provide support to these other agencies as they try to stabilize regions once conflict has been reduced. This is going to be of enormous importance for Iraq and Syria and Afghanistan. The nice thing about this is there was bipartisan support, and it was requested by the Department of Defense. You know your DOD leaders are on the ball when they are saying: Give us more ability to allow the State Department and USAID to do the things they are better at than we are.

Again, these are just three examples, and I could list 1,000 provisions that are in the National Defense Authorization Act that are novel and creative and that are completely bipartisan. At a time when so many things seem partisan, it is nice to know that when it comes to the defense of the Nation, Democrats and Republicans can work together after having been inspired by the hectoring phone calls from Senator MCCAIN and his staff to produce something that is really positive for the country. I celebrate its passage in the Senate last night and look forward to working with my colleagues when the matter comes back to us following the conference with the House.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, tomorrow, June 20, is World Refugee Day. The United Nations General Assembly in 2000 declared June 20 to be World Refugee Day so we can have public awareness and support for refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced people.

The numbers are now out as to the number of displaced people in the year 2017, and that number is kind of shocking. It is record-setting for recent times—65.6 million people are displaced from their homes today. Over 22 million are refugees, over 40 million are displaced in their own country—internally displaced individuals, and almost 3 million are asylum seekers. These numbers rival the number of displaced people we saw after World War II.

Fifty-five percent of the refugees come from three countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan. We have seen recent additions to the number of displaced people. In Burma, the Rohingya Muslims were forced out of their homes, and 650,000 had to flee. In the Central African Republic, we saw, again by reason of conflict, a lot of people being displaced. In our own hemisphere in Venezuela, there are 1.5 million people displaced from that conflict, and of course we all are familiar with the problems in Central America and El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—countries which have been plagued by violence, from which a lot of families have tried to escape in order to save their children.

In Syria, there are 12 million displaced people. That is over half the population of Syria as a result of the conflict and the ISIS campaign. Over half the people in that country are displaced. When we talk about the impact it has on other countries when individuals seek to leave and become refugees—in Lebanon, for example, 1 million Syrians have fled to Lebanon. In Jordan, 660,000 Syrians have fled to Jordan. These countries have been prepared to take in these refugees. The impact, of course, is immediate to the individuals who are displaced. There is also an impact on the region, and as far away as we have seen the distances people will go in order to seek safety, there has been a major impact on the Continent of Europe.

I will be introducing a resolution for the U.S. Senate to go on record recognizing World Refugee Day. It will reaffirm the U.S. Government commitment to uphold international leadership, our strong support for humanitarian assistance, particularly in helping host countries' living conditions. I just saw the press accounts of the Rohingya popu-

lation living in tent cities during the monsoon season who are at great risk. We need to join the international community that is working to help these vulnerable people.

The resolution speaks to us partnering with our international communities. This is an international effort, with U.S. leadership. We are reaffirming our longstanding tradition of resettling refugees in the United States.

I have worked on this issue since I have been in Congress, and it has always been bipartisan. I have had strong partners on both the Democratic and Republican side fighting for America to maintain its leadership against the vulnerable people in the world who have been displaced and the refugee population and the asylum seekers.

I remember vividly working with Senator MCCAIN on humanitarian aid and holding those who prey on these vulnerable people who are displaced, the perpetrators, accountable for their human rights violations. There have been many other examples of us working together. We should be welcoming the persecuted and vulnerable refugees in the United States, recognizing that America's strength is in our diversity, the people who braved coming to this country who built this great country, the United States of America.

So I need to comment that President Trump's policies stand in sharp contrast to what America's role must be in regard to promoting the welfare of displaced people as we tomorrow celebrate World Refugee Day. I know the subject that is getting the most debate right now—and rightly so, and I am going to talk about it—is the removal of children from their parents at our border, which, to me, is an abomination. I am going to talk about that, but that is not the only problematic part of President Trump's refugee policies.

This administration has reduced dramatically the refugee caps for those permitted to resettle in the United States. We believe the number is as high as an 83 percent reduction in America's willingness to accept refugees. Here we are with global leadership asking countries to keep their borders open for those who are at risk to enter their country, and we are closing our borders. That is not what the world leader does in that regard.

We have seen policies that discriminate against who can come to this country. There is no question the Trump administration tried to impose a Muslim ban, a religious test, as to who could come to this country. We heard the President's comments about certain countries, which raised questions about whether the demographics of that country affect the ability of people being able to come to America. We have seen this administration propose, time and time again, cuts in humanitarian aid to vulnerable, displaced people in order to fund a wall on our southern border.

Then there are the Dreamers, the DACA registrants. Through Executive

order, President Trump created a problem that didn't exist for the Dreamers who were given status to be able to work and go to school under an Executive order by President Obama. President Trump changed that by Executive order. It wasn't Congress. Congress didn't create the problem, the President did.

Then we have those who are legally here—legally here under temporary status, TPS—from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, and other countries. They have been here a long time because the conditions in their country have not changed. It is still not safe for them to go back to their country. They are legally in the United States, and against the recommendations of our own missions in these countries, the Trump administration decided to put an ending date for their legal status in the United States, meaning, even though they have been here for 15 years, they are going to have to leave America. That is done by Executive action by President Trump, not by Congress. We didn't create this problem—whether it is the Dreamers or TPS, the President could change that today with the stroke of a pen.

Then we have asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are the most persecuted. Their own lives are at risk if they have to go back to their host countries. What did Attorney General Sessions do? He removed victims of domestic abuse and gang violence from those who can seek asylum in the United States. They did that by Executive action, not Congress. We didn't create this problem. The Trump administration created the problem, and they could change it with the stroke of a pen.

