

will take longer for new animal drugs and treatments to be available to farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, and families, but, fortunately, because of the cooperation today, that will not happen.

The Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, our committee, approved the Senate version of this bill on February 28 of this year by a bipartisan vote of 22 to 1. The bill passed the House in almost identical form that was approved by the HELP Committee in February, but the House bill, as Senator MURRAY said, expands conditional approval to encourage innovation and competition.

Conditional approval allows a drug to go to market once it meets the Food and Drug Administration safety standards, and then the drug company has up to 5 years to prove the drug is effective. Based on bipartisan feedback about conditional approval, the House of Representatives agreed to make three changes in its bill: No. 1, a 10-year sunset for conditional approval; No. 2, clarify the conditional approval does not require an additional fee to be paid to the Food and Drug Administration; and, No. 3, a Government Accountability Office report on conditional approval.

Senator MURRAY and I agree that we need to clarify what it means for a drug to be “difficult to study.” I have talked to Dr. Scott Gottlieb, the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration about these concerns, and he agrees. Dr. Gottlieb has agreed to quickly issue guidance and develop regulations that provide clarity on what “difficult to study” means and that do not change the gold standard of the Food and Drug Administration’s drug approval process.

Also, conditional approval is not available for antimicrobial drugs. The language in the bill is clear, and Dr. Gottlieb understands that conditional approval is not available for antimicrobial drugs.

Congress will also conduct oversight to make sure conditional approval is achieving the goal of helping more pets and keeping our food supply safe. This bipartisan legislation will help keep animals healthy, prevent disease outbreaks, and protect our food supply.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 5554.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5554) to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to reauthorize user fee programs relating to new animal drugs and generic new animal drugs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to proceeding to the measure?

Without objection, notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate will proceed to the measure.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 5554) was passed.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, FINANCIAL SERVICES, AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

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

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

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, from the earliest moments in the Presidential campaign, Donald Trump made it clear that immigration was an important issue to his election. You will recall statements that he made about the construction of the wall on the southern border of the United States. He called it the big, glorious, gorgeous 2,000-mile wall, and he promised us that the Mexicans would pay for it. Over and over he promised us they would pay for it. That wasn’t the only reference made to immigration during the course of the campaign, so it came as no surprise, when President Trump was elected, that immigration became a major issue in his administration.

It is ironic, in a way, that this Nation of immigrants called America would have such struggles these days with the issue of immigration. Many of us can trace our origins to recent immigrants. In my own case, my mother was an immigrant to this country, and here her son turned out to have a full-time government job as a U.S. Senator.

My story is my family’s story, but it is also America’s story of how the sons and daughters of immigrants came here and tried to—and in many ways did—make a difference in the country we live in. Despite that fact, despite the Statue of Liberty and all of our heritage from immigrants coming to America, there has always been a political voice and a political force that has resisted more immigration.

There were people who have said: We have enough. They are going to take our jobs. They don’t practice our religions. They don’t speak our language. Their food smells funny. We don’t like the way they dress.

Over the course of decades, if not centuries, that was always part of the American political life, but it was a minority position. With the Trump administration, immigration issues have been front and center. We have seen that many times.

Years ago, I introduced the Dream Act. The Dream Act said that if you were brought to this country, undocumented as a baby, as a child, you should have a chance to earn your way to legal status to become part of America’s future. I have tried to pass that bill, and I have been successful in the Senate a few times. We have been successful in the House, but it has never made it through both Chambers to become the law of the land.

President Obama created a program called DACA, based on the Dream Act, which allowed those who qualified to have 2-year temporary, renewable status, protected from deportation, with the legal right to work.

Last year, President Trump abolished the program, and 790,000 young people who were protected—who had registered with the government, who had paid a filing fee, who had gone through a criminal background check and were going to school and working—were told their protection would go away.

Were it not for a court decision to protect them, many of them would be deported today. But that court decision can change any day, any week, any month.

We tried in February on the floor of the Senate to come up with a bipartisan approach to solving this problem, but we fell short. When a bipartisan group of Senators came up with a proposal, which I supported and which received over 50 votes, at the end of the day, the Trump administration opposed it, so it went down, and we did not answer the need for the passage of legislation.

There is a new issue before us, one most Americans are well aware of; that is, the President’s announcement of what is known as the zero tolerance policy. It started at the beginning of April, and it was a policy by our government to literally arrest and charge every person who came to this border without legal status.

You could come to the United States without legal status and apply to become a person protected with asylum or a refugee. Just coming to the border itself is not a crime if you come for that purpose.

But this new zero tolerance policy said that they would charge every person who came to the border as a criminal. Well, one thing led to another because once a person has been charged as a criminal—even as a misdemeanor criminal—in most circumstances, their children, minors in their custody, are removed from them. That is exactly what happened. In 2,700 cases, our government, under the President’s zero tolerance policy, forcibly removed children from their parents.

We had a hearing on it today, and it is the reason I have come to the floor. We asked the heads of the agencies who created this policy some basic questions. We asked them if they had created a means of determining what would happen to the children, where the parents would be, and how they would be reunited. The sad answer, the real answer, is no.

So when a Federal judge in Southern California stepped in and said that the zero tolerance policy must end, and now there must be a reunification of these families—parents with their children—it turned out that this Government of the United States of America did not have the records to reunite parents and children.

They literally turned thousands of people loose, trying to match up these kids with their parents—kids who had been separated by our government at the border. You think to yourself, as one of my colleagues said: When you take your child into Chuck E. Cheese, they sometimes give them little plastic bracelets so that they don't get lost and we know who that little child belongs to.

Our Federal Government didn't do that, and, as a consequence, thousands—thousands—of children were turned loose into a system, and when the court order was applied we couldn't comply; we couldn't reunify them.

Where are we today? Today, out of the 2,700 or more children who were separated from their parents, we have reunified about 2,000 of them, roughly, but for 711, we are still short of bringing the reunification together; the parents are not reunited with their children. For 94 of these children, we do not have information. We don't know where their parents are. Think about that.

In the United States of America, with our vast wealth and talent and resources and computers, we removed children from their families and tossed them into the bureaucratic sea. I am not sure how this story is going to end, but it is a pretty sad situation.

One of my colleagues, Senator BLUMENTHAL from Connecticut, asked the assembled representatives of the Trump administration the following question: Do you believe that the zero tolerance policy was a success? Not one of them did. Do you believe that the United States should engage in further family separation? Not one of them did.

So we know it was a mistake, and we know there are still victims out there—kids who have not been reunited. The obvious question is: What can we do about it? Well, we can use every resource at our disposal to make sure that we bring these children back in contact with their parents.

I went to one of the shelters in Chicago about 5 weeks ago to meet with 10 of these kids. Their ages ranged from about 5 years of age to 14, and the youngest ones were from Central America and Mexico. They came into

the room. I remember two little girls holding hands, walking into the room, cutest little things, and they looked like twins because their hair was fixed the same way. It turns out that they were not twins; they were not even sisters. One of the little girls said: "No, amigas"—friends.

I watched them. They held on to one another through the entire meeting, and as they left the room, they held hands together. They were clinging to the only connectivity—the only anchors—in their lives: other children who were going through the same experience. They had been forcibly separated from their parents.

I brought some cards with me, made by kids of my staff in Chicago—just cards with stickers on them, construction paper with little messages, some in Spanish, some in English. I let the kids choose from these cards if they wanted them. Every single one of them took one and hung on to it like it was a Christmas gift.

What is it like for these children to be separated at that early age? I am not an expert. I have been a dad and a grandfather, if that gives me any claim to expertise. But when you turn to the experts, the pediatric physicians, they say that it is institutional child abuse to forcibly remove children from their parents and set them off in a strange setting, this institutional setting, for weeks and for months, and that is exactly what we did.

The President finally realized that he was wrong and reversed the policy, but the kids are still there. The kids have not been united, and we have not solved the problems that face this country.

There are a lot of things that divide Democrats and Republicans in this town. I hope there are several things we can all agree on.

No. 1, the United States needs border security. We can't have open borders for everyone who wants to come to this country. It wouldn't work, it wouldn't be safe, and I am not advocating that. I doubt that many people are.

Secondly, we need to make sure that dangerous people who want to come into this country are stopped, and anyone who is here, undocumented and dangerous, should be removed. I think we all agree on that.

The third thing we need—clearly need—is comprehensive immigration reform. Our immigration system is desperately broken. It doesn't serve our needs in so many different ways.

I was part of an effort 5 years ago when eight Senators—four Democrats and four Republicans joined together. JOHN MCCAIN, CHUCK SCHUMER, LINDSEY GRAHAM, MICHAEL BENNET, BOB MENENDEZ, JEFF FLAKE, MARCO RUBIO, and I spent about 6 months writing a comprehensive immigration reform bill. We all had to give a little. That is what happens when you are in a political situation.

We brought the bill to the floor of the Senate, and it passed with 64 votes.

That is a pretty healthy margin in a Chamber that is often bitterly divided.

We had comprehensive immigration reform. So what happened to it? It crossed the Rotunda into the House of Representatives and disappeared. They never held a hearing, and they never called a bill. They ignored it completely. They left the mess that we now have in place.

Well, we need to return to this issue, and we need to do it quickly. We need to make sure that we have another comprehensive immigration reform bill that starts addressing the basic issues we addressed in our last effort. That, to me, is the only way to put us on the right track to do the right thing.

In the meantime, there are too many victims, and too darn many of them are children. We can do better as a nation. The United States is a caring and compassionate nation. We have proved it over and over again throughout our history. We need to do it again.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. President, I want to discuss the conference report that is coming over for the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act.

I want to thank Senator JOHN MCCAIN, who has been absent from the Chamber for months, but we think of him every day and remember fondly his amazing ability to shepherd this bill through the Senate and through conference committee; JACK REED, the Democrat serving on that same defense authorization committee; JIM INHOFE of Oklahoma, who has stepped in to fill in for JOHN MCCAIN in his absence; Congressman THORNBERRY, Congressman SMITH, and all of those who worked on this conference agreement.

Since I am the ranking Democrat or vice chair of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I know how hard it is to take a bill of this complexity and size and work out a political compromise. But that was achieved with the National Defense Authorization Act, and it was done with many extraordinary efforts when it came to defense and foreign policy.

No compromise is perfect, but I am troubled and disappointed by several particular provisions in the bill, and I wanted to speak to them on the floor before the bill comes up for consideration later this week.

This last January, Secretary of Defense Mattis, whom I respect greatly and voted for, argued in his national defense strategy that we were seeing "the reemergence of long-term, strategic competition," especially against Russia and China. I don't think anyone disputes that, and yet two high-profile provisions in this Defense authorization bill weaken the pressure that we should be exerting against these two nations.

Russia has illegally seized territory in Ukraine and Georgia. It has protected the murderous Syrian regime. It has murdered its critics with chemical attacks on foreign soil. It has attempted to undermine democratic elections across the Western world, from

France to our own United States. For that reason, Congress put in place tough sanctions against Russia last year. They passed with overwhelming votes in the House and the Senate. I voted for them as did most of the Members from both sides of the aisle.

Many of those sanctions required the President to impose the sanctions. It was mandatory that he do this. It gave Congress the right to review those sanctions if the President decided to waive and not apply them. Why? It is sad to say that this congressional review was included because no one trusted President Trump to stand up to Vladimir Putin. He believes the word of Vladimir Putin over that of our intelligence community professionals. Unfortunately, our President has shown on almost a daily basis, that he simply doesn't have it in him to stand up for American interests if Vladimir Putin disagrees.

Yet the conference report before us provides the administration with an even bigger national security waiver on these sanctions, a larger escape clause so that the President could avoid applying sanctions to Russia, and it removes Congress's ability to review that decision. I am sure the Secretary of Defense will use his powers in this bill wisely to allow the United States to help key allies wean themselves off of Russian military equipment. The problem is that this is not the only way the administration can use this broad waiver. It makes congressional review more, not less, important, and yet the conference report, I think, goes in thing wrong direction.

We need to be firm with Russia. They need to understand there is a price to pay for what they are doing to their neighbors, as well as to the rest of the world and especially to the electoral process of the United States. It was only last week that we received the latest notification that one of my fellow colleagues in this Chamber has had her office hacked by the Russians during the course of her reelection campaign. This is not the end of Russian intrigue, and we have to address this Russian threat with our eyes wide open. I wish the Defense authorization bill were more explicit in that regard.

This conference agreement also waters down sanctions against China. Last year, a large Chinese telecommunications company was caught redhanded evading U.S. sanctions on North Korea and Iran.

Earlier this year, the Department of Defense also stopped selling its phones to the military because it "may pose an unacceptable risk to personnel, information, and mission." These phones from China "may pose an unacceptable risk to personnel, information, and mission." Our Department of Defense has warned us that this Chinese equipment can be dangerous if used by our military establishment in the United States.

