

need to be thanked. They need to be revered. Agencies always need to be improved, but if you believe we should end ICE, you had better own the consequences.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. LEAHY. Mr. President, today the Senate is considering one of the most troubling executive branch nominations that this President has made to date—the nomination of Brian Benczkowski to lead the Criminal Division of the Justice Department.

For years, I have studied and have been aware of the Criminal Division. This is an amazing nomination. I think it is enough to oppose Mr. Benczkowski's nomination because he is objectively unqualified for this important position, but there are also compelling reasons to believe that it would be uniquely reckless to confirm him to this position.

Now, speaking about Mr. Benczkowski's lack of qualifications for this role is not meant to denigrate. Many of us know him, as I did, from his service in the Judiciary Committee as the staff director for the then Ranking Member Jeff Sessions. The fact is, this nominee to head the Criminal Division has virtually no criminal law experience. Even at this age, he has never tried a case. He has never served as a prosecutor. He has almost zero courtroom experience. Instead, his experience has been to serve as a political aide to various officials.

As a former prosecutor, I know there is no substitute for actual courtroom experience, actually going into a courtroom and trying a criminal case, arguing criminal cases on appeal, determining whether you bring a charge or don't bring a charge. These are things an experienced prosecutor has to do. For the last several decades, under Republican and Democratic administrations, every head of a criminal division—which is probably the most important litigating arm of the Justice Department—has had substantial prosecutorial experience, with the exception of one individual whose nomination I simply could not support. This shouldn't be a partisan issue. I voted for nominees in Republican administrations and in Democratic administrations because they were qualified, and there are countless qualified prosecutors the President could select.

For this reason alone, the Senate should not consent to Mr. Benczkowski's nomination. But there are two other reasons, aside from the fact that he has absolutely zero qualifications for this important position. It is sort of like sending somebody in to

do brain surgery when their main experience has been clipping hedges. You have to have some experience in there, but aside from the fact that he has no experience, there are two other reasons he shouldn't be confirmed.

First, he has demonstrated, at a minimum, exceptionally poor judgment when it comes to perhaps our Nation's most critical ongoing national security investigation—the Russian Government's attack on our democracy. We all know, if we have read the intelligence reports, Russia attacked the U.S. democracy and vote in the last election.

After serving on Mr. Trump's transition team, Mr. Benczkowski represented a Putin-connected Russian bank, Alfa-Bank, regarding its bizarre server communications with the Trump organization during the height of the Presidential campaign. Alfa-Bank was at the very center of scrutiny into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia, even making an appearance in the Steele dossier. Yet Mr. Benczkowski took on Alfa-Bank as a client on an issue related to the Russia investigation at the same time he was being considered for a senior position in the Trump Justice Department, totally blinded to the obvious conflict of interest. In fact, he continued to represent Vladimir Putin's connected bank until the day he was formally nominated to lead the criminal division.

Now, some have said we should give Mr. Benczkowski the benefit of the doubt. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, you have to admit, at least demonstrates an embarrassingly poor sense of judgment for someone who is nominated to lead the Criminal Division to look into the criminal activities of places like Alfa-Bank. Now, we find Mr. Benczkowski has refused to recuse himself from matters related to the Russia investigation or the Steele dossier.

You can't make these things up. It is just conflict of interest 101. As Senator DURBIN and Senator WHITEHOUSE have warned, as head of the Criminal Division, Mr. Benczkowski would therefore have visibility and be able to look into investigations of individuals related to the Trump campaign. He could serve as a conduit of information to the Attorney General about these sensitive matters.

According to the Department of Justice, it is possible Special Counsel Mueller's office "will seek approvals from the Criminal Division as required . . . or may simply want to consult with subject-matter experts in the Criminal Division as appropriate in the normal course of department investigations," and who would have availability to that? Mr. Benczkowski. He could even be in a position to share secret grand jury information directly with the President.

What is also concerning is that if Mr. Benczkowski were to be confirmed and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein

were then to be removed, the President, under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act, could simply install Mr. Benczkowski as the Acting Attorney General, with respect to the Russia investigation.

