

percent of our population lives in a coastal county. There are 56 million jobs there, and more than \$8 trillion is produced in goods and services, according to NOAA.

Let's also not forget about our rivers and inland waterways. The Mississippi River, for example, accounts for a \$400 billion annual economic impact. When communities near a river, lake, or ocean suffer, the effects can ripple across the whole Nation. Try as we might, we can't prevent floods. We can mitigate and try to guard against them and try to strengthen our protection, but we can't eliminate flooding from happening. They are the most frequent natural disaster. We should do what we can to mitigate the damage and costs.

It is also worth reminding my colleagues that the National Flood Insurance Program is a program that serves ordinary people—workers and families who are just trying to make an honest living and who do not want to see everything they have washed away in a flood. These 5 million Americans pay their flood insurance premiums, and they should be able to live without worry that should a disaster strike, they will be left high and dry.

I call on my colleagues in the next day and a half to pass this short-term authorization, and, certainly, we will do that on a bipartisan basis. Then, let's give the Banking Committee and people who are concentrating on this issue some bipartisan support to pass much needed reforms.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, there are few responsibilities—I would say none—more important than our duties in connection with the appointment of a Supreme Court Justice. Much is at stake in the nomination that is before the Senate now to appoint Judge Brett Kavanaugh as the Justice who will replace Justice Kennedy. So much is at stake—the future of *Roe v. Wade*, affordable healthcare, particularly, preexisting conditions and the protections of them for millions of Americans.

But I am not here to talk about Judge Kavanaugh as a nominee. I am here to talk about how we reach a conclusion as to how my colleagues and I vote and how we seek and pursue the truth about Judge Kavanaugh, his qualifications, his temperament, his integrity and intellect, who he is, and what kind of Justice he will be.

The best way to do it is to know what he has written and said—all of his writings and opinions and the articles he has written. These points are pretty basic.

I am struck by our colleagues' objection to our seeking documents they have sought in connection with past nominees when they were made by Presidents of our party. When President Obama nominated Justice Kagan, Republicans asked for documents from her years in the Clinton administration, her tenure as dean of the Harvard Law School, and even her clerkship for Justice Thurgood Marshall. Senator GRASSLEY, now the chairman of the Judiciary Committee said at the time: "For the Senate to fulfill its constitutional responsibility of advice and consent, we must get all of her documents . . . and have enough time to analyze them so we can determine whether she should be a Justice."

I agree. Now, unfortunately, Republicans want to apply a completely different standard to Judge Kavanaugh. They want his documents kept sealed and stored so that he can waltz onto the Court without having to answer tough questions about what he has written, said, and done. They maintain that there is nothing in the documents that would be relevant or revelatory. Well, we can't know this supposed irrelevance, and neither can they until we all see those documents.

For some reason, the Republicans seem worried. They seem concerned. They seem apprehensive. The American people and we have a right to ask: What are they concealing and why are they scared of it? What is Judge Kavanaugh hiding and why is he afraid of it? That is a question he should answer and which they have a responsibility to address before we begin the hearings. Our questions require those documents.

There is, in fact, a lot of good reason to think that those documents will be relevant and revelatory, particularly the documents from his time in the White House. My Republican colleagues are now downplaying the role Judge Kavanaugh had while working for President Bush. Republican whip and Judiciary Committee member JOHN CORNYN, our friend and colleague from Texas, said that Judge Kavanaugh was "more or less a traffic cop," but that contention contradicts what our colleagues said at the time when Judge Kavanaugh was a nominee to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. Senator CORNYN himself said then of Kavanaugh: "He . . . is currently Staff Secretary to President Bush, a job whose title belies the very serious and important responsibilities that individual performs."

Senator HATCH, also a colleague and a very distinguished member of the Judiciary Committee, said of Judge Kavanaugh: "His background as Staff Secretary may prove to be particularly good judicial training."

But for me the best indication of how important his role as Staff Secretary to President Bush was—not just as counsel, but as Staff Secretary—comes from Judge Kavanaugh himself. He said:

When people ask me which of my prior experiences has been most useful to me as a judge, I tell them that all of them have been useful, and I certainly draw on all of them. But I also do not hesitate to say that my five and a half years in the White House—and especially my three years as Staff Secretary for President Bush—were the most interesting and in many ways the most instructive.

