

money; they are spending the Federal Government's money. So we are looking for ways to perhaps strengthen that provision.

I hope we will have an opportunity to have a vote on it. My goal is to make sure we pass a farm bill, but I do think it is important that we demonstrate our commitment to protecting the Federal taxpayer and imposing modest work, preparation for work, or community service requirements on able-bodied people.

I yield to the chairman.

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the Senator for yielding.

We are looking at those provisions, and we are looking at making sure able-bodied people do achieve the goal of going from dependence to independence, more especially in this time of economic recovery, which is really the secret to all of this. The numbers in the Food Stamp Program have decreased dramatically as we have seen our economy improve, but we are taking a look at those waivers. The difference is, in the House bill, we have a situation where if somebody has children 6 and under, it used to be 10 and under, and then on the other side, people who were 50 to now 60 are included—that has raised some dust.

There are several other issues the Senator has mentioned. It is just a matter of degree. We want to provide integrity to that program. We want it to work and have it go to the people who truly need it, and we have tried very hard to accomplish that.

We will study hard the good recommendations the Senator has mentioned, and we will do our best.

Mr. CORNYN. I appreciate the chairman's comments, and I have confidence in him and his ability to manage this bill successfully across the floor.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION ACT OF 2018—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the important legislation before us, and that is

the 2018 farm bill. This is critical legislation for Nebraskans and for all Americans. It will provide the certainty and predictability agriculture producers need to do their job of delivering abundant, high-quality, nutritious food to our Nation.

My husband, Bruce, and I have a family ranch in the Sandhills of Nebraska. That is our home. That is where we live, and that is where we work. I know firsthand that being a farmer or rancher is more than just a job. It is a way of life, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is one of life's most noble callings to care for the land and God's creatures, to be stewards of our natural resources, and to feed the world.

As a State senator of the Nebraska legislature and now as a U.S. Senator, commonsense agriculture policy has been a top priority for me. This year, I was honored to have the opportunity to join the Senate Ag Committee, where I am the voice for Nebraska agriculture as we work on this vital legislation for our State.

I want to thank Chairman ROBERTS for welcoming me to the committee and for his excellent work on this bill. I also want to thank him for making a trip to the "good life" this past May. Together, we held a roundtable at the Nebraska State fairgrounds in Grand Island and toured a soybean processing plant in Hastings. During these visits, we heard feedback and input from Nebraska ag producers that we brought back to Washington as the committee crafted this bill.

Production agriculture is the economic engine of Nebraska. Across our State, there are more than 47,000 farms and ranches. From the panhandle to Central Nebraska, to the city streets of Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraskans understand the monumental role of agriculture as our State's No. 1 industry. One in four Nebraska jobs is tied to agriculture, but we all know there is a lot of anxiety in farm country today.

Current net farm income is down by over 50 percent compared to 5 years ago when we passed the last farm bill. While uncertainty surrounds international trade and biofuels policy, we are looking at experiencing depressed commodity prices and tight margins. Since the beginning of June, Nebraska cash corn prices are down roughly 11 percent. Cash soybean prices are down 14 percent. This has resulted in over \$1 billion in potential lost receipts to corn and soybean producers. Farmers and ranchers are worried.

For many years, I traveled the State of Nebraska to meet with and listen carefully to folks about their ideas to address the issues they face. I hosted several ag roundtables with local producers, Nebraska stakeholders, government officials, and agriculture industry experts about how we can boost our rural economies.

Many of our discussions explore the relationship between the "internet of things" and agriculture. A key point that has been consistently made is the

need for high-speed internet connectivity on farms and ranches. I hold a number of these roundtables every year, and it is always good to hear straight from producers about these important issues. I also bring leaders in our government to Nebraska so that they can develop a better understanding of our State and familiarize themselves with the challenges producers deal with on a daily basis.

On a snowy day in May last year, I welcomed the Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, to our family ranch. The Secretary joined me in hosting a roundtable discussion with more than 60 of our neighbors and our friends. He heard about our suggestions on trade, marketing our products, broadband deployment, and other concerns we as ag producers have.

Working together with my colleagues here in the Senate, we have had some great successes rolling back Federal regulations that have hurt farmers and ranchers. For example, Congress worked with the administration to halt the harmful waters of the United States rule, which would have expanded the Federal Government's jurisdiction over my State's water resources.

Earlier this year, as a part of the government spending bill, Congress passed and the President signed into law a permanent fix, which I championed. It ensures that farmers and ranchers are not treated like superfund sites under those EPA regulations. Additionally, we made some progress in eliminating regulations meant for oil refineries that were unreasonably affecting producers who use on-farm fuel storage tanks.

Leading up to the 2018 farm bill, I was pleased to work alongside the USDA and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to lift a 13-year ban on U.S. beef shipments to Israel. I have also been outspoken about the value of the South Korean market to Nebraska's high-quality agriculture products. I advocated for our country to stay in the KORUS Free Trade Agreement, and I visited with both the U.S. administration officials and South Korean officials to stress the importance of the trade relationship between our two countries.

I was pleased to see that the administration made a good trade deal with South Korea. This is a step in the right direction. It will expand opportunities for our producers and for the State of Nebraska.

These were big wins for our producers, but we can, we should, and we must provide the predictability our producers need, especially during these tough times. That means passing the farm bill and enacting it into law.

Traveling around our State, a common theme that I hear is the continued need for a strong farm safety net that upholds the integrity of the crop insurance program. This is a critical risk management tool that works for farmers. From the very beginning, I have

made safeguarding crop insurance my top priority throughout this process, and I appreciate that the farm bill will enhance this vital program for producers in my State and across the country.

This farm bill also recognizes the importance of our trade promotion programs. Nebraska producers have demonstrated that they can excel in the global marketplace. The bill before us merges the Market Access Program, the Foreign Market Development Program, the Emerging Markets Program, and the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops into one new Priority Trade Promotion, Development, and Assistance Program.

This new priority trade promotion program will ensure that the baselines for these important programs will be upheld while allowing ag organizations to leverage these critical dollars to promote our high-quality ag products around the world. Moreover, the program will allow the Secretary of Agriculture to address immediate trade needs effectively to ensure that valuable market access is prioritized.

What is more, this bill takes major steps to expand broadband so that our rural communities, which are harder to reach, are not left behind in this digital era. There is no stronger example of the benefits of innovation than the influence of internet access on the agriculture industry. Today's rural areas are experiencing increased productivity because of the advanced technologies fueling U.S. agricultural growth.

Just recently, I had the honor of welcoming the FCC Commissioner, Brendan Carr, to Northeast Nebraska to further address this issue. Together, we visited Northeast Community College, where we learned about their fascinating precision agriculture curriculum, which focuses on familiarizing students with new farming technology. Advanced information technology and the data these systems gather help our amazing agriculture producers make effective decisions as they feed the world.

The Precision Agriculture Connectivity Act was included in the Ag Committee's managers' package during the markup of the farm bill. This would create a task force at the FCC charged with identifying breaks in high-speed internet connectivity across America's farm and ranch land.

Additionally, in the committee markup for the farm bill, I was also pleased to sponsor several amendments that were adopted unanimously in the managers' package. My amendment encouraging producers to utilize efficient water irrigation conservation technology directs the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to recognize the use of remote telemetry data systems for irrigation scheduling as a best management practice.

The 2018 farm bill will also provide some much needed relief for our ag haulers. It is clear that the hours of

service regulations for truck drivers are inflexible, and they fail to consider the realities that impact our livestock haulers.

I filed an amendment with my colleague, the senior Senator from Arkansas, which would expand the definition of livestock to include llama, alpacas, live fish, and crawfish. With this expanded definition, agricultural haulers would receive exemptions for these products from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's hours of service requirements.

This legislation addresses many important issues for Nebraska's producers, but it is not perfect. Pesticide applicators in Nebraska are being forced to deal with redundant Federal regulations that provide no environmental or water quality benefits, yet they are putting a financial strain on producers. This is a bipartisan issue, and it needs to be addressed. In fact, the EPA, under the Obama administration, supported this fix.

I wish this bill did more to cut red-tape and to provide relief for our farmers and their families.

Additionally, I was disappointed that the bill doesn't include commonsense flexibilities for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. That is why I am a cosponsor to an amendment that would provide our children, no matter where they live, with access to fruits and vegetables, regardless of form. This bipartisan amendment would ensure that the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program does not use our taxpayer dollars to pick winners and losers based on product categories. Instead, this amendment would provide our schools, particularly those in the most rural areas of our country, with more flexibility to provide their students with canned or frozen produce that is nutritionally equivalent.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

I am proud to fight for farmers, ranchers, and producers in the Senate. Our ag producers are God's gift to Nebraska and to the world. They are my neighbors and my friends. They are my family.

By coming together to pass this pro-farmer, pro-agriculture farm bill, we can secure a better future for our producers and for our country.

Again, I thank Chairman ROBERTS and Ranking Member STABENOW for their good work on this bill. The House has done their job, and now it is our turn.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

NATIONAL GREAT OUTDOORS MONTH

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, for Montanans, nothing beats getting outside and getting outdoors for hunting, fishing, skiing, backpacking, snowmobiling, you name it. It is our way of life in Montana. That is why I

am excited to announce that June is National Great Outdoors Month.

The outdoor life in Montana has a very special meaning for me. I grew up fishing, hunting, hiking, and skiing, in fact, all over the State of Montana. In fact, in July of 1986, I proposed to my sweet wife Cindy after we hiked to the top of Hyalite Peak, just south of Bozeman. It is a peak a little over 10,000 feet. Seven and a half miles from the trailhead to the top and back was a long 15-mile day, and I am grateful she said yes.

In fact, during the summer, I spend a lot of time backpacking in the Beartooths with our family. We bring along our mini Australian shepherds and bear spray. It is good practice.

In Montana, outdoor recreation isn't just our way of life; it is also our economy. In fact, outdoor recreation directly supports some 71,000 Montana jobs and generates \$2.2 billion in wages and salaries and an estimate of over \$7 billion in consumer spending.

We see it every summer, every winter, and now every shoulder season that people from around the Nation and around the world come to visit America's great outdoors, but in Montana, it is all right here, in our very own backyard. Whether it is hiking in Glacier, fly fishing in the Gallatin, Jefferson, Madison, Stillwater, Yellowstone, Missouri, the Big Horn, or skiing in places like Big Mountain, Red Lodge, Bridger, or Big Sky, or floating in whitewater float trips, we are lucky to have all of that right at our fingertips.

