

hand of those who wish to do us harm through recruitment and radicalization. U.S. leadership on this issue is key to our counterterrorism strategy.

President Ronald Reagan admitted 140,000 refugees in just 1 year of his Presidency. By contrast, at a time of extraordinary international need—far greater than when President Reagan was in office—President Trump capped refugee resettlement at 45,000 this fiscal year. Since he announced that policy, refugee admissions in this country have fallen to a level unseen in modern history. At the current rate, the United States may grant entry to fewer than 20,000 refugees—the lowest number since the program was established in 1980. The President's stealth attack on refugee resettlement is a war on a program that has embodied America's compassion and global leadership.

Much attention has been drawn to the despicable uncertainty that President Trump has injected into the lives of hundreds of thousands of Dreamers, preparing to deport young people who are essentially American citizens to countries they have never known. But equally as troubling is the President's denial of temporary protected status, or TPS, for hundreds of thousands of people from Haiti and El Salvador. Many more from Honduras and Syria sit in the President's crosshairs. These people have lived in our country, sometimes for decades, contribute to our economy, and many have American citizen children. Sending them back to their home nations at this time—countries that are already destabilized to various degrees—will exacerbate local and regional problems.

I am proud of the legislation I have written with Senators FEINSTEIN and VAN HOLLEN that is supported by numerous colleagues to create a legal pathway to residency for TPS recipients who only seek a better life for themselves and their families, enriching our country and all that it stands for in the process.

The U.S. military is the finest in the world, but increasingly, President Trump wants our men and women in uniform to do what should be the responsibility of our diplomatic and development corps—our forces for peace. And it is not just a slow and steady transfer of responsibilities from Foggy Bottom to the Pentagon; President Trump has failed to fill critical national security jobs and is gutting our development and diplomatic institutions.

It infuriates me when the President or his team dares to accuse the Senate of failing to do its constitutional responsibilities regarding nominations. Of 163 Senate-confirmed positions across the State Department and USAID, the administration does not have nominees for 72 of those jobs—just under 50 percent—1 year into office of this administration.

The administration has proposed an illogical and ideological cut of over 30

percent to the State Department and USAID budgets, attempting to dis-embowel critical national security tools. Secretary Tillerson has maintained an unexplained hiring freeze at the Department and Agency. Diplomats are leaving the government in large numbers, and his attempt to reorganize the Department many view as a solution in search of a problem. The President has little interest in how diplomacy advances our interests, promotes our values, and makes us safer and more prosperous.

To make matters worse, the President and his family continue to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes their business interests, making our foreign policy more difficult. In his dealings with China alone, the writing is on the wall. Candidate Trump said that on day one of his Presidency, he would declare China a currency manipulator. American businesses are still waiting. Did he sacrifice the American worker in order to appease the Chinese banker who paid him rent at Trump Tower? Or perhaps it was so he could secure those long sought after business trademarks with China—38 in all.

The American people should not lose sight of the fact that the President has refused to divest himself from the Trump Organization, ignoring decades of ethical norms and precedent. The President of the United States is engaged in foreign policy while maintaining unprecedented business interests in about 20 countries. Today, the President has a financial stake in real estate projects in India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and elsewhere—developments that require approval and intervention from governments, financing from banks, and cooperation from local partners. He continues to earn royalties from properties located throughout the world, from Panama to the United Arab Emirates.

Reaping a financial profit while serving as President begs the question of whether he is working in his own best interest or the Nation's best interest—exactly why the Constitution's emolument clause exists and of which I believe he is in violation. President Trump could easily rectify this by cutting his financial ties and leaving no doubt that his first and foremost priority is serving the Nation's interests.

In closing, let me say that American foreign policy led by our values, support for our allies, and a desire to make the world a better place, keeps us safe at home and advances our country's prosperity and security. President Trump has not put the strategies in place to deal with the complicated national security crises facing our country. Instead, he has made international security challenges more difficult to solve, including the crisis with Iran, the nuclear weapons dilemma with North Korea, and the Kremlin activities sowing discord in our country and throughout the world. President Trump has been unwilling to engage in the delicate diplomacy and tough na-

tional security decisions that are required to keep this country safe and maintain our global leadership.

The role of Congress in shaping and advancing U.S. foreign policy has never been more important, and I will continue to advance legislation, conduct oversight, and speak out about these important issues in the name of the American people and the values and norms that define us and our place in this complicated world. I am proud that there are many Members on both sides of the aisle who share these concerns, and we will work together for America's national security interests.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE PRIORITIES

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, now that the government is up and running again, we need to look ahead at what our legislative priorities should be. I can't speak for everybody, but I can speak for myself. My priorities are threefold.

