

water them down. The sanctions this body passed by an overwhelming bipartisan margin of 98 to 2—and I salute Leader MCCONNELL; he helped to bring it to the floor even though the President didn't like it—have not yet been fully implemented by the Trump administration. On our side, Senators MENENDEZ and VAN HOLLEN have some very good ideas about sanctions, and we should act on them.

Fourth, our Republican colleagues can and should insist that the President finally release his tax returns. We all know that the President broke decades of practice when he didn't release those returns—so damaging because his economic interests outside of the government are so large, complicated, and varied and so important because he deals with international finance in these situations.

There was no good reason not to release his tax returns then. Yet President Trump's inexplicable behavior in Helsinki has many Americans asking: What does Putin have over him that he is behaving in a way that is, basically, inexplicable by any rational, logical line of thinking? That is why his tax returns will be so important. We should pass legislation that requires the President to release his tax returns. It was important before, but it is much more important now, after Helsinki.

Fifth, the Republicans should demand with us that the President insist the 12 Russians who have been indicted for our election interference and information warfare be handed over. Putin may not do it, but at least we ought to show how serious we are as a country. The President ought to show how alarmed he is that this happened, and the best way to do that is for our Republican colleagues to join with us. They will have more influence than we will have in asking him to do so.

Finally, we should have bipartisan legislation on election security. Together, in a bipartisan way, with the help of my friend from Tennessee—a senior member of Appropriations—in the last omnibus bill, we passed \$380 million for election security. As I understand it, that money is now being sent out to help the States, but we have to do more. There is bipartisan legislation. Senators KLOBUCHAR and LANKFORD and Senators VAN HOLLEN and RUBIO have good legislation that could help beef up our election security. We ought to move on it.

Our country—our cyber networks and our election systems—is under constant attack from adversaries like the Russians. There is bipartisan consensus that we must harden our election infrastructure. This has led to the legislation I mentioned by KLOBUCHAR, LANKFORD, VAN HOLLEN, and RUBIO. There is other legislation by Senators HARRIS and WYDEN. I urge the Republican leader to let us move on one or more of these bills.

We should do all of these things, not just one or two—all of them. I can't think of a logical reason not to do any

of them other than out of fear of offending the President. Times like these call for us to do more. We have already heard some of our Republican colleagues say “let's move on” after what the President said yesterday—as I mentioned, his so-called walk back was not a walk back at all—and that if we cared about our Nation's security, we would move forward.

The final thing I would say to my Republican colleagues is this: This is a moment that will be remembered in American history. It is not going away. This is a moment that will be remembered next week, next month, in November of 2018, in November of 2020, and way beyond. The Helsinki summit is now an unalterable fact in American history—a moment when, unfortunately, an American President humiliated his own country and himself before a foreign dictator. It was a terrible sign of weakness by this President, and it, unfortunately, weakens the office he holds.

Yet it can be remembered as a moment when a bipartisan majority in Congress—Democrats and Republicans in their dropping all trappings of party—links arms and stands up for our country after our President has refused to do so. Let's hope it is. Let's hope it is.

#### NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. President, I know my colleagues are waiting, and I appreciate their indulgence as I have one final point on the Supreme Court and Brett Kavanaugh.

I just read in a very recent interview that Judge Kavanaugh was asked, if granted the opportunity, whether he would overturn precedent in any one case. Judge Kavanaugh initially declined to answer. He then paused and said, on second thought, he would overturn the precedent in *Morrison v. Olson*. That is the case that upheld the constitutionality of the independent counsel law. I will make two brief points on the subject.

First, Judge Kavanaugh's response demonstrates he is willing to answer direct questions about precedent—which precedents he agrees with and which precedents he would overturn. I hope, during the hearings, we will not suffer the tried-and-true verbal gymnastics of nominees who have refused to answer questions on existing precedent. Judge Kavanaugh had no qualms about that in that interview.

Second and more immediately, considering everything we know about Judge Kavanaugh's expansive view of Executive power and accountability, the fact that *Morrison v. Olson*—of all of the cases in the history of the Supreme Court—is the first case he would think of overturning is deeply, deeply troubling.

We already know he believes a President shouldn't be investigated while in office, that a President can't be indicted while in office, that a President doesn't have to follow laws that the President “deems”—his word—uncon-

stitutional. Clearly, Judge Kavanaugh's judicial philosophy incorporates an almost monarchical view of Executive power and accountability, animated by a belief that our Chief Executive gets to play by a different set of rules.

Judge Kavanaugh, particularly after this interview, needs to recuse himself from anything having to do with the Mueller probe given his record and the fact that he was nominated by the subject of the investigation he could very well end up ruling on.