That is why it is important to recognize the value of the outdoors during National Great Outdoors Month. I think, when you spend time outdoors, you are not only experiencing Montana's great outdoors, but you are giving back to our local economy and creating jobs. For our young people, getting them outside, off their phones, and out into the wilderness is a good thing.

I encourage everybody to recognize National Great Outdoors Month by joining me in getting away from the TV, away from the phones, and getting outside—get out there and experience all that the outdoors has to offer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

FAMILY SEPARATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last Friday, I visited Heartland Alliance, a nonprofit organization in the city of Chicago, which, for more than two decades, has provided care for immigrant children who are classified as unaccompanied children.

The day I visited last Friday was my second visit to one of their nine facilities in the city of Chicago. Very few, if any, people in that city—a great city, and I am proud to represent it—even know that Heartland Alliance exists. The children are kept in residential neighborhoods, in places that look like ordinary homes. The only giveaway is the security fence around the building is a little higher than most of the

fences in the neighborhood. That is the only difference. In the busy neighborhood, there is a house with dozens of children inside.

On the day I was there, Heartland Alliance of Chicago had 66 children under their care who had been separated from their parents by our Federal Government over the last several weeks. They were separated under President Trump's zero tolerance policy. Two-thirds of these 66 zero tolerance children were under the age of 13. Twenty-two of the children—zero tolerance children, separated from their parents—were under the age of 5.

I went into the facility's nursery, where the infants and toddlers were being held, and I couldn't imagine for a moment what it must have been like when someone reached over and took that infant out of the arms of that mother and decided to transport that baby thousands of miles away. That is what has happened.

I met two little girls. I will not use their names, but their ages are 5 and 6. When these tiny, little girls walked into the room together, holding hands, I thought immediately they were twins. They had a Bamm-Bamm hairstyle—maybe somebody will remember what I am referring to from the old television show—and they were as cute as can be. They were holding hands as they walked into the room. I thought, at first, they were twins, and then I realized one was a little bit older than the other. So I started asking them questions: their names and their ages and where they were from. They were answering for one another.

At the end of it, we asked: Are you sisters?

They said: No, "amigas"—friends.

They, like so many other kids in this situation, were clinging to anything that created a connection in their desperate little lives.

I brought with me some handmade cards that kids from my staff and friends had made to give to them. They were just pieces of construction paper with stickers inside, the kind kids love to make and love to receive. I went around, and I asked each of them if they would like to take one. They took them like they were Christmas toys, and they hung on to them—another connection in a life that, sadly, has become disconnected from the reality of their family.

I asked the staff at Heartland Alliance about these zero tolerance kids. I said: Could you find the parents of these kids if you needed to for a medical emergency?

They replied: Well, we could try. In some cases, we could, but in many cases, it is like a scavenger hunt.

You see, their parents may be moved from place to place, and if something happened, a medical emergency, it would be difficult to find that parent. I thought about that.

My little granddaughters and grandson are 6, 7, 8 years old. If they were brought into a hospital with some seri-

ous medical condition, the first thing the doctor wants to know is, what is the history? Has this child had a problem before?

These people don't know. There are no files that are coming with the children that have their medical history, and, in many cases, there is no way to contact their parents in an emergency situation.

This was a gut-wrenching visit. It is still with me today. It is just hard to imagine that the Government of the United States of America would forcibly take children away from their parents—parents who are seeking a chance at asylum and safety from violence and persecution.

I am angry too. I am infuriated that not only have these families not been reunited, but there doesn't seem to be an effective plan in place to bring these kids back to their parents.

How did we reach this point? How, in the history of this country, did we reach the point, where, on April 6, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the Trump administration had created a new zero tolerance policy for prosecuting border cases?

There is no requirement in law to prosecute every border case criminally—none. These cases could be handled under civil law and families can be kept together under the law, but this administration chose to call every person at the border a criminal, even those who are fleeing violence and death threats and seeking a chance at asylum. As soon as they allege that the adult at the border is a criminal, then they can rationalize separating the children from these possible criminals, but, in most cases, the overwhelming majority of cases, the only possible crime was the fact that they showed up at the border.

As far as we know, more than 2,300 children have been taken away from their parents by the U.S. Government as a result of the zero tolerance policy. They have been transferred to facilities in places far away, sometimes thousands of miles away, like Chicago.

If the Federal Government separates children from parents while the family is in custody, I believe the government has the solemn obligation to ensure that each child can be located and properly reunited with their parents. Isn't this basic? But what we hear from advocates and the media is that the administration's handling of the reunification process is a mess.

We are at a real risk of lost children, lost in a bureaucratic system, adrift in a bureaucratic sea, who are delayed for who knows how long from seeing their parents again. That is because this was done so quickly, without any real thought to the impact it would have on the children, the impact it would have on the mothers and dads, and the impact it would have on the image of the United States around the world.

The Trump administration needs to make it an immediate priority to ensure that children who are separated

from parents are brought back together again quickly.

Over the weekend, the Department of Homeland Security said the Federal Government "knows the location of all children in its custody and is working to reunite them with their families." I question that, but I accept it. If it is true, there is no excuse for delay.

No law required the administration to separate these families, and we don't need any new laws to be passed in this Chamber to reunite them. We just need this administration to act, and we need Congress to exert its oversight to verify that the administration is doing what it promised.

I have worked for most of my Senate career to pass bipartisan legislation to fix our broken immigration system. Time and again, bipartisan efforts, supported by a majority of Americans, have been blocked by a minority of vocal Republicans.

I worked for 6 months with JOHN MCCAIN and six other colleagues to write a comprehensive immigration reform bill, which we brought to the floor of the Senate and passed with an overwhelming vote. It would have cured this problem and many others, but the House of Representatives refused to even consider it.

Yesterday I sat down with several of my colleagues—Republicans and Democrats—to discuss whether we can find a way to pass a law or state of policy to stop the administration from separating families in the future. I am always happy to sit down, on a bipartisan basis, roll up my sleeves, and try to write a law that might serve the purpose of making this a better country, curing the problems we face, and doing it with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, but Pennsylvania Avenue is a two-way street, and over the past few days, President Trump has made statements about immigration reform that do not help at all and I believe are contrary not only to the law and the Constitution but the values of our country.

Last Friday, President Trump said Republicans should stop "wasting their time on immigration until after we elect more Senators and Congressmen/women in November."

Also, on Friday, he said the stories of children separated from their parents were "phony"—"phony." I have seen these kids. These aren't phony kids, and they aren't phony stories.

On Sunday, the President tweeted:

We cannot allow all of these people to invade our country. When somebody comes in, we must immediately, with no judges or court cases, bring them back from where they came.

That was the President's tweet. Statements like that and the President's tweet make a mockery of our Constitution and its solemn guarantee of due process of law.

The due process clause of the Constitution doesn't just apply to citizens; it applies to all people in the United States. The idea of abandoning due process when people seek asylum at

our borders and having, as the President said, “no judges or court cases,” is antithetical to the Constitution and its principles.

I will continue to work in good faith with my colleagues to see what Congress can do, but as long as President Trump is listening to advisers like Stephen Miller and making statements like these, it is hard to see how any bipartisan agreement can be reached on immigration.

While Congress works on this issue, the administration has a moral obligation to immediately reunite all families they have separated under that zero tolerance policy. They also have to make it clear that the President’s Executive order last week will continue to be followed, and they will not separate any more families.

The third thing that we clearly need to do is to find a way for those who present themselves at the border to be brought to their hearings in a timely fashion to determine whether they are eligible for asylum. It is that basic. We don’t have to detain them for long periods of time to achieve that.

We know there are three ways to get over 90 percent of these people to the hearings as scheduled: No. 1, provide them with the advice of legal counsel; No. 2, provide them with case management, such as those provided by Lutheran services, Catholic services, and others, which are willing to counsel them and work with them and tell them what the legal system in America requires; No. 3, in extreme cases, ankle monitors. Over 90 percent of the people show up for hearings with those three basic things. We don’t need to build multimillion dollar detention facilities and internment camps for these families. For goodness’ sake, we can do this in a humane and constitutional way.

Then, we need to address some root causes of this issue. On Friday, in Chicago, the regional head of the Drug Enforcement Agency came by to sit down with me, and we talked about the flow of opioids, the flow of heroin, and the flow of fentanyl into my State of Illinois. I am sure it is as true in Ohio as it is in Illinois. There is no town too small and no suburb too wealthy not to be hit by this drug epidemic that we are currently facing.

I was shocked to learn that in any given month, 2,000 pounds of fentanyl come into the city of Chicago—2,000 pounds—and the Drug Enforcement Agency is lucky to intercept 20 or 30 pounds. The rest of it is going to be consumed and distributed from that city.

Where is a lot of it coming from? It is coming from the cartels in Mexico. It isn’t the people from Honduras at the border that pose the threat to America’s security—not nearly as much as this drug epidemic.

Keep in mind that it is a two-way street in this drug epidemic. Not only are these Mexican cartels sending these drugs to the United States, killing our kids and killing our neighbors and

friends, but we are sending back to them laundered drug money and guns so these cartels can take control in Mexico, in Honduras, in El Salvador, and in Guatemala. When these gangs take control and threaten the lives of people, they flee to the United States looking for protection. It is an endless circle that should be broken by breaking the supply of drugs coming into this country.

Any other President would be sitting down with the leaders of Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, addressing this drug issue head-on. We have seen the tweets about kids who he calls “phony” coming to our border. We need to truly have a meeting of Central American and North American leaders to discuss this drug problem and all of the problems it is creating not only in their countries but in ours.

We also need to move forward and pass the Dream Act. I have been trying for a long time here—almost 17 or 18 years now—to pass the law that will allow those who were brought to this country as children a chance to earn their way into legal status. Almost 90 percent of Americans support it. We need to pass it here.

Finally, I haven’t given up on comprehensive immigration reform. For goodness’ sake, we see these problems every day—piecemeal problems, one at a time, trying to address one here and one there. Isn’t it time that we take a look at the whole immigration system and concede that we cannot accept everyone from all over the world who wants to come. We just can’t open our borders for everyone. We need security on our borders. We also need a clear and humane system when it comes to dealing with the current border crisis.