Yes, there are a lot of issues where I believe President Trump's policies are not what America is about, whether it is support for humanitarian aid or whether it is the number of refugees we accept or whether it is dealing with the Dreamers or those in TPS, the asylum seekers. All of that, to me, violates the basic principles of America that make us the strong Nation we are.

The most recent force of separation of parents from their children at our southern border is outrageous, and it is affecting people's lives every day—children's lives every day.

Let me set this up because, again, this was done by the President. He can correct it with the stroke of a pen. Congress didn't create the problem; the President did this. The President can change this today.

It is my understanding that as many as 70 children every single day are being separated from their parents at our southern border. This can't wait until tomorrow. Each one of these children will be scarred for the rest of their life because of this cruel and inhumane policy announced by the Trump administration.

Let me set this up as to how this happened, because there is no law requiring this. The President decided that be-

cause you happen to be a parent concerned about your child's life—you live in a country in which you have a choice of your child joining a gang—by the way, if you join a gang, you are going to have to take someone else's life. That is usually the admission to join a gang. And if you refuse to join a gang, not only is your life at risk, but your family's life is at risk. So what would you do as a father or a mother if your child were in that position? You are trying to seek the safety of your child, so you leave and you come to our southern border. Now you are told you are going to lose your child in separation for doing what—trying to protect that child's life? Is that the United States? No, it isn't. But that is the policy President Trump has now established at our southern border.

It has to end, and it can end today by the President of the United States signing an order saying we are not going to do that. We all want to have rule of law and enforcement of laws at our border. We understand that. But you don't separate children from their parents. That can change, and we need to change it.

Why are we doing this?

Attorney General Sessions said we are doing this as a deterrent. We take children away from parents as a deterrent when parents are acting in order to protect their children? That makes absolutely no sense.

Then I heard: Congress could take action. The President said that. We could take action. Our domestic policies must support our fundamental ideals of compassion and freedom and unwavering support for human rights. I agree with that. Yes, it would be nice for Congress to pass laws. I am all for doing that. We saw that we weren't even able to pass a bill protecting the Dreamers, even though Democrats and Republicans agreed on it, because President Trump wanted to use that for leverage for his wall and for repressive immigration policies.

Let's not go down another path where we are going to have delay after delay and children being separated from parents every day. It is President Trump's responsibility to correct this today.

Yes, we should work on legislation. I applaud Senator FEINSTEIN for her legislation that would keep families together with the proper legal process. I congratulate Senator SMITH for the HELP Separated Children Act, which gives fundamental principles. A lot of us have talked about various parts of immigration reform and comprehensive immigration reform. I am all for that. I voted for comprehensive immigration reform. But make no mistake about it—children are being taken away from their parents today by U.S. authorities on our southern border, when their parents have done nothing other than try to protect their children. It is happening today, and the way to change it today is for President Trump to say that is not what we are

going to do here in America. I stand ready to work with any of my colleagues on reasonable laws that could protect the vulnerable people.

Tomorrow, as I said, is World Refugee Day, where we have record numbers of people who have been displaced. America has the responsibility to be a leader on these issues and to lead by example, recognizing that diversity is our strength. We have responsibilities to those who have been persecuted to welcome them under our reasonable vetting rules so that we can, in fact, live up to our principles and lead the world.

I ask my colleagues—on the eve of World Refugee Day—let us work together. I ask President Trump to do the right thing and reverse these repressive, un-American policies that he has put into place.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, for the information of Senators and staffs, the leadership staffs are talking now about the possibility of a vote at about 4:45 this afternoon on a proposal by Senator CRAPO and Senator WHITEHOUSE, which would be a pilot program for advanced reactor fuel. I am saying this just for the information of Senators. The vote is not set yet, but we are hopeful that it will be. As soon as we have final clearance, we will let Senators know.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from New Jersey.

FORCED FAMILY SEPARATION

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the humanitarian crisis that we are facing at this moment in our country. It is a moral crisis. It is a crisis that didn't come about by some natural disaster; it has been manufactured by the actions of the Trump administration and the actions of our President.

Since this past April, over 2,700 children—some of them just infants—have been forcibly separated from their parents. That is about 45 children every single day. These children have been ripped from the arms of their parents, in some cases literally. These children have been imprisoned or deported, and at this very moment, many of these children are being warehoused. Some of them are put in what amount to cages, and some of them are being covered with thin, tinfoil-like blankets that we see handed out to marathon runners.

I know these children are experiencing great fear, great trauma, wondering where their parents are, wondering what will happen to them, confused, feeling isolated and alone. They

are wondering if they did something wrong, and they are wondering what they did to deserve this. But more than that, we know these children are enduring psychological damage, which is literally having a physical effect on their brains. Pediatricians and researchers know trauma like this creates toxic stress. These children are enduring things that affect the development of their brains and their life's well-being. The research is clear. They found that separating children from parents literally changes the makeup of their brains—this level of cortisol, this level of trauma. One pediatric expert called the effect of this kind of family separation “catastrophic” on those children.

At this very moment, so many Americans, these children, and others are wondering what happened to the America that we believe in, that we know, and that we hale. What is happening to this Nation that has for so long been a symbol of hope, a symbol of opportunity? How can we be seeing an America and how can they be experiencing an America that is so different from what we say we are? Well, the answer to the question, unfortunately, is painful, and it is direct.

A little over 2 months ago, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen, and President Donald Trump made the decision to institute what they are calling a zero tolerance policy when it comes to individuals and families who cross the southern border without documentation or authorization. The policy dictates that any adult who illegally crosses the southern border will be subject to Federal prosecution and therefore placed in Federal custody.

