

SEC. 2. PUBLICATION OF QUALITY RATING OF NURSING HOMES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not less frequently than annually thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress and publish in the Federal Register and on a publicly available Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs the rating assigned by the Department to each nursing home of the Department with respect to quality of care, including all internal metrics and criteria used in determining such rating.

(b) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(1) the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives.

AMENDMENT NO. 3050

(Purpose: To require the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct an investigation of all nursing homes of the Department of Veterans Affairs with an overall one-star rating as determined by the rating system of the Department)

At the end of title II of division C, add the following:

SEC. 2. The Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall conduct an investigation of all nursing homes of the Department of Veterans Affairs that had an overall one-star rating within the two full calendar years prior to the year of enactment, as determined by the rating system of the Department.

AMENDMENT NO. 2992

(Purpose: To prohibit the use of funds made available under this Act in a manner that would increase wait times for veterans who seek care at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs)

At the end of title II of division C, add the following:

SEC. 2. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used in a manner that would increase wait times for veterans who seek care at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

AMENDMENT NO. 2955

(Purpose: To prevent the use of funds made available by this Act to modernize or realign facilities of the Veterans Health Administration in States in which the Department does not operate a full-service medical facility unless the Secretary of Veterans Affairs certifies to Congress that such modernization or realignment will not result in a disruption or reduction of services for veterans)

At the end of title II of division C, add the following:

SEC. 2. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Department of Veterans Affairs for the modernization or realignment of facilities of the Veterans Health Administration in States in which the Department does not operate a full-service medical facility pursuant to recommendations by the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission under the VA Asset and Infrastructure Review Act of 2018 (sub-title A of title II of Public Law 115–182) until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submits to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate, the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives, and the Commission a report certifying that such modernization or realignment will not result in a disruption or reduction of services for veterans residing in those States.

AMENDMENT NO. 3032

(Purpose: To limit the conversion of funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs program to improve retention of housing by formerly homeless veterans and veterans at risk of becoming homeless)

At the appropriate place in title II of division C, insert the following:

SEC. . LIMITATION ON CONVERSION OF FUNDS FOR PROGRAM TO IMPROVE RETENTION OF HOUSING BY FORMERLY HOMELESS VETERANS AND VETERANS AT RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may not convert any of the amounts appropriated or otherwise made available in a fiscal year to carry out section 2013 of title 38, United States Code, from a specific purpose program to a general purpose program unless the Secretary included a proposal to do so in the budget justification materials submitted to Congress in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs budget for such fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President for such fiscal year under section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code).

AMENDMENT NO. 3066

(Purpose: To express the sense of Congress relating to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan)

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

SEC. 1. (a) Congress finds that—
(1) the restoration of the Everglades, as described in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan authorized by title VI of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (Public Law 106–54; 114 Stat. 2680) (referred to in this section as the “Plan”), is the most ambitious environmental restoration program in history;

(2) the overarching objectives of the Plan are the restoration, preservation, and protection of the south Florida ecosystem, while providing for other water-related needs of the region, including water supply and flood protection;

(3) the Plan should continue to be implemented as authorized—

(A) to ensure—
(i) the protection of water quality in the south Florida ecosystem;

(ii) the reduction of the loss of fresh water from the south Florida ecosystem; and

(iii) the improvement of the environment of the south Florida ecosystem; and

(B) to achieve and maintain the benefits to the natural system and human environment described in the Plan; and

(4) the equal partnership between the Federal Government and the State of Florida remains essential to accomplishing the objectives of the Plan.

(b) It is the sense of the Congress that—

(1) the discharge of excess water by the Corps of Engineers from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee Estuary and the Indian River Lagoon represents a significant loss of fresh water from the South Florida ecosystem;

(2) the diversion of those Lake Okeechobee discharges to Plan projects or features like the Everglades Agricultural Area Storage Reservoir, designed to store and treat water prior to release into the Central Everglades, is an essential source of fresh water for meeting the objectives of the Plan; and

(3) the Plan authorizes a 50/50 Federal-State cost share for all aspects of congressionally authorized restoration projects, including water quality project features or components.

AMENDMENT NO. 2957

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Energy to conduct a study on the potential for natural gas demand response across energy sectors and geographic regions)

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

SEC. 3. (a) The Secretary of Energy (referred to in this section as the “Secretary”) shall conduct a study on the potential for natural gas demand response across energy sectors and geographic regions.

(b) Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the results of study conducted under subsection (a), including—

(1) a description and quantification of—
(A) potential natural gas and energy savings and load shifting; and

(B) the costs and benefits associated with those savings, including avoided energy costs, reduced market price volatility, improved electric and gas system reliability, deferred or avoided pipeline or utility capital investment, and air emissions reductions;

(2) an identification of geographic areas that would benefit most from implementing demand response measures for natural gas infrastructure; and

(3) a description of—

(A) existing and emerging technologies that can be used for demand response in the natural gas sector; and

(B) best practices for developing a strategy for deployment of those technologies in the natural gas sector.