I hope this is a goal that even some Republicans can agree on, and it doesn’t take a new law to first reunite these kids with their parents and to take a positive step forward.

Let’s get this done before the Fourth of July. Let’s reunite all 2,300 of these children with their parents so we can have the peace of mind that we are dealing with this in an American way.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, when I am back home in Wyoming, as I am every weekend, people will often tell me about how they have suffered under the healthcare law known as ObamaCare. I have been able to give them some very good news recently about things that Republicans in Congress and this administration have done to help people get out of the ObamaCare problems they have been having and escape some of the problems that have been caused by the law.

This is a headline in the Wall Street Journal from June 20: “Exit From ObamaCare.” It is something that I have been working on ever since the law was passed. What I have been able to tell people at home in Wyoming is

that we have now scrapped the law’s terribly unpopular individual mandate. We did that successfully this past year so that people aren’t forced to buy insurance that may not be right for them or their families and, certainly, much more expensive than they would like to pay.

That individual mandate was part of the law that said that every American—everyone—had to have insurance, not that worked for them but that Washington dictated, even if it wasn’t the right choice for them or their family.

I have told people about the work we have been doing to expand people’s options, their choices, and their freedom to use what are called short-term, limited duration health plans. These are less expensive health plans. They are free from the expensive, intrusive, and burdensome regulations that ObamaCare has placed on the insurance that they have been forced to buy.

Thanks to President Trump, I am now able to point to the latest thing that Republicans have done to help millions of Americans get the care they need from a doctor they choose at a lower cost to them.

Last week, the Department of Labor expanded the availability of what have been known as association health plans. This Wall Street Journal editorial called “Exit From ObamaCare,” I believe, is the best example of it.

The idea is very simple. Large employers in this country can offer their workers a variety of good health insurance plans, and they can do it because they have the negotiating leverage that comes with a large group of employers. Well, small businesses and people who work for themselves don’t have that same ability, that same leverage. Their workers are often stuck looking for expensive coverage, and the place where it seems to be most expensive, certainly, that I see, is in the ObamaCare markets.

So an association health plan lets these groups of individuals, or just individuals themselves, band together and negotiate as if they were one big business. They get much better deals. So maybe it is like all the Lyft drivers or Uber drivers or independent truck drivers working in a State or working across State lines all joining together or the small businesses that are members of the city’s chamber of commerce—all of those small businesses doing that. We have seen that in Las Vegas, where the chamber of commerce there has been providing opportunities for all of the small businesses to come together. They have done it for over 30 years, but it was outlawed by the Obama healthcare law. Once again, these businesses can now join together to offer the same opportunities for coverage that the healthcare law reserved only for people who worked with big businesses. It is a way for people now—small businesses and their workers—to escape the ObamaCare marketplace that has failed so many people across the country.

According to one estimate, Americans who sign up for one of these association health plans could save close to \$10,000 a year on their premiums compared to the individual ObamaCare market. The plans would come with the same protections people get if they do work for large companies and they have the same protections for people with preexisting conditions, which, to me, is critical. My wife is a breast cancer survivor—multiple operations, chemotherapy. It is important that we continue to protect people with preexisting conditions, and this does it.

We have all the same protections against losing coverage if someone in the family gets sick, but it just allows them to join together in a group to have much better buying opportunities and lower costs. They will have the same protections for people who want to cover their adult children up to 26 years of age. They will have the same bans on lifetime limits for how much the insurance will pay.

Where I live in Wyoming, most of the businesses we have are small businesses. It is the nature of our State. It is a rural economy. They are the small shop owners, ice cream stores, and florists on the corners. When I talk to people in Wyoming, every one of them considers themselves a small business in the sense that they don't really use the word "small" very much because they just think of themselves as businesses in our State, businesses in our communities, businesses that our families rely on and go to and shop at regularly. These are people who want to do right by their workers, and they want to offer a lot of the same benefits that bigger companies have and offer their workers.

So this new move by the Trump administration really does give all of them a chance to do that, specifically when it comes to health insurance and benefits for their employees.

So Republican policies have been so successful at creating a thriving and growing economy that we now have more job openings in America than we actually have people looking for work. That is how strong this economic recovery has become.

Small businesses really do need to be able to offer these better health benefits in order to compete for workers. They need to be able to compete to provide affordable insurance so they can afford to provide it for their workers. At the same time, people who own insurance have seen prices more than double under ObamaCare. We need to help those people get back to more reasonable rates so they are getting the care they need from a doctor they want at a cost they can afford.

When Democrats wrote the healthcare law and passed it on straight party-line votes, they actually targeted small businesses and forced them to pay more. That is hard to believe, but it is true. So Republicans are leveling the playing field.

Under this new plan—this exit from ObamaCare—it has been estimated by

the Congressional Budget Office that 4 million Americans will sign up for this new option—4 million Americans. That is how popular this is going to be. For people who don't have insurance right now because they can't afford it, they are saying that 400,000 more Americans who currently don't have insurance will be able to get insurance because it will now be affordable for them. So they will finally have a chance to get the high-quality insurance they couldn't afford under the mandates of ObamaCare.

This isn't something that anyone is going to be required to sign up for. It is something about which people will have the freedom to make decisions and choices and the flexibility to see what works best for them. That is what it is about—freedom and flexibility and choice. People can decide for themselves if one of these association health plans is the best option for them, the best option for their workers or for their families. They will choose one of these plans only if they decide it gives them better coverage and better value. Isn't that what people want? They want choices and value for the money they spend.

It is interesting that just as a result of the fact that these associated health plans came out and the options were provided, Democrats don't seem to like the fact that Americans will have this kind of choice. Washington Democrats like to talk about the benefits of union workers being able to get together to negotiate for things like better healthcare, but the same Democrats here in the Senate oppose this new action by the Trump administration that just lets workers get together to negotiate for better, more affordable healthcare coverage. The only difference here is that the Republicans want to give this opportunity to people who are self-employed or who work for small businesses.

It does seem to be that the Democrats want to reserve the right only for the union members—the big unions—and maybe they are the ones who fund their Democratic campaigns for reelection.

There is nothing in the new association health plans that tries to lure younger, healthy people away from ObamaCare plans. It just says that here is a choice. Nothing requires people or businesses to participate. It just provides millions of Americans with a choice: ObamaCare or an association health plan. That is the difference. You take a look and see what works best for you. See what you find value in, where you are going to get value for your dollars, and make that decision.

Republicans are for opportunities and options. Democrats seem to be more for mandates and restrictions. We like to offer options, opportunities, and openness. I think the American people prefer options in this land of opportunity.

Democrats are going to go out on the campaign trail and claim that what we

have done now with these association health plans is to sabotage ObamaCare. I have heard them talk. Don't believe it. If the only way ObamaCare can survive is to force millions of hard-working Americans to pay too much for their health insurance, then, ObamaCare is the problem. Democrats don't seem to want to admit that. They also don't really want to change any of the things that are broken in the American healthcare system. They want it to stay broken so they can push the plan for what we have heard some of the Democrats refer to as a single-payer health plan. That is a completely government-run healthcare system, where all of the bills are paid by the taxpayers. It has become the liberal litmus test for the Democrats.

We are going to hear them a lot more talking about that in the weeks and months ahead. When I look at that as a doctor who has practiced medicine for 25 years, as an orthopedic surgeon taking care of families in Wyoming, and having taken care of people from Canada, where they have a single-payer system—a government-run system—what I have seen from the patients I have taken care of who have come from Canada to the United States for care—why did they come if it is free in Canada?—is that they came because they couldn't afford to wait as long as they would have to wait to get the care.

So when we look at what has been proposed by a number of the Democrats, cosponsored by many—a single-payer healthcare system, a government-run insurance plan—we are talking about a program with higher taxes, longer lines, and fewer choices. I believe that is not what the American people want. What they want is an exit from ObamaCare into much more affordable insurance, something that works for them, something where they have an opportunity to make their own choices and have the flexibility to evaluate what is best for them and their families.

We are offering real solutions to improve healthcare in this country. We are giving families more freedom and more flexibility to choose what works for them, not what Washington dictates.

I yield the floor.

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.

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

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

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the farm bill—something that we have in common, something that both of our States know is very important for this country's economy. This legislation is one of the most important chances we have in this Chamber to address one of the

most pressing issues in rural parts of our country right now.

I want to speak about two of my most urgent priorities for this year's farm bill, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting them.

The first is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which most of us call SNAP. There are more than 40 million Americans who rely on SNAP every day. More than 40 million people would go hungry if they didn't have access to SNAP. Many of these Americans are disabled. Many of them are elderly and retired. Nearly half of them are children. Millions of them—and I truly mean millions—are working.

Congress should not take SNAP away from hard-working Americans just because they don't fill out monthly paperwork. Last week, the House passed its own version of the farm bill that would do just that. That is shameful.

Here is the truth about SNAP. The vast majority of able-bodied adults on SNAP are already working. They are already working. They have jobs. Many of them work several jobs. They are doing everything they can to get ahead, just to have a small slice of the American dream. They still need SNAP. They need SNAP because their wages are too low.

To be clear, they already have to follow the work requirements. There have been work requirements in place since 1971. But the farm bill would just add more redtape, more paperwork for struggling families just so they could eat dinner.

This is the difference between the House farm bill and the Senate farm bill: The Senate farm bill got it right; the House farm bill has created this terrible requirement of paperwork just to get SNAP. One of our House colleagues said that it is to promote "self-sufficiency," as if low-income workers on SNAP aren't already working every waking hour just to scrape by. The House plan is a blatant example of how out of touch Congress is about poverty in this country. It is shameful that some Members of the House from my own State would even support this cruel plan when so many New Yorkers rely on SNAP every single day. I am happy that the Senate farm bill has more heart than that.

The bill that came out of committee shows respect for all hard-working families who need SNAP, and now we need to take it a step further to do even more to help hungry children. I am submitting an amendment to the Senate farm bill called the SNAP for Kids Act. It would increase the amount of SNAP funding that families with kids in school are allowed to receive. If we pass this amendment, we will help families stretch their food budgets just a few more days at the end of every month when they need it the most, before the next paycheck comes in, and we will help keep millions of children in this country from going hungry. That should be a priority here—protecting children—for all of us.