When the Trump administration instituted this policy, they knew exactly what they were doing. They were concerned, probably, with the fallout—what this might mean, what people might say—but they clearly knew, consciously knew what would happen because any accompanying children could not be placed in criminal detention facilities with their parents once their parents were charged and detained. The families would be separated. The forced separation of children and families was not an unintended consequence of the Trump administration policy; it was and is a purposeful decision done with full consciousness of the impact on families and children.

As news reports and photos of this inhumane policy that is shocking the consciousness of Americans—not left or right, not Republican or Democrat; it is shocking the consciousness of America—as images of these actions have spread over the past several days, we have seen the President and members of the administration try to distance themselves from the very policy they created. They have even gone so far—and it is not shocking at this point, but to hear the President out-and-out lie and try to blame Democrats in Congress, try to blame a Federal

law, try to blame anything and not accept responsibility, when clearly, as my colleague LINDSEY GRAHAM has said, this is something that didn't come about from this body—this didn't come about because of some Democrats. CHUCK SCHUMER didn't do this. NANCY PELOSI didn't do this. This was a decision made by our President that he could stop right now, as Senator GRAHAM said, with a phone call.

So let's be clear about something. This is a policy. This is a decision. This is a President who is assaulting—it is moral vandalism—the values, the common decency of our country, the ideals we hold dear. This is being carried out by Trump administration officials—something that can be reversed with a phone call.

So this moment really is a moment of moral reckoning in the United States of America. It is a low point. It is a heartbreaking point. I am one of those people who believe that if this country hasn't broken your heart, you probably don't love her enough. This is one of those moments, as we have seen in the past, where we will be judged. How we react in this moral moment—future generations will look back at this crossroads of conscience in the same way we look back at some of the most shameful chapters, shameful moments in our history. They will look back and see what we did, what we said, how we acted, how we stood up, how we fought, how we demanded during this time.

Today, we look back at the horrors of slavery and the shame of that time and the way that purposefully fracturing families was used to terrorize and subjugate Black Americans, how children were torn from the mothers and sold away, how wives and husbands were violently separated. We know these acts were not just financial decisions on the part of slave owners. It was deeper than that. It was this idea of subjugating, this idea of dehumanizing, this idea that if you so demonize people and dehumanize them, it makes it easier to victimize those folks, to assault their dignity, unconscious of the fact that when you assault the dignity of others, you assault the dignity of yourself.

Today, we look back with shame and regret at the practice of the internment of Japanese Americans, the out-and-out violation of our values and ideals as a country. Our fellow Americans—over 120,000 men, women, and children—were forcibly removed from their homes and put into detainment and internment camps.

Today, we look back with deep shame and regret at how Jewish refugees fleeing from the Holocaust were turned away from our shores, many who were sent back to Germany and killed by the Nazis.

Today, we look back with shame at the way Native American families were separated, their children taken and sent to boarding schools where they were stripped of their language and stripped of their culture.

These were moral moments in our past. Do you know what? We tell ourselves that if we were in those moments, if we were in those times, maybe we would have stood up, and so many people of good faith and of every background did stand up in those times. We think to ourselves that if we were there in those moments, we would have done something, we would have acted. We are at that moment, and we are at a defining moment in our history. We are at a moral crossroads. We are at a point where our Nation's character is being revealed.

When we look at history, we have seen the ways we have made mistakes, but we have also seen the truth of our Nation in those periods, the ideals that we have professed since our founding, the ideals that generations of Americans have tried to make more real, more perfect, more established in this Nation. We see in the history how generations past—Black, White, Christian, Jewish, folks from all different backgrounds, men and women—stood up and did the right thing. They were insistent that this Nation should be different.

We were not founded as a country because we all pray alike or because we all look alike or because we are all the same race. No. We always strove to be different as a nation, that we would be a nation of ideals and values, that we would be a nation bigger than the racial or religious lives that divide men and women, that we would have unifying ideals and principles, and that we in America would be a light unto nations.

We have seen this Nation do it right and live up to those ideals with Hungarian refugees, Cuban refugees, Chinese refugees, and Haitian refugees, who all fled and found a safe haven here in the United States of America. Look at the waves of Irish who came to our shores to escape famine. Look at the waves of folks who have escaped oppression.

When we were at our best, we were a light unto nations—of hope, of integrity, of honesty, of honor. We are a nation of refugees. We are a nation of immigrants. We are a nation of exiles. We are a nation of ancestors of former slaves. We are not our particularistic parts, but we are a profound sum of those parts. We have made mistakes, but we have answered the question of who we are by showing our values, and that is why the United States has become known throughout the planet Earth as that beacon of light and hope.

I have traveled around the globe with the privileges of a Senator, and I see the way people look at this country. I see the way people try to model their behavior after ours. I see the way we talk about democratic ideals, democratic principles, how we try to talk about human rights, how we talk about human decency, and how we are held up as the model.

This is why Americans from across the aisle, across religions, across political affiliations, from across the country are speaking out. I have seen conservative Christian evangelicals, conservative Catholics, and Republican colleagues of mine stand up and speak the moral truth about our Nation that this behavior is un-American. They speak with a chorus of conviction, telling the one man who has the immediate power to change this, the one man who did this, to stop his actions, to restore honor, to correct this wrong.

I am proud to see Democrats and Republicans, progressives and conservatives speaking out against the moral vandalism that is not just degrading the dignity and humanity of the migrants at our border, but it is assaulting the dignity and humanity of America—the people of this country speaking out in one voice, one people understanding that we have one destiny, understanding that we share common values, and understanding that this is a time when we can't be silent. The opposite of justice is not injustice; it often is inaction. It is silence, it is apathy, and it is indifference.