Once again, I thank my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

#### TARIFFS

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, I rise to discuss an issue that is of great importance to my constituents in Alabama and to many other people across the country. At issue is the health of our automotive industry.

Unfortunately, the health of my State's automobile industry is being threatened not by unfair competition or illegal practices but by significant tariffs proposed by the President. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, more than a half a million Alabama jobs are supported by global trade, meaning more than one in every four Alabama jobs is tied to trade.

One of the key reasons Alabama has such a robust trade posture is due to our automotive manufacturing industry. I am old enough to remember what it was like before auto companies came to Alabama in the 1990s, starting with Mercedes. At the time that Mercedes came, many of Alabama's manufacturing facilities were closing down and moving to other countries. Yet, one by one—from Mercedes, to Honda, to Hyundai, and now to Toyota and Mazda, which are breaking ground on a new plant very soon—these automakers came to Alabama and breathed new life into our State's economy. They support, today, some 57,000 Alabama jobs, and our auto exports topped \$11 billion in 2017. That doesn't even include the new Toyota-Mazda plant in Huntsville, which is going to add another 4,000 jobs and \$1.6 billion in economic development.

After having no automobile industry 30 years ago, Alabama has become the third largest exporter of automobiles in this country. In only the past 15 months, every major automobile manufacturer in Alabama has announced an expansion to total 5,400 jobs and \$3.3 billion in investments. This industry has been a phenomenal success in Alabama and, more importantly, for the men and women who rely on these very good-paying jobs to support their families and to build better lives.

That is why it is a priority for me and colleagues like my friend, Senator ALEXANDER from Tennessee, to keep our States' automotive industry thriving. Yet, recently, this industry has come under attack. In May, President Trump threatened a 25-percent tariff

on imported cars, trucks, and auto parts under the pretext that these products somehow threaten our national security.

Let me be clear. While the United States faces any number of threats from adversaries on any number of fronts, foreign automobiles and auto parts are not threats to our national security. Do you know what is a threat? It is a 25-percent tax on the prices of these imported goods. The President's proposed auto tariffs have the potential to inflict serious damage on a booming industry in my State and in other leading auto-producing States, like Tennessee. We might call it a tariff, but we all know exactly what it is—a tax.

By definition, a tariff is a tax on a particular class of imports or exports. Any tariffs placed on products that come into the United States are taxes that increase the cost of those goods to American consumers. When other countries place additional tariffs, or new taxes, on American goods, it raises the purchase prices of American products overseas and hurts our ability to sustain competitive markets in those countries. So it is deeply troubling that the recent proposal from the President will threaten tens of thousands of jobs in Alabama and increase costs for American consumers.

Shortly after this tariff threat was issued, Senator ALEXANDER joined me in writing to Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, and we urged him to reconsider the auto tariff tax proposal. Between our two States, the automotive sector contributes more than 200,000 jobs to our economies. Numbers of autoworkers from our States are in town this week to tell their stories, firsthand, to the Commerce Department, and I commend them for their efforts in doing so.

Senator ALEXANDER and I understand the devastating blow these tariffs will represent to an industry that has literally rebuilt our respective States' economies from the ground up. Automakers and their suppliers can be found in every corner and in nearly every county of each of our States. We have found common cause in fighting these tariffs and protecting our constituents from the devastating impacts they will have.

There are already a few legislative solutions out there, including Senator CORKER's solution regarding tariffs. I know Senator PORTMAN is also doing a lot of good work in this space. Senator ALEXANDER and I are working together to propose a solution of our own as a complementary measure to halt these tariffs. We hope to introduce that proposal as early as next week after consulting with our automotive manufacturers and working with our colleagues to grow bipartisan support for this legislation.

I realize that folks who have been affected by these proposed tariffs are looking for a silver bullet to stop them dead in their tracks. Right now, the

only silver bullet in this case is for the President to change his mind and recognize how many jobs are at risk because of these proposed tariffs. Until that happens, we are going to fight to protect what our States and our workers have earned.

I want to thank my colleague Senator ALEXANDER, who is here today, for his continued partnership in this effort. I look forward to working with more of our colleagues to stop the urgent threat to American jobs.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Alabama for his remarks.

I come to the floor to discuss bipartisan legislation that he and I, as he said, plan to introduce as soon as next week to encourage the Trump administration to reconsider the dangerous steps it is taking to impose tariffs on imported automobiles and automotive parts.

I use the word "dangerous" because nothing has done more during the last 40 years to raise family incomes in Tennessee than the arrival of the auto industry, and nothing could do more damage to those family incomes than the proposed tariffs on imported automobiles and automotive parts, combined with the tariffs on imported steel and aluminum that the administration has already imposed.