I have two young children, and I know that many of our colleagues in this Chamber also have young children. Our children will never have to have access to SNAP to get basic nutrition. They will never know what it is like to wake up hungry because their parents didn't have enough food to feed them a nutritious dinner. I believe at my core that we need to care about other people's children as much as we care about our own, so I urge my colleagues to do what is right and support the SNAP for Kids Act. Let's reject the House of Representatives' cruel plan and commit ourselves to protecting SNAP instead of destroying it.

The second issue I want to talk about today is dairy prices. My home State of New York is one of the biggest dairy-producing States in the country. We are blessed with thousands of dairy farms and even more hard-working men and women who wake up before the Sun rises every single day to produce the milk that keeps our families healthy.

Unfortunately, over the last few years, our dairy farmers have taken a serious hit from persistently low dairy prices. Many of our dairy farms are operating below their cost of production. Over the last decade, dairy farms all over New York have actually had to shut down because of this crisis. Many are currently on the brink of failing.

This is what one dairy farmer said:

It's stressful. . . . Do I want to wake up and lose \$30,000 a day?

Imagine the pain our dairy farmers and their families suffer when they wake up before dawn, every day, without a break, and they still can't make ends meet and provide for their own children. Imagine the heartbreak and the depression of the last dairy farmer in a family—the one who has to sell the farm despite generations of hard work because he just can't make ends meet.

This is a crisis right in our backyard. It is hurting our agricultural economy. It is hurting our rural communities, and, most of all, it is hurting our farmers and their families. One big reason is that our dairy insurance program didn't work.

I have heard from dairy farmers all across New York who have been essentially ripped off by the dairy insurance program because the program failed to cover our farmers when they needed it the most—when milk prices have plummeted.

Our dairy farmers need a lifeline, and I was very proud to add a provision to the Senate farm bill for \$77 million of those premiums to be returned. This is great news for our dairy farmers, but there is still so much more we can do. I have asked the Secretary of Agriculture for emergency funding to address this issue now, but he refuses to help our dairy farmers.

I am submitting an amendment that would require the Department of Agriculture to help our dairy farmers with emergency funding now. I am asking the Secretary of Agriculture for the

exact same amount of funding he just gave cotton farmers across this country when they were struggling.

The USDA should be fair and treat our dairy farmers with the same support. I want this emergency funding to go directly to those farmers who need it so they can keep producing milk—without going bankrupt—long enough for the industry to come together to balance supply and for Congress to create a more fair milk pricing system.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment too. It affects all of us. I know you believe our farmers work hard every day. They need our support. I urge all of us to stand with them.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, allow me to say a few words on the passing of a dear friend, Charles Krauthammer. Charles was a giant in the conservative intellectual movement and community. With his passing, we have lost not only a first-rate political mind but a model of civility. As testament to his decency, leaders on both sides of the aisle paid tribute to Charles over the weekend. Today, I know I speak for people of all political stripes when I say we will miss him dearly.

Few were as formidable in debate as Charles Krauthammer. Although his body was confined to a wheelchair, his intellect was boundless. With even keel and gentle voice, he could carefully deconstruct the views of his opponents, expressing his own ideas with preternatural eloquence.

In a political landscape marked by anger and acrimony, Charles stood for reason and respect. Indeed, he was a voice of temperance in intemperate times. While he never backed down in debate, he was also well practiced in the subtle art of disagreeing without being disagreeable. In so many ways, Charles showed us how political discourse should be: balanced and rational, measured and informed, with emphasis on facts over feeling.

I think we can all agree that civility took a beating this weekend, but perhaps the biggest blow was losing Charles Krauthammer—a man who embodied civility in his very being. At different times throughout our history, we have been called upon to heed the better angels of our nature. Charles was one of those better angels. He represented what we could be if we listened to our better selves and if we listened to each other.

As a nation, we have much to learn from the example of Charles Krauthammer. In celebrating the life of an extraordinary man, we must do

more than pay lipservice to his legacy; we must honor it through our actions. We can do so by being strong in our convictions but soft with our words, by being principled in our positions but respectful of other views in this world. In a word, we can be more civil.

Open the newspaper, scroll through Twitter, or simply turn on the TV, and you will see that this Nation suffers from a deficit of civility quite unlike anything I have ever seen. The problem is bad. It is getting worse, and both sides are to blame. Both sides are at fault for escalating the rhetoric to irresponsible levels.

I have said this many times before, but it bears repeating: Our words have consequences, and in an age of retweets, viral videos, and shareable content, those words often echo well beyond their intended audience and context. It is incumbent upon all of us—from the President, to Congress, on down—to be responsible for our speech.

With that, I ask my colleagues, is there a better way to honor the life of Charles Krauthammer than to follow the example of civility he leaves behind? May we all, then, recommit ourselves to civility by living as Charles lived. May his memory be a blessing to us all.

My wife is a wonderful person. She is a farm girl. She grew up on a farm and really has earned everything she has ever had. She had a brother named Ramon. Ramon was an athlete when he got struck—right before the solutions to his illness were arrived at—and he became crippled. Ramon was one of the finest men I ever met in my life. He was very hurt by this malady that came upon him, but I can remember what a decent, honorable, kind person he was and how he went on and got his master's degree. He went all the way through undergraduate and got a master's degree at Utah State University and then became a major electrical engineer in Las Vegas. I remember one time carrying him—he was so light—in my arms through the Los Angeles Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was one of the finest men I have ever known at any time, anywhere.

That is one reason why I recognize Charles so well. Charles Krauthammer is one of the finest men I have known too. He and Ramon were heroes of mine, people who took on the ramifications and difficulties of life and beat them.

We are going to miss Charles Krauthammer. Not only was he brilliant, but he was somebody who made sense. He was somebody who really could relate to everybody. He was a really good person, just like my brother-in-law, Ramon, was as good a person as you could have ever thought. I think we all should stop and think about these two lives and recommit ourselves to being more reasonable to our colleagues. We might all realize there is more to this Earth than just fighting, finding fault, and advancing our own

cause. I believe this is the greatest of all legislative bodies. We have come close to doing that—to doing what is right, to showing respect for each other—but we don't always get there. I am not sure you can always get there. Sometimes you really have to speak out and you have to speak bluntly.

I just want to remind people that Charles Krauthammer and my brother-in-law, Ramon Hansen, were two people who literally lived very good lives, set very good examples, and overcame the challenges of being crippled and terribly hurt to rise above and to do things that really made a difference in this world.

I wish the Krauthammer family the very best. I care for them. I hope they come and visit once in a while. We lost a great person this weekend; I just wanted to say a few words about it.

This is a great body. We have great people on both sides. I would like to see us work better together and accomplish more together in the best interest of the greatest country on Earth. If we do that, I think we will all, when the time comes, leave this place knowing we had done our best.

Mr. President, 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. HOEVEN. 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. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, also referred to as the Senate's farm bill.

As a member of the Senate Ag Committee, I was proud to work with Senator ROBERTS and our ranking member, Senator STABENOW of Michigan, to pass a strong farm bill out of committee.

Times are challenging in ag country. Commodity prices are low, and our farmers and ranchers face numerous challenges. Net farm income is down 52 percent from where it stood 5 years ago, and bankruptcies are up more than 39 percent from 2014. Moving this farm bill through the Senate will help reduce uncertainty for our ag producers and will benefit the broader economy.

I would like to say and I often say that good farm policy benefits every single American every single day. Think about that. Our farmers and ranchers produce the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world, in the history of the world. So every single day, every American benefits just in that respect and in other respects in terms of the employment that is created, the positive balance of trade, the innovation, and so many other things. In fact, the crops we grow and the livestock we raise are used not only for food but also for fuel and fiber.

But simply the fact that every single American benefits every day from the

highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world means that when we pass the farm bill, providing good farm policy that helps support our farmers and ranchers so they can continue to provide that food supply for Americans, we really are doing something for all Americans and something that affects their lives, obviously, in a very big way every single day.

I am pleased we were able to draft a bill that will give our farmers and ranchers the support they need to continue to produce that food, fuel, and fiber that make our country go and provide the same things to so many in other countries throughout the world.

Leading up to consideration of the farm bill, we worked diligently to gather input from farmers and ranchers in my State and across the country. Over the past year, I have held roundtables back home. I have hosted Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue so that he could hear directly from our great farmers and ranchers about their priorities for this farm bill.

I am grateful that the bill includes many of these important provisions and that it will support the great work done by our farmers and ranchers in North Dakota and across the country. I just want to highlight a few of those measures.

We have worked hard to ensure that the bill maintains and strengthens crop insurance, which is the primary risk management tool for our producers. Let me emphasize that again. Crop insurance is the No. 1 risk management tool used by our producers across the country.

The farm bill also includes a provision based on a pilot program I have put forward to improve the fairness of ARC, which is the Agriculture Risk Coverage Program, which is a very important part of the countercyclical safety net for our farmers and ranchers. So we have ARC, or the Agriculture Risk Coverage Program, and PLC, the Price Loss Coverage Program, which comprise that safety net—that countercyclical safety net—for our farmers, so that when prices are low, they get help, and when they are high, they don't. That is the whole idea—to help them through the tough stretches, along with, as I mentioned just a minute ago, crop insurance.

The pilot program we incorporated into the bill really allows RMA data, which is the Risk Management Agency data, to be used in addition to the NASS data, or the National Agricultural Statistics Service data, which has been used historically and provides flexibility so that you get a good, commonsense result when you are applying that ARC Program across the country to many different farmers in many different circumstances.

The legislation also includes increased authorization for the Water Bank Program that I advanced, which provides compensation for farmers and landowners for flooded land through 10-year, voluntary conservation agreements.

In addition, I supported measures to help address risks to animal health, livestock export markets, and industry economic stability. That is why I am glad this bill includes a new Animal Disease and Disaster Response Program, as well as a foot-and-mouth disease vaccine bank. That protects the animals, and that protects all of us as well.

This farm bill also prioritizes ag research, including supporting important work done at North Dakota State University and at the North Dakota Extension Service, which are working to enhance crop genetics and production. The ag research done in our State and in our other agriculture universities across this Nation have really revolutionized farming and ranching. We can grow crops that are disease resistant and raise livestock that is healthier and stronger because of the amazing things that have been done in research. We need to continue that because we not only supply food for this country but really for the world. We are doing things that we never even dreamed of years ago because of the amazing advancements in ag research.

