

and retirement benefits. James caught the mistake. He did the honorable thing. He notified the VA it was overpaying him, but the VA continued to overpay him. Then it charged him twice to recoup the overpayments, and they garnished his benefits.

The staff in my office worked with the VA to resolve James's issues, but this should never have happened in the first place. It is fixed now. He had to go through that. To his credit, to James's credit, he wanted to make sure his experience, which was uncomfortable—or worse at times—would change policy and affect future veterans so they wouldn't have to go through this, which is why I admire him so much.

This story is too common. In 2016, the VA issued some 200,000 overpayment notices to veterans. When this happens, the agency often tries to get its money back by withholding some or all of the monthly disability payments our veterans have earned. Our veterans deal with enough stress already. They shouldn't be forced to pay for the VA's accounting mistakes.

Our bill would ban the VA from charging veterans for its own mistake in overpayments. It should protect veterans' payments who depend on their benefits by capping the amount the VA can deduct from a veteran's monthly payment at 25 percent. It would ban the VA from collecting debts that are more than 5 years old.

Our veterans sacrifice so much already to serve our country. I am the first Ohioan to ever serve a full term. I have been on this committee now for 12 years, the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am on that committee because we should serve those who serve us. We should protect those who protect us. The veterans shouldn't be paying for the mistakes of the agency that is supposed to serve them.

Unfortunately, our bill was not included in the National Defense Authorization Act last week. Instead, we have an amendment to the MILCON-VA bill to require the VA to track down these overpayments and report to Congress on the scope of VA debt. We will continue to push for the Tester-Boozman bill, but I hope all of my colleagues will join me in supporting this bipartisan, commonsense step toward fixing VA overpayment and debt for America's veterans.

I yield the floor.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I have submitted amendment No. 2955 to H.R. 5895 on behalf of Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN. I strongly support the provision's intent to ensure that veterans in New Hampshire receive the best possible care.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The majority leader.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for amendment No. 2910.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Senate amendment No. 2910 to Calendar No. 449, H.R. 5895, an act making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Todd Young, Lamar Alexander, John Boozman, Ben Sasse, Johnny Isakson, Thom Tillis, Cindy Hyde-Smith, David Perdue, John Cornyn, Patrick J. Toomey, Pat Roberts, Jeff Flake, Mike Rounds, Mike Crapo, Tim Scott, Mitch McConnell.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the bill H.R. 5895.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 449, H.R. 5895, an act making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Todd Young, Lamar Alexander, John Boozman, Ben Sasse, Johnny Isakson, Thom Tillis, Cindy Hyde-Smith, David Perdue, John Cornyn, Patrick J. Toomey, Pat Roberts, Jeff Flake, Mike Rounds, Mike Crapo, Tim Scott, Mitch McConnell.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls be waived.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, here is where we are. I filed cloture, but we anticipate that will not actually be necessary and we will be able to vitiate the cloture motions tomorrow because we anticipate being able to process additional amendments throughout the day and wrap the bill up sometime tomorrow afternoon. But there will be an opportunity during the day to continue to process amendments, and we should be able to finish the bill this week without resorting to cloture.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate 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.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the June 19, 2018, vote on Senate amendment 2914 to Sen-

ate amendment 2910 to H.R. 5895, Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2019. I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the June 19, 2018, vote on Senate amendment 2920 to Senate amendment 2910 to H.R. 5895, Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2019. I would have voted yea.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of World Refugee Day and to express my deep concern over the Trump administration's systematic assault on refugees, asylum seekers, and the United States' refugee resettlement program.

Manmade conflict, natural disasters, poverty, and violence have left the world in the midst of the largest refugee crisis in recorded history with over 25 million refugees worldwide. Tragically, less than 1 percent of these individuals will ever be resettled to a third country.

The United States was built on the hopes and dreams of those fleeing persecution and oppression, those seeking better lives for themselves and their families. The values and moral compass that embraced these individuals and shone as a beacon of freedom have made this country great. In times of crisis, the United States traditionally asserted global leadership through these values that have made this country so successful. That leadership served as an important uniting and motivating voice in the face of tremendous international challenges.