We responded forcefully to these repeated violations of the law and na-

tional security risk, passing a provision to prohibit this company from doing any business in the United States, but, again, just as with the Russia provision, this was watered down from prohibiting it from doing business with the U.S. Government. What it means is that the Chinese telecommunications company, which we fear is going to make us weaker in terms of national security, is prohibited for business with our government but is able to sell its products in the general commerce of America. That cannot make our country any safer.

The agreement also contains a comprehensive overhaul of the way we protect our economy from national security threats. So perhaps next time, if the Chinese violate it or any other country does, we can catch them before damage is done. We could have made this provision much stronger.

Another reason why I am disappointed by this conference committee report is the irresponsible removal of provisions related to Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. The House bill contained five provisions restricting security engagement with Burma, imposing sanctions on Burmese officials responsible for human rights abuses, and requiring the State Department to make a determination on whether the atrocities committed against the Rohingya people, a minority, constituted ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, or genocide.

These provisions were included in the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act with overwhelming bipartisan support. Similar language passed out of our Senate Foreign Relations Committee in a stand-alone bill with bipartisan support. It looked like these provisions were destined to be in the final work product.

We are all aware of the horrific persecution of the Rohingya people by the Burmese military, stemming from decades of deep-seated misconceptions and hatred that have led to violence, most recently last August, when a small group of militants attacked a security outpost.

The Burmese military brutally responded in a scorched-earth campaign against the Rohingya people, killing thousands, including children, violating their women, forcibly starving their people, and burning down their villages. More than 700,000 Rohingya people fled Burma to nearby Bangladesh, as they had been overwhelmed by the Burmese military and their forces.

In neighboring Bangladesh, they were forced into squalid refugee camps, which I visited. I know the Bangladeshis and others are doing their best to help them, but these are horrible living conditions for anyone.

In Burma the government authorities continue to deny that any of this took place. They burned and overtook former Rohingya villages. They ignored calls for safe and voluntary repatriation and accountability.

I am particularly disappointed in Aung San Suu Kyi. Her silence on these problems is hard to explain. Many of us admired her for a long period of time and the courage she showed against the Burmese military, but when it comes to this moral humanitarian choice, her silence is distressing. Just this month, an extensive and devastating report released by the group Fortify Rights found that the Burmese authorities had actually made the preparations for attacks against the Rohingya people before the August 25 militant attack, which they blamed for their actions. Groups such as Fortify Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and countless others have even documented the Burmese military officials and units responsible for the crimes against the Rohingya, led by General Min Aung Hlaing.

Despite this, our President has been slow to sanction military officials. The Trump administration has been sitting on a potential list for months and so far has sanctioned one person only. Here in the Senate, one of our Senate leaders, dismayed, continues to block movement of any bipartisan sanction effort aimed for those responsible for this atrocity.

I am sorry to say that what looked like an easy bipartisan provision to condemn this behavior by the Burmese military is a casualty of this conference committee, and it is another reason that I am troubled by the work product. Finally, I want to note that this conference agreement provides zero paid increases for defense civilian personnel. That is just unacceptable. The President did not request an increase in his budget proposal even though Secretary Mattis has called their contributions essential to our military operations for everything from acquisition to policy expertise.

Congress should exercise its independent judgment to provide this civilian pay increase. After all, we cannot expect to continue to recruit and retain the best civilian workers in our military without appropriate pay.

I am glad that the Appropriations Committee was providing modest increases for all Federal and civilian employees, but every committee in every branch of government must take responsibility for this in the future. I understand that one cannot demand perfection in the legislative process, and there are many provisions in this conference report that I appreciate and the work that was put into it.

The conferees rejected unrelated poison pill environmental provisions from the House and retained a very strong Senate statement in support of NATO. These are two of the hundreds of good provisions contained in this bill and conference report. But as I stated at the outset, I believe the agreement also makes improper changes in the key areas that I have outlined, and for those reasons I will be voting against cloture on the conference agreement.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CODES ACT

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak about the importance of teaching computer science and coding in our education system. Throughout the United States and especially in my home State of Washington, our internet economy is booming. Nationwide, it represents 7 percent of our GDP and makes up 13 percent of Washington's economy. In Washington, more than 13,000 internet companies provide more than a quarter of a million jobs.

We want to keep this American success story going, but to do that, we need to make sure these startups have the workforce of tomorrow that they need. That is why it is so important for children throughout the United States to be able to learn to code in school.

Every student in America should be taught the tools they need to enter our 21st-century economy. I laugh and say all the time that I took typing and Latin as my prerequisite requirements in college. I am not saying that typing and Latin didn't help me today, but I question whether we are teaching the same skills today that we need for the 21st-century economy.

Every student in the United States should have the opportunity to learn about the internet, algorithms, and applications. In Washington, we are making progress in this area because 31 percent of our high schools offer coding classes, but more still needs to be done.

According to a great organization, code.org, 90 percent of parents in the United States want their children to study or understand computer science; however, only 40 percent of their children are taught anything about computer programming. Computer jobs are the No. 1 source of new jobs in the country. Currently, there are more than 500,000 computer job openings in the United States.

This is a skills gap we have to close if we want to continue to develop these new products and services. That is why I worked with my colleague from Louisiana, Senator CASSIDY, to introduce the High School CODES Act earlier this year. Our legislation creates a new Federal grant program to help high schools throughout the country establish or expand coding education programs for their students.

Ninety percent of parents want their children to study computer science, so we should be providing them more opportunities. Children in cities, suburbs and rural communities all should have access to these computer science programs.

As I mentioned, in my State, the demand for computer science and coding programs is clear. Right now, Washington has more than 16,000 good-paying job openings in computer science. Still, only 31 percent of our State schools offered computer science courses for the high school level between 2016 and 2017. What is standing in our way? Well, in many cases, it is the cost of developing a computer science curriculum and getting a program up and running in the high school. That is exactly the problem our legislation tries to solve by giving local communities the resources they need to develop and implement good computer science curriculums that make the most sense for those communities.

As I said, not everybody will necessarily go into computer science. I took typing and Latin, which gave me a fundamental understanding of both of those things. What is wrong with everybody having a fundamental understanding of the language of the 21st-century computer programming?

I was excited, with Senator CASSIDY, when we were able to include language in the reauthorization of the Perkins vocational and technical educational bill, which the President signed today, to move us closer to that goal. The language in the bill that was signed by the President would allow the use of Federal funds to support efforts to expand, develop, or implement programs to increase opportunities for students to take rigorous courses in coding and computer science and support statewide efforts to create access to and implementation of coding and computer science. This is a great example of what we can do when working together in a bipartisan manner.

It is the first important step to make sure that every student understands some level of what our economy is going to be built on in the future. We will have plenty of work to do. As I said, not everyone will go into computer science, but having a basic understanding of how just about everything in your home and your workplace is going to work, and even your car and other applications that you have, will be a good bridge to this economy.

We are going to continue to work together and find ways that computer science and coding can be taught in our classrooms. At the Federal level, we don't have a lot of control over that curriculum at the local level, but we can incentivize, as we are doing today, schools across the United States, with a little Federal support, to make sure that coding and computer science are key parts of a high school education.

I want to thank my colleague Senator CASSIDY for working on this important issue with me and helping to get it included in this Perkins legislation. I thank all my colleagues for voting for it and the President for signing it. The economy of the future can leave people behind but not if we help prepare them for the future, and part of preparing them for the future is just a

basic understanding of how programming and computer science work.

I hope many schools across the United States will take up this opportunity. I hope it will lead to many new applications, new job creations, and greater awareness of what STEM education is all about. Having people trained in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math is key to our country's future. I am so glad the President is signing this legislation today.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL H. SHIELDS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, as we are working through the remaining issues as they relate to the various appropriations bills before us, I wanted to take just a few moments this afternoon to speak about a friend of mine, a friend of Alaska's, a gentleman, and a leader, Alaska's LTG Michael H. Shields, who is retiring from the U.S. Army after 35 years of service. I thank Mike on behalf of my Senate colleagues and the people of Alaska for his outstanding service as he retires from Active Duty.

Mike received his commission through the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps at Norwich University in 1983. Like so many of Alaska's best and finest citizens, we kind of adopted him. He came to Alaska to serve. He came to love our State, and we just loved him right back.

I first came to know Mike as Colonel Shields when he was commanding the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team—known as the Arctic Wolves—at Fort Wainwright, AK, just outside of Fairbanks. He led the brigade during the height of Operation Iraqi Freedom. It was a very difficult command, probably one of the more difficult commands any colonel could imagine.

The Arctic Wolves had executed their planned 2005 to 2006 deployment in northern Iraq. They had done an exceptional job, and they were ready to come home. They had been there for a full deployment. The plans were laid. The families had all been told. This very successful, yearlong deployment was coming to an end during the early summer of 2006. Again, there was a great deal of excitement about the end of that deployment. The problem, though, was that it was not coming to an end. The unit had performed very well in northern Iraq, and the Pentagon basically said: We need more help. We need you to help out in the vicinity around Baghdad.

As it is with the military, the Pentagon didn't exactly ask the soldiers if

they wanted to extend their deployment; they told the soldiers that the deployment was going to be extended. That is not unusual. This is the military. You go where you are told to go and when you are told to go. Unfortunately, this message was delivered in a messy and very chaotic way. It was very sudden, and it was without warning to their families. Some of the elements of the 172nd had already returned to Fort Wainwright, and ultimately they had to redeploy. They had to go back to Iraq. Other elements were actually in the air on the way home when their planes were turned around.

I was in Fairbanks, at Fort Wainwright, at the time, and I can recall going through the gates, and there were areas where there were chain link fences. Kids had taken papier-mache and stuffed it in the chain link to spell out the words "Welcome Home Daddy" and hearts. The messages of love and excitement about their dad or their husband coming home were everywhere. But when the plug is pulled and they are told they are not going to be coming home, it is extraordinarily disappointing not only for those who have been deployed for this yearlong period but also for those families who are literally waiting, who knew exactly what they were going to be wearing when their dad stepped off that airplane, to be told "He is not coming home now, and we don't know when he is coming home." It was very difficult when these families were told to wait. The families were angry. They were upset. They were very angry. They felt they had been misled and with good cause.

Fortunately, the Army and the Fairbanks community just kind of stepped up to wrap their arms around the families during this now-extended deployment, and things calmed down. These are military families. They are tough. They have gone through these separations, and as hard as that had been, they had kind of set their heads right and said: No. We are going to get through this. That may have been the easy part.

Mike, on the other hand, our colonel, had to deal with these problems from a distance. Baghdad is 5,620 miles and 11 time zones away from Fairbanks. So not only did Mike have to manage the challenges of the battlefield in Iraq but also the challenges of maintaining troop morale and focus across all of this time and distance.

Part of the problem—and making matters worse—was that nobody really knew how long this extension would be. When you think about all that goes on in a tense situation like that, only the most outstanding of leaders can really pull something like this off, and Mike proved himself to be the best of the best. He reminded his troops, they needed to stick together in order to survive.

He said: "The strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack." That is the motto of the Arctic Wolves.

Then-Colonel Shields went on to say:

It means no wolf pack is stronger than its individual hunter, and no hunter is more important than the pack. Individually, we accomplish little. As a team, we accomplish much.

The troops endured what turned out to be a 4-month extension on top of their initial deployment. The unit returned home by Christmas. The American Forces Press Service reported on December 15 of 2006 that the Arctic Wolves earned distinction in Iraq as they took on what then-Army Secretary Francis Harvey called "the toughest challenge of any unit in Iraq." Again, there are many reasons to be very proud of all they have done under the command of Colonel Shields.

Mike moved on to other challenges. He was twice promoted following that deployment. He then went back to Alaska. I was thrilled when Mike returned as a major general to command U.S. Army Alaska, which was headquartered at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage. He returned to Alaska in 2013 to command U.S. Army Alaska. He branded U.S. Army Alaska as the Army's experts in high-altitude, cold-weather ground operations.

One of our really great—I mean truly great—training assets is the Northern Warfare Training Center in Black Rapids, AK. Mike ensured that his troops were trained at Black Rapids for missions that would demand their unique skill sets. He then opened Black Rapids to the allied troops who required those skills. He was really an effective evangelist for the Army's cold-weather mission—a mission of increasing importance as the Arctic has become more strategic.

He has told me numerous times of some of the challenges of training some of these young soldiers how to ski in extremely cold conditions with very interesting Army-issued skis and equipment. One of these days, he will challenge me to a race, but I don't know. In knowing the skills of General Shields, I think I am going to pass on that.