In order to allow our producers to continue to compete and excel in the global marketplace, the bill creates, expands, and maintains critical export programs that support U.S. ag products. I am pleased that the bill we passed out of our committee preserves the no-cost sugar policy, which ensures that American producers can compete on a level playing field with sugar from around the world.

The bill also includes measures important to Tribal communities, including almost all of the provisions of the Cultivating Resources, Opportunity, Prosperity, and Sustainability for Indian Country Act, or the CROPS for Indian Country Act. The CROPS for Indian Country Act is bipartisan legislation that I introduced and that we passed out of the Indian Affairs Committee, which I chair. There are very important provisions in that bill that we included in this farm bill. I thank both the Ag Committee chairman and the ranking member for working with us to include those provisions in the farm bill.

During committee markup, we were also able to strengthen the bill in other ways as well. Another good example and something that we worked very diligently to improve is legislation in regard to the NRCS. Particularly, this legislation will improve NRCS wetlands determination and ensure that NRCS is working more closely with our producers—by that I mean in a more farmer friendly way.

The committee included my amendments to increase the participation of Tribal producers on international trade missions, as well as to give Tribal colleges and universities access to certain grant programs.

Another area about which we heard from many concerned farmers and ranchers is access to credit. As they go

through these challenging times, they need access to credit. So I offered an amendment in committee, which we passed. It increases the amounts for FSA, or the Farm Service Agency, loan guarantees from about \$1.39 million up to about \$1.75 million. That is under the guarantee program. We also increased the direct loan program from \$300,000 to \$600,000 on a chattel-type loan and \$400,000 on operating loans. Again, this is about making sure farmers and ranchers have access to credit.

This was advocated for by not only the ag community but also by the financial community as a way to make sure that we can help farmers through tough times but also so that we can help our young farmers get access to the credit and the capital they need to get into the business of farming.

The average age for a farmer now is 60 years old. That is the average age for our farmers across the country. So we have to continue to work to help with the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program so that we get young people into the business of farming. It takes more capital to do that, and that is why these programs are so important.

I am convinced the farm bill we are considering this week will give our farmers and ranchers the tools they need to succeed in the next 5 years and beyond.

Congress has not enacted a farm bill in the same year it was introduced since 1990. So I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this farm bill so that we can continue to provide our ag producers with the tools they very much need.

I am going to conclude with something I said at the outset and which I try to remind people of every chance I get, and that is, again, that good farm policy not only benefits our farmers and ranchers, but it benefits every single American every single day with the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I just want to take a moment to thank my friend from North Dakota for his leadership and the valuable input and hard work that he provides to the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. We have worked together now on two farm bills and now have worked on the ARC Program and on conservation, trade, and research, but also on the important Tribal provisions that I think are going to have a very positive impact. So I just want to thank Senator HOEVEN for all of his hard work.

Mr. HOEVEN. Will the Senator yield?

Ms. STABENOW. I am happy to.

Mr. HOEVEN. I thank our ranking member. This is truly a bipartisan bill that we brought out of committee through the hard work and the leadership of both our chairman and ranking member. So I appreciate all of her diligent, good efforts on the bill.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, agriculture is the lifeblood of my State of South Dakota. More than 43 million of our State's roughly 50 million acres are given over to farming and ranching. In fact, cattle actually outnumber people in South Dakota. We have more than four times as many cattle in our State, which is a pretty good example of just how fundamental ranching is to South Dakota life. We routinely place in the top 10 States for production of a number of crops, including soybeans, corn, and wheat. Agriculture isn't just part of the South Dakota way of life, it is the South Dakota way of life.

While I am one of those South Dakota residents who doesn't farm a ranch, I have always considered it one of my great privileges to know South Dakota farmers and ranchers and get to represent them in the U.S. Congress. That is why, when I was in the House of Representatives, I chose to serve on the House Agriculture Committee, and that is why I serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee today.

Our biggest job as members of the Senate Agriculture Committee is to work on producing farm bills. These bills set the rules of the road for farmers and ranchers. They govern safety net programs like crop insurance and livestock disaster programs, which are so essential for individuals working in an industry where bad weather can wipe out a year's work and place a family farm at risk. They set the rules for conservation programs. They cover farm loan programs and much more.

This year's farm bill is particularly important as farmers and ranchers are facing a tough ag economy. Commodity prices have plunged, and net farm income is half of what it was 4 or 5 years ago. Now more than ever, farmers and ranchers need to know with certainty what the rules of the road will be so they can plan well for the future.

The farm bill we are considering this week is the fourth farm bill I have had the chance to work on during my time in Congress. While there are a handful of things I would like to improve further, I am pleased with the product we have on the floor today.

Given the variety of programs and priorities they cover, farm bills are always a big production. That is why I got a head start on this year's farm bill last March when I introduced legislation that created a new income protection program for farmers. That bill was the first of nearly a dozen pieces of legislation I introduced over the past year. I figured that starting the process early would allow us to not just reauthorize agricultural programs but to strengthen and improve them, and I am pleased the bill before us today does exactly that.

I am also pleased several of my proposals are included in the bill, although the credit for that goes to the

farmers and ranchers who helped inspire these much needed policies and policy changes. The fact is, nobody knows more about what works and what doesn't work when it comes to agriculture policy than the people out there every day working to make a living at farming and ranching.

That is why I make it a point to meet regularly with South Dakota farmers and ranchers to hear how things are going directly from them. They let me know which agriculture programs are working, which aren't, and which can be improved. Many of my proposals for this year's bill are the direct result of conversations with farmers and ranchers back in South Dakota.

Perhaps the prime example of that is my proposal to help improve the accuracy of the U.S. Drought Monitor. In April of this year, I held an agricultural roundtable in Rapid City, SD. During this event, several ranchers shared their concerns about accurate precipitation measurement. Accurate precipitation measurements matter to ranchers because this data is used to determine whether ranchers qualify for grazing loss assistance and livestock forage loss assistance when weather conditions threaten their feed supplies and the well-being of their herds.

Ranchers have been frustrated by inconsistent rainfall and drought determinations at the Department of Agriculture.

This spring, after last summer's drought, for example, the U.S. Forest Service determined that some Federal grazing lands in western South Dakota were too dry and consequently reduced the number of livestock ranchers can graze on U.S. Forest Service lands. That left ranchers struggling to find sufficient grazing lands for their cattle.

However, last year, the Drought Monitor classified that same area as not dry enough to trigger eligibility for the Livestock Forage Program, which provides assistance to ranchers whose pastures have suffered grazing losses due to drought. Obviously, this kind of inconsistent monitoring and resulting inconsistent Federal assistance is a problem, and the ranchers in April let me know just how much of a problem it can be.

So I came back to Washington and worked with my staff to develop legislation to improve the accuracy of the Drought Monitor and to require the Department of Agriculture to use consistent precipitation monitoring data across its programs. I am happy to report that my Drought Monitor legislation was adopted as part of the farm bill that is before the Senate today.

I am also proud that the farm bill includes authorization for a program I proposed that would strengthen soil health by reducing farmers' crop insurance costs.

All farmers are familiar with the Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP, which provides incentives for farmers to take environmentally sen-

sitive land out of production for 10 to 15 years, but a lot of farmers have told me they don't want to retire portions of their land for a decade or more, and they don't want to place expensive seed, fertilizer, and other inputs on their poorest land, especially now, when prices are at such low levels.

To address this, in March of last year, I offered a bill to create a new program called the Soil Health and Income Protection Program. This program would provide a new, short-term option for farmers that would allow them to take their worst performing cropland out of production for 3 to 5 years instead of the 10 to 15 years required by CRP rules.

In return for taking this land out of production, farmers would receive a modest rental payment and increased crop insurance premium discounts. This program would accomplish the dual goals of protecting the environment while improving the bottom line for farmers. I am very pleased that the authorization for the Soil Health and Income Protection Program was included in the farm bill we are considering today.

A number of other proposals I introduced also made it into the bill, including proposals to improve the Agriculture Risk Coverage Program, proposals to provide pasture, rangeland, and forage insurance premium assistance for Native American ranchers and proposals to increase the approval rate of the Livestock Indemnity Program applications.

One proposal I am still working to get included in the bill is a proposal to allow more flexibility in the Conservation Reserve Program haying and grazing policies. The CRP program plays a significant role in South Dakota's economy. It provides a major portion of the habitat for pheasants, which bring in about \$200 million each year to South Dakota's economy.

Farmers have spent years frustrated with the Department of Agriculture's management of the CRP program, particularly the program's sometimes excessive restrictions on land use and requirements to destroy vegetative cover under midcontract management, even in drought years when feed supplies are short.

The proposal I am working to get included in the final bill will allow haying on one-third of all CRP acres and limited grazing on most CRP land. This commonsense reform, along with other CRP reforms I have proposed that are included in the bill in front of us today, will address some of the farmers' major concerns with current land use rules for acres that are enrolled in the CRP program.

As I mentioned, there are a few areas where I think we could have done more or gone further to make improvements. I have proposals to further increase CRP acres and proposals to make additional improvements to the Agriculture Risk Coverage Program—or the ARC Program.

I think we have a strong bill before us today. I am grateful for the leadership of our Agriculture Committee chairman, Senator ROBERTS, and the ranking member, Senator STABENOW. All too often these days, measures that should be collaborative fall victim to partisanship, but the debate over the farm bill was collegial and collaborative, and we produced a strong bipartisan bill as a result.

It takes a special kind of person to be a farmer or a rancher. There are no set hours and no paid vacations. Bad weather isn't just an inconvenience, it jeopardizes your entire livelihood. Your job is filled with late nights and early mornings. You can sit up all night with a sick calf and then have to get out there sleepless the next morning to work a full day in the fields. The work is physically demanding, and it is performed no matter what the weather—blazing Sun, freezing cold, or blowing snow or rain. Believe me, we have all of the above in South Dakota.

We don't see the backbreaking work, the sweat and tears that have gone into the production of that gallon of milk we pick up at the grocery store on our way home, but every time we go to that grocery store, we are the beneficiaries of the courage, the dedication, and hard work of our Nation's farmers and ranchers. They feed our country, and they literally feed the world.