We have heard the Senator from Alabama talk about his State. In my view, Tennessee is more likely to be hurt than any other State by these tariffs. Let me tell a short story to explain why I would make such a dramatic statement.

Forty years ago, I walked 1,000 miles across Tennessee in my campaign for Governor. In Rutherford County, outside Nashville, I spent the night with the Knight family. Mrs. Knight told me that her twin boys were bright but that she was sad because, as she put it, there are no jobs around here. She said: They are smart boys, and they will never get a job here, and I will never see my grandchildren.

Forty years ago, there were no auto jobs in Tennessee. We were the third poorest State. Our family incomes were the third lowest. Our low-paying textile jobs were fleeing outside of our country. Unemployment and inflation were high, and prospects were bleak. Then in 1980—just 2 years after that walk, when I was the Governor of Tennessee—Nissan from Japan arrived and came to Rutherford. Then General Motors, with Saturn, came to Spring Hill. Then Volkswagen came to Chattanooga. All had large manufacturing plants.

As the American automobile industry moved to the Southeastern United States, more than 900 auto part suppliers spread across 88 of Tennessee's 95 counties. Today, 136,000 Tennesseans—or one-third of our manufacturing

workforce—work in those auto plants. Those auto jobs have become the main driver of family incomes, which have now risen to a little above the national average. Our economy is booming, and unemployment is at a record low.

Today, Tennessee produces 6.7 percent of all of the cars and trucks produced in the United States. Tennessee exported more than \$5.5 billion worth of automobiles and auto parts last year. Tennessee has been the top State in auto manufacturing strength for 5 out of the last 8 years, according to Business Facilities.

Let me get back to my little story. Last year, one of those bright twins from Rutherford County—the Knight family—where I spent the night 40 years ago, Randy Knight, retired as the general manager of the Nissan plant, which is the largest and most efficient auto plant in North America. His brother works there, too, and so does one of those grandchildren whom the grandmother thought she would never see.

You can see why Tennesseans become very worried when anything threatens the auto industry that has transformed our State. Here is why the proposed tariffs do that.

As the Senator from Alabama said, tariffs are taxes. Tariffs are taxes on us, pure and simple. They make what we buy and sell more expensive. The laws of economics usually say that when you make what you buy and sell more expensive, you buy and sell less of it. If we sell fewer automobiles and automotive parts, there will be lower revenues, lower profits, fewer wage increases, and fewer jobs.

Since almost every one of the 900 auto part suppliers use steel and aluminum, lower revenues and smaller profits mean fewer wage increases and fewer jobs for the 136,000 Tennesseans who work in the more than 900 auto plants in our State. More expensive cars means fewer people in the United States buy those cars and fewer people overseas buy those cars—the cars we make. Fewer people buying cars and trucks means that 136,000 Tennesseans in America's No. 1 auto State are going to have a lower standard of living than they otherwise would and lower family incomes.

Why in the world would our government raise our taxes and destroy our jobs in this way? Well, the government's answer is that tariffs protect jobs in the steel and aluminum industry.

It is true that some steel and aluminum jobs might be saved, but in 2003, when President George W. Bush proposed steel tariffs, there were about 10 times as many people working in the steel-using industries as there were in steel-producing industries. Let me say that again. There were more people working in the steel-using industry than there were in the steel-producing industry.

President Bush dropped the idea after a year because the tariffs destroyed, as

I said, more jobs in other industries, including the automotive industry, than they saved in the steel-producing industry.

I know something about the aluminum industry. My dad worked most of his life at Alcoa's Tennessee aluminum smelting plant, which closed a few years ago because electricity was so much cheaper in other parts of the world. You use electricity—lots of it—to smelt aluminum. That is why those plants came to East Tennessee more than a century ago. But electric prices in the United States gradually rose over that century, and are still cheaper in other parts of the world. So today there are only eight smelting plants left in the United States. Seven of them are still in operation. Alcoa operates four and makes 46 percent—nearly half—of all of the aluminum produced in the United States. Alcoa opposes the aluminum tariffs because it also operates smelting plants in Canada and other countries that export aluminum to the United States.

The bottom line is this: The largest U.S. producer of aluminum, Alcoa, doesn't want the aluminum tariffs. The thousands of auto plants and other plants that use aluminum don't want the aluminum tariffs. So who is asking for the aluminum tariffs?

A second reason justifying tariffs is that other countries may have been unfair to the United States. There may be examples of that, but when did it become a good idea to solve your own problem by shooting yourself in both feet at once? It is hard to see how raising our taxes and destroying our jobs is a smart solution to unfair trade practices.