We must call on our President to end this. If he refuses, then we have an obligation here in Congress. We have the power; we can and must act to stop this inhumane, immoral, and un-American practice. We could vote today on a bill, the Keep Families Together Act, which has the support of 47 Democratic Senators and 2 Independents—49 Members of this body. It would prohibit the Department of Homeland Security from separating children from their parents unless there are extraordinary circumstances. The bill is common sense. It is a moderate proposal. It is literally the least Congress can do to prevent this crisis from continuing.

Yes, we need to secure our borders. Yes, we need to uphold our just laws. But separating families and imprisoning children are not how we do that. We need to protect our borders, but we also need to reflect our values, to protect our values, to affirm the character of this country. We need to protect and secure the ideals of a nation we have all stood for. In this moral moment in our Nation's history, that means protecting and standing up for the dignity and humanity of these children.

I say again, future generations will look back at this moment, at this crisis of conscience, and they will see what has already happened. They will see this as a low moment, and they will wonder what we did during this time.

History does have its eyes on us, but we have a chance right now to show them what we did, to let them see, when our morals have been tested, how we responded. They will look to see what people in this country did when people were having their values violated and their ideals and the dignity of their children and families assaulted. They will look to see what we did. They will look to see if we are silent or if we speak up—if we are indif-

ferent or if we act. Do we indulge in apathy or have we become activists? They will look to see whether we fought for the ideals that made this Nation what I believe it is, which is, as Elijah called for the State of Israel, to be a light unto nations. That is the America I believe in. That is the America I know.

We look back on the low of when women were being denied the vote, and we see a multiracial, multiethnic coalition—everyone from Frederick Douglass to Susan B. Anthony—come together and build a movement that propelled this government to act, and women were granted the right to vote.

We look back on the low of segregation and how a multiracial coalition of Americans came together, worked together, fought together, stood together, sacrificed together, and some died together to advance the cause of civil rights.

We look back at the Japanese internment, and we see how people, regardless of their background in America, regardless of their political party, came together to redress this wrong. In 1988, we saw a Republican President, Ronald Reagan, who responded by signing the Civil Liberties Act into law and working to right the wrong of Japanese internment.

Future generations will look back on this moment. They will look to see whether we affirmed that in America we don't injure and imprison children; we protect them. They will look back to see that in America we don't abuse rights; we protect them. They will look back at America to see if we are called to be a nation, truly, that works to defend human rights at home and abroad, not violate them in our own backyard.

This isn't an injustice that needs to take decades, years, or even months to correct. President Trump must, can, and should end this immoral policy today. If he refuses to act, this body will be judged. Congress can vote today on the Keep Families Together Act, and we must act. We must do something; we must stand for something or the dignity and the humanity that will be assaulted will not be those of children on our border. It will be damaging to the dignity and the humanity of us all.

For the sake of our values, for the sake of our Nation, I urge my colleagues to act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, for the information of colleagues, we are hoping within the next few minutes to have clearance from the leadership to be able to move ahead on a vote this afternoon on an amendment by Senator CRAPO and Senator WHITEHOUSE involving a pilot program for advancing reactor fuel.

Senator CRAPO would like to be recognized when I sit down in order to briefly comment on that amendment. Following that, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MENENDEZ be recognized.

Hopefully, by the time Senator MENENDEZ is finished, we will have clearance for the vote, and we can proceed to the vote.

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

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I first thank Senator ALEXANDER for the great efforts he has undergone to bring this legislation forward.

The Senate is working as it should. We are processing amendments. Hopefully, we will make it through all of our appropriations bills this year and go back to regular order so that we avoid the kinds of collisions we have had all too often in the past few years as we try to accomplish the business of our government.

As we have been told, the next amendment planned to be voted on in the next few minutes, we hope, is the Crapo-Whitehouse amendment. This amendment is one that focuses on our nuclear energy in the United States.

Nuclear energy is a carbon-free emissions source of energy. It is becoming recognized as one of the more important parts of the energy solution in the United States, and our amendment does a very simple thing. It creates a pilot project at the Idaho National Laboratory to begin perfecting and implementing the process of processing spent naval fuel into fuel that can be utilized in our new, advanced reactors.

Currently, when naval fuel from our reactors in our Navy ships is spent, it still has about 80 percent of its value or its energy in it. The new, advanced reactors need about a 20-percent level. So we can literally get about four times as much fuel out of a spent naval fuel rod for new, advanced reactors as is in the rod itself, once it is ready for processing.

This is a tremendous source of new energy for the United States and one that should help us as we move forward in developing an "all of the above" energy policy for the United States. I encourage my colleagues, when we have the opportunity to vote for this, to support it and help us to move forward in this important part of our national energy policy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

FORCED FAMILY SEPARATION

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, today I rise in condemnation of the Trump administration's heartless, cruel, and inhumane policy of separating children from their parents when they seek asylum at our southern border.

I do so as the son of refugees who fled their homeland and came to this country because they longed to be free. I do so as a Catholic appalled by what is being done in the name of my Christian faith. I do so out of concern, as the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that the cruelty being conducted in the name of the U.S. Government may cause lasting damage to America's reputation in the

world. I do so as a parent who knows that there is no love more powerful, no love more universal than love for your child, and it is love that has driven these families to seek asylum in the United States.

Seeking asylum is not a crime. It is a cry for mercy, an act of desperation. The trauma being inflicted on these children and the anguish being inflicted on these parents is a direct result of the Trump administration's decision to criminalize asylum seekers and persecute families fleeing for their very lives.

President Trump is lying to the American people when he says that family separation is the law of the land. He is lying when he says that Democrats put a law on the books mandating that children be terrorized in this way.

Under the policies of previous administrations, families remained together while waiting for their asylum claims to proceed through our immigration courts. But this President has broken with the basic standards of decency that have guided past administrations, Republican and Democrat alike.