First, we need to expedite disaster relief. In December, the House passed an \$81 billion disaster relief bill designed to address the natural disasters caused by Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Harvey, as well as the wildfires out West. That has been sitting in the Senate since December. We need to act and act with dispatch.

Everybody remembers Hurricane Harvey—we certainly do in Texas—which pummeled us last August. It was last August; this is February. Most of the media attention in the months since has focused on the city of Houston, which quite literally was torn apart. This was the most intense rain event in American history—more than 50 inches of rain fell in 5 days.

Other areas beyond Houston fared worse—I am thinking of cities like Rockport and Port Author on the Texas coast. I am thinking of cities like Victoria and Beaumont. More than 28,000 square miles were flooded. Crops rotted, livestock died, and almost 6 months later people are still piecing together their lives.

In addition to Hurricane Harvey, as I said, there was Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria, and there were the wildfires that burned across California that later resulted in mudslides after the rains fell. I know the Federal Government is not the only entity charged with ensuring help gets to these places, but it certainly has an important part to play.

This morning, I attended the U.S. Conference of Mayors and saw a number of my mayors from Texas who were part of the success or at least the management of this natural disaster in

Texas. They have done their part. The State has done its part. It is time for the Federal Government to step up, and it is time for the Senate to pass this supplemental bill that was passed by the House in December.

The second priority I have, personally, is lifting the spending caps that impair our national defense, particularly our men and women in uniform. In my remarks yesterday, I said this is a problem set in motion by the Budget Control Act of 2011. While well-intentioned—for a while it did hold down discretionary spending and reduced our deficits and our debt—its implementation has not stemmed our national debt, but it has tied the hands of our military. This is an important lesson. It is not defense spending, it is not tax cuts, it is not discretionary spending; it is the mandatory spending in our entitlement programs which continue to run up deficits and debt and which threaten us and our financial future, to be sure.

In the meantime, our military faces readiness challenges across the globe. We simply must listen to people like Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. We should lift the caps, end sequester so our military no longer suffers and so our national security is on safer ground.

The third on my immediate to-do list is working with a bipartisan group of legislators as well as President Trump on the issue of the DACA recipients. As everybody who has been paying much attention in recent days knows, this is a group of about 690,000 young adults who came into the country as children because their parents brought them in illegally, in noncompliance with our immigration laws.

In the United States, we don't hold children responsible for the mistakes of their parents, nor should we punish these young adults who have now grown up because their parents broke our immigration laws. We know they face an uncertain future, and much of the responsibility for our porous borders should be borne by Congress—not only the present Congress, but past Congresses—for basically turning our heads the other way while people continued to immigrate illegally into the United States.

We are going to need to improve our infrastructure, personnel, and technology to make sure we don't experience that sort of rush of illegal immigration in the future, which is why some of our Democratic colleagues like to say that we need to protect DACA recipients, which we are willing to do. But we want to make sure there is not a repetition of this in 3 years or 5 years hence. So there are important measures we need to combine with that, and the President has told us that he is going to insist upon—and he is correct in doing so—a robust border security component, as well as ending chain migration and the diversity lottery visas. From the news I saw this morning, it sounds like the President made some

statement about the first piece of that puzzle last night. We are expecting to hear more from the White House on how they expect Congress to respond and what the President would find acceptable here in the next few days.

This bill can't become law without the President's signature. So the President's views are not irrelevant, but we are the ones who have the primary responsibility to resolve these complicated issues. Getting 60 votes is not the only thing we are aiming for. Certainly, that is the hurdle we have in the Senate, but it would be a futile act if the President wouldn't sign it or if it wouldn't pass the House of Representatives. So we have our work cut out for us, and I know the American people will not support it unless it is a serious and well-thought-out proposal. The blowback will be strong, and we will face a harsh reprisal if we don't take into account the opinions and the views of our constituents back home, which I intend to do.

Beyond these short-term actions, which we need to move on as soon as possible, there are other priorities I would like to mention as well. Infrastructure is something everybody likes to talk about, until you ask the question: How are we going to pay for it?

Recently, I introduced a bipartisan bill with Senator WARNER from Virginia that would expand an infrastructure financing authority already in use by many States and local governments across the United States. This legislation is called the BUILD Act, which would raise the caps on a specific category of what are known as private activity bonds, giving additional access to tax-exempt bond authority for the purpose of constructing highway projects.