Prior to departing Alaska for his next assignment in 2015, Mike was required to host visiting Army officials who were studying a major downsizing that potentially involved the consolidation of brigades. Both the 172nd, which was then rebranded the 1st of the 25th, and the Airborne Brigade at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson were potentially on the chopping block.

Big Army was looking at a variety of scenarios across its enterprise, and that brought evaluation teams to both Anchorage and Fairbanks. He showed the evaluation teams our remarkable training assets. Even more importantly, he prepared the teams for what they would hear at the community meetings. What they heard was that Alaska was a very special place for our military families and that Alaska communities went above and beyond what was expected in their support of mili-

tary communities. Whatever else one may say about Alaska's military value, it is a great place for military families.

The evaluation teams left with favorable impressions of what Alaska had to offer. The Stryker Brigade survived this process. Yes, we fought to retain our Airborne Brigade at JBER, but Mike laid very solid groundwork for our ultimate success, and we are very grateful to him for his support of the Alaska mission.

Throughout, Mike distinguished himself through exceptionally meritorious service and achievement in a multitude of assignments of increasing responsibility, culminating as the Director of the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization, and he has proven to be an exceptional and inspiring leader there.

His selfless service, dedication to duty, and unyielding devotion to soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coalition partners are in keeping with the finest traditions of military service.

The distinctive accomplishments of Lieutenant General Shields bring great credit upon himself, the U.S. Army, and the Department of Defense. It is with great pride that I reflect upon his outstanding career before the U.S. Senate today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, over the last several days, the minority leader has again continued his unprecedented partisan interference with the business of the Senate Judiciary Committee. In addition to these partisan interventions being unwelcomed, many of the minority leader's assertions are just plain false, and other assertions omit significant context. So, as I have done several times in recent days, I am here to correct the record.

Let me start by reiterating that the confirmation process for Judge Kavanaugh will be the most transparent in history. That is from the availability of all the documents that are out there for our colleagues to study about this nominee. Senators already have access to the most important part of Judge Kavanaugh's record—his more than 300 opinions written during his 12 years on the DC Circuit, in addition to the hundreds more opinions he joined, and the more than 6,000 pages that were submitted in connection with his Senate Judiciary questionnaire.

Moreover, the Senate will receive more pages of executive branch documents than the Senate will have received for any Supreme Court nominee ever—I anticipate up to 1 million pages of documents from Judge Kavanaugh's time in the White House Counsel's Office and his service in the Office of the Independent Counsel, along with records related to his 2006 confirmation to be a judge on the DC Circuit. The production could be larger than those of the last five Supreme Court nominees combined. Hence, one understands

why I am saying this will be the most transparent confirmation process of any Federal Supreme Court Justice.

The other side is pretending like the most expansive and transparent confirmation process in history is not good enough. Despite this expansive and transparent confirmation process and that Senators already have Judge Kavanaugh's entire judicial record in front of them already, Democratic leaders continue to make unreasonable demands for more and more documents. In fact, they demand access to every email and every other document ever written or received by every staffer who ever worked in the Bush White House. They want these records in order to fish for documents that merely mention Brett Kavanaugh's name. In other words, they, essentially, want access to every document that ever went through the Bush White House.

Now, this is really beyond unreasonable, and it is not a very serious proposal. During Judge Kagan's confirmation, then-Chairman LEAHY was adamant that documents merely mentioning Justice Kagan's name shouldn't be produced. This is just one example of Democratic leaders' not following the Kagan standard.

The motive behind the unreasonable demands for documents is obvious: Democratic leaders want to stall Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation in any way possible. They hope to bury the Senate in mountains of irrelevant documents to delay his confirmation hearing and to perhaps deny him a vote during this current Congress.

The ranking member's hometown newspaper reported this scheme over the weekend. The headline used the word "stall."

The San Francisco Chronicle called it "a tactic that could postpone a decision until after the midterm elections." The article explained: "The Democrats' strategy . . . is to demand to see every document that crossed Kavanaugh's desk while he served as President George W. Bush's staff secretary from 2003 to 2006." In other words, the Democratic leaders are demanding these documents in order to needlessly delay the process rather than for legitimate purposes. Yet these tactics aren't going to work.

Let me address some of the minority leader's specific points.

He says, traditionally, the Senate Judiciary Committee sends a bipartisan letter that requests documents, and he said we should have sent out this letter 2 weeks ago. What the minority leader fails to point out is, my staff worked extensively with the ranking member's staff to attempt to identify specific Staff Secretary records that might be of some interest to the Democrats, but the Democratic staff was not interested in a reasonable compromise, including my attempts to get them even more documents than the up to 1 million pages of documents we were already in the process of receiving.

After multiple rounds of negotiation, the ranking member's staff still had

not budged from its position that it was entitled to access any of the millions and millions of pages of documents that ever went through the Bush White House. These demands were unprecedented, were unreasonable, and were obviously intended to delay the confirmation process.

I couldn't allow this tactic to further delay this important business of the committee. So, as chairman, I sent a records request for the White House Counsel's documents because we needed to keep this process moving. We couldn't be stalling. It is unfortunate the ranking member didn't agree to sign it because the letter requested documents that both sides agreed we should have. Both sides agreed with the documents that were in my letter, but there was no signature from the minority.

The minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, also says we should have followed the precedent established during Justice Kagan's nomination. In suggesting this point, he is rewriting history. He may not know that, but he is. He conveniently forgets that both Democrats and Republicans agreed we shouldn't have requested documents from Justice Kagan's time as Solicitor General. Everyone agreed that the Kagan Solicitor General documents were too sensitive for disclosure and, in fact, could chill the candidness of internal deliberations for future Presidents and their counsel—their Solicitor General.

This same respect for confidentiality should apply with greater force, then, to Staff Secretary documents, which include some of the most sensitive policy advice going directly to a President. In this case, it was President George W. Bush. Indeed, the White House Staff Secretary is essentially the inbox and outbox for the President of the United States. Now, that is not to say that it is not a very important position, but it doesn't get involved in much policy.

The Senate's current task is to evaluate the qualifications of Judge Kavanaugh, not to relitigate every political and policy disagreement from President George W. Bush's 8 years in the White House.

As my Democratic colleagues keep pointing out, Judge Kavanaugh has described how his time as Staff Secretary was a formative experience for him. Well, Justice Kagan said the same thing about her time as Solicitor General, but in the case of Kagan, the Democrats refused to request her records.

On top of the undisputed relevance of Solicitor General material, Judge Kagan, however, lacked a judicial record. In other words, unlike the more than 300 opinions that Judge Kavanaugh authored and the hundreds more opinions that he joined in during his 12 years of service on the DC Circuit, Justice Kagan had zero judicial opinions that she offered, zero judicial opinions that she joined, and zero years of judicial service.

Her Solicitor General documents were, therefore, even more relevant. Democratic leaders, then, are rewriting the Kagan standard to further their stalling tactics.

The minority leader also tried to draw a parallel—or parallels—with the request for documents from Justice Sotomayor's time as a board member of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. This, however, was a narrow request, closely tailored to a specific need for information. It resulted in the production of approximately 100 documents, not millions of documents, as are involved with the White House Staff Secretary.

In contrast, Democratic leaders demand access to every single one of the millions and millions of pages of emails and other records from every one of the 100 staffers who served in the White House with Judge Kavanaugh. As I have said repeatedly, I will not put the American taxpayers on the hook for the Senate Democrats' fishing expedition.

Clearly, losing on the substantive arguments, the minority leader has even resorted to personally attacking Mr. Bill Burck, President George W. Bush's attorney. Mr. Burck has been one of President Bush's designated representatives for the Presidential Records Act, going way back to 2009. He is a leading partner in one of America's most respected and, I think, most liberal law firms.

I am told that he has insisted that no lawyer be selected to participate in the review of President Bush's White House papers on the basis of his or her party affiliation or political ideology. Moreover, Mr. Burck has taken the time to personally meet with the ranking member's staff and answer all of their questions about the document review process that I am describing to you here.

The minority leader said at a press conference today that the review by President Bush's lawyers "wouldn't be so bad if he also got a full set of documents from the Archives." Well, that is exactly what I expect to happen—in other words, a full set of documents from the Archives.

President Bush has offered to give us access to copies of documents that we requested from the Archives so that we on the committee can quickly begin our review of Judge Kavanaugh's record while the Archives works through our document request. The minority leader could have learned this by simply having a conversation with me instead of putting on a political show in front of TV cameras earlier today.

I must also address the minority leader's unprecedented intervention into the business of the Judiciary Committee. The minority leader is not a member of that committee. We are not going to let him run the committee. I am the chairman of that committee. He has no business inserting himself

into the committee's business, including the manner in which the committee will obtain the documents needed to review Judge Kavanaugh's record.

But last week he sent a letter to President George W. Bush, asking him to release all records from Judge Kavanaugh's service in the White House, while at the same time criticizing the way that President Bush has chosen to review those records. This letter was an inappropriate attempt to meddle in the committee's business, and I am disappointed that my Democratic colleagues on the committee are tolerating that sort of intervention.

I have also learned that the minority leader called the Archivist on Monday and asked him to "do the right thing" with regard to the documents.

I was disappointed to hear that the minority leader was attempting to pressure a government official—one appointed by President Obama, can you believe—with regard to the committee's business.

I also want to address one argument that my colleague on the Judiciary Committee, the senior Senator from Illinois, has made. My colleague believes Judge Kavanaugh misled the committee during his 2006 confirmation hearing when he said he was not involved in developing the Bush administration's detention and interrogation policies. The senior Senator pointed to a media report that described a 2002 meeting in the White House in which Judge Kavanaugh advised whether his former boss, Justice Kennedy, would accept a legal argument about American citizens' access to counsel.

These allegations have no merit, and here is why. Offering advice on the potential success of a legal position suggested by others—meaning others in the White House Staff Secretary's Office—does not show involvement in developing detention and interrogation policies.

Multiple sources have confirmed that Judge Kavanaugh wasn't involved in developing detention and interrogation policies. Moreover, these allegations were already referred to the Department of Justice, which concluded that they didn't even warrant opening an investigation.

I will further point out that this 2002 meeting occurred while Judge Kavanaugh was in the White House Counsel's Office and, as I have explained, the entire Senate—or at least the entire Judiciary Committee—is going to have access to Judge Kavanaugh's White House Counsel records.

In short, I am proud to preside over what will be the most transparent confirmation process in history. As they have said publicly, Democratic leaders are firmly opposed to Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation, and they have also said that they will do whatever it takes to defeat Judge Kavanaugh. They would like to bury the Senate in a mountain of irrelevant documents to delay the confirmation

process as long as possible. As you can tell from my remarks today—and my remarks three or four times since Judge Kavanaugh was appointed—I am not going to allow the minority to abuse the process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me just follow up on the remarks of my friend from Iowa.

I think most of us around this Chamber had a chance to meet Judge Kavanaugh. I am in kind of a unique situation in that I am not a lawyer. So I ask different questions than most people do, but I was already convinced, judging from his history in voting and his adherence and commitment to the Constitution, that he is my kind of guy. In fact, I even sent a message to him saying: Don't bother wasting your time on me because you don't need to. But, nonetheless, he came.

This is what is interesting about this guy. Everything that the Senator from Iowa said is true, but over and above that, I have had personal conversations with people who were from his home church. There was one lady who was a close friend of Judge Kavanaugh whose husband died, and every time there is an event, such as a parent-student event, Judge Kavanaugh would go and get the children of his deceased friend and take them to the events as if he were their father. It is not very often that we see that kind of compassion in somebody. So we had a conversation about those things and I was very excited about it.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. President, on Thursday we are going to be passing a bill that I consider every year to be the most significant bill of the year. We know it is going to pass because it has passed every year for the last 57 years. It is going to pass. It is named the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act, and I am pleased that this conference report is the result of an open and bipartisan process.

I have to thank, first of all, Chairman MCCAIN and his staff for working so diligently in leading the legislation that bears his name. This year's NDAA is a fitting testament to him. We are talking about JOHN MCCAIN's policies and his priorities and the lasting legacy on our Nation. John is a true American hero. So it is appropriate that we name this bill after him.

I also want to thank Ranking Member REED. Senator REED has been by my side. The two of us have worked this Defense authorization bill now for several months, and we have been very busy doing that. We have been working closely with Chairman THORNBERRY over in the House, as well as with

Ranking Member SMITH in the House. I thank them for their hard work on this bill.

It always gets around to the big four, after we all meet and we have the meetings with the House and the Senate, our joint conference meetings. But then there are always some things that need to be done, and they have to be done by the big four. I have been involved with several of these, and this year, of course, the chairman of the House committee, the acting chairman of the Senate committee, and the ranking members worked very hard, and we got this done.

So we should all be proud of this week's National Defense Authorization Act, but we shouldn't lose sight of why it is so important. We need to remember the degraded state of our military.