The criminalizing of asylum seekers is in fact a newly unveiled policy. Attorney General Jeff Sessions calls it a zero tolerance policy. I say it is a zero humanity policy, a zero compassion policy.

This policy of persecuting families fleeing for their lives comes straight from the White nationalist fringe. It has been in the works for over a year, going all the way back to when Chief of Staff John Kelly was Secretary of Homeland Security. Back in March of 2017, then-Secretary John Kelly said that the "name of the game is deterrence." He said that if the administration began separating kids from their parents, they could deter migrants from traveling to our southern border.

We have since heard Attorney General Jeff Sessions double down on this theme of deterrence. He said:

If people don't want to be separated from their children, they should not bring them with them. . . . If you bring children, you'll still be prosecuted.

To those who spout this perverse notion of deterrence, I ask: How do you deter a mother trying to protect her child from the brutality of forced servitude? How do you deter a father trying to protect his daughter from being raped and tortured? How do you deter a family so fearful for their safety that they are willing to embark on a perilous journey and travel thousands of miles—thousands of miles—to reach the United States?

The answer is that you can't, not without addressing the root causes of this forced migration.

Most of these families come from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras—the countries collectively known as the Northern Triangle. It is a region plagued by transnational gang violence, weak institutions, and poverty. Young boys are forced into ser-

vitute by gangs. Young girls are beaten and raped. Any parent who resists is killed. These countries suffer from some of the highest homicide rates in the world, and the violence against women is particularly appalling.

In El Salvador, a woman is murdered every 19 hours, and in Honduras—the country with the highest homicide rate for women in the world—a woman is killed every 16 hours.

To be blunt, these families face a stark choice. It is either stay and die or flee for a chance to live.

The facts show this policy of deterrence isn't deterring anyone. That is because it is hard to deter people who are fleeing for their lives. In recent months, we have seen the number of people seeking safety in record droves. There were 36,682 apprehensions at the border in February. By April, that number jumped to 50,924. In May, the number rose again to nearly 52,000.

If we aim to reduce forced migration, we must improve the conditions in the region. Our only hope of doing so is by working with the governments of the Northern Triangle by exercising smart diplomacy, by working together to find solutions to promote the rule of law, provide public safety, and free communities of terror from transnational gang violence. Yet, just a few hours ago, President Trump threatened to cut off aid to Central America and Mexico because "they are not sending their best."

In other words, he would have the policy of the United States be to make the dire conditions in Central America even worse—driving even more families to flee their homes in search of asylum. Let's be clear. These individuals are fleeing of their own accord. They are not being sent. They are fleeing. Their choice is stark: stay and die or leave and have a shot to live.

We know USAID initiatives that support economic development and good governance make a real difference. We have heard directly from young people who have found hope and safety through these programs. Now is not the time to recklessly abandon these programs. It is a time to invest in them.

The administration claims to be for law and order, but it deals in chaos and discord. President Trump lies with such frequency and such confidence because he knows the muddier the waters, the harder it is for the rays of truth to shine through.

This past weekend, some rays of light shone through when former First Lady Laura Bush made her voice heard. As she wrote in the Washington Post, "Our government should not be in the business of warehousing children in converted box stores or making plans to place them in tent cities in the desert outside of El Paso. These images are eerily reminiscent of the internment camps for U.S. citizens and non-citizens of Japanese descent during World War II, now considered to have been one of the most shameful episodes in U.S. history."

She couldn't be more right.

This isn't a PR crisis. It is a humanitarian crisis, and it is a moral crisis for our country. That is why even members of the Trump administration are struggling to defend this policy. It is indefensible.

Years from now, will we look back on this policy and be proud? No. We are going to look back and see it for what it is—another dark period in our history, in which we as a country failed to live up to the values that make America a beacon of hope and a leader among nations.

It is despicable to see President Trump inflict trauma on innocent children just to score political points with his base or to somehow use children as a leverage for some negotiating point. That is what is happening here.

President Trump and his Republican enablers in Congress have one strategy left in their playbook for 2018. They cannot run on being fiscally responsible; their trillion-dollar corporate tax cuts have exploded the Federal deficit. They cannot run on delivering the American people more affordable health care because under their watch, healthcare premiums are soaring, and prescription drug costs are surging. They cannot run on raising wages because under their policies, most of the Nation's economic gains continue to go to big corporations and to the top 1 percent instead of working families and the middle class. The only thing they have left to run on is fear.

In 2018, the Republican Party has one message. It is a message that says, as the President said earlier today, that these migrants aim to "infest our country"; that babies and toddlers and middle schoolers pose a threat to our public safety and our national security; that Latino families who are fleeing unthinkable violence are nothing more than pests.

Let me be clear, Mr. President. Running to save the lives of your child doesn't make you a criminal. It makes you a parent. Tearing innocent children away from their parents is shameful, it is cruel, and it is un-American.

President Trump is calling on Congress to fix a policy of his own creation. There is no law that instigates the President and his administration to do this, none at all. He chooses to do it.

House Republicans are trying to pass a so-called immigration compromise, when as far as I can see, the only thing it compromises is our time-tested system of legal, family-based immigration in this country.

Contrary to Speaker RYAN's claims, this will do nothing to end the separation of families at the border. It doesn't address the issue of the President's zero tolerance policy or put an end to the administration's cruel practices. Instead, the bill removes protections for asylum seekers and gives the administration license to lock families into detention for indefinite periods of time.

President Trump and ideologues like Jeff Sessions and Stephen Miller want to use the tears of innocent children as leverage in their quest to end legal immigration, as we know it, and to force the American people to pay for a ludicrous \$25 billion border wall.