I would read that sentence again, but I am not sure I need to. It will be in the RECORD, and it is well-known to many of my colleagues.

Judge Kavanaugh went on:

As Staff Secretary, I sat in meetings where he talked with President Hu and then-President Musharraf and President Karzai and Prime Minister Blair and Pope John Paul. I was at the G-8 in Scotland when the London subway bombing occurred. I saw and participated in the process of putting legislation together, whether it was terrorism insurance or Medicare prescription drug coverage or attempts at immigration reform. I worked on drafting and revising executive orders. I remember times on the Hill in negotiating last-minute changes in legislation. I saw regulatory agencies screw up. I saw how they might try to avoid congressional mandates. I saw the relationship between independent agencies and executive agencies and the President and White House and OMB. I saw FOIA requests.

That is from Judge Kavanaugh.

If there is any indication as to why we need those documents from the time he was Staff Secretary to President Bush, it is from Judge Kavanaugh's own words. If we want to know what kind of Justice he will be, we need to understand the decisions he has made and the lessons he has learned in that most informative job. If we refuse to even try, we have abdicated our constitutional responsibility. We have a duty.

I submit, with great respect, that the request made by the chairman of the Judiciary Committee involves all of us abdicating that responsibility unless we protest and raise a hue and cry and force the production of additional documents. This goes beyond any sort of partisan divide, and it goes beyond the question of whether any of my colleagues are voting for or against Judge Kavanaugh. It is about our constitutional responsibility.

These documents, as Judge Kavanaugh himself has said, would, in effect, reveal much about Judge Kavanaugh, for he worked on just about every major issue as counselor to President Bush and as Staff Secretary to him.

In a recent interview, Karl Rove noted: "Literally every document that goes to the president on a policy issue has to pass through the hands of the staff secretary."

As he himself has said, Judge Kavanaugh was at the President's side at many pivotal moments of the Bush Presidency—from the passage of the partial-birth abortion ban to debates over same-sex marriage and well beyond. We should know just what Judge Kavanaugh said as Staff Secretary to President Bush during those and other critical moments of the Bush Presidency. His advice to President Bush

and his role in those decisions are relevant. I think that word understates its importance. It is critical to our judgments about his qualifications.

Perhaps—maybe just by chance—there is nothing in those documents. When Judge Kavanaugh was in the White House, maybe he was just a traffic cop, as Senator CORNYN has claimed, or was an honest broker, as the judge described himself at his confirmation hearing. Yet, if that were true, what are they hiding? Why do they need to conceal it? We should have the opportunity to determine whether Judge Kavanaugh had truly been an honest broker, just a traffic cop, or had just passed documents through his hands without his having had any input. The best way to determine this is by reviewing those documents.

Judge Kavanaugh made this very point when he was an appellate court nominee. At his confirmation hearing, he was asked how Senators should assess his record. He answered: "I think that's done through an assessment of going back, in my case, 16 years of my career and looking at the kinds of things I've done in the staff secretary's office."

We should heed those words. They are the words of Judge Kavanaugh. We should examine all of the documents. It may take some additional time to review all of those documents but maybe not if there is nothing in there that relates to his view and his opinion and his role. If he were just a traffic cop or an honest broker, we can get through them very, very quickly. Regardless of the time involved, there is no more important task that we will undertake as U.S. Senators than to decide on his qualifications for being a Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. Anything less would be a dereliction of our duty.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). The Senator from Louisiana.

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, last week, the House voted overwhelmingly, by a vote of 366 to 52, to extend the National Flood Insurance Program for 4 months, until November 30, 2018. The purpose is to allow for the continued reform efforts of this program so as to make it more accountable, more affordable, and more sustainable. Two weeks ago, the Senate demonstrated almost unanimous support for a 6-month extension of the National Flood Insurance Program, by a vote of 94 to 5.