AMENDMENT NO. 3038

(Purpose: To require a report on cell site simulators detected near facilities of the Department of Defense)

At the appropriate place in division C, insert the following:

SEC. . REPORT ON CELL SITE SIMULATORS DETECTED NEAR FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

The Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees a full accounting of cell site simulators detected near facilities of the Department of Defense during the three year period ending on the date of the enactment of this Act and the actions taken by the Secretary to protect personnel of the Department, their families, and facilities of the Department from foreign powers using such technology to conduct surveillance.

The amendment (No. 2911) was agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2910) in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to move to proceed to H.R. 2, the farm bill, during today’s session of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION ACT OF 2018—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to H.R. 2 and send a cloture motion to the desk for the motion to proceed.

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

The assistant bill 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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 483, H.R. 2, an act to provide for the reform and continuation of agricultural and other programs of the Department of Agriculture through fiscal year 2023, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Deb Fischer, Mike Rounds, John Barrasso, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, Shelley Moore Capito, Steve Daines, John Boozman, Orrin G. Hatch, Thom Tillis, David Perdue, Mike Crapo, Richard Burr, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Pat Roberts.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: PN1641.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Jean Carol Hovland, of South Dakota, to be Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, Department of Health and Human Services.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements related to this nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hovland nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO WENDELL LAWRENCE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize Wendell Lawrence, of Elizabethtown, KY, who will be retiring from his role as the executive director of the Lincoln Trail Area Development District, LTADD, on August 1. After 35 years of service, including more than two decades as the executive director, Wendell leaves a lasting impact on his community and has helped the organization fulfill its mission.

Comprised of eight counties—Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, Larue, Marion, Meade, Nelson, and Washington—the LTADD was formed in 1968 to foster regional strategies and partnerships to benefit the citizens of the Commonwealth. Kentucky was the first in the Nation to establish a statewide system of regional development organizations.

This region is an important part of Kentucky's economy and culture. It is the home of both the Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park and Fort Knox, a vital U.S. Army installation and the site of the U.S. Bullion Depository. Comprised of small businesses, heritage sites, and agricultural centers, the Lincoln Trail is a rich part of both our Commonwealth's history and its future. Under Wendell's leadership, the LTADD has helped communities and organizations secure grants and resources to help the area continue to thrive.

During his time leading the district, Wendell has helped establish a number of partnerships to increase the region's competitiveness and benefit its workers. With organizations like OneKnox and WIRED65, the region has leveraged unique geographical and commercial resources to help it flourish. Wendell also worked closely with Fort Knox to expand the installation's potential and to assist Fort Knox area military personnel transitioning out of service into the workforce through his role as the former advisory board chairman of Where Opportunity Knox. Although the region has changed and developed during his tenure, Wendell's diligent leadership of the LTADD has set the area and many of its award-winning municipalities on a pathway to a bright future.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the LTADD. At a recent event to commemorate its half century of excellence, the members showed their gratitude to Wendell by surprising him with their Lifetime Achievement Award. Wendell's dedicated service to the district throughout his impressive career has endeared him to so many in this area.

In addition to his passionate work in the Lincoln Trail area, Wendell also used his talents for the good of Kentucky and other causes close to his heart. As a previous chairman of the Kentucky Association of District Di-

rectors, he helped encourage economic growth throughout the Commonwealth. A retired captain in the U.S. Army Reserve with 23 years of Active and Reserve service, he is also passionate about our Nation's military and is a life member of the Reserve Officers Association and former member of the board of directors of the George S. Patton Museum and Center of Leadership at Fort Knox.

On a personal note, I have always enjoyed working with Wendell on behalf of the people of Kentucky. His decades of leadership have produced tangible benefits for the Lincoln Trail area, which will continue to be felt for years to come. In addition, his daughter Amanda is a constituent caseworker in my Louisville office. It is clear that a commitment to helping Kentuckians runs in the family.

When Wendell retires later this year, he will begin a new chapter in his life. Whatever his next adventure may hold in store, I am confident that with the support of his wife, Jackie, and their children, Amanda, Thomas, and Meredith, he will continue to find success.

I would like to join the people of Kentucky and the staff of the Lincoln Trail Area Development District in thanking Wendell for his years of achievement and wishing him well in the future. I urge my Senate colleagues to join me.

TRIBUTE TO JORGE RAMIREZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to thank Jorge Ramirez for his extraordinary service to the city of Chicago. Earlier this year, Jorge announced that after 12 years at the Chicago Federation of Labor—8 as president—that he will be retiring at the end of the month.

Jorge's story is the story of the American Dream. The son of Mexican immigrants, Jorge Ramirez attended high school in Texas and was a 4-year letterman in football at the University of Texas El Paso, where he earned a double major in marketing and computer information systems. In 2006, Jorge joined the Chicago Federation of Labor as its secretary-treasurer and, four years later, became its first Latino president.

Jorge Ramirez is a trailblazer, but anyone who knows his father, Ruben, a Chicagoland legend, wouldn't be surprised. Ruben was the Ramirez's family original Labor leader, spending four decades as a member, officer, and in 1993 becoming the first and only Latino president for United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 100A, Chicago's meatpacking union. You could say organized Labor is in Jorge's blood.

Jorge watched his father closely and learned important values and principles that would serve him well throughout his career. As president, Ruben made sure the leadership of Local 100A mirrored the members they served by including women and men of all backgrounds on the Union's executive board. Inclusivity and respect for