So what do we have? We have Mr. Benczkowski, under those circumstances, gaining direct control over the special counsel's investigation. He would even have the power to stop the special counsel's probe. Gosh, we wonder, could that ever occur to someone at the White House; that he could suddenly stop Mr. Mueller from his investigations?

On qualifications, the man who is going to be head of the Criminal Division has never tried a case, never handled any criminal matter, never had anything to do with criminal matters. He is really unqualified for this role by any objective measure. The only apparent qualification that Mr. Benczkowski has is his close relationship with, and political loyalty to, the Attorney General and the President. In fact, that is likely the very reason he was nominated to this critical position. That is all the more troubling given his terrible judgment with respect to the Russia investigation. We are putting someone in who has been involved as an attorney for a bank involved in this Russia investigation.

Many of my fellow Republican Senators, to their credit, have stated their commitment to ensuring that Special Counsel Mueller be allowed to carry out his investigation independently and without political interference. I hope they keep this commitment in mind when considering Mr. Benczkowski's nomination. I hope they join me in voting no. Apparently, his only qualification is he is going to be put in a position where he could stymie Mueller's investigation of Russia.

I have voted for a lot of nominees, both Republicans and Democrats, in this position because of their qualifications—not because of their ideology but their qualifications. No President of either party has ever nominated somebody for this critical position who is less qualified. In fact, it is pretty hard to find anybody in this country less qualified.

Mr. President, I see other Senators on the floor, so I yield to them.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

#### SECTION 232

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise to talk about my opposition to the section 232 motion which will be voted on later today.

I have utmost respect for my colleagues who are bringing this motion. I totally understand their logic, and I respect their point of view on this and many other issues. One of the great things about this deliberative body is that we deliberate. Unfortunately, I just don't understand why this body continues to try to tie the hands of this President at every turn.

We all know that enacting tariffs on imports is not the goal here. This

President is committed to creating a more level playing field for our workers and our companies here at home that compete on the unlevel playing field which exists in the trade world we know of today. We need to give this President, and every future President, frankly, room to negotiate.

The 1962 Trade Expansion Act was passed by Congress to give the executive branch the authority and flexibility to negotiate on trade. It was this authority that paved the way for negotiations on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—GATT—which helped reduce global trade barriers.

Most of my career, I have dealt with in the GATT restrictions and opportunities we have to trade across borders internationally. I think, more than anybody else in this body, I have actually transacted products across borders internationally. I am very concerned, in this era of entrenchment in Congress, where we are so paralyzed that we can't even fulfill our most basic constitutional function of funding the government on time—which we have only done four times in 44 years—in that environment, if we get the authority on trade back, that we will not be able to even hold a vote and have a debate and will hamstring any administration's negotiating efforts.

Credibility in negotiating trade terms is absolutely critical. Imagine a head of state in another part of the world dealing with our head of state, knowing that before he can make any deal, he has to wait on us in this body to act. I have been waiting 3 years to see this body act on healthcare. We haven't been able to find a way to even solve one of the most near crises we all know exists today. So imagine what a world would look like if we are trying to do that in the trade environment.

Like me, President Trump is an outsider to this political process. He is a business guy who has seen the impact of unfair trade practices in the real world. For years, he has seen how America has often been treated unfairly when it comes to trade. I know, and most people who have traded internationally in the last four decades know, these rules were written by us. We wrote these rules. It created an unlevel playing field that allowed the rest of the world to develop, but guess what. In the last 40 years, we have seen global poverty be reduced by almost two-thirds, while our poverty rate in the United States, since the Great Society was signed into law, has not been reduced one iota. That is partly a function of our trade practices.

This President has made it a priority to restore fairness and balance to this trade imbalance with our trading partners around the world. He needs credibility and he needs flexibility in order to achieve that.

Looking at what we are up against today, it is easy to see why the President is insisting on getting America a better deal. Today, Canada has a 270-percent tariff on U.S. milk; the EU

keeps a 10-percent tariff on American autos; Brazil bans U.S. fresh, frozen, and processed pork products; China has a 15-percent tariff on American cars; the EU has a tariff of up to 26 percent on U.S. seafood; and you cannot sell fresh American potatoes in most of Mexico. I could do this all day.