I was with a number of Texas mayors earlier this morning, and they told me they see that as a positive development, something they can use in their cities. They appreciate that during the tax reform debate we maintained the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds used for those kinds of purposes.

In the near future, I intend to introduce a few other legislative initiatives to help rehabilitate our Nation's infrastructure. I come from a State that is growing because we are creating so many jobs, and that is putting a strain on our existing infrastructure. So for the interest of public safety and the environment, as well as our economy, we need to repair and build out our infrastructure. I know the White House has some plans in this area as well, and we look forward to hearing more about them and working with the administration when it comes to infrastructure.

Thinking about other areas that we could work on in a bipartisan fashion, I firmly believe it is important for us to look at success stories in the States, and then, once these laboratories of democracy have done things that actually result in positive things, we can then learn from them and scale them up at the Federal level.

That is one reason I am very interested in taking the lessons we learned in Texas and other States on prison reform and offering a better, more enlightened, and sensible path to reentry for people who made mistakes and ended up in our jails and prisons. Not everybody is going to take advantage of it. In my visits in Texas prisons, I know illiteracy is rampant. Some people have drug or alcohol problems that need to be addressed. Some people just need to learn basic job skills if we expect for them to succeed once they get out of prison. We have used various incentives for low-risk offenders in Texas to provide them opportunities to address each of those concerns, and it has been quite successful. Not only have fewer people recommitted crimes and ended up back in prison, but our communities have become safer as a result, and taxpayers have had to build fewer prisons in the process.

I have been working in the Senate on a bipartisan way with my colleague from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and my colleague from Utah, Senator LEE. I know this issue has gotten some real traction thanks to President Trump and the roundtable he hosted at the White House earlier this month.

More than 11 million people go to jail each year in the United States, and there are currently 2.3 million people under confinement. This is a matter of great public concern, but to me the No. 1 concern is public safety. If we can keep the public safer, if we can save taxpayer dollars, and if we can help people who are willing to accept the opportunity to turn their lives around and become productive members of our society, it seems to me that we ought to be doing that.

I look forward to hearing more—perhaps even from the President during the State of the Union Address on Tuesday night, if he chooses to mention his interest in that topic, which I know he is interested in.

Finally, we have to keep filling our judicial vacancies. Last year, we were able to put two Texans on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, but more district judges have come through the pipeline this year. One of the judges we confirmed earlier this month is David Counts from Midland, TX. He will be serving in the Western District of Texas. Just this week, the President announced his intention to nominate another judge for the Western District of Texas, Alan Albright, as well as Cam Barker, Jeremy Kernodle, and Michael Truncale for the Eastern District of Texas.

We are a big State. So we have a lot of judicial vacancies, and Senator CRUZ and I are working hard, together with the White House, to make recommendations to President Trump for nomination. They go through a very extensive vetting process. Senator CRUZ and I have created something we call the Federal Judicial Evaluation Committee, which is a group of our

most experienced practitioners in the State, on a bipartisan basis, to evaluate the people who apply for these important life-tenured positions.

I want to compliment the President for his sterling picks for the judiciary, certainly so far, starting with the Supreme Court of the United States. But at the intermediate appellate courts, like the Fifth Circuit and these district courts, these are the people who do the day-in and day-out work of the judiciary to make sure that all Americans have access to justice and the opportunity for a fair hearing before an impartial judge. That is one of the most important things the Federal Government provides through our judicial branch: "Equal justice under law," as the words above the Supreme Court building say.

TRIBUTE TO EMILY KIRLIN

Madam President, I wish to recognize and sincerely thank a member of my staff, Emily Kirlin, for her decade of public service here in the Senate. Everybody knows Emily in the Senate because of her bubbly personality, and she is always looking to find ways to help Senators be more successful and to recognize their tremendous contributions to this body.

Emily is originally from Crossville, TN, and we will not hold that against her. She is not a Texan, but many people from Tennessee eventually came to Texas, as I tell a couple of my Tennessee colleagues, most of them one step ahead of a great spouse or one step ahead of the law. Those are the Tennesseans who made their way to Texas at the time of our founding. Things have gotten better, by the way, but that is sort of an inside joke between Tennesseans and Texans.

Emily has been director of Member services in my whip office and is the longest serving member of our operation. Before working in her current capacity, she served under my predecessor, Senator Jon Kyl, and before that for my colleague, Senator ALEXANDER.