I am grateful so many farmers and ranchers call South Dakota home, and I hope the bill that is before us today will help make their jobs just a little bit easier in the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I just want to take a moment before the senior Senator from South Dakota leaves the floor to thank him for his leadership on so many provisions of this bill. I think the soil health provisions are really important, the changes in ARC, and I am really glad we were able to work together to address many of the issues the Senator from South Dakota raised on the Conservation Reserve Program. I very much appreciate all of his hard work in getting us to a place where we have a good bill.

I know the Senator from South Dakota has other thoughts as well. We will continue to work together to continue to improve it, but I very much appreciate all of the Senator's hard work.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

EPA ADMINISTRATOR PRUITT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, as I rise for my 209th "Time to Wake Up" climate change speech, I return to a familiar subject: disgraced Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt.

Not that long ago, I was here discussing the baker's dozen of ethical scandals swirling around Pruitt. From his \$43,000 "cone of silence" phone booth to the millions he spent on a 20-

person security detail, to his lights-and-sirens escapades, to fancy DC restaurant Le Diplomate, Pruitt has come to personify the swamp President Trump promised to drain. And he just keeps on getting swampier.

In just the few weeks since my last speech on Pruitt, we have learned that he used one of his closest aides to plan his vacations, hunt for a Washington apartment, and, most bizarrely, solicit a used hotel mattress from the Trump Hotel. The aide did many of these tasks on government time when she was supposed to be working for taxpayers. That is a clear violation of Federal employment rules. Federal rules also bar officials such as Pruitt from accepting gifts from their subordinates, including these kinds of personal services even on personal time. So one way or the other, this was pretty swampy. We also learned, in a scene worthy of the finest banana republic, that Pruitt had his staffer approach the founder of the fast food chain Chick-fil-A about securing a franchise for Pruitt's wife.

As the New York Times recently wrote, "Grifters Gonna Grift." But with all deference to the editorial writers at the Times, I would add that Pruitt's actions aren't just matters of grift; they also reveal his servility to the interests of his fossil fuel backers over the interests of the American public. My Republican colleague, Senator ERNST of Iowa, recently said that Pruitt's efforts to undermine the renewable fuel standard, including the abundance of waivers for refiners, amount to broken promises to American farmers. "He is about as swampy as you get here in Washington, DC," she said. Amen.

You would think that someone so corrupt would not be long for a President's Cabinet. You would be wrong. Just last week, in the face of all of Pruitt's latest scandals, President Trump reaffirmed his support for his EPA Administrator, saying that the Agency is doing really, really well under Pruitt. The President doesn't see anything wrong with having someone as scandal-plagued as Pruitt in his Cabinet. What he can see is that the fossil fuel industry is solidly lined up behind its servant, Pruitt. He has oil company interests and the front groups they fund telling him to keep Pruitt on the job because Pruitt is rolling back regulations polluters don't like.

Let's look at how well Pruitt is really doing for the polluters. Let's start with Pruitt's record in the courts.

A number of EPA's regulatory actions or its failures to regulate have been challenged in court.

Republicans continue to rubberstamp Trump's activist, extreme-rightwing, and polluter-friendly judicial nominees, but American courts nevertheless remain a forum in which outright lies are not countenanced and in which regulatory agencies such as EPA have to demonstrate the scientific, technical, economic, and legal basis of their regulatory decisions. An agency whose po-

litical leadership dissembles or doesn't do its homework won't do well in court.

So how has Scott Pruitt's EPA fared in the courts? In two words, not well. Our Environment and Public Works Committee ranking member, TOM CARPER, recently released a report analyzing Pruitt's record in court. As you can see from this chart, 66 cases have been filed against Pruitt's EPA in relation to ethics and transparency. I know this comes as little shock, given Pruitt's numerous and continuing ethical shortcomings. Of the 14 of these ethics cases that have already been decided by a judge, EPA lost 13 of them. That is a 7-percent success rate for Pruitt. The other 79 cases challenge EPA's regulatory actions or inactions.

This is what Pruitt is supposed to be there for—rolling back rules protecting public health and the environment to make his fossil fuel patrons happy. This is why he still has industry support. This is why he is still running EPA despite all the scandals. You can be corrupt in this administration as long as you are corrupt for the right people.

Of the six of these cases that have been fully reviewed by the courts, Pruitt's EPA lost four of them, succeeded in delaying arguments on one, and got another dismissed on mootness grounds after withdrawing the challenged rule. In other words, Pruitt is zero for six before the courts when it comes to defending his regulatory rollbacks. Pruitt is a former baseball player, so he will understand it when I say that he is batting way below the Mendoza line.

The courts have blocked Pruitt's attempt to delay the implementation of a rule curbing methane emissions from new oil and gas wells. Methane, of course, is a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. The courts also blocked Pruitt's effort to slow-walk EPA's revision of lead paint standards. Pruitt wanted another 6 years to revise the standards, and the courts gave him 90 days.

Many of Pruitt's biggest deregulatory actions, after a splashy announcement, have yet to even be finalized, so they aren't yet ripe for judicial review. But even on these half-baked rollbacks, Pruitt is making mistakes that will provide ample ammunition in court for those who will sue him.

Take Pruitt's rulemaking to rescind the Clean Power Plan—President Obama's blueprint to reduce carbon emissions from the power sector. As Oklahoma attorney general, Pruitt sued three times to block the Clean Power Plan. He has a long record against the Clean Power Plan in the press, at industry conferences, and on social media. Many of the same fossil fuel industry donors who have bankrolled Pruitt's political career are on the other side, suing to block the Clean Power Plan.

Pruitt has not even revealed the full depth of his fiscal engagement with the fossil fuel industry because he has

never fessed up to who gave money to his dark money political operation, so it is actually probably worse than we know.

Well, here is where America's rule of law kicks in. America's rule of law provides that those who are interested in an agency rulemaking "have a right to a fair and open proceeding; that right includes access to an impartial decision maker." Here, given Pruitt's strident opposition to the Clean Power Plan as attorney general, combined with his sickeningly close financial and political ties with the industry opposing it, can there be any doubt that Pruitt possesses what under law one would call an unalterably closed mind when it comes to the Clean Power Plan? Courts will take notice of that sort of thing.

Then there is Pruitt's effort to exclude certain scientific studies from consideration in rulemaking. Pruitt claims it is to boost transparency. That couldn't be phonier. It is an effort to boost two industries that are big donors to his political operations—fossil fuel and tobacco.

For decades, fossil fuel and tobacco have pushed to prevent regulatory agencies from considering scientific studies that rely on people's medical records. They have figured out that because people like their medical records to be private and because public health studies rely on private medical records, if they can cook up the notion that that is somehow a transparency problem, they can take the entire corpus of public health science based on medical records and put it in the bin. Blocking that public health evidence is a way for these industries to screen out the most damning evidence in actual Americans' actual health records of the effects of tobacco smoke and air pollution on human health.

Pruitt's own Science Advisory Board isn't buying that one. He rebuffed the Board's request for information about this proposed rule and issued it without the Board's input. When he claimed that his proposed rule was consistent with the position of various scientific journals and groups, those journals and groups stood up and said: Oh, no. They were quick to correct the record. And EPA's Science Advisory Board just voted unanimously to examine the policy anyway.

You might think that such a rule may also exclude some industry-funded studies, but never fear—internal emails obtained by the Union of Concerned Scientists show that Pruitt's lackeys, themselves former industry lobbyists, knew they had to make sure industry studies could still be considered by EPA.

It would be great to take all of the real public health studies that rely on real healthcare information, pretend that is a transparency problem, shove them off to the side, and then have industry-funded studies left to rely upon. Well, the Pruitt lackeys pulled a little trick and put in the proposed rule that

the Administrator can include any study he likes, regardless of what the rule may require, opening up a nice, safe harbor for his industry sponsors' industry-funded studies.

All of this sounds pretty arbitrary and capricious to me. And "arbitrary and capricious" by the way, is the legal standard courts will use to evaluate challenges to this phony baloney rule.

Pruitt's drive to weaken fuel economy standards also looks to be on shaky legal ground. They cobbled together a 38-page document in April announcing Pruitt's intention to roll back the 2012 auto fuel efficiency standards. That cobbled-together report is devoid of the type of serious, detailed analysis that courts typically look for in such a rulemaking. Half of that little document is just quotes from car companies objecting to the rule. By comparison, the Obama administration assembled a 1,217-page document justifying those standards, chockful of real scientific, technical, and economic analysis—all of the stuff the Pruitt EPA is allergic to.

Once again, Pruitt's work product looks pretty arbitrary and capricious—short on facts, short on analysis, long on giveaways to industries that fund him. It is entirely understandable that the interests to which Pruitt is beholden would be fighting for him to keep his job. They love this. For them, Pruitt running this public health agency into the ground is a feature, not a bug, of the Pruitt tenure. They are just in it for the regulatory rollbacks.

I hope they recognize a lot of Pruitt's work is so sloppy that, ultimately, it will likely not stand up in court. I hope President Trump understands the guy he thinks of as his great deregulator isn't very good at deregulating.

Only time will tell how long Scott Pruitt can survive the mounting, swirling, ethical ordeals of his own making. We will also see how his industry friendly regulatory record fares under the scrutiny of honest courts. Something tells me I will be back here in the not-too-distant future with more to say about the troubled and disgraceful tenure of Scott Pruitt.

I yield the floor.

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

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

FAMILY SEPARATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, over the past few days, the issue of family separation has reached a fever pitch. All you have to do is look at the daily newspapers or cable television, and you know that is true. This is a crisis that has been brewing since the surge of young migrants across our border way back in 2014 and is just now reaching a new peak.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: I find it ridiculous to suggest that members of my political party—the Republican Party—somehow support the idea of separating families. No one wants families separated. No one wants to see families exploited. To suggest otherwise is to feed the frenzy that has been whipped up over the last few days.

Lost in this frenzy is the reality that the only groups standing to truly benefit while America is divided are smugglers, drug cartels, and human traffickers. They know about the weaknesses and loopholes in our current immigration law, and they aren't afraid to use those weaknesses and loopholes. For these people, it is all about profit. Smugglers, drug cartels, and human traffickers don't care about human lives.

In 2015 and 2016, I questioned the Obama administration's Department of Homeland Security after receiving reports that human trafficking was increasing, and some smugglers weren't being arrested even after smuggling people across the border dozens of times. The lack of consequences emboldened these smugglers.