I don't mean this in a partisan way, but we had 8 years of the Obama administration, and one thing that I have always appreciated about previously Senator Obama and then-President Obama is that he is a real, sincere, in-the-heart liberal. Quite often, the priorities of those individuals are not the same as some of us, particularly in a strong national defense. So we are really hurting.

At the end of the Obama administration, in 2016, only 33 percent of our brigade combat teams were at sufficient levels to be deployed; only a quarter of our aviation brigades were ready; and just 40 percent of the Marines' F-18s were flyable—only 40 percent—because the first thing somebody does when they are cutting down on the expense of a strong military is they do away with the maintenance, and that is the problem we had. We were short 1,500 pilots and had shrunk the force by nearly 100,000 servicemembers despite growing threats around the world.

I don't think anyone can argue that this is a threatened world. I think it is the most threatened our country has ever been. Countries around the world have the capability of firing a rocket and hitting a city in America. That didn't used to be the case. You had to be a giant in order to be one of the leaders. Now we have people out there whose judgment we have to question, and they have this capability. So we have a lot of things.

We have fallen behind China and Russia. This year's national defense strategy—the first in a decade—rightfully recognized that China and Russia are strategic adversaries and competitors.

We are also falling behind especially in technologies that will define the future of deterrence and capabilities.

Look at hypersonic weapons. Hypersonic weapons operate at five times the speed of sound. They are still in the experimental stage. We are working on it, but we are behind China and Russia. They are both ahead of us at this time.

The nuclear triad is a modernization program. Over the 8 Obama years, we didn't do anything in that. Consequently, during those years, both China and Russia passed us up.

Long-range artillery. Artillery is measured by the rapid fire and by the range, and right now, in both cases of rapid fire and range, China and Russia are ahead of us.

The national defense strategy identified these vulnerabilities, but it is our responsibility to take that strategy and turn it into policy, and that is exactly what we are doing. This year's NDAA does that. We are investing in training, maintenance, and modernization, restoring our qualitative and quantitative advantage around the world. I say restoring, not achieving, because we lost it. The Chairman of our Joint Chiefs of Staff, in the fifth year of the Obama administration, said that we are losing our qualitative and quantitative advantage around the world. It is kind of hard for people to conceive of this. I am used to the fact that most people believed and probably still believe today that the United States has the very best of everything. Well, we have the best troops and the best-trained troops, but our equipment is not all that good, and so we are doing everything to try to change that.

So that is the situation in which we find ourselves. This year's NDAA will fully fund the key priorities we have identified that will ensure that our Armed Forces have the training, resources, and equipment they need to complete their mission. We fully fund what is needed to modernize the force, including procurement for aircraft, shipbuilding, and artillery.

Procurement has always been a problem. It has been a problem since I was serving in the House on the House Armed Services Committee. We are addressing this problem as it has not been addressed before.

We have now fully funded in this bill the modernization of our Nation's nuclear strategy, including the development of low-yield nuclear weapons and a layered missile defense. A lot of people don't realize that Russia had low-yield nuclear weapons and we didn't. So we are trying to catch up in those areas.

We fully funded support for critical allies and partners, including the Afghanistan security forces, coalition support, Iraqi security forces, and Israel.

We have increased end strength to align with the President's budget request and adapt to the growing threats from around the world. Now, this sounds easy, but it is not because we are starting from behind. The NDAA bill we are going to vote on on Thursday goes beyond the President's request to provide greater funding for research and development, ensuring that we can continue to focus on new and emerging threats, like hypersonics, space, and cyber.

We are standing up to China by strengthening our position across the Pacific region. This bill provides support to our allies who stand up against China's military and economic coercion and procures deployable airbase

systems to enhance credible combat power.

The NDAA also calls out China for illegally creating and fortifying islands in the South China Sea. I was in the South China Sea about a month ago. Our allies are looking at us and looking at China, and wondering, whose side do we want to be on? Because all they see is what is happening in China. Those are illegal islands. They don't own the land under them. There are some seven different islands exceeding 3,000 acres that are as if they are preparing for World War III. So we know what their capability is. We know what the problems are.

Then, of course, the NDAA counters Russia's growing aggression and influence across Eastern Europe by directing a study on permanently stationing U.S. forces in Poland and conducting a study on Russia's malign influence around the world. That is in this bill. So we are actually going to take some action.

It wasn't long ago—I think in March—that the RAND Corporation, which makes assessments as to what our capabilities are, said that Russia is to the point right now that if they were to take on NATO, including our forces in NATO and Western Europe, that they would win. That is a pretty frightening thought.

The bill continues limitations on U.S.-Russia military cooperation and provides defensive lethal aid to Ukraine. I happened to be in Ukraine with President Poroshenko way back when they had their Parliamentary elections. I think it was about 4 years ago. That was the first time they had a Parliamentary election where there was not one Communist in the Ukraine Parliament. He was very, very proud. Of course that upset Russia, and Putin started sending people into Ukraine and killing them, and our President at that time, President Obama, would not allow us to send defensive weapons in there to help them.

It keeps faith with our troops by providing a 2.6-percent military pay increase—the first one in about 10 years—and it is modernizing the officer personnel system and supporting our troops and military families.

When Senator REED and I started on this process, we shared a commitment to making sure that this year's NDAA is more than just another piece of legislation; rather, that it is a message to each and every one of our servicemembers. And we did that. The NDAA tells them that they are our top priority. It is what we have to do to defend America. After all, the No. 1 thing we should be doing around here is defending America. A lot of people have forgotten that there is an old document around that nobody reads anymore called the Constitution. The Constitution says what we are supposed to be doing: defending America. I am proud to say that we did. Every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine can look at this legislation and know they have the support and commitment of their country.

I want to speak for a minute about the historical significance of this legislation because the history of the National Defense Authorization Act is a distinguished one.

As I mentioned before, we have passed this for 57 consecutive years. This is the 58th year. But what is unique is the fact that we are passing the legislation this week—a record for how quickly in the year it will be passed and signed into law. This was deliberate. We are moving quickly, but we are thorough, considering hundreds of bipartisan amendments in both committee markup and on the floor. This will be the earliest an NDAA has passed since 1996 when we were considering the legislation for fiscal year 1997. So it is the result of the legislative process working.

We set a budget in February and are authorizing the funding well in advance of next year's fiscal year. So now we can and should turn our attention to passing the necessary appropriations bill on time that aligns with that which we are authorizing today.

About 5 years ago, we were all the way to December before we passed this bill. To remind you, if we don't get it done by the end of December, it means we are not going to get flight pay and hazard pay to our troops who are standing in harm's way. So we have done a good job on this. I am anxious to get this out of the way and vote it into law, which is going to take place on Thursday.

We have to remember that without consistent, continued funding, the critical reforms in this year's NDAA will not be possible, and we won't be able to make the needed investments to restore our competitive advantage over China and Russia. That is exactly what we are going to do—we are going to restore what we have lost, and it is all happening in this bill. I think we will have the chance on Thursday to vote for what I consider to be the most significant legislation each year.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes as in morning business.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the big oil companies—particularly Exxon, Shell, BP, and Chevron—want us to believe they have turned over a new leaf, that they are finally in favor of climate action. All four of them claimed to support the Paris Agreement, and Exxon, Shell, and BP all claim to support putting a price on carbon emissions—a price that would reflect the costs of the damage climate change inflicts on the environment, the economy, and public health.

For example, this is on Exxon's website: "ExxonMobil believes a revenue-neutral carbon tax would be a more effective policy option than. . . ."

and it lists other options. “A properly designed carbon tax can be predictable, transparent, and comparatively simple to understand and implement.”

So it looks as if they are supporting a properly designed carbon tax, but is that support for pricing carbon emissions real, or is it just PR, just greenwashing by companies desperate to improve their images? Well, Senator SCHATZ and I introduced a carbon price bill in 2014 to put a fee on products that produce carbon dioxide emissions, and we have reintroduced it in every Congress since. If the oil companies really supported putting a price on carbon emissions, you would think they might have come to see us, the authors of that carbon price bill. You would think that if the oil companies really supported putting a price on carbon emissions, they might have supported our bill or lobbied other Senators to support it or even come to us to say: You know, we would like to support your bill, but you need to change this or that.

Well, they have done none of that. Despite their public-facing pronouncements on a carbon fee or tax, as they call it, we have had no visits from oil company representatives to our offices to work on this bill, no support for our bill—or any other—no lobbying to help or amend our bill. Nothing. Zero. Zilch. Nada.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the giant trade associations these oil companies fund—the American Petroleum Institute, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers—are all working hard to ensure that Republicans oppose carbon pricing and, indeed, any proposals to reduce carbon emissions.

Look what the big oil companies do when the prospect of getting a carbon fee on the books looks real. This fall, voters in Washington State will vote on a ballot initiative that would initially put a price on carbon. It would price carbon emissions at \$15 per ton. Who is funding the campaign against this carbon price initiative? You guessed it, the oil companies, the very same oil companies that claim to support a carbon fee. Already, Shell, BP, and Chevron have pledged to pour dollars into a super PAC created by the Western States Petroleum Association, which is another trade association that fronts for them to oppose this carbon pricing initiative. The oil companies are backing the opposition in Congress also.

In the House, Majority Whip STEVE SCALISE got wind that some of his Republican Members were working on carbon fee legislation. He introduced legislation stating that pricing carbon emissions would be bad for the economy. Guess who SCALISE's most generous donors are. You guessed it, the oil and gas industry. The industry has given his campaign more than \$1.1 million, far more than any other industry has given him. The oil and gas industry has also given his PAC \$1.5 million.

Again, far more than from any other industry.

As they say, follow the money. Then, where were the big oil companies on SCALISE's resolution? Not one opposed it. In fact, when contacted by the press, Exxon, BP, and Shell all declined to comment on the Scalise resolution, but they noted their general support for carbon pricing.

When you look at what the big oil companies actually do on carbon pricing proposals, their general support for carbon pricing begins to look purely hypothetical—or hypocritical. “General support” probably gets them a little good PR, fools the unwary, and I guess it lets their executives hobnob with movers and shakers at cocktail parties in Davos or at home at their golf clubs, without having to bear any shame for disgraceful behavior on climate change.

This phony general support is also belied by the climate denial infrastructure the oil companies have set up and funded for years. They have underwritten dozens of climate-denying front groups over the years. Guess what. Their front groups sprang into action to support the Scalise anti-carbon pricing resolution. It is a neat little trick. You say you support carbon pricing, and then you deploy an armada of front groups that you funded over the years to make sure the thing you claim to support never comes to pass.

On July 9, 18 of these phony front groups wrote to House Speaker PAUL RYAN urging him to bring the Scalise resolution up for a vote. This letter asserts that pricing carbon emissions would harm the economy, citing a bogus study from the fossil fuel industry-funded National Association of Manufacturers.

By the way, I work pretty well with the manufacturers in my State, and there isn't a manufacturer in my State that subscribes to the National Association of Manufacturers' climate-denying, anti-climate action policies. Somebody somewhere is interjecting themselves so the national organization has become the tool of the fossil fuel industry, but that is not recognized in Rhode Island.

It is not so easy to follow the money behind all these phony front groups that wrote this letter. They and their donors are all very secretive about that. After all, it ruins the purpose of a phony front group if everyone can see the fossil fuel hand in the phony-front-group glove. Enterprising reporters and researchers have been able to shine a little light into this dark money den.

Let's see how much money these front groups have received from the four major oil companies, from the American Petroleum Institute, and from trusts and foundations associated with the fossil fuel magnate Koch brothers.

American Energy Alliance, the top one there: Koch-connected organizations gave the American Energy Alli-

ance at least \$1.7 million. A sister organization that shares both the management and the office space of this phony front group received at least \$160,000 from Exxon.

ALEC: Koch-connected foundations gave ALEC at least \$600,000. We know Koch Industries is also a donor, but we don't know how much it has given. We know Exxon gave at least \$1.6 million before announcing this month it was cutting ties with ALEC. The American Petroleum Institute gave at least \$88,000, while Chevron gave at least \$20,000. Shell and BP also used to fund this front group—we don't know quite how much they gave—before they quit in 2015.

American Commitment received at least \$21 million from Koch-affiliated organizations.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute: Exxon gave at least \$2 million. Koch-affiliated organizations gave at least \$5.2 million.

Americans for Limited Government received at least \$5.6 million from Koch-affiliated groups.

The so-called National Black Chamber of Commerce: Exxon gave at least \$1 million. American Petroleum Institute gave at least \$75,000. Koch-affiliated organizations gave at least \$25,000.

Americans for Tax Reform: API, the American Petroleum Institute, gave at least \$525,000. Koch-affiliated groups gave at least \$330,000.