The President, the Attorney General, the DHS Secretary, and the White House Chief of Staff are practicing a doublespeak tactic in the hope of confusing the American public, but there is nothing confusing about separating children from their parents. The America I know doesn't put children into cages. The America I know doesn't rip newborn babies out of their mothers' arms. The America I know doesn't treat families fleeing from criminals like they are criminals.

President Trump could end this despicable policy today without a law. He can order U.S. Customs and Border Control to stop tearing babies from their mothers' arms today. He can correct course and restore America's commitment to basic human rights today.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but the audio released yesterday by ProPublica is worth a million tears.

How do you submit the cries of innocent children to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD? I don't know how you do that, but you can hear it.

(Inaudible audio.)

You can hear it. I know we don't want to hear it. I know we don't want to hear it, but those are the cries of innocent children. I can't replicate it. I can't replicate their pain: "Papi, papi. Donde estas, papi?"

It is time this Senate has its conscience pricked, that it moves to action, and that it challenges the President on this horrific policy.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, first, let me thank the senior Senator from New Jersey for those remarks. It was a privilege and a pleasure to be here to hear them delivered. We had a hearing in the Judiciary Committee this morning with a representative of Homeland Security who was virtually incapable of explaining any of what they were trying to do here. I think we now have five or six different explanations from the Trump administration. One is, the Bible made me do it—the Attorney General; the other is, the Democrats made me do it; the third is, we are actually not doing it; the fourth is, we are doing it to build legislative leverage; and the fifth is, we are doing it in order to deter people from coming to our shores.

I doubt any of those are true, but, for sure, they can't all be true. It is a mess, but it is nothing like the mess of the images the Senator from New Jersey called to the conscience of the country today.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator would yield for a moment for a scheduling announcement.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Of course. I am finished, until I go to my business related to your bill.

Mr. ALEXANDER. For the information of Senators, there will not be a vote tonight on the Crapo-Whitehouse amendment. We have at least one Senator who is still studying the bill, but we believe that will be cleared up shortly. Our goal would be to have votes tomorrow morning at about 10 o'clock on the Crapo-Whitehouse amendment, as well as an amendment by Senator BALDWIN. Both of those are subject to being approved by the leadership staff. Only they can announce the scheduling of a vote.

For the information of Senators, there will not be a vote tonight, and there will be a vote on at least one to three amendments tomorrow morning, hopefully, at about 10 o'clock.

Senator CRAPO already has spoken about the Crapo-Whitehouse amendment, which is a pilot program for advanced reactor fuel. It is a very good idea. It is not reauthorizing a new program. It is not spending any more money. It is reallocating money for a very creative idea that Senator WHITEHOUSE and Senator CRAPO have come up with. I fully support it. I think the Senators on both sides of the aisle will see the wisdom of it once everyone has a chance to consider it. I am glad Senator WHITEHOUSE is here to talk more about it.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. First, let me thank Chairman ALEXANDER for his support and assistance in getting us to this point. He has also, until I rotated off the HELP Committee and onto the Finance Committee, been my chairman on the HELP Committee. Both in his work as the appropriations subcommittee chair here managing this bill, I thank him, and for all of his leadership on the HELP Committee when I was a member of that committee, I thank him.

As the Senate looks at this measure, I want to try to explain it in as simple terms as possible because I think this is a complete slam-dunk, win-win amendment. A next generation of nuclear power capability is being developed, and a great deal of the design of that next-generation nuclear capability is being done here in the United States.

For a variety of reasons, those American designs are now moving to approval and construction in other countries, particularly including China. I don't think it is a good idea for us to be designing new technologies but have them deployed in other countries. We are trying to address some of the hiccups that prevent this from going forward in the United States.

Our U.S. Navy uses nuclear fuel all the time. I think it is widely known that our aircraft carriers and submarines operate with nuclear engines. They do so very safely. They do so with the expert support of our U.S. Navy. Then, at the end of the day, they gen-

erate spent fuel that gets taken off of the aircraft carrier or the submarine when the engine is refueled. The question is, What becomes of that spent fuel?

What this bill would do is to allow the Navy to give access to that spent fuel to our National Labs. America's National Labs are a science gem of global proportions. The scientists who work in our National Labs are brilliant. They are extraordinary. They are at the cutting edge of a great number of issues and developments. One of them is—guess what—next-generation nuclear power. What access to the Navy's fuel would do is to allow them, under the strict controls that are protecting our National Labs, to begin to work through testing how some of these next-generation nuclear plants might work.

Why is it a big deal for us to look at developing in the United States this next generation of nuclear power?

One obvious reason is that it is carbon-free power, and we have already blown through 400 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. That is way out of the range that we have been in the entire history of humankind on this planet, and it will have all sorts of cascading effects on our climate, our atmosphere, and our oceans. Nuclear power avoids all of those ancillary risks of fossil fuel power.

The other problem is that we have been operating with old-school nuclear power for quite a long time in this country, and we have built up a very substantial reserve of nuclear waste, of spent fuel. At the moment, the Senate and the Congress and, indeed, the U.S. Government have no plan for getting rid of that nuclear waste. There have been fights over sticking it in caves in Nevada. There have been all sorts of ideas, but we do not currently have an operating plan. A great deal of that nuclear waste is, simply, stored at the powerplant at which the power was generated. That is a big liability, I believe.

I think that if we were to act as if we were a corporation and book as a liability the liability of the cost of having to safely dispose of all of that nuclear waste, it would get the companies' accountants' attention, and they would invest some effort into figuring out what the solution is to dealing with all of those stockpiles of nuclear waste for which we currently have no plan.

Here is where the two lines converge, because the next-generation nuclear technologies carry the promise of being able to take our nuclear waste stockpile and repurpose it as fuel—to turn toxic, dangerous, multi-10,000-year waste, with a huge liability attached to it, into an asset, a power-producing asset.