Everyone who has had the privilege of meeting Emily knows that she is one of a kind. Her smile lights up rooms, and her personality is contagious. Everyone loves being around her. But she also works incredibly hard. Some nights she is here until 1 in the morning and goes home and works even harder alongside her husband Michael. Together, they have two small children, Brock and Madge, who, I am sure, require a lot of love and attention.

So we are sad to see Emily go, but we wish her nothing but the best and want to express our sincere gratitude for her service to the Senate. We know her future will be bright in whatever path she decides to take.

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. PETERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

WORK OF THE SENATE

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I believe every campaign for elective office in this great Nation is essentially a months-long job interview with the voters or, perhaps more accurately, it is thousands and thousands of individual interviews. Like any employer, the voters have expectations for us once we have been hired to do this job.

I will never forget I work for the people of Michigan, and I feel very fortunate to have earned the opportunity to serve them. When I ran for the U.S. Senate, I told Michiganders I would be a pragmatic problem-solver and stand by that promise each and every day. We were all sent here to be problem-solvers, especially the hard problems. Making the effort to participate in our democracy is fundamentally optimistic. Voters want us to make their lives and our Nation better. Every Senator elected to this body carries the hopes, the dreams, and the expectations of the people who live in their State.

While we should never lose sight of our Nation's hopes and dreams, today I wish to focus on expectations. Americans expect us to work together. They expect us to talk to each other. They expect us to negotiate and find common ground where we disagree. They expect us to help our fellow Americans after disasters. They expect us to respond to crises like the opioid epidemic and dangerously underfunded pensions that jeopardize their retirement security. They expect us to keep our borders secure and enact reasonable human immigration policies that keep our Nation competitive and boost economic growth, and they expect us to responsibly fund the Federal Government.

None of us should be proud of the recent government shutdown. There is no such thing as a good government shutdown. I am nevertheless hopeful that lessons can be learned from last weekend and a better path forward can be found. I think the coming weeks and months are of vital importance to the future of the U.S. Senate as a meaningful, functional institution.

Let's be honest with ourselves and with the American people. In the last few years, we have not been functional. We have blown deadline after deadline. It took us almost 4 months past the funding deadline to tackle the easiest problem: reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program, a program that provides healthcare to millions of Americans children, while saving taxpayers money.

As I stand here, healthcare for over 600,000 Michiganders—including over 12,000 Michigan veterans—remains at risk because we have blown through deadline after deadline to fund community health centers, a program that

provides cost-effective care to millions of Americans in both rural and urban areas across our country.

How is it that a nation that put the first man on the Moon still can't put lights on for our own American citizens in Puerto Rico? We need to help families clean out their flooded homes in the gulf, support communities that have faced out-of-control wildfires and mudslides during the devastating 2017 disaster season, and ensure affordable flood insurance is available to every homeowner who needs it.

Americans stand by each other in the face of tragedy. This is why Senator STABENOW and I fought for a year to deliver Federal resources to Flint and continue working to make sure families are receiving the care they need and get their damaged pipes repaired. In addition to addressing all of these urgent issues, we need to keep the lights on in the Federal Government, where funding is set to expire again in just 2 weeks.

While the government was shut down this past weekend, I worked with a bipartisan group of Senators pulled together by my colleagues Senator COLLINS and Senator MANCHIN. This group is called the Common Sense Coalition, and we worked through the weekend to find a bipartisan compromise to open the Federal Government and find a path forward to tackle the complex, pressing issues before us in Congress.

While the lights are back on, the real work is just beginning. In the coming weeks, we need to find a legislative solution to provide certainty to the Dreamers—young men and women brought to the United States as small children. They grew up as Americans, went to school here, served in our military, only speak English, and are every bit as American as you and I. They graduate from our colleges and universities and provide critical talent to a growing American economy. They start their own small businesses and create jobs in our communities. They are young adults who voluntarily came out of the shadows to participate in the DACA Program and are fearful they will be ripped from their home and be deported to a country they have never visited, a country where they don't even speak the language and will find themselves a stranger in a foreign land, which is an absolutely terrifying situation.

Without question, we must also pass a disaster relief package to help communities devastated by the hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. We must also reauthorize the Community Health Center Program that provides essential healthcare to Americans and over 600,000 Michiganders.

We must do more to fight the far-reaching opioid epidemic that is hurting and killing far too many of our friends, family, and neighbors. The opioid epidemic is a public health crisis that touches everyone in every State and every county.

We need to deliver certainty to the hard-working Americans who spent