The Caesar Rodney Institute: Koch-affiliated groups gave at least \$50,000. The Caesar Rodney Institute is part of the larger so-called State Policy Network, which itself is funded by the Koch organization.

FreedomWorks has received at least \$2.5 million from Koch-affiliated groups and at least \$130,000 from the American Petroleum Institute.

The Heartland Institute—there are some beauties—Koch-affiliated groups gave at least \$7.1 million, and Heartland got at least \$730,000 from Exxon. This is the group, by the way, that has compared climate scientists to the Unabomber—a real classy group. I can see why the others would want to associate with them.

The National Center for Public Policy Research received at least \$445,000 from Exxon and at least \$300,000 from Koch-affiliated groups.

The Energy & Environment Legal Institute—here is another beauty—received at least \$500,000 from Koch-affiliated groups. Energy & Environment Legal Institute, by the way, is a particularly creepy group whose function is actually to harass legitimate scientists. That is actually what they do. Another super classy group. You can understand why they would all want to be affiliated with them.

Western Energy Alliance is an oil and gas industry trade association. The group's website promises its fossil fuel members that it will “actively influence regulatory actions and legislation on behalf of your business.” It is no

mystery who is behind this group, but, as usual, funding details are hidden.

The Cornwall Alliance's funders are secret. When I tell you a bit more about it, you can see why they would want to be secret. I can tell you, I have seen this bogus front group turning up constantly on the climate denial odd-ball fringe, with other front groups funded by Big Oil. What is more, the Cornwall Alliance's founder doesn't believe in evolution, thinks that tornadoes are a punishment from God, and, quite despicably, believes AIDS is a punishment for being gay—a really great guy for Speaker RYAN to be taking advice from and a great company for all the rest of these groups to be keeping.

CO2 Science received at least \$100,000 from Exxon and \$280,000 from Koch-affiliated organizations.

The Mississippi Center for Public Policy received at least \$340,000 from Koch-affiliated organizations and is also a member of that Koch-funded so-called State Policy Network.

The Institute for Liberty received at least \$1.8 million from Koch-affiliated organizations.

That is a grand total of over \$54 million from Big Oil and their climate denial allies in the Koch network, and that is the minimum. That is what we know. That is what has leaked through the darkness. Because all these groups and donors are so secretive about their clandestine funding network, we know the total is, if anything, much higher.

Of course, a sophisticated political operative like Speaker RYAN recognized that these were phony front groups and blew this letter off in order to pursue the people's serious business before the House.

Actually, no. What did Speaker RYAN do? He agreed to bring the Scalise resolution to the floor for a vote, of course. With his caucus essentially a wholly owned subsidiary of the fossil fuel industry, how could he have said no? Money talks, and big money commands.

With the resolution heading for a vote, the front groups reappeared—this time, 41 strong, the whole fossil fuel front group armada was deployed—with a letter to all House Members.

I don't want to go through the list again and add the new groups and which received funding from Big Oil and which from the Koch network and which from both, but suffice it to say, almost all of them have been funded by the oil industry and/or the Koch network or are otherwise tied to them. This is the web of denial my Senate colleagues and I have come to the floor to call out before.

With this type of orchestrated lobbying campaign by the fossil fuel front groups, passage of the Scalise resolution was assured. Indeed, only six House Republicans had the courage to vote against their fossil fuel overlords.

Instead of listening to, say, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz or the researchers at Columbia

University and serious think tanks who study this stuff or the dozens of blue-chip companies that all say pricing carbon emissions would be good for the economy, House Republicans listened to these phony fossil fuel-funded front groups, including the group that equated climate scientists with the Unabomber and the group founded by the guy who thinks evolution is fake news and AIDS is punishment for being gay.

How low will you go when your big donors whistle? We just saw. The resolution was rammed through the House.

The failure of the U.S. Congress to act on our climate crisis is a failure of American democracy. When untold tens, even hundreds of millions of special interest dollars slosh through our political system, what voice do the citizens of Rhode Island have or the citizens of Florida or Louisiana who are also confronting ever-rising seas caused by climate change?

When corporate dark money rules and phony front groups get more political respect than Nobel Prize-winning economists—on matters of economics, no less—what chance is there for reason and truth in this body?

The fossil fuel industry and its trade associations and front groups have taken the Republican Party hostage and, with it, our American democracy.

It is corruption in plain view, and history's judgment will not be kind. It is seriously, urgently time for us to wake up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The Senator from Maryland.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, the plan had been for me to join with the Senator from Florida, now the Presiding Officer, to address our concerns in two areas. One has to do with the Chinese telecommunications company ZTE and the threat that it poses to the national security of the United States. The second is to discuss the urgent need for this Senate to take action to protect the integrity of our democracy by passing the bipartisan DETER Act, which Senator RUBIO and I have introduced.

Since the Senator from Florida is now presiding in the Chair, I will do my best to cover this for both of us, and I know that he will have an opportunity at some other point to cover these important issues as well.

First, as for ZTE, it is a Chinese telecommunications company. It is a telecommunications company that has been exhibit A in the mix of Chinese companies that have stolen U.S. technology.

In fact, when Secretary Pompeo was before the Senate a while ago, talking about the relationships between the Chinese Government and Chinese companies and talking about how they were stealing U.S. intellectual property secrets for their own purposes, ZTE would be on the top of that list. It is one of the most notorious thieves of

intellectual property anywhere in the world.

In the United States alone, they have been sued for patent infringement 126 times in the last 5 years. That is an astonishing figure, particularly as only a small subset of firms have the resources to even bring litigation before a Federal court. ZTE has reportedly been sued for patent infringement at least 100 times in other countries around the world. This is a company that has developed by stealing high technology from U.S. companies and other institutions around the world.

Second, ZTE poses an espionage threat to the United States—translated: spying on Americans. This past February, FBI Director Wray testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee saying:

We are deeply concerned about the risks of allowing any company or entity that is beholden to foreign governments that don't share our values to gain positions of power inside our telecommunications networks. That provides the capacity to exert pressure or control over our telecommunications infrastructure. It provides the capacity to maliciously modify or steal information, and it provides the capacity to conduct undetected espionage.

That answer was in response to questions from the Senator from Florida, who is now presiding.

ZTE has stolen American technology. According to our national security officials—not just the Director of the FBI but also the head of NSA, or the National Security Agency; and the DNI, or the Director of National Intelligence; and the head of the CIA—ZTA poses an espionage threat.

Now, on top of that—on top of that—ZTE was caught violating the U.S. sanctions against North Korea and Iran, and it is not just that they got caught, but when they got caught, they tried to cover it up.

They were warned not just once but twice, and, again, despite that, they engaged in what Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross called a “multiyear conspiracy to violate U.S. sanctions against North Korea and Iran in an elaborate scheme of coverup.” That is why, just a few months back—I think it was in June—Secretary Ross imposed very stiff sanctions on ZTE, including what is called the denial order, to stop them from getting advanced technology components from U.S. companies that ZTE could then use in their phones and their telecommunications systems and then use that to conduct espionage against the United States.

Secretary Ross did the exact right thing. Unfortunately, his decision to impose that denial order was reversed by the President of the United States.

When the President reversed that order, Senators here, on a bipartisan basis—the Senator from Florida, Mr. RUBIO; the Senator from Arkansas, Mr. COTTON; and others, including Senator WARNER—thought it was important to protect the national security of the United States by reimposing those important sanctions that the Secretary of Commerce had put in.

How did we do that? We added a provision to the National Defense Authorization Act that passed overwhelmingly in this body. That provision was first inserted in the Senate Banking Committee. It was then included in what is called the CFIUS bill, and then it was passed by this body.

We urged the conferees in the Senate and the House on the Defense bill to keep that provision in there and not let ZTE off the hook. During that short period of time while it was in conference, a couple months, ZTE spent over \$1.3 million to hire Washington lobbyists to help them pull that provision out of the Defense authorization bill. The sad and really shameful story here is that ZTE and their lobbyists succeeded. They succeeded in lifting that penalty on ZTE.

We have just sent the worst of all signals to China—whether it is ZTE or Huawei or others—that we are not really serious when we say that if we catch you violating our sanctions, we will punish you, or that we are not serious in defending our country from espionage, or that we are not serious about defending our country from the theft of our intellectual property. That is a terrible and very weak message to send.

I am going to keep fighting along with our colleagues, on a bipartisan basis, to keep the pressure on these issues, on ZTE and Huawei, because if we do not get serious about confronting these threats, they will continue to come back to bite us.

I am very disappointed that the conferees did not include that provision, and it does raise serious questions about a bill that provides for our national defense: Why would it have a big loophole in it that creates an opportunity for China to harm our national security?

Now, there is another way that our adversaries can harm our national security, and that is to interfere in our elections to try to undermine our democracy. We know from the heads of all the intelligence agencies that this is exactly what happened in 2016. Our focus in this body should be on making sure that no country interferes in our elections again.

We all know that suspect No. 1 has been Russia. Russia was the country that interfered in 2016, and we know that Russia is planning to interfere in the 2018 midterm elections and beyond.

How do we know that? Well, first of all, the Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, a former Member of this body, has said that all of the lights are flashing red—a big warning that Russia plans to interfere in our midterm elections, which are 98 days away.

We also learned just today that Facebook uncovered an ongoing effort by foreign social media entities to disrupt our 2018 elections. This is an ongoing process right now. This was the headline today in the Washington Post: “Facebook says it has uncovered a coordinated disinformation operation ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.”

They document what they are doing to try to prevent that disinformation campaign.

We have the testimony of Dan Coats, the Director of National Intelligence, and other intelligence agency heads. We have Facebook. We also know that the Russians—and, specifically, the same operation, GRU, that interfered in the 2016 elections—have already attempted to interfere in three elections for 2018.

We know one that has been made public, the Senator from Missouri, Mrs. MCCASKILL, where the Russians attempted to get into their system ahead of the 2018 elections. We know all of this is happening, and it would be surrendering our obligation as Members of the Senate, both Republicans and Democrats, for us not to take action to defend the integrity of our elections. The clock is ticking—98 days to go to the elections.

We know from our intelligence agencies, we know from the evidence that surfaced today from Facebook, and we know from the fact that they have already interfered or attempted to interfere in three elections for 2018 that this Russian effort is coming. So for goodness’ sake, don’t we have an obligation to do everything we can to stop it?

That is exactly why Senator RUBIO, who is presiding now, and I joined together to introduce the DETER Act. It is a very straight forward, simple idea. You need to send a signal in advance to Vladimir Putin that if Russia gets caught again, if it gets caught this time interfering in the 2018 elections, there will be automatic and harsh penalties imposed on Russia and it will hurt Russia’s economy. It will hit them where it hurts. That is what the DETER Act does.

Everything we have heard about Russian conduct and behavior is that it is important to try to send these signals early if you want to influence their behavior. So what we need to do is to establish a very credible threat that if they interfere and they get caught again, they will face the penalty.

So what the DETER Act does is it says that the Director of National Intelligence, on behalf of the intelligence community, will make an assessment about whether or not Russia interfered in the 2018 election. This assessment would take place shortly after the 2018 elections, and if their finding is yes, then very harsh penalties take place.

Now, we can talk about the details in the coming days and make sure that we get this exactly right, but where there should be no debate—there should be no debate—is about the need to do something along the lines of the DETER Act and to do it urgently.

As I said, the clock is ticking. We know how the Senate operates. There is not really that much time between now and the elections, given all the other things that we have to do, but I hope the Senate would prioritize defending our democracy. I hope the Senate would prioritize making sure that

we have an election that the people of this country can have confidence in and that we would prioritize making sure that we protect the integrity of our democratic system. What Putin wants to do is to undermine the confidence in the democratic system. He wants to do that in the United States of America. He wants to do that to our allies around the world, and we can’t let that happen.

So this is not a moment where the Senate should just have hearings or just talk about it. This is a moment for action, and I join the Presiding Officer—and I am sorry he wasn’t able to join me here because of his duty in the Chair—but I want to join him not as Republicans or Democrats but as Americans who want to defend our democracy. Let’s get this job done now. Let’s protect the integrity of our democratic process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before he leaves the floor, I want to commend our colleague from Maryland and the Presiding Officer for the good work they have done on this issue.

As a Member of the Intelligence Committee, I have seen firsthand what this has meant. I had a chance, as my colleague the Presiding Officer knows, to question Mr. Ervin Nina, who has been chosen Vice President for a key job in the intelligence field, and I asked him pointblank if he considered ZTE an espionage threat to this day, and the answer was yes.

We are now going to spend the next hour talking about Medicare and Medicaid. This is the 53rd anniversary. But before he leaves the floor, I wanted to commend my colleague from Maryland and the Presiding Officer on the Intelligence Committee for their good work.