To me, this is a very small investment in a potential solution to a very big problem. I think we can have considerable confidence that the U.S. Navy knows what it is doing in handling these nuclear fuels and that our National Labs know what they are doing

in handling nuclear materials. The trust of the Navy and the trust of the National Labs and the expertise of the National Labs, in their giving us the ability to actually create a potential solution to at least a significant part of our nuclear waste problem, is worth the small investment that, I hope, my colleagues will be willing to make today.

I particularly thank Senator CRAPO, who has worked with me very closely on this whole nuclear innovation side. He is a real leader in this area. I am happy to be his Democratic colleague working on this. I hope that with that explanation, we can come to a measure of agreement that this is actually a good, “no losers” idea and be able to vote on it tomorrow. I hope we will have a very strong and successful vote.

With all of that, I yield the floor to the floor manager from the Republican side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Rhode Island for his idea. This is a creative idea on his part.

I would like to give credit to Senator CRAPO and Senator RISCH from the State of Idaho. Idaho has our nuclear laboratory, among our 17 National Laboratories, and the work that we are talking about would be done in Idaho.

The Energy and Water Development appropriations bill, which was approved almost unanimously in the Appropriations Committee a few weeks ago, approved \$10 million for the kind of work that Senator WHITEHOUSE just described. It is a pilot program to recycle the Navy’s spent nuclear fuel and use the recovered uranium to supply high-assay low-enriched uranium for advanced reactors. That is already in the bill. This amendment by Senators WHITEHOUSE, CRAPO, and RISCH would add an additional \$5 million to the pilot program. The additional \$5 million is being reallocated from fuel cycle research and development and does not increase the overall spending in the bill.

In looking ahead to tomorrow, the leaders’ offices are still talking, but our expectation is that we will have at least two votes tomorrow at about 10 o’clock. One would be on the Crapo-Whitehouse-Risch amendment, which we have just described. The second would be on the Baldwin-Portman amendment, which has been considered. Hopefully, we will have other appropriations amendments during the day.

I encourage Senators and their staffs to file tonight, if at all possible, the amendments they have to these three appropriations bills, because the majority leader has said that he would like to finish our work this week.

While there is an opportunity for offering amendments, as Senators know, most amendments that Senators can think of have already been dealt with. I speak from experience on our own

subcommittee, the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, and then on the full Appropriations Committee, which includes 31 Senators. We have heard, in our case, from 83 different Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle. We have heard their suggestions just as in the case of Senator WHITEHOUSE’s idea about a pilot program for advanced reactor fuels. We have already heard from him about that and from Senator CRAPO and Senator RISCH, and we have included it in the base bill. What we will do tomorrow, if we have another vote, is to simply add \$5 million to it from another account without increasing the amount of spending.

There are a great many amendments that Senators have offered that are already a part of the Energy and Water Development bill. That is why I think it has such strong support on the subcommittee, the committee, and the floor. Yet, if there are additional amendments that relate to the bill, particularly if they are bipartisan amendments, we would like for them to be filed tonight so they can be considered tomorrow.

It is my hope that before we close tonight, the leaders will authorize the announcements of votes tomorrow morning on two amendments at about 10 o’clock.

I yield the floor.

Seeing no other Senator on the floor, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. President.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, as 2010 dawned, in what now seems like another era of political time, the U.S. Congress was poised to tackle the problem of climate change. The House of Representatives had just passed a cap-and-trade bill, and there was bipartisan support for climate action in the Senate. Then, on January 21—a date that ought to live in judicial infamy—five Justices on the U.S. Supreme Court—all Republican appointees—delivered *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and unleashed unlimited special interest money into America’s political system.

The fossil fuel industry was looking for a way to stop climate legislation; it got *Citizens United*. Fossil fuel interests asked those Justices for, anticipated, and immediately seized on the political opportunity *Citizens United* provided them.

Citizens United instantly changed the game in Congress for big political interests, such as the fossil fuel industry. Before that fateful day, Congress had held regular, bipartisan hearings and even votes on legislation to limit the carbon emissions causing climate change, but *Citizens United* allowed the fossil fuel industry to strike at this bipartisan progress, and it struck hard. The fossil fuel industry set its political forces instantly to work, targeting pro-climate-action candidates, particularly Republicans. Outside spending in 2010’s congressional races increased 75 percent—75 percent—by more than \$200 million over the previous midterm’s levels.

Citizens United gave the fossil fuel political forces another power—not just the power to spend but the power to threaten. As powerful a cudgel as actual election spending is to wield, it is also powerful to threaten to wield that cudgel. Threats are not only powerful, they are less expensive than actual spending—you get to keep the money, and the threats are likely to be secret.

The sudden barrage of unlimited money, dark money, and political threat had its desired effect: The political hit men of the fossil fuel industry stopped bipartisan climate action in its tracks. Pro-climate Republicans had a choice: either stop advocating for climate action or become a casualty.

The clear before-and-after point is 2010’s *Citizens United* decision and the immediate weaponization of that new power by the fossil fuel industry to protect its polluting status quo—a status quo, by the way, that the International Monetary Fund estimates provides fossil fuel a subsidy of \$700 billion—billion with a “b”—every year, just in the United States.

The Republican appointees who delivered the *Citizens United* decision claimed that there would be a regime of “effective disclosure” that would, as they said, “provide shareholders and citizens with the information needed to hold corporations and elected officials accountable for their positions and supporters.” Of course, this has not happened. Instead, we have witnessed billionaires and corporate interests spending unlimited secret money in elections. Outside groups have already spent \$140 million in the 2018 election cycle, nearly half of which is from groups with no or only partial disclosure.