We know there is an imbalance in trade around the world. This is about making sure America is treated fairly and is in the best place to do business in the world. It is about making America more competitive and secure. It is about ensuring our economic and national security for the next 100 years.

The President is taking a different approach, sometimes controversial, but I believe he is a pragmatist, and I believe he only wants one thing for America; that is, results and a level playing field with the rest of the world.

I believe we ought to give the executive branch—just like the 1962 act did—space to negotiate. We need to give him space to succeed for American workers and for American companies here at home.

With that, I urge my colleagues to oppose this motion.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Corker-Toomey-Flake motion that we are going to be voting on soon. Let me be clear. This is a motion that simply would reflect—if it is adopted—the consensus of the Senate that Congress should have a role in determining the use of section 232 to impose tariffs.

Let me give a little bit of context. First of all, I want to be very clear that free trade is enormously constructive, enormously helpful for our economy and our standard of living. The United States has been a leader in promoting free trade around the world for many decades, and that is part of the reason we are the most affluent society on the globe by far, consistently outperforming the rest of the world. What it does is it provides our consumers with many choices and lower costs and therefore a more affordable standard of living, and it provides our workers with foreign markets.

Ninety-five percent of the world's population lives somewhere else. I want to sell to them, and we do that through an environment of free trade. Take NAFTA, for instance. Since NAFTA was enacted in 1994, Pennsylvanians have seen exports to Mexico increase by more than 500 percent. That is what happened because of the reduction in the barriers to trade that existed prior to NAFTA. Of course, it also encourages investment in the United States—new plants, factories, and all the jobs that come with that.

Tariffs and quotas and other obstacles to trade do the exact opposite. They reduce our consumers' choices. They raise costs. They limit our opportunity to sell our products, whether it is agricultural products or manufac-

tured products. They reduce the opportunities to sell these abroad. Of course, inevitably, the imposition of these barriers involves the government's deciding which sectors and which industries will be winners and losers because very seldom are these broadly and uniformly applied. Individual sectors are usually selected.

So where are we today? It has been 16 weeks since the President invoked section 232 of our trade law to impose tariffs on imported steel and aluminum. First and foremost, I have to say this is a misuse of section 232 of our trade law.

Section 232 is supposed to be invoked when there is a specific threat to America's national security. Well, let's consider the case of steel. The United States produces domestically 75 percent of all the steel we consume. Our defense needs consume 3 percent of total steel consumption. How could one possibly make the case that we don't have a plentiful abundance of domestically produced steel to satisfy our defense needs? But it is not only that. Where are the biggest sources for the 25 percent of steel that we consume but we don't produce ourselves? Well, that would be Mexico and Canada. Those are the two countries that provide the most steel. With both of those countries, we have a surplus of trade in steel. The Canadians actually buy more steel from us than we buy from them, and so do the Mexicans.

Where is the security threat to America when my constituents choose to buy some portion of the steel we consume from Canada? We know the answer. There is no security threat from Canada and Mexico, and the fact that they provide a modest percentage of our steel needs does not constitute a national security threat, and we know it doesn't. Yet the administration invoked section 232 to impose this tax on American consumers when we choose to buy steel and aluminum from Canada and Mexico and the European Union, by the way, for that matter.

The harmful effects we have feared have already begun. We have increased prices on U.S. consumers and a real threat to workers and businesses. I have heard from many Pennsylvania manufacturers that happen to rely, for some portion of their products, on imported steel, and now their products are no longer competitive because they, alone in the world, are being forced to pay this additional tax when they import this steel.

I have to say this is part of what looks like a pattern to me—and this is one of my concerns—of this administration moving away from support for free trade. First, there was a sugar deal negotiated with Mexico which is designed to artificially inflate the price American consumers have to pay for sugar. It works out very well if you are one of the handful of people who produce sugar in the United States, but it is a terrible deal for everyone else. Then we had tariffs applied to solar panels and washing machines under a

different provision. Now we have an on-going and apparently escalating trade war with China. This motion has absolutely nothing to do with China; I am just presenting that as a matter of context. And we are hearing that the administration is threatening now to again misuse section 232, in my view, to impose new taxes on Americans who choose to buy automobiles that originate in Europe. That would be terrible for our economy and for our consumers. It would be a bad idea, but we are told that is under active consideration.