Then there is the question of whether tariffs help autoworkers. Raising taxes and prices and selling fewer cars wouldn't seem to help the American autoworker.

Will it cause foreign companies to build more cars in the United States? Well, that is already happening.

The foreign manufacturers have been doing exactly what we asked them to do. They have moved here. They produce cars and trucks here. They export many of those cars and trucks and auto parts to other countries. Today, about half the cars being built in America are being built by the so-called foreign manufacturers. Nissan's plant in Rutherford County employs 8,000 Tennesseans and is the largest and most efficient auto plant in North America.

I was with President Trump last year when he spoke in Michigan about all the autoworker jobs leaving the Midwest. Since 1994, 3.6 million of those jobs have left the Midwest, but they didn't go overseas; they moved to Tennessee and Alabama and other parts of the Southeastern United States, which gained 3.6 million auto jobs during the same period. Those new auto plants are in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Texas. Those are all States where

the President is widely admired and States that he carried heavily in his election effort.

Those plants moved primarily to the Southeast because our part of the country offered right-to-work laws and an environment that allowed companies to make quality cars at a lower cost and sell them competitively here in the United States and around the world. In fact, my own view is that the movement of the American auto industry to the Southeast saved the American auto industry because where it was 25, 30, or 40 years ago was stuck in the Midwest in an oligopoly where the United Automobile Workers and three big companies were producing big, expensive cars, and the little foreign cars were coming in and eating their lunch in the marketplace. So now we have strong and effective American auto plants in the Midwestern United States and in the Southeastern United States, and half of them are made by so-called foreign manufacturers.

I agree with President Trump on many things—taxes, judges, regulations, the economy, Keystone Pipeline, and others. He has helped create today's booming economy and low unemployment. I give him credit for helping to do that, but these tariffs take us in exactly the opposite direction.

These tariffs are dangerous. These tariffs are going to cost us jobs. These tariffs are going to lower our family incomes. These tariffs are going to undo much of the good the President and this Congress have done during the last year and a half to create this booming economy.

I respectfully suggest that the President reconsider his trade policy, drop the tariffs as a tool for implementing his objectives, and find other, more effective means to persuade other countries to do for us what we do for them.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

#### OPENING OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL VA MEDICAL CENTER

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, this weekend, Colorado will be celebrating the opening of our new Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center in Aurora. I am incredibly proud that we will be reaching this milestone this weekend after more than a decade of work and some significant hurdles, trials, and tribulations along the way. I commend my colleagues for the work they did funding this project.

The Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center will be the crown jewel of the VA system. It wasn't easy to get here. A lot of people had to do a lot of work to make it happen, including the veterans, the leadership organizations in Colorado, our colleagues across the aisle, Congressman COFFMAN, Congressman PERLMUTTER, Senator BENNET—in fact, the entire congressional delegation for a number of years—Senator Salazar, Senator Udall, Senator Allard. They have all done incredible work to make this weekend a possibility.

Hundreds of millions of tax dollars were used for this facility. It did run over budget. It certainly ran over time. But we have learned a lot as a result of this facility, and the Army Corps of Engineers will now be taking over major construction projects like this. As a result of this facility, we have made changes on how designs are being made. It was a learning experience and unfortunately a costly one at that, but it doesn't change the fact that this will be a crown jewel in the VA system.

This is not the end of a project, it is the beginning of a promise to be fulfilled—a promise to our veterans on the care they will receive, a place where they will find healing, where they will find support, and where they will find a return to good health.

To our men and women in uniform who currently serve, know that you have a place in Colorado where you will find incredible care.

To those who have served our country, who live in Colorado, know that with great pride, we open this facility this weekend.

But we have more work to do. We have work to do to make sure that it is easier to hire doctors and fill the positions at the hospital that have remained open for months around the VA system. It takes too long to onboard medical professionals. We should cut down that time, figure out how to cut through the redtape and the bureaucracy. If you are qualified to practice medicine at Swedish Hospital in Denver, or any of our other great facilities, why can't you just go to work at the VA hospital as well? So these are things that we can do to do a better job.

On Monday, I met with the Secretary nominee, Robert Wilkie, President Trump's nominee to be the new VA Secretary, and I talked to him about the work we have to continue to do to make sure that veterans receive the best care possible. This Congress has passed legislation, such as the Choice Act. We have made great reforms over the last several months to reduce wait times and wait lists and to eliminate them and make sure that we can provide that promise of care.

This weekend in Colorado there will be a great celebration as we open this facility. So many people put in tireless years upon years of work, from the leadership of the State to the leadership of Congress. I am grateful that this weekend we celebrate as we open a facility that begins to fulfill the promise made a decade ago for veterans in the region.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to join my colleagues in making it clear just how