53RD ANNIVERSARY OF MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

Mr. President, this week marks the 53rd anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid, our bedrock Federal healthcare programs.

I am pleased to be joined by my colleagues. I see Senators CARDIN and WHITEHOUSE wanting to participate and know of Senator COONS’ support for these programs. Our colleagues will be talking today about why these programs are so vitally important to tens of millions of Americans—literally generations of our people.

Medicare and Medicaid have stood the test of time because the American people have long understood the value of a healthcare guarantee, particularly for seniors and the most vulnerable among us. Medicare—and my colleagues on the Finance Committee talk a fair amount about it—isn’t a piece of paper, and it isn’t a voucher. It is a guarantee, and Americans have always understood that was the case.

It wasn’t that long ago when there wasn’t a guarantee. Getting older or falling on hardship meant healthcare was one of the first of life’s necessities to go out of reach. It wasn’t that long

ago when there were poor farms—literally, poor farms—to try to meet the needs of older people. People, before these programs, often fell through the cracks and into destitution. Their family wasn't there. Seniors ended up in the streets or on those poor farms.

These healthcare promises—the pledges behind Medicare and Medicaid—have lasted for more than half a century because Americans understand that when they get a paycheck, part of that pay goes to supporting the health care guarantees.

Families around the country, however, are beginning to wonder, given the events of the last 1½ years, whether that guarantee will be there when they need it. They aren't wrong for worrying. Every major Republican legislation that has had a pulse in this Congress has increased the risk that Medicare and Medicaid will not be there when it counts. Most recently, Trump's tax law stole billions of dollars and years of security from Medicare's future, all to rain down tax benefits on the largest corporations and wealthy individuals in the country. As a result of this reckless tax legislation, shareholders are now swimming in a sea of tax buybacks and executives have pocketed huge windfalls while Medicare faces a crisis years ahead of the earlier projections.

In addition to leaving a gaping hole on Federal balance sheets after this law passed—I am not sure many Americans know this—the Trump administration released a budget that outlines in black and white just how they plan to make up the difference.

You don't have to take it from me. Here are some examples out of the President's budget document.

On page 52, the President proposes revising the Graham-Cassidy proposal Americans rejected last year, which would repeal the Affordable Care Act, including its ironclad preexisting conditions protection.

On page 53, the President seeks to slash Medicaid by more than \$1 trillion over the next 10 years by eliminating the Medicaid expansion and placing harsh caps on the rest of the program that squeeze out critical care.

On page 54, the President calls for close to \$500 billion in reduced Medicare spending without an explicit guarantee that seniors will not be worse off.

On pages 24, 53, and 64, the President calls in his budget for burdensome paperwork requirements for SNAP—a vital program to help hungry Americans—affordable housing, and healthcare that really create more bureaucracy without making people better off.

So, as we begin this, this isn't some sort of message or something. Those are the pages in the President's budget document—specific numbers on a specific page in a specific report embraced by the President that harm Medicare and Medicaid.

I am just going to spend a minute now because I am looking forward to

my seatmates in the Finance Committee coming up on Medicaid.

Medicaid has endured the single most concentrated attack on its future that I have seen since the days when I was codirector of the Oregon Gray Panthers. In spite of Republican attempts to slash Medicaid, people power stopped that effort. Republicans would have block-granted Medicaid, choking off funding for the program—couldn't keep up with the needs of our people. Without Medicaid's guarantee, two of three seniors who count on Medicaid to help pay for their nursing costs would increasingly have nowhere to turn. People with disabilities who have been able to live and thrive in their homes and communities rather than institutions might not have that same kind of opportunity. Without Medicaid—the promise of affordable care—families and parents working two or three jobs would face yet another unnecessary obstacle to the well-being of their kids and families.

Even without the partisan attacks on Medicare and Medicaid, there are challenges that need to be addressed to keep these programs secure. Drug prices are out of control while the drug industry pockets billions every quarter, with consumers and taxpayers footing the bill. A recent study by the Department of Health and Human Services inspector general found that while the number of brand-name prescriptions in Medicare Part D has decreased in the last 5 years, spending on those drugs has increased by 77 percent during that time. The number of seniors paying more than \$2,000 out of pocket for medicine has nearly doubled. That is unacceptable. Americans are up in arms at the fact that our seniors still get clobbered at the pharmacy window.

In the face of these challenges, there are still opportunities to improve Medicare and Medicaid so that the guarantee is strong for years to come. Earlier this year, on a bipartisan basis, Congress passed one of the most significant updates to the Medicare guarantee in a generation—one that is going to begin the effort to keep up with the rising tide of seniors managing multiple chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, diabetes, or cancer.

Chronic illness is going to drive American healthcare, and this bill begins the effort to improve Medicare so that no matter how seniors get their care, there will be more opportunities for them to thrive in later years.

Finally, when it comes to Medicaid, the country is witnessing a groundswell of Americans who are fed up with partisan gridlock holding up State decisions to expand Medicaid to help more people walking on an economic tightrope. One look makes it clear that this is a winning proposition for any State. When States expand the program, the uninsured rate goes down. The number of opioid-related hospitalizations is lowered in expansion States, medical debt is down, and peo-

ple have more access to preventive care.

While legislators sit on their hands, people are pushing ballot initiatives to force the issue. In Maine, where a Medicaid expansion initiative easily passed, incredibly, the conservative Governor says: Who cares? He is going to stand in its way.

Healthcare in America is too hard to access for too many. The Affordable Care Act was a significant step forward. There were ironclad protections. I am very proud of the fact that it really came from a bipartisan bill I was part of—air tight, loophole-free protection from discrimination for Americans, from sea to shining sea, if they had a preexisting condition. It created a baseline for Medicaid so that fewer Americans fell through the cracks of patchwork health systems. But for too many, premiums increase at a far faster rate than their paychecks, and the price of prescription medicine is still spiking.

We are going to talk more over the next hour about these crucial issues. I am really pleased that two very thoughtful members of the Finance Committee are here to start us off. They have long been part of the effort to stand as a bulwark protecting Americans with debilitating sickness from financial ruin, supporting the Medicare and Medicaid guarantees. I am pleased to be able to yield to the Senator from Maryland who has been involved in these programs and has championed the cause of the vulnerable for years and years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first let me thank my colleague Senator WYDEN for his extraordinary leadership on Medicare and Medicaid and so many other issues.

I remember Senator WYDEN in the House of Representatives as one of the champions when the Medicare and Medicaid Programs were a lot younger. We worked to improve and expand both Medicaid and Medicare, and now Senator WYDEN, in a key role on the Senate Finance Committee—the ranking Democrat—has been one of the real champions to protect the progress we have made in Medicare and Medicaid, recognizing that what we need to talk about is how to improve these programs and make them better.

As we celebrate the 53rd anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid, let me address the point that Mr. WYDEN made; that is, these are two of the most successful programs we ever have enacted in the Congress of the United States that guarantee, as Mr. WYDEN has said, affordable, quality healthcare to our seniors, to individuals with disabilities, to low-income families.

In Medicare alone, almost 45 million Americans are protected under Medicare—seniors and those with disabilities. In Maryland, more than 990 thousand Marylanders are protected under the Medicare Program.

What Mr. WYDEN alluded to—I want to underscore this point: Before there was Medicare, over half of our seniors did not have health insurance, and without health insurance, their access to healthcare was greatly at risk, and many were unable to get access to quality care. Medicare has provided affordability so that our seniors can now get quality healthcare, and we have improved it over its 53-year history. We have done things from adding benefits for end-stage renal disease to adding preventive healthcare.

I remember working with Mr. WYDEN when I was in the House of Representatives, when we expanded the preventive care package to include cancer screenings and diabetes and osteoporosis screenings and diabetes self-management. All of that has been done as we have, together, expanded Medicare over its 53 years in order to provide stronger coverage and better protection to our seniors and those with disabilities.

In my State, we have 1.2 million Marylanders covered under the Medicaid Program. We are talking about veterans, seniors, women, and children. We are in partnership with our State; this is a program in which the Federal Government works in partnership with our State to allow our State flexibility to figure out better and more efficient ways to provide healthcare to vulnerable people. In my State of Maryland, they have taken advantage of that to work out ways to coordinate care, provide more integrated care, so we can take care of people who desperately need help.

The coverage under Medicaid includes such important services as dental care, behavioral healthcare, and, of course, for many of our seniors, a lifeline for long-term care. So these programs are critically important.

Let me underscore the point that Mr. WYDEN made. It is at risk today. We say that because Mr. WYDEN mentioned chapter and verse of President Trump's budget that would jeopardize both Medicare and Medicaid. But we don't have to go to the President; we can look at the Republican budget that was submitted here in Congress and passed in Congress, which provided for a \$1 trillion cut in Medicaid and a \$500 billion cut in the Medicare Program.

This is not hypothetical. We are here today to celebrate the 53rd anniversary but also to say that we should not be jeopardizing these programs through these reckless budget cuts. We should be strengthening these programs.

Let me quickly point out what we need to do. In Medicare, I think we all understand that if an individual only has traditional Medicare, there are quite a bit of out-of-pocket costs they have to incur under the current Medicare laws. It is not going to cover things such as dental care or hearing aids. We should be looking at ways to strengthen the Medicare system, as previous Congresses have done. Let's make it stronger. Let's provide help for

our seniors. Certainly, let's not cut the program.

We need to strengthen the Medicaid Program. Senator WYDEN is absolutely correct. Our States are asking for a waiver authority.

There are some who are slow to act here in Washington, in the Trump administration. Let me give an example in my State of Maryland. My State of Maryland wants to move forward on dealing with the opioid crisis. How important are Medicaid and the Medicaid expansion? Let me give one example. On Monday, we were in Baltimore with Congressman CUMMINGS and Senator WARREN at Health Care for the Homeless looking at a program that provides some of our most vulnerable people the healthcare they need. Many, by the way, are veterans. Before the Affordable Care Act, 30 percent of their clientele were insured. After the Affordable Care Act, 90 percent were insured. That is what Medicaid expansion meant for Health Care for the Homeless in my community.

What did they do as a result of that expansion? They expanded services at Health Care for the Homeless. They have a modern dental facility to take care of their population. They have expanded their behavioral health services. They have been able to expand the quality of service. We need to do more of that.

We haven't yet figured out the opioid crisis. What we want to do in Maryland is expand peer review so that we have people who experienced this problem available to help those who are suffering. That means we need to invest more money in Medicaid to save money.

The mayor of Baltimore wants to establish a stabilization center. What does that mean? Rather than people having OD problems and being taken to our emergency rooms, we can get them to a stabilization center that knows how to follow up their care. They know we get them in care.

There is a challenge when people who are addicted all of a sudden get heroin laced with fentanyl. We have to protect our population who are addicted, and stabilization centers will help. They will save money, but we have to invest to do that. That means we need to expand our budget support for Medicaid, not contract it.

On this 53rd anniversary, I wanted to join my colleagues and just praise the progress we have made. I urge our Republican colleagues to abandon this effort to reduce the Federal Government's commitment to both Medicare and Medicaid. Let's work together in the best traditions, in a bipartisan manner, to strengthen and expand these programs, and let's make that commitment on the 53rd anniversary of Medicaid and Medicare.

I thank my colleague. His usual passion and eloquence is so appreciated and his decades of commitment to these wonderful programs. I thank him.

Senator STABENOW, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator CORTEZ MASTO will have the opportunity to speak. Next in line is Senator STABENOW.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank our ranking member on the Finance Committee and all of my colleagues who are here to talk about and celebrate two programs that for 53 years have changed the lives of Michigan families and the families of our country for the better.

The words of President Lyndon B. Johnson, who signed the programs into law, are a great reminder of what life was like before Medicare and Medicaid. He said:

No longer will older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings that they have so carefully put away over a lifetime so that they might enjoy dignity in their later years. No longer will young families see their own incomes and their own hopes eaten away simply because they are carrying out their deep moral obligations to their parents, and to their uncles, and to their aunts. And no longer will this Nation refuse the hand of justice to those who have given a lifetime of service and wisdom and labor to the progress of this progressive country.

Thanks to these two programs, we have come a long way toward building that just Nation President Johnson envisioned.

Before Medicare, only about half of Americans age 65 and older had health insurance. Today, more than 98 percent of Americans age 65 and older have health insurance.

In Michigan, more than 675,000 people have gained health coverage through Healthy Michigan, our Medicaid expansion, and 97 percent of Michigan children can see a doctor when they get sick or hurt. The number of people treated without insurance has dropped 50 percent. In Michigan, we ended 2017 with \$413 million more than it invested in the program, which is a savings for taxpayers in Michigan because fewer people were walking into the emergency room who didn't have insurance and couldn't pay the bill.