My view is that it is about time Congress restores to Congress the constitutional responsibility we have to establish tariffs. The Constitution is completely unambiguous about this. Article I, section 8, clause 1, states that “the Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises.” Clause 3 says that “the Congress shall have the power . . . to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations.” We made a mistake in recent decades when we ceded this constitutional responsibility to the executive branch. I think that was a mistake, and I have argued that for a long time. Now we are seeing a price being paid as the administration, I think, is misusing this important tool.

What our motion does is it would simply take a step in the direction of restoring this responsibility the Constitution assigns to us in the first place. This does not tie the President's hands at all. The President is free to negotiate better trade agreements if he can, and I think he should. What it does say, though, is that if he wants to invoke national security as the reason for imposing taxes on Americans when they buy foreign products—when he wants to do that, Congress ought to have a role. That is all it says. That is what this motion to instruct says.

I am very pleased to be working with Senator CORKER from Tennessee and Senator FLAKE from Arizona. I think this is a very modest step. It takes us in a direction that would be very constructive, which is to restore the constitutional responsibility we have been shirking. I am pleased there is bipartisan support for this. I hope this motion to instruct our conferees will be adopted by a wide margin.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the same topic on which my friend from Pennsylvania just spoke. I want to thank him for laying out the rationale for this vote. I also thank Senator FLAKE for his efforts. I know Senator ALEXANDER, the senior Senator from Tennessee and my friend, will speak on this topic in just a few moments. I do hope we will have an overwhelming vote for this motion to instruct. It is just a step in the direction that we would like to go relative to Congress's role.

Section 232 of the Trade Act was never intended to be used the way this

administration is using it. The Senator from Pennsylvania laid out the fact that this certainly is not being imposed for national security reasons. As a matter of fact, the White House has said loosely on many occasions that they are only using section 232 in order to try to create some kind of leverage on NAFTA. I don't understand how putting tariffs in place on our allies in Europe has anything to do with NAFTA. I don't understand how putting tariffs on our neighbors has anything to do with combating what China is doing in stealing our intellectual property, and I know the Presiding Officer knows full well what is happening there. We do need to counter that kind of activity, and I don't know if we are doing it in the best way now.

This is an abuse of Presidential authority. It is an abuse of Presidential authority. What I hope is going to happen today is that, in a bipartisan way, in an overwhelming vote, we are going to pass this motion to instruct, moving Congress into its rightful role as it relates to this issue.

The reason the President, by the way—for those of you who may not be following this closely—is invoking section 232 is that under 232, no one has really an ability to oppose it. I mean, with the China tariffs—and this has nothing to do with the China tariffs that are being imposed today and that were recently imposed. They go under different sections of the Trade Act where you have to actually make a case for what you are doing. In January, the President used section 201 of the Trade Act, but he has to make a case to be successful there. He recently used section 301 on China tariffs. Again, this particular motion has nothing to do with China tariffs, but he has to make a case for that. He has to deal with the World Trade Organization and ITC.

Section 232—basically, he can just wake up and decide he is going to use section 232, the way it is now written. It has never been used in this manner by any President ever, but if we have a situation where we set up a rules-based society in dealing with trade, and any executive officer of a country can wake up and one day decide they have a national security issue and have to make no case, then, in effect, treaties relative to trade have no effect. You move into a place of not using rules to implement trade.

Now, as the Senator from Pennsylvania mentioned, our country has benefited greatly from trade. The State of Tennessee is one of the destinations for foreign direct investment in our country. It is a place where we export all around the world. And what the President is doing is shaking the very regime by not being able to even articulate where he is going.

The Senator from Georgia is my friend, and he has worked all around the world, and I am surprised that he would oppose Congress having a role only when section 232 is utilized. But

the fact is that Congress should have a role.