At that time, I also asked the Obama Department of Homeland Security about a dangerous tactic used by smugglers to pair kids with unrelated adults to create the appearance of a family unit. The word "appearance" is key here.

Knowing the legal loopholes better than most, these smugglers knew that our laws, like the Flores settlement agreement, prevented family detention.

Flores vs. Reno effectively prohibits the government from maintaining custody of immigrant children even when they are with their families. Through this agreement, the government had sent the message that if you come alone, you will be detained, but if you come with a family, and as a family, you will likely be released. Understanding this, these smart smugglers knew they could sell this false freedom and build a cruel new business model.

In 2015, I was horrified to learn that human smuggling rings were exploiting children and selling them to the highest bidder to get to the United States and avoid detention. That is right. Smugglers would use kids like pawns in an effort to help adults avoid detention when coming across the border. To truly help families, any solution we come up with must protect against this evil stunt by the smugglers.

Department officials reported that kids were being kidnapped, or adopted, and then smuggled with their unrelated adult so-called "family member" to the United States.

U.S. Government officials work closely with foreign officials, trying to locate and safely return these kidnapped children to their mothers and fathers. Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen. For example, a woman paid a smuggling organization in Brazil

\$13,000 in fees to smuggle her to the United States. She flew from her home country of Brazil to Mexico, where she was paired with a minor child. She was then instructed to claim the child as her own upon arrival to the United States.

After learning about this scam, ICE intervened, and the woman was removed. The child, however, was never found. She will never be reunited with her real family. She is likely separated from that real family forever. That is all because the flaws in our current immigration system permitted—and even encouraged—her to be trafficked.

I heard just yesterday that U.S. Customs and Border Protection has temporarily stopped referring cases for criminal prosecution, but that is exactly what the Obama administration did during their tenure. It is exactly why we are dealing with this terrible situation that separates children and families in the first place. Failure to refer cases for prosecution will only give a green light to these smugglers, once more putting at risk the very kids we are worried about protecting, and we ought to be worried about protecting them.

This tactic of creating fake family units isn't new and isn't limited to just a one-time deal. Last week, Secretary Nielsen reported that this tactic is still being utilized. She stated:

In the last five months, we've had a 314 percent increase in adults and children arriving at the border, fraudulently claiming to be a family unit. This is, obviously, of concern.

These fake family units are often provided with fraudulent documents to support that the group is actually a family unit when we all know it is not a family unit. There is a whole industry that exists to create fake birth certificates and many other documents that show a familial relationship. As the tactic to create these fake family units has become more popular, the underground market has exploded. Smugglers are very smart, and many of them are masters of gaming our immigration system.

Let me reiterate that the way the Flores vs. Reno agreement is currently applied, the government can't keep immigrant children even if they are with their parents. Flores discourages the Federal Government from keeping families together in Department of Homeland Security custody. If we remedy this situation, not only would we be able to keep families together, but we would also be telling the smugglers who profit from this that their days of making millions of dollars off the most vulnerable are over. The most vulnerable—the kids we are talking about—aren't getting the protection they ought to get when they are separated from their parents.

To me, the answer to this problem appears to be very simple. We should repeal the Flores decision only as it applies to accompanied children so that the Department of Homeland Security

can keep families together in family residential centers. That is very simple, and that is very quick. That is why, last week, I worked hand in hand with Senator TILLIS to produce a bill that would do just that.

Senator TILLIS's thoughtful bill, in addition to repealing parts of the Flores decision, would also allow more immigrant court judges to be hired and would provide for detained families to have their cases heard first.

Senator TILLIS's bill would immediately end this crisis and wouldn't return us to the failed catch-and-release policies that even the former Obama Department of Homeland Secretary, Jeh Johnson, has acknowledged are poor public policies.

I hope my colleagues will join with Senator TILLIS and this Senator to fix this problem. The American people are counting on it. Thousands of families are depending upon it.

I yield the floor.

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

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

A LIVING WAGE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, we know Americans work harder and longer than ever before and have less and less to show for it. Hard work doesn't pay off the way it used to. Workers in Ohio have known that for a long time—that their paychecks don't stretch far enough. This month, the State's second largest newspaper, the Columbus Dispatch, reported on just how bad things are for far too many Ohioans.

The Dispatch reported on a new study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio that found—get this—that only 2 out of the 10 most common jobs in Ohio pay enough for one to be able to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.

Think about the number of people who work in fast-food restaurants. Think of the number of people who clean hotel rooms. Think of the number of people who are orderlies in big hospitals. Think of the number of people who do clerical work or who are bank tellers who simply don't make enough to live any kind of a lifestyle which, when they were kids, they expected to live.

Look at it this way. Average renters in Ohio earn just over \$13 an hour—\$2 less than the \$15.25 an hour they need to rent a basic two-bedroom. Now, that is statewide, but in Columbus, which is the State's largest city, it is worse. You need to earn \$17.50 per hour to rent a basic two-bedroom apartment.

Policy Matters Ohio has also done great work in shining a light on working Ohioans. Its report this spring found that last year, 6 of the 10 most

common jobs in our State paid so little that workers would need food stamps to feed a family of 3. Six of the ten most common jobs in Ohio paid so little that workers would need food stamps if there were three in the household.

Think of what this means. These are Ohioans who are doing everything we have asked. They hold down jobs. They get up every day. They go to work. They serve their communities. They are holding up their end of the bargain—the bargain we are supposed to have in this country. Yet the corporations they work for don't pay them what they are worth. It is not just the workers in these jobs who get hurt by this, it is obviously their families, and, interestingly, it is the taxpayers.

Here is why: When corporations refuse to pay workers living wages, when they refuse them opportunities to save for retirement, when they refuse to provide decent healthcare, they create a drag on the economy. Do you know why? It is because taxpayers pick it up. Someone has to pick up the tab when corporations pay \$9 and \$10 and \$11.

I was at my high school reunion a couple of years ago. At dinner, I sat across the table—my wife and I did—from a woman who has worked for a bank, for a very well-known, huge national bank. She had worked there for 30 years as a teller, and she made \$30,000 a year, after 30 years, working as a teller.

So what happens to people like her? The taxpayers end up helping to finance their, generally, barely adequate standards of living. I will get to that in a second.

No one who works 40 hours should be forced onto food stamps or housing vouchers or Medicaid or other government aid just to stay afloat. American citizens—American taxpayers—shouldn't be forced to subsidize wages for megacorporations. Yet that is what is happening in Ohio, what is happening in Wisconsin, and what is happening around the country.

If people are making \$10 an hour, they are probably getting their insurance from Medicaid, which is paid for by taxpayers. They are probably getting the earned-income tax credit, which is a refundable tax credit that is provided by taxpayers. They are probably getting food stamps, which are provided by taxpayers—the SNAP benefit. They are probably getting housing vouchers. What this means is, because a company only pays \$10 an hour, taxpayers have to provide the rest, so taxpayers are fundamentally subsidizing them.

Think of these huge retail operations in this country. Think of these huge fast-food restaurants. Think of the executives for those corporations who are making \$2 million, \$5 million, \$10 million a year. They are not paying their line workers anything close to their economic value. Do you know what happens then? It means taxpayers are

subsidizing these huge companies with their exorbitant executive salaries.

This month, the Dispatch talked with a home health aide who lives on the east side of Columbus. Her name is Karon Taylor. Ms. Taylor works hard to support her daughter and grandchildren. She only makes \$11 an hour, which is well below the \$17 I mentioned that you need in Columbus to be able to afford a family apartment. She relies on federally subsidized housing.

She told the Dispatch:

I know how to budget, and I can stretch \$20 really far. Wages—that's the problem.

She works hard, and she does her part, but she needs help to make ends meet because companies refuse to pay workers like her a living wage. It doesn't have to be that way.

Last year, as some in this body remember, I introduced a bill called the corporate freeloader fee. It works this way: If you are a huge corporation—I am not talking about a mom-and-pop restaurant, and I am not talking about a lawn care service with 10 employees or about one who is self-employed or about one with 30 employees or even 100 employees; I am talking about large corporations, if you choose to pay your workers so little that they are disproportionately forced onto government assistance so that they are eligible for all of these programs—again, food stamps, Medicaid, the earned-income tax credit, subsidized housing—you need to reimburse American taxpayers.

You are a huge corporation. Your executive vice presidents make \$1 million; the senior executive vice president makes \$5 million; the CFO makes \$7 million; the CEO makes \$10 million. Yet you are paying your workers \$10, \$11, and \$12 an hour, and they go onto government assistance. Do you know what? Instead of passing the Senate tax bill that gave all kinds of tax benefits to the rich—the bill that was negotiated down in the majority leader's office, where all of the special interest lobbyists scurried in and out when you turned the lights on—if we had passed the tax bill with my patriot employer tax credit, which I will talk about in a moment, and with the corporate freeloader fee, we would have seen a very different tax bill. We would have seen a tax bill that would have said to these companies: Pay your workers a little better, and you will get a little better of a tax break.

If you are a huge corporation and you pay your workers so little that they are forced to go onto government assistance, you reimburse American taxpayers. That is the corporate freeloader fee. On the other hand, if you are a company like a whole lot of companies in my State and you pay good wages—if you pay \$15 an hour or more—and offer good benefits and if you keep jobs in this country and production in this country, if you don't offshore your production to Mexico or China, then you get a tax cut. That is the patriot employer tax credit.

Months and months ago, I spoke to the President of the United States in a discussion with about 10 Senators—in the Cabinet room—about these two ideas. The President said he liked the patriot employer tax credit, giving tax benefits to those who do the right thing. Apparently, he seemed to like the corporate freeloader fee also, punishing those corporations that don't do the right thing and making them simply pay a fee to the government for that. In the end, the President of the United States joined the majority leader and the Speaker of the House in writing a tax bill, whereby, 5 years from now, 80 percent of the benefits in that tax bill will go to the richest 1 percent of the people in the country.

Imagine instead if that tax bill had actually been written like this—in a way that would have seen wages go up and the standard of living go up. Instead, the special interests went to work. Instead of tax reform that would have given companies real incentives to invest in workers, we got a tax cut that will lead to billions in stock buybacks that will benefit corporate executives.

In that meeting at the White House, the President also said: Our tax bill is going to mean a \$4,000 to \$9,000 raise for the average American worker per year.

I am like, really?