It is good for State budgets, and it is good for family budgets too. In fact, a recent study found that the finances of low-income residents improved in States like Michigan that chose to expand Medicaid.

I know what a difference these programs make for Michigan families because they share their stories with me.

Ann was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when she was 40 years old. She has very limited use of her arms and legs. Yet she feels so strongly about Medicare and Medicaid that she traveled to Washington, DC, at my invitation, to speak at a healthcare hearing last year.

Medicare and secondary insurance cover most of the costs of Ann's medication, which costs an astounding \$75,000 a year. That is nearly her entire

household income, including Social Security benefits.

Ann had been caring for her aging mom, but when her mom's dementia worsened, Ann didn't know where she would find \$6,000 a month for nursing home care. Fortunately, Ann's mom qualified for Medicaid. Here is what Ann said:

It was only because of Medicaid that she was able to get the help that she needed at the end of her life. . . . I don't know how I could have cared for my mother on top of managing my own care. My family would have lost our home and all our savings trying to keep up with their bills.

In Felicia's case, she may have lost her life. In 2011, she was an AmeriCorps member with no health insurance. When she started feeling tired all the time and losing weight, she went to the Center for Family Health in Jackson, MI. Felicia was diagnosed with stage 4 Hodgkin's lymphoma. The Center for Family Health helped her get Medicaid and care at the University of Michigan, including a stem cell transplant.

Felicia wrote:

Now I am feeling awesome, I am cancer-free, and I am working part time while I am finishing up college. I feel that I owe my life to the Center for Family Health.

Fifty-three years after they were created, Medicare and Medicaid are more than just programs, and that is really why we are here on the floor this evening. They are powerful tools to promote health, to prevent poverty, and to protect families and give them the dignity of knowing that they have healthcare when they need it for themselves, their children, their moms and dads.

LBJ said 53 years ago:

There are men and women in pain who will now find ease. . . . There are those fearing the terrible darkness of despairing poverty . . . who will now look up to see the light of hope and realization.

There just can be no satisfaction, nor any act of leadership, that gives greater satisfaction than this.

I think we share those sentiments, which is why we are not only here celebrating 53 years of Medicare and Medicaid but indicating in the strongest possible terms our commitment to keep Medicare and Medicaid strong for current families and for future generations.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before she leaves the floor, I want to thank my seatmate on the Finance Committee—a strong advocate for the concept that Medicare and Medicaid are guarantees. They are lifelines for working families.

It is a pleasure to have you here on this special occasion, and I look forward to many more partnerships as we start thinking down the road, as Senator CARDIN said, about how we are going to strengthen these programs, not just play defense against Congress.

I thank you.

Ms. STABENOW. Absolutely.

Mr. WYDEN. Another outstanding member of the Finance Committee, Senator WHITEHOUSE.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank Senator WYDEN.

Mr. President, it is great to be here to have a birthday party to celebrate Medicare and Medicaid, which are the kinds of huge successes for a nation that don't happen very often, but they sure did happen in America. And what a change it made when Medicare and Medicaid were there to support American families. There is scarcely an American family today who doesn't to some extent depend on Medicare or Medicaid. We have planned our lives around the safety and security of those programs, and we have avoided enormous human suffering by virtue of those programs.

Of course, coming from a small State as I do, it is very important for us in Rhode Island to celebrate our role in this important legislation because one of the original authors of the Medicare bill was Representative Aime Forand of Cumberland, RI, who served over in the House for 22 years. He served with great distinction. He was passionate about healthcare and about building this program. He was one of the original groups of the Members of Congress who got together and designed the Medicare Program. When it came time to pass it in 1965, it was Rhode Island Congressman John Fogarty of Providence who was then the chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Labor, Health, Education, and Welfare. So between one of the original authors of the legislation and one of the key chairmen supporting the legislation, there was a lot that Rhode Island did to accomplish these wonderful goals.

It gives me particular pride as a member of the Rhode Island delegation to come here for the Medicare-Medicaid Senator WYDEN birthday party. I am very glad to have the chance to do it.

These programs provide health insurance coverage to over half a million people in my State. That is half the State. Without it, so many lives would be changed for the worse. Nationally, it is a little bit over 130 million Americans. When you consider the families who get the protection of having a family member covered, as I said, it is virtually all of us.

Obviously, it is seniors. Rhode Island has a lot of seniors whom we treasure and whom we love having Medicare and Medicaid being there for, but it is also people with disabilities, children, pregnant women, veterans, and people fighting substance abuse disorders. It is a broad population.

Medicare and Medicaid do their jobs well. They do their jobs efficiently. They do their jobs humanely. They do their jobs with super-low overhead compared to their private sector competition, and they do it in a very reform-oriented way.

It is CMS that is leading the accountable care organizations process that was one of the great achievements of the Affordable Care Act. It is the pro-

viders, the doctors, who are in those accountable care organizations who are redesigning care in ways that are wonderful for their patients.

I will briefly discuss the example—because I am so proud of it and mention it all the time—of Coastal Medical, which is one of our biggest provider groups in Rhode Island. It is a doctor-run accountable care organization. What they did is they signed up early on—what they called Pioneer ACOs. The deal was this: We will take some of the risk of how our patients run up costs in the system, and we will share if we can make money back for you.

Now, in the bad old days of managed care, when insurance companies tried to do this, they went in and said: Well, you can't have that, and we are cutting you off on this, and we are not paying you, and we just hired 50 people to make sure that your claim never gets settled. They just, basically, pushed back on paying for things.

That is not the way the doctors work in the ACO process. They have done things like hire social workers, pharmacists, and home visitors. What they have done is to take their patients and to decide they are going to help make them healthier. They are going to have social workers make sure they get the benefits they need. They are going to have home care workers go to their homes to see what they can get done at home. They use electronic monitoring and testing so they can keep better track of the reports and keep better track of people's care. They engage with their patients.

What we have seen—because a lot of people I know in Rhode Island get their healthcare through Coastal Medical—is a lot of really happy patients. Now you can call at 2 in the morning when you are sick, and at Coastal Medical, you will get a live nurse who will talk you through what is going on and help you decide if you actually need to go to the emergency room or not and get you in quick, first thing in the morning, if you don't go to the emergency room and they still want to see you and check you out.

So, for the patients, this has been an incredible boon. They feel so much better cared for, and they are, in fact, healthier. That comes back to all of us here because—guess what—in the time that Coastal Medical has been doing this, it has lowered the cost of care, year over year, for its patients—\$700 per patient.

When we were passing the Affordable Care Act, we used to talk about how we were going to bend the healthcare cost curve down. We are not bending the healthcare cost curve down at Coastal Medical; we are actually dropping healthcare costs. It is actually below where it was. It is not just not accelerating so fast. That is the kind of leadership that Medicare and Medicaid and CMS support.

This is a really terrific and exciting program in so many ways, not just in

terms of humaneness, not just in terms of security for American families but also in terms of leadership and in helping us continue to develop a healthcare system that we can be very proud of.

I am delighted to serve on the Finance Committee under the leadership of our ranking member, and I thank him for convening us on this terrific birthday. I would only propose that when we do this again, there be cake.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank my colleague.

Mr. President, I particularly appreciate the fact that more than anyone else I know in this body, he keeps coming back to the proposition of building the healthcare system around paying for value. My colleague went through some examples in his State and around the country that are doing just that. That is a big part of what we are going to have to do to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid in the years ahead. So I thank my colleague.

We are also so pleased that he has joined the Finance Committee. Particularly, this argument about paying for values has to be right in the center of strengthening Medicare and Medicaid. I thank him for it.

Our colleague from Nevada is its former attorney general and is a champion of the rights of seniors. I am very pleased that she is here tonight.

I will tell my colleagues that we are all trying to play catchup ball as we have started running behind.

I really welcome my colleague Senator CORTEZ MASTO from Nevada, and I look forward to her remarks.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. I thank Senator WYDEN.

Mr. President, 53 years ago on July 30, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed landmark legislation to establish Medicare and Medicaid—two essential programs that provide healthcare to over 120 million Americans and over 1 million Nevadans.

When President Johnson signed this historic bill, he said:

No longer will older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings that they have so carefully put away over a lifetime so that they might enjoy dignity in their later years. No longer will young families see their own incomes, and their own hopes, eaten away simply because they are carrying out their deep moral obligations to their parents, and to their uncles, and their aunts. And no longer will this Nation refuse the hand of justice to those who have given a lifetime of service and wisdom and labor to the progress of this progressive country.

On that day, LBJ declared an end to an era in which healthcare was denied to the most vulnerable members of our communities.

So I rise to celebrate the incredible progress we have made since President Johnson created Medicare and Medicaid. We lifted hundreds of millions of Americans out of abject poverty and provided hundreds of millions more with dignity, security, and peace of mind. Then, in 2010, we passed the Af-

fordable Care Act, which was built on the foundation that President Johnson laid, and gave 20 million additional Americans, including hundreds of thousands of Nevadans, access to affordable healthcare coverage.

Yet today is not just for celebration, because our work is not yet done. Prescription drug prices, premiums, and copays are still too high. Too many Americans can't afford the medicine they need in order to live. Too many Americans can't find a doctor whose office is less than a day's drive away. Too many Americans are still struggling to get healthcare that meets their basic needs.

Instead of trying to expand access to healthcare, some of my Republican colleagues here in Congress are working every single day to attack the Affordable Care Act and strip healthcare coverage away from tens of millions of Americans. Some Republican leaders are now threatening to cut Medicare and Medicaid in order to pay for President Trump's massive tax cut to corporations and special interest groups. The Republican tax bill exploded our deficit by \$1.5 trillion, and now Republicans are demanding cuts to critical healthcare programs to pay for their lavish corporate CEO giveaway. So it is not enough to celebrate our progress.

When President Johnson signed the Social Security Amendments Act, he landed an historic blow in the fight against poverty, injustice, and inequality. Today, we have to rededicate ourselves to that fight.

We have to protect, strengthen, and improve the Affordable Care Act. We have to lower the cost of prescription drugs and invest in the health of every community. We have to create an affordable public health insurance option that would be available to everyone in the United States regardless of one's income level. We also have to fight back against cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, because the fight to protect our healthcare is a fight to protect our dignity, our security, and our basic rights.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank my colleague.

Mr. President, suffice it to say, the Senator is someone who gets right to the point. She succinctly got to the central question of ensuring that we build on the guarantee that has been Medicare and Medicaid. She has been a terrific advocate for seniors. I followed her work in the State government and have followed it here. We are so pleased that she is here to be a passionate healthcare advocate for millions of Americans. I thank her.

To my colleagues, we have three Senators who have arrived on time. Unfortunately, the Senate is in its usual position of being a little bit late. We have Senator KING, Senator HIRONO, and Senator HASSAN, if my colleagues can accept that.

I thank Senator KING and look forward to his remarks.

Mr. KING. I thank the Senator from Oregon for bringing us here today.

Mr. President, 53 years ago this week, President Johnson signed the Medicare bill. I believe it to be one of the most important pieces of legislation signed in the last 100 years. It finally removed from the shoulders of the senior citizens of this country the burden, stress, cost, and anxiety of not knowing whether they were going to be able to pay for healthcare, for hospitalization, for doctors' visits, and, later, for prescription drugs.

I will talk for a moment about two things. No. 1 is what it has done to our economy and, particularly, to the economy involving seniors.

Here is a pretty graphic representation.

In 1965, when Medicare was passed, a third of the senior citizens in the country lived in poverty. One-third lived in poverty and in fear of losing everything if they were stricken by health catastrophes or even minor health problems that they could not deal with. Over the next 53 years, this line has come down to 9.3 percent of seniors living in poverty. It has declined by two-thirds, largely because of Medicare, largely because the financial burden of healthcare costs has been eliminated from their shoulders.

Now, Medicare isn't perfect. There are things we can do to strengthen it, to improve it. I think one of the things we need to do is to talk about high drug prices and the effect on seniors under Medicare. We also have to talk about prevention. One of the faults, I believe, with Medicare is that it only pays for medical procedures and it doesn't pay to prevent medical procedures. The cheapest operation is the one that you don't have to have. I believe that is one of the areas in which we can improve Medicare—to provide more preventive services that will lower the costs for seniors, for the taxpayers, and for the whole economy.

Medicare, I would argue, is one of the most successful programs this body, this government, and this country have ever adopted. Yet, as I stand here today, there are people in this Congress who are, essentially, talking about scrapping it. They use all kinds of fancy language about "premium support" and those kinds of things and that they don't want to really do away with Medicare. Make no mistake. Premium support equals vouchers, and vouchers equal the end of Medicare as we know it.

This is a horrible, no-good, rotten, lousy idea, and we shouldn't do it. It will decline. It will diminish the support for the program and, ultimately, put the burden back on seniors of paying the cost of their healthcare.