The NFIP, as the Flood Insurance Program is called, insures properties in every State—approximately 6 million homes and businesses and over \$1.2 trillion in assets. The current law has it set to expire at 11:59 p.m. tomorrow, on July 31. If the NFIP is not extended, people will not be able to renew their flood insurance policies or purchase new ones. That means more will be uninsured during the peak of hurricane season. That is not acceptable. According to the National Association of Re-

altors, letting the NFIP expire would cost up to 40,000 property sales per month, or about 1,330 home sales per day.

Last week, the Senate tried to pass the short-term extension that the House had passed by unanimous consent, but we were unable to. So, on Friday, cloture was filed in the Senate on the 4-month extension that the House passed. The problem is that the cloture vote will not occur until Wednesday, setting up the final passage of the extension on Thursday. That means that the NFIP would lapse for 2 days.

This is totally avoidable. Its delay does nothing to advance reforms within the NFIP, many of which I proposed a year ago in a long-term reauthorization bill that I had introduced with colleagues from New York and West Virginia. A lapse does disrupt real estate transactions for the 2,600 Americans who are trying to close on their homes—perhaps on their first homes—over the next couple of days. By the way, these are not million-dollar properties, for 98.5 percent of NFIP properties are in parishes or counties with median household incomes of below \$100,000, and 62 percent are in parishes or counties with median household incomes below the national average of \$54,000.

Congress has always honored the flood insurance policies that NFIP policyholders have had. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to expedite the consideration of the National Flood Insurance Program's 4-month extension and pass it by unanimous consent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

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

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

MEDICAID

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to talk about an important anniversary. Today marks 53 years since the Medicare and Medicaid Programs have been created. I will speak specifically today about Medicaid. Many Americans are familiar with all of the benefits that Medicaid provides to so many Americans, but I don't know if people have a sense of the scope of it.

First of all, Medicaid helps 70 million individuals and families in every stage of life. Medicaid covers nearly half of every birth in the United States of America. Medicaid covers 40 percent of all children across the country. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it is also true that roughly 40 percent of all of the children have their healthcare covered through Medicaid. Roughly 50 percent of the people with disabilities in our State are covered by Medicaid, and about 60 percent of those who need skilled care, so-called nursing home care—about 2 million Pennsylvanians—are covered by Medicaid.

Medicaid is currently considered the "gold standard" for children's

healthcare, which includes the early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment benefits, known as EPSDT. It doesn't get a lot of attention, but a lot of the professionals who understand pediatrics and children's healthcare will stress the importance of early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment.

Medicaid helps to prevent moms and dads from being forced into deciding whether to put food on their tables or take a child to see a doctor. Through Medicaid, 15 million people with disabilities receive assistance with their healthcare or with durable medical equipment, such as wheelchairs or assistive speaking devices, long-term supports for daily living, such as personal care attendants, and so many other benefits.

If you just focus on the category of Americans with disabilities who are children, 60 percent of children in America with disabilities are covered by Medicaid. Medicaid helps Americans afford their Medicare premiums. That is the interplay between both the Medicaid Program and the Medicare Program. Medicaid pays for nursing home care for older relatives who otherwise would incur \$75,000 per year of expenses, which would force countless middle-class families out of their homes and deprive them of their hard-earned savings.

How about our schools? Forty-eight percent of school districts use Medicaid funds to provide medical and therapy services in schools for children who receive special education.

Medicaid also funds transportation for eligible individuals to receive medical services.

Finally, on this long list, Medicaid is the primary payer for the treatment and services of opioid addiction, as well as for substance use disorder services.

All of those issues are critically important to the American people and especially, of course, to the American family. That is why last year—and continuing into 2018—the efforts that have been made to repeal the Affordable Care Act have had an adverse impact on Medicaid by, in one sense, decimating the program and badly injuring our ability to deliver all of those healthcare benefits to children, to people with disabilities, to seniors. In virtually every bill that has been considered in the Senate or the House, the effect on the opioid crisis has been devastating because of what has happened to the expansion of Medicaid as opposed to the original Medicaid Program itself.

I hope our Republican friends will consider all of those benefits and the impact on Medicaid when they are proposing repeal legislation and similar legislative proposals.

I will make a point about one family, which I think, in so many ways, is emblematic of a lot of other families when it comes to Medicaid. In Pennsylvania, I received a letter from a mom in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Her name