Unfortunately, instead of asserting moral and strategic leadership, the Trump administration has chosen to retreat. The President has traded in our proud tradition of lifting up the most vulnerable for an agenda of degrading and insulting those who seek our support. Starting with his assertion that Mexicans are "rapists" and "drug dealers," this President has spent his tenure as our Nation's leader attacking America's immigrant and refugee communities. The President said he wanted to protect Dreamers; yet he abruptly ended the DACA program throwing the lives of 800,000 people into great uncertainty. He imposed a slap-dash Muslim ban that has been repeatedly struck down by the courts. He has slowed refugee admissions to a trickle, closing America's doors to some of the most vulnerable people on the planet, reducing America's global leadership standing.

Driven by vitriolic voices, the President and the Attorney General together have worked to effectively destroy the refugee resettlement program, which traditionally received broad bipartisan support. Last September, the President decreed that the number of refugees to be admitted in

fiscal year 2018 should be 45,000—half of the historic average. Even more concerning, it is now clear that this administration is further rigging the admissions program to ensure that only a fraction of that number of people will be allowed in. In the first quarter of 2018, just 6,704 refugees were resettled, compared to 25,671 in 2017 and 13,791 in 2016.

The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program—and the faith groups, organizations, families and individuals that assist it—supports the most vulnerable. These are the victims of torture, people with urgent medical needs, and desperate women and children. They are not safe in their home country. They have gone through extensive multi-agency vetting before even reaching the United States. We are witnessing the intentional dismantling of a program that has helped the world's most defenseless, built our leadership abroad and here at home helped create thriving, diverse communities across the country, including in places like Camden and Elizabeth in my home State of New Jersey.

Despite its effort to prove the opposite by commissioning a study by the Department of Health and Human Services, the administration's own report found that refugees have had a net positive economic impact in the United States over the past decade. The study concluded that between 2005 and 2014, refugees "contributed an estimated \$269.1 billion in revenues to all levels of government" and estimated the net positive fiscal impact of refugees over the 10-year period to be \$63 billion.

Alarming and horrifically, we have witnessed the administration's callous and misguided approach to migrants and refugees most recently on our southern border. American citizens and people around the world have watched in horror as U.S. officials are forcibly pulling babies and children out of their parents' arms, tearing families apart, and using preposterous defenses for their actions. This is not the United States I know. This is not the United States that has stood as a champion for the rule of law and human rights.

The President has blamed those fleeing persecution. He has blamed Democrats. He has taken no responsibility. His tweets have only gotten more hysterical. His repeated demands for a ridiculous wall are not a solution and only further fuel negative perceptions of the United States.

The party of "family values" has become the part of "family separation." This "policy" is not required by U.S. law. This is a choice that this administration has made. It was a policy choice to charge asylum seekers in criminal court with illegal entry. In essence, it seems that President Trump and Attorney General Sessions want to turn every asylum seeker into a criminal and every child into a foster child.

It is easy to be distracted by the President's tweets and outlandish statements. The palace intrigue coming from the White House provide endless fodder for the talking heads on TV, but we cannot lose focus on the real harms being done to our fellow human beings and to our global standing.

On this World Refugee Day, let us come together and remember that part what makes America great is our open doors that have welcomed people from all over the world. We have been a shining city on a hill; a beacon of light and hope. Since 2001, the United States has settled nearly a million refugees. They are our friends, our neighbors, our coworkers. They sit next to your kid in school, and someday, they may grow up to be a Secretary of State like Madeleine Albright.

What kind of a country do we want to be? A country where we rip children from their parents? A country that keeps out refugees because of their religion? I have seen a quote posted on Twitter, pasted on signs at rallies, even on a church bulletin board—I don't know who said it first—but it bears repeating here: "Rather than a wall, America needs to build a giant mirror to reflect on what we've become."