The head of the Koch brothers’ dark money group, Americans for Prosperity, announced that the Kochs’ political network plans to spend \$400 million in the 2018 cycle—60 percent more than it spent in 2016. Just last month, a single anonymous donor contributed \$26.4 million to the American Action Network, a dark-money organization with close ties to Speaker PAUL RYAN.

Secrecy is the key to the fossil fuel polluters’ toxic control of our democracy. Light will drive them back. As a Foreign Service officer’s son living overseas in impoverished tropical

countries, I remember that the cockroaches would come out at night. When you would go into the kitchen to get a drink, you would hit the light switch, the lights would flicker on, and you would see and hear the cockroaches scuttling for the protection of the shadows, fleeing the light.

Well, we need a little bit of that light in our democracy. So, with my Democratic colleagues, I am reintroducing my legislation to bring about the so-called “effective disclosure,” which even the Supreme Court that decided *Citizens United* acknowledged is necessary for the American people to have full faith in our political system.

The DISCLOSE Act of 2018 offers a commonsense solution to restore transparency and accountability in our political system. The DISCLOSE Act would rein in what has been called a “tsunami of slime” by requiring organizations spending money in American elections—including super PACs, unions, tax-exempt 501(c)(4) groups, all of them—to promptly disclose donors who give \$10,000 or more during an election cycle. Big, sneaky donors will try to hide behind shell corporations that disguise who they are, so the bill includes robust transfer provisions to prevent dark-money operatives from using complex webs of phony front groups to hide real donor identities.

The DISCLOSE Act also strengthens the ban forbidding election spending by foreign nationals. One of the problems of our present dark-money infestation is that foreign actors can hide their political influence activities in the exact same dark-money channels used by the big special interests. Once you tolerate dark-money channels of influence in American elections, you can’t police who uses those dark-money channels. Anonymity is anonymity; anyone could be hiding in the dark. Vladimir Putin could be hiding in the dark. We don’t know until we turn on the lights.

Last, the bill requires people spending money on election advertising to “stand by your ad” so that the ad itself identifies who is behind the advertising.

Can we get this done? The public certainly wants us to, and it wasn’t too long ago that Republicans supported disclosure. They were right back then, but now Republicans, who once extolled the principles of openness and accountability in our elections, have changed their tune. Gone is their distaste for secretive election spending; indeed, a new appetite for secret spending has emerged.

This is how the special interest rot of our democracy occurs: The big special interests not only want to win in Congress, they want to change the rules of democracy to make it so they can always win in Congress, and they use those changed rules to make sure their party goes along with it.

Back in 2014, the Rules Committee actually held a hearing on DISCLOSE. I hope we can get another hearing because since that time, the problem of

dark money has only gotten worse. President Trump promised to drain the swamp and then turned his administration over to the biggest dark-money swamp monsters that exist. For example, nearly two dozen dark-money organizations fronting for God knows who—but one can guess—backed the nomination of Scott Pruitt to be the Environmental Protection Agency Administrator. Indeed, Administrator Pruitt himself raised millions of dollars in dark money while serving as Oklahoma’s attorney general, and he has never disclosed what business those interests that funded him now have before the EPA.

Americans correctly feel that the tsunami of anonymous dark money drowns out their voices in Washington and washes them to the margins of our political arena. The DISCLOSE Act of 2018 offers a commonsense solution to restore transparency and accountability into our political system. With the Senate now in session through most of the summer, there is ample time for this body to examine the merits of clearing dark money out of our political system. The problem of dark-money spending and threats is too big to ignore.

This is why we are failing at addressing climate change. The corruption and fear *Citizens United* set loose in our politics in 2010 sickeningly empowered big special interests, and to the lasting shame of our Nation, it allowed the fossil fuel industry to purchase veto power over our national policymaking on climate change. We have allowed the biggest interest with the biggest conflict of interest to acquire veto power over what the Congress of the United States does on this vital issue.

This has been a double evil: It has been poisonous to the American democracy we cherish, and by preventing action to address climate change, it is poisonous to our entire planet.

By introducing this legislation, we are giving our Republican colleagues a chance to show the American people where they stand—with the individual voters we were all sent here to represent, who massively want there to be climate action, or with the billionaires and corporate interests pursuing a quiet, hostile takeover of American democracy using dark money and threats.

The cockroaches are everywhere. I say, let’s turn on the lights.

I yield the floor.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sen-

ate be in 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.

(At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

● Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 127 on the motion to waive a budget point of order with respect to H.R. 5515, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. On vote No. 127, had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was also necessarily absent for vote No. 128 on passage of H.R. 5515, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, as amended. On vote No. 128, had I been present, I would have voted yea on passage of H.R. 5515, as amended.

Mr. President, I was also necessarily absent for vote No. 129 on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5895, the Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2019. On vote No. 129, had I been present, I would have voted yea.●

(At the request of Ms. HARRIS, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

JUNETEENTH INDEPENDENCE DAY

● Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I would like to recognize today, June 19, as Juneteenth Independence Day. We are celebrating the 153rd anniversary of the date on which slavery legally came to an end in the United States. On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to end slavery in the United States, but it still took 2 and a half years for this news to spread throughout all the Southern States. Today, we honor the faith and strength demonstrated by former slaves and the descendants of these individuals, who remain an example for all people of the United States, no matter their background, religion, or race. It is my hope that Juneteenth and the Emancipation Proclamation serve as a reminder of the progress the United States has made towards equality and the ways in which we can still improve.●

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Juneteenth Independence Day, a day that commemorates June 19, 1865, as the date on which slavery came to an end in the United States. On this day, over 150 years ago, and over 2 and half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Texas became the final State where the abolishment of slavery took effect.

On this day, we must confront the ugly parts of our history and honor the slaves who suffered and died under a repressive regime. We must also pay tribute to all those who had the strength