Nothing even close to that has happened. Instead, what companies have done is they have taken their largesse that has been provided by middle-class and working-class taxpayers—the 80 percent of benefits going to the 1 percent wealthiest people in corporations—and they have done stock buybacks. They have increased their own executive compensation. Workers have gotten almost nothing. Workers have gotten squeezed on both ends, whereby paychecks haven't grown fast enough, corporations have paid poverty-level wages, and housing has gotten more expensive.

Think of this. One-quarter of renters—one-quarter of the people who rent in my State, who are not much different than those who are anywhere else—pay half of their income in housing. There are 400,000 renters in Ohio who pay half of their income or more in housing. Do you know what that means? It means, if the car breaks down, it means if a kid gets sick, it means if you miss work for 2 weeks for some reason, you are probably going to get evicted. It happens every day in every city, in every community, in every rural area in my State.

We know we need to do more to preserve and grow our stock of affordable housing in this country. Instead, the administration is making it worse. It has proposed to hike rents by 20 percent for almost all Ohio families who receive housing assistance.

In going back to Ms. Taylor in Columbus, OH, she is a home health aide. She still isn't paid enough. Average rents for Columbus families would go up by a projected 22 percent. Do you

think her company is going to pay her 22 percent more or even 10 percent or 5 percent more? Her housing costs would go up because of a decision by Dr. Carson—ratified by the White House—to cut that help, to reduce that help. Housing, healthcare, education, gas, and transportation are all getting more expensive. Workers wages aren't keeping up because corporations don't value workers.

We know one solution to this problem—giving workers a voice in the workplace. A single worker can't take on a corporation. A single worker can't take on the CEO and can't take on the behemoth in the executive suite. That is why you need collective bargaining.

Last September, 400 security officers in Columbus got raises—from as low as \$9 an hour to a minimum of \$12.45 an hour. They signed their first union contract with the Service Employees International Union, Local 1. That union card bought them a minimum \$2.50 raise. That is still below what workers need, but it is progress. They joined together, and they demanded a unified voice in the companies they helped to build. It is not just unions. We need stronger workplace standards to make sure workers get the pay they earn.

In Columbus, OH, 2 years ago, I stood with the Vice President of the United States and the Secretary of Labor, and we announced an overtime rule, wherein 130,000 Ohioans would get a pay increase or would work fewer hours for the same amount of money.

Here is how it works: If you are the supervisor on the night shift at a fast-food restaurant and you are making \$35,000 a year and your company—a fast-food restaurant, a big national company—decides to call you management, it can make you work 50 hours, 60 hours, 70 hours a week and pay you not a cent of overtime. So this updating of the Federal overtime rule that we did—that the Secretary of Labor did, with Vice President Biden and President Obama, 2 or 3 years ago or so—said that 130,000 Ohioans would get paid time and a half for that 50th or 55th hour, instead of going straight salary just because the company classified no overtime.

Unfortunately, the folks in the White House—the folks who promised to drain the swamp—have sided with the fast food restaurants and with the big employers, and they are trying to strip away that overtime rule so those workers will continue to have to work 50 or 60 hours and not get a dime for it, meaning less time for their children, less time with their families, less leisure time, less pay—all of that.

So, fundamentally, whose side are these people on? They are always on the side of the wealthy. They are always on the side of the richest corporations. They are always on the side of the privileged. They are never on the side of people who fight, work, and struggle just to stay above water. At the same time, we need to go after cor-

porations that misclassify their workers. They pretend they are independent contractors so they can avoid paying into Medicare and Social Security and paying their share of taxes and wages. From housing to wages to workers' rights, we need to change how we think about these issues.

It is not multinational corporations that drive the economy. It is workers. Since 2010, since the auto rescue, every single month from 2010 until this month at least, June 2018, we have had an increase in the number of net jobs created in this country—every month since 2010. Granted, the President's comments notwithstanding, the growth in jobs in 2017 was less than the 5 years before. We have had a slowly increasing economy where job growth isn't as big as we want and wage growth certainly isn't as big as we want, but we have seen it because in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013, the government understood that you grow an economy from the middle up. You don't give tax cuts to the richest people saying it is going to trickle down. You give tax breaks and focus on growth in the economy in the middle level, so that workers making minimum wage get raises. As I said, it is not multinational corporations that drive the economy, it is workers making the minimum wage, workers paid in tips, workers on factory floors, workers behind desks, workers in hospital wards, in restaurant kitchens, and in classrooms, and workers on salary and workers punching the clock. It is about fighting for the little guy, whether she punches a clock or whether he works in an office; fighting for the little guy, whether she works construction or whether he works in manufacturing; fighting for the little guy, whether he sits behind a computer terminal or whether she is midlevel management in a fast food restaurant. You grow the economy from the middle class out.

But if you don't value work, Americans can't earn their way to a better life for their family, no matter how hard they work. That is what people around here don't understand. I sat at this desk watching a very close vote last year where 49 of my colleagues—49 out of 100 colleagues—all of whom have government-paid health insurance, stood on this floor and voted yes to taking away insurance from 900,000 people in my State, and in Wisconsin from 400,000 or 500,000 people. People who have government insurance paid for by taxpayers, who are U.S. Senators who have these jobs, who have these titles, who have this income and these benefits, were willing to take insurance away from millions of people, and hundreds of thousands of people in my State alone.

Again, if work isn't valued, if my colleagues in this body don't understand the value of work—and they don't seem to, frankly, with the way so many of my colleagues vote—Americans can't earn their way to a better life for their families—again, no matter how hard they work.

That is what we have to change. Until Wall Street, corporate boardrooms, and Members of the Senate respect a hard day's work, we will continue to see the consequences. The gap between Wall Street and Main Street will keep growing, it will be harder and harder for workers to afford housing and other expenses. Our middle class will continue to shrink, as it has, and our economic growth will continue to lag behind. We can work together to fix that.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ROBERTS. 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. ROBERTS. For the information of our colleagues, the Senate will proceed to the bill tomorrow morning at 10 a.m., and the amendment process will begin.

After Senator STABENOW and I offer the bipartisan substitute, the first amendment offered on this side will be the Thune amendment on the Conservation Reserve Program.

There will be no further rollcall votes tonight.

I yield to my distinguished colleague, the ranking member of the committee, Senator STABENOW.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I am pleased that we are moving forward and looking forward to the first amendment we will be voting on, Senator THUNE's amendment, of which I am very supportive. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues as we move through the bill. Hopefully, we are on the road to getting this done this week.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DAINES. 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. DAINES. 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.

ENERGY AND WATER APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I wish to discuss H.R. 5895, the Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2019.

I thank Senate leadership and the Appropriations Committee for their work on this legislation.

The Appropriations Committee's effort this year to return the Senate to regular order on annual spending bills is commendable, and the leadership of the committee honors a bipartisan commitment to keep the most controversial policy language out of these pieces of legislation.

While we can agree that the legislation is indeed absent of unrelated policy riders, that does not mean all of the appropriations it contains and the resulting policy implications of those appropriations are good.

One such misguided priority within this bill is funding an unnecessary, destabilizing, and thoroughly underexplained expansion of America's nuclear arsenal.

In particular, the Fiscal Year 2019 Energy and Water Appropriations Act contains \$65 million in funding to develop a new so-called low-yield nuclear weapon warhead: the W76-2. This is a new nuclear weapon that we simply just do not need. For this reason, I opposed this bill.

I made clear during Senate consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act that developing the W76-2 low-yield nuclear warhead creates a new nuclear weapon that is unnecessary to maintain America's nuclear deterrent.

This need for a new low-yield nuclear weapon first came to light just 5 months ago in the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review.

I have seen no documents, reports, or studies justifying the W76-2 or supporting its immediate development, and serious questions remain unanswered.

Why are the hundreds of low-yield nuclear weapons that we already have, like the B61 bomb and air-launched cruise missile, not adequate?

Where will these new W76-2 nuclear weapons be deployed?

On how many of our boomer submarines will we be placing these weapons and on what schedule?

What targets will we no longer hold at risk with strategic nuclear weapons to accommodate these new low-yield weapons?

Since this W76-2 low-yield nuclear weapon will be launched using the same rockets as our strategic thermonuclear weapons and off of the exact same submarines, how can anyone distinguish whether it is one or the other?

Somehow, answers to these questions have not been written down anywhere. Instead, we are simply told "we need the low yield nuclear weapon to deter the Russians and prevent an escalate to de-escalate scenario."

The United States already has plans to spend hundreds of billions of dollars to upgrade our existing nuclear weapons systems as part of the existing nuclear modernization program, systems that are in excess of what we need to maintain our nuclear deterrence.

So it just makes no sense to spend money to develop new nuclear weapons.

In doing so, we are making America and the world less safe, not more. We are throwing away decades of American leadership trying to move the world away from nuclear weapons and the existential threat they pose to all of us.

That is why I filed an amendment to redirect funds that the Trump administration would use to develop this wasteful and unnecessary low-yield nuclear weapon towards preparing for nonproliferation activities that will be essential to helping denuclearize North Korea whether now or at some point in the future.

I regret that my amendment was not considered during the floor debate on this bill, but I still believe that Congress needs to seriously consider the consequences of authorizing and appropriating funds for this new weapon.

I am more worried than ever that this crucial debate has not and is not receiving the attention that it deserves. I hope, moving forward, we can change that and that the Senate will appropriately consider the magnitude of the decisions we are making here today.

A nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon. They are fundamentally different than anything else in the world, and they must be treated as such.

In the absence of a full debate on the floor of this Chamber that allows the American people to understand what is truly at stake with this new weapon, I could not support this legislation.

Thank you.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO BERNARD BRADY

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I rise on behalf of the Delaware delegation to honor the exemplary service of Bernard Brady, secretary of the senate for the State of Delaware.

A native of Wilmington and a graduate of Trinity College, University of Dublin, Bernard began his career with the Delaware Senate in January of 1979. After nearly 40 years of public service, he has made the difficult decision to retire. Bernard serves as the chief administrative officer of the Senate, which is a position elected by the members. For four decades, Bernard has been the cornerstone of the Delaware Senate, involved in matters relating to budget, legislation, and overall operations. His office maintains records of official Senate transactions, handles the introduction and flow of legislation, sends and receives legislative messages and executive communications, compiles and posts agendas, records committee reports, rollcalls, and the legislative journal. This is no small task for one person. Many nights while serving as Delaware's Governor, I