FOOD LABELING

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Jacob's letter and my response letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEAR SENATOR RUBIO: Approximately a year and half ago I was diagnosed with Celiac, which means that I can only eat gluten free foods.

There are not a lot of things that are labeled gluten free and there should be more. A lot of things right now I have to look up to see if they're gluten free. I have read some articles that explain how every company should label their products. It's also hard to know for sure if something is safe to eat when I go food shopping, out with my friends, and to restaurants. It would be great if the government could find a way to put food labeling on packages consistently.

Thank you for putting your time into this.

Sincerely,

JACOB TANNENBAUM.

UNITED STATES SENATE,
Washington, DC, June 20, 2018.

Jacob Tannenbaum,
202 Royal Palm Way,
Boca Raton, FL.

DEAR JACOB: Thank you for your letter regarding food labeling. Hearing from fellow Floridians on issues that affect millions of Americans, including children, is important for me to do my job in the U.S. Senate.

Food allergies are sometimes mild and easily preventable by avoiding consumption of certain foods, while other cases may be life-threatening. With respect to celiac disease, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates that there are approximately 3 million people in the United States, like you, who must refrain from ingesting gluten.

Among its many roles, the FDA is responsible for ensuring the safety of our nation's food supply by enforcing labeling laws and regulations. The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-282) was enacted to require a list of ingredients that may cause allergic reactions to be included on food labels. Further, the law tasked the Secretary of Health and Human Services to define the term "gluten-free" on food labels. The FDA issued its final "gluten-free" rule in 2013. Currently, all FDA regulated food products and dietary supplements (including imports from other countries) which bear a "gluten-free" label must comply with the agency's 2013 voluntary labeling law. Under the rule, "gluten-

free" means a food is either naturally gluten-free, is not constituted from gluten-containing grains, is constituted from gluten-containing grains that have been processed to remove gluten, or has an "unavoidable presence" of gluten of not more than 20 parts per million.

With the prevalence of food allergies impacting millions across our nation, the federal government plays an important role in enforcing voluntary labeling requirements, based on sound science, to ensure consumer safety and confidence. National, uniform, voluntary labeling standards establish consistency for businesses engaged in interstate commerce, while providing necessary protections for consumers to make safe choices when selecting what food products to purchase and eat. Mandatory labeling, however, could pose significant burdens on industry and produce confusion for consumers with a multitude of labels for every food allergy recognized by the federal government on each product.

I understand your concerns that it may be difficult at times to determine what is safe to eat. The good news is that we live in a country blessed with a plethora of food options, and a market that responds quickly to consumer needs and demands. This evolving market, in concert with federal standards for voluntary labeling, means that it will only get easier for all Americans to find the ingredient and nutrition you need to make safe and smart choices in the future.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve you as your United States Senator, and I commend you for bringing awareness to this important issue.

Sincerely,

MARCO RUBIO,
U.S. Senator.

TAX REFORM

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as you may know, I voted in favor of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that became law last year. Every day we are learning more about the positive impact this law is having on the economy and about average Americans having more money in their paychecks. While it is important to appreciate the effects that the tax law had on individuals, we should not forget that small businesses have benefited from the law as well. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I supported the legislation because I believed it would allow small business owners to invest in their businesses, increase overall economic growth, and reduce taxes for the millions of small businesses who employ the majority of Americans in every part of the country. I also saw the potential that the legislation would have, not just to give an economic boost to small businesses in my home State of Idaho, but to spark renewed confidence from small businesses across the country. A couple of weeks ago, I began this series of speeches to bring attention to small businesses that have benefited from this law.

While there are many stories about small businesses benefitting from tax reform, I rise today to talk about Dempsey Wood Products in Orangeburg, SC. Dempsey Wood Products offers a wide variety of high-quality pine and hardwood products to its customers. The company serves many different industries with kiln-dried lumber for the housing industry, pallet stock for pallet manufacturers, debarked chips for the paper industry,