We gave this authority away in the 1960s and again in 1974. It was a mistake for us to have done that. We never expected the President of the United States to use 232 in the way it is being utilized today. This is a vote for Congress to assume its rightful role. It is a baby step.

I hope to have legislation coming behind us where 15 Senators—Republicans, Democrats, and an Independent—have come together on a piece of legislation to absolutely ensure that Congress has a role. This is just a motion to instruct to say that we agree that Congress should have a role when 232 is invoked. We will decide what that role is down the road.

I urge all Senators to support this motion.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I join my colleagues today. I thank Senator TOOMEY from Pennsylvania and Senator CORKER from Tennessee especially for working this out.

Let's be clear. This is a rebuke of the President's abuse of trade authority. The President has abused section 232 to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum, impacting our allies, such as Canada, Mexico, and countries in the EU. Can you imagine being in Canada and being told that your steel and aluminum exports to the United States represent a national security threat? Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau rightfully called the President's recent tariffs an “affront to the longstanding security partnership between Canada and the United States” and, he continued, “kind of insulting.”

Canada is the largest consumer of U.S. goods. It buys more goods from the United States than China, Japan, and the UK combined. Canadian companies operating in the United States directly employ 500,000 Americans. Canada and the United States share more than 5,500 miles of a peaceful border. Close to 400,000 people cross that shared border each day for business, pleasure, or to maintain family ties. Canada has been our partner in the War on Terrorism since 2001. More than 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members served alongside us in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014. Canada has been our ally, our partner, and our friend, and now they are told that their steel and aluminum exports to us represent a national security threat. That is an abuse of section 232 of the Trade Act.

I am so glad that Congress is finally pushing back on this. We have neglected our constitutional role. We gave the President authority years ago, under the 1962 act, to exempt from that act imports that represent a true national security threat. These imports do not. This is an abuse of that authority, and that is why Congress needs to speak up today.

This is a nonbinding resolution. This will not have an effect that will actually get to the President in legislation. That is the next step, and we need to go there. We have to go there. Those voting on this today need to know that is where we will go. We have to rein in an abuse of Presidential authority and to restore Congress's constitutional authority in this regard.

I thank my colleagues for bringing this to the floor. I urge all of my colleagues to support it—not just that, but once we go from here, taking this symbolic step, this nonbinding resolution, to take actual steps on legislation that will return the actual authority to Congress once again to impose or to manage tariffs.

With that, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, my motion to instruct conferees to the mini-bus appropriations bill, H.R. 5895, is a simple 6-month extension of the National Flood Insurance Program, currently set to expire July 31, 2018—in about 2 weeks. The same timeline in this motion was passed by the Senate a few weeks ago by unanimous consent during consideration of the farm bill.

The National Flood Insurance Program insures properties in every State, insuring over 5 million homes and businesses and \$1.2 trillion in assets. If the NFIP is not extended, people will not be able to renew or purchase new flood insurance policies, and more people would be without flood insurance during peak hurricane season. This is so to the moment because, given the series of emergency supplemental appropriations bills the Senate has passed, an expiration of the NFIP puts the U.S. taxpayer in the very vulnerable position of funding more uninsured losses in emergency supplemental appropriations legislation.

I thank Senators CRAPO and BROWN for their work in providing a path forward to a bipartisan long-term reauthorization of the NFIP, which ideally includes commonsense reforms providing for greater investment in flood mitigation, updated flood mapping technology, greater accountability, and consumer choice. However, these discussions will not conclude in the next 2 weeks, prior to the upcoming NFIP expiration deadline.

It is imperative that Congress provide for a 6-month extension of NFIP now, so progress can continue on long-term reauthorization and reform of the NFIP through the Banking Committee.

I urge my colleagues to vote to protect the taxpayer, the homeowner, and to support this motion to instruct.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### ENERGY AND WATER, LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS, AND MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, in the next few minutes, the Senate will be taking the next steps on an appro-

priations process that is being conducted the way an appropriations process is supposed to be conducted. Boy Scouts shouldn't get a merit badge for telling the truth, and Senators shouldn't get a pat on the back for conducting an appropriations process the way it is supposed to be conducted. It is worth noting that we are doing it, since it has been a long time since we have done it.

The right way means we are moving ahead on three bills: Energy and Water, legislative affairs, and Military Construction. The right way means we have had hearings on all of these bills. We have consulted with Senators. I know that in our Energy and Water bill, Senator FEINSTEIN and I heard from 83 different Senators and tried to respond to them in our bill. We marked up the bills unanimously in most cases.

What was missing was allowing the other 70 Senators to participate on the floor. We did that this time; 40 amendments, 7 rollcall votes. We got off the floor without a cloture vote; that is, a motion to cut off debate. We are doing it the way it is supposed to be done. That was done by showing something that needs to be shown more in the Senate—restraint. Restraint means that when you have a lot of freedom, it doesn't mean you exercise all of your freedoms all at once because nothing will happen.

We avoided controversial riders. We even had 20 Republican Senators vote to table something we agree with, which is the waters of the United States provision, because we thought this was not the appropriate bill for it.

Now we are moving to motions to instruct, which are nonbinding resolutions. It is important, though, because they give the Senate a chance to say what Senators want to say. That is why we are here.

One of those issues has to do with tariffs. The administration has imposed tariffs on aluminum and steel, and now other products, provoking a response of tariffs on soybeans and other products grown and manufactured in our country. In general, these tariffs are a big mistake. Using national security as an excuse to impose them is an even bigger mistake.

I have urged President Trump instead to focus on reciprocity; tell other countries to do for our country what we do for you.

Imposing tariffs as a way of achieving that is like shooting ourselves in both feet as a way of solving our problem. Tariffs are taxes. They raise the price of what we buy and sell. Tariffs reduce revenues, profits, wages, and jobs.

U.S. tariffs on aluminum and steel hurt 136,000 Tennesseans who work in more than 900 auto plants in 88 of our 95 counties; that is, one-third of our manufacturing jobs. Retaliatory tariffs hurt Tennessee soybean farmers by lowering prices and making markets disappear.

Our goal should be to persuade our trading partners to do for us what we

do for them. Shooting ourselves in both feet at once is not a good way to do that. There are better ways to achieve the goal.

This doesn't just hurt auto parts workers in Tennessee. I was in Springfield, TN, the other day. They had been excited about an expansion of an Electrolux plant, a \$250 million expansion for that community. Electrolux canceled it when word of the steel tariffs came, even though Electrolux, which makes washing machines, buys all of their steel in the United States. Tariffs on imported steel raise the price of steel sold in United States.

In Chestnut Hill, Bush Brothers cans about one-third of all beans canned in the United States. You wouldn't think that is such a big deal, but it involves a lot of people and a lot of beans. They say that 8½ percent of their revenues will go down as a result of the tin-plated steel that is used for their cans. Not enough is produced in the United States.

Then, we have Bridgestone and Hankook. They make tires in Tennessee. They are big companies. They use steel wire in every tire, and none of it is produced in the United States. The price goes up.

For 40 years, I worked to bring the auto industry to Tennessee. It has done more than anything that has happened to raise our standard of living, to raise families' incomes. Tariffs will lower our standard of living. They will hurt our State more than almost any other State.

As respectfully and as effectively as I can, I have said to the President: Mr. President, we agree on taxes. We agree on regulations. We agree on judges. We are proud of having the best economy in 18 years, the lowest employment rate that anyone can remember. But these tariffs are a big mistake. They will take us in the wrong direction.

I have not been successful in talking with the President about this, but I intend to keep trying. There are other, better ways to persuade our trading partners to do for us what we do for them instead of shooting ourselves in both feet at once, which is what we do when we impose these tariffs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, before we vote this morning, I want to express my support for the appointment of conferees and my belief that this is yet another encouraging sign of a return to regular order in the appropriations process.

The package of appropriations bills that will be conferenced with the House received overwhelming bipartisan support in the Senate. This broad agreement was facilitated by a concerted effort by both parties to prevent partisan riders from poisoning the well. Thus far, we have been able to translate bipartisan cooperation among members of the Appropriations Committee into success on the Senate floor.