As to this whole idea of vouchers, who at 85 or 90 years old wants to sort through 10 different insurance policies, compare deductibles and copays, and try to figure it all out? I don't think that is practical. I think it is a cruel joke on our seniors. As long as I am here, I am going to do everything I can to call out this idea for what it is—a

cruel swipe at the protection for seniors that Medicare has provided.

I had a roundtable with seniors in Maine just this week, and we talked about prescription drug prices but also about Medicare. One of the things I learned is about one of the most important programs under Medicare. It is called the SHIP program, or the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, whereby people help seniors to sort through what is still the fairly complex process of signing up and determining Medicare coverage. That has been cut 20 percent in the last 2 years.

One of the things that came out of our roundtable was that what we need, as much or more than anything else, is information and guidance and care and concern. The SHIP program provides that. To be cutting it at this moment, again, is just inexplicable and, ultimately, I feel, is cruel. Now is not the time to be making cuts in Medicare. Now is the time to be strengthening it, to be providing for the future, and to be providing for those citizens who are coming up.

I know people in Maine who can't wait to be 65 because they will be covered by Medicare. I suppose they would just as soon not be 65, but they are genuinely waiting for the time when the burden of healthcare expenses is lifted from them, at least insofar as Medicare can do so. Yes, it needs improvement; yes, we should do more about prevention; yes, we should do more about the cost of prescription drugs, but, fundamentally, this is an important program that is so essential to the lives of seniors across the country and the 200,000 Medicare patients in the State of Maine.

This is an important anniversary. It is one that has really shown an incredible change. If anything has shown a successful track record, it is Medicare, and I am certainly going to do everything I can in my time here to make sure it maintains itself as a bulwark against the risk of medical catastrophe for our seniors. We can do that, and we shall do it.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before he leaves the floor, I wish to thank my colleague, particularly, for noting some of the progress over the years as he makes the case for the future.

I remember years ago, when I was director of the Oregon Gray Panthers, it was common for a senior to have 15 or even 20 private health insurance policies that were supposed to supplement their Medicare. Most of them weren't worth the paper they were written on, and finally we passed a law to end that incredible outrage.

So my colleague has really said it well about some of the things that, fortunately, from yesteryear have been changed, but it has highlighted what we have to do in the future. I thank my colleague so much.

We have another advocate for our seniors here, the Senator from Hawaii,

Ms. HIRONO. I have been with her in her home State and have seen the bond she has with older people. We very much welcome her for her remarks.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I would like to start by thanking Senator WYDEN for his leadership in the fight to protect Medicare and Medicaid and for organizing this time for us to speak on this important subject.

I grew up in a three-generation household. My 93-year-old great-grandmother lived with us for over 20 years, and my grandmother lived with us until she was 98. So I, of all people, of course know the importance of Medicare to our seniors.

On May 7, 2015—a full 3 months before he descended a golden escalator to launch his campaign—Donald Trump bragged on Twitter about how he was “the first and only” Republican candidate to run for President to state that “there will be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.”

He made, and repeated, that promise for a reason.

All across the country, we know Americans across party lines care deeply about healthcare and expect their Members of Congress to protect their healthcare.

Millions of Americans receive their healthcare through Medicaid and Medicare. These two programs have helped tens of millions of Americans since their creation 53 years ago. Medicare provides quality health insurance for millions of seniors, and Medicaid helps them afford nursing home care and other services when they need it.

Medicaid has served working families and the poor who otherwise couldn't afford healthcare coverage, helping to bring our uninsured rate to a historic low, and Medicaid is currently helping tens of thousands of Americans receive drug treatment amidst the ongoing opioid epidemic.

Again, it isn't surprising that Donald Trump pledged to protect these programs while campaigning for President. They are wildly popular programs for a reason, but it also isn't surprising that almost immediately after his election, Donald Trump reneged on his promise to protect Medicare and Medicaid. It began when he appointed Tom Price—the architect of plans to dismantle Medicare and Medicaid—to serve as his Secretary of Health and Human Services.

It continued when the President and congressional Republicans sought to eliminate the Medicaid expansion and cut hundreds of billions of dollars in Medicaid funding during the push to repeal the Affordable Care Act—the ACA.

It continued when the administration issued new rules that allowed States to implement arbitrary work requirements for Medicaid. Four States have already taken advantage of this new authority. If the rest of the country follows their lead, between 1 million and 4 million Americans will lose their healthcare coverage.

It continued when the President proposed turning Medicare into a voucher

program, converting Medicaid to a block grant, and cutting nearly \$2 trillion from both programs as part of his fiscal year 2019 budget.

These changes and cuts would have a devastating impact on the hundreds of thousands of Hawaii residents who depend on these programs for their healthcare and their long-term care needs.

Medicaid, for example, serves around 350,000 Hawaii residents, including 38 percent of all the children in Hawaii and 15 percent of seniors, as well as people with disabilities across our State. These cuts would be particularly devastating to Hawaii residents who access healthcare through our Federally Qualified Community Health Centers, many of which depend on reimbursements through Medicaid to provide high-quality care to those in need.

During the height of the debate to repeal the Affordable Care Act, I spoke with Sheila Beckham, the CEO of Waikiki Health on Oahu. Waikiki Health operates a network of health centers and shelters in Honolulu that cater to high-risk populations, including a significant number of patients living with HIV and AIDS. If the President and congressional Republicans had succeeded in cutting Medicaid, Sheila would have had to lay off between 80 to 100 workers and close all but two of the clinics she operates.

Medicaid cuts would have also had a significant impact on women's health outcomes throughout Hawaii. Last year, I shared a story about a young woman named Anne, who walked into the Kokua Kalihi Valley Clinic 3 years ago. She had no health insurance, and she was pregnant at the age of 15. The doctors at the clinic helped Anne apply for Medicaid, which helped her afford prenatal care and gave her support to stay healthy and in school. Medicaid helped Anne and her husband Dan, age 17, welcome a healthy baby boy named Joseph. Today, Anne is a graduate of Farrington High School, she works part-time and has plans to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. Her family now has health insurance through Dan's employer.

Medicaid also plays a crucial role in providing long-term nursing care for seniors who otherwise would not be able to afford it. I know how important this is for our seniors in Hawaii because we have in Hawaii the fastest growing aging population in the entire country. Across our State, Medicaid provides coverage for three in five nursing home residents. At Hale Makua on Maui, that number is closer to 80 percent, and without Medicaid, many of the residents would not be able to afford to stay there.

One story that has stuck with me came from Keith Moniz. After working as a custodian for more than 40 years at St. Anthony's School, Keith's brother Lester lost his job and his health insurance. Only a few short months later, Keith's brother Lester had a debilitating stroke that left him permanently disabled. Fortunately, Lester

was able to obtain Medicaid coverage and is now a long-term resident at Hale Makua.

Keith was very clear about what would have happened to his brother if the President had succeeded in making large cuts to Medicaid. Keith said:

It would be devastating. We had a difficult time taking care of him when he was at home, and he's gotten the care that he needs at Hale Makua. It would be a big loss. . . . I don't know what we could do, where we would be able to move him to.

Our seniors—in Hawaii we call them kupuna—would also be significantly harmed by the President's plan to voucherize and make huge cuts to Medicare. More than 230,000 kupuna—our seniors in Hawaii—or 17 percent of our State's population are covered by Medicare. Through its payments to providers and purchases of medical equipment, Medicare generates \$2.5 billion for Hawaii's economy.

Our kupuna are already struggling with the rising cost of living and nearly 9 percent of them live in poverty. Many more are living on fixed incomes and would be especially vulnerable to rising costs under the President's plan to turn Medicare into a voucher program.

Last year, I shared the story of Lanny and Anne Bruner from Kauai. Lanny is 80 years old, but he is still working three jobs to make ends meet after losing the family home during the 2008 mortgage crisis. His wife Anne has glaucoma and pays what she calls a "ridiculous amount" for eye drops. Lanny had a heart attack and two knee replacements. Like many of our kupuna living on a fixed income, they simply could not afford to pay the extra money they would be forced to pay if Republicans succeed in their effort to privatize Medicare.

These stories underscore the importance of and the need for Congress to pass specific legislation to protect Medicare and Medicaid from partisan attacks from Donald Trump and congressional Republicans. This week, I will be introducing new legislation that would prohibit Congress from making devastating cuts to Medicare and Medicaid through the budget reconciliation process. It accomplishes this objective by requiring any legislation that seeks to make certain changes to Medicare or Medicaid to receive 60 votes in the Senate before such changes can be implemented. Of course, these changes include increasing the Medicare eligibility age, privatizing or turning Medicare into a voucher program, block granting or imposing per capita caps on Medicaid, and rolling back the ACA's Medicaid expansion.

My legislation builds on the success of an amendment I introduced with my colleague from Indiana, Senator DONNELLY, during last January's budget debate to protect these programs. Although our amendment did not pass—it came pretty close—two Republicans joined us in supporting it. It is nice to

know some of my Republican colleagues are concerned about seniors, children, and working families who rely on Medicare and Medicaid every single day.

I think it is just astonishing that as we are talking about cutting Medicare and Medicaid for millions of seniors throughout our country, and hundreds of thousands in Hawaii, these kinds of changes are being proposed by the very President and the people in Congress who gave the richest 1 percent of the people in our country and corporations a huge—a huge—tax break. By the way, the President is talking about giving the rich people in our country even more of a tax cut. It is just astounding to me that while all of that is happening on the one hand, on the other hand, they propose changes to two huge programs that millions of people in our country rely on. Where are our priorities? They are definitely misplaced if we go along with these schemes.

I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in this fight to protect these critical social safety net programs.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before the Senator leaves the floor, I want to thank my colleague for an excellent statement. I thank her, in particular, for her last point, highlighting the proposition that the administration seems to be considering—after all the boondoggles that the fortunate few have already gotten, they seem to be considering the idea of administratively and unilaterally cutting the capital gains tax to provide another windfall, while, as my colleague said—and I went sort of page by page in the President's budget—they seek to clobber Medicare and Medicaid.

The Senator from Hawaii has given us the starkest example of what the priorities ought to be and what they shouldn't be, and I thank her for her excellent presentation. I look forward to working with her.

Our last Senator slated to speak this evening is Senator HASSAN, a Governor who knows inside out how these programs work, understands the federalism aspect of this—the Federal-State partnership, for example—in terms of Medicaid. She has been working with families in her State and with families around the country for years and years as an advocate of these programs. I really appreciate her joining us tonight.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oregon for organizing this evening's recognition.

Fifty-three years ago this week, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Medicare and Medicaid into law, delivering healthcare to seniors and some of our most vulnerable citizens, and bolstering efforts to expand opportunity and help more of our people thrive. Today, tens of millions of Americans are covered through Medicare and Medicaid.

In communities in New Hampshire and throughout our country, seniors are able to live active, engaging, and high-quality lives, participating physically and economically, because of the care Medicare provides. We know Medicaid has delivered countless benefits to people from all walks of life. Medicaid helps seniors and those who experience disabilities receive supports that allow them to live independently in their homes and in their communities. It also helps countless children who experience disabilities go to school, and it assists school districts in covering costs for special education services and equipment.

New Hampshire's bipartisan Medicaid expansion plan has provided more than 50,000 hard-working Granite Staters with the peace of mind that comes with quality, affordable health insurance.

Experts on the frontlines have said that our Medicaid expansion plan is the No. 1 tool at our disposal to combat the opioid crisis in New Hampshire. What we have learned is that when people who have substance misuse disorders have Medicaid coverage, they have the opportunity to change their lives, people like a Granite Stater named Elizabeth, who at one point in her life was homeless and lost custody of her son as a result of a substance misuse disorder. Elizabeth is in recovery and works at the SOS Recovery Community Organization in Rochester, a facility that recently celebrated an expansion to ensure that they can help even more people in need. Elizabeth has credited her recovery to the services she has received through Medicaid expansion and has stressed its importance in helping people who have struggled with substance misuse disorder find the support and help they need to improve their lives, to get better, to work, to raise a family.

On this anniversary, we must reaffirm our commitment to protecting Medicare and Medicaid and strengthening them so that they are available for future generations. Unfortunately, the Trump administration and my Republican colleagues have repeatedly pushed efforts that would undermine and drastically cut Medicare and Medicaid.

During last year's TrumpCare debate, a top priority for Republicans was instituting massive cuts to Medicaid that would have forced States to choose between slashing benefits, reducing the number of people who can get care, or both, threatening the very services on which children, people with disabilities, and seniors depend. Thankfully, the TrumpCare bill failed, but efforts from this administration to sabotage the health of millions haven't stopped, and Medicare and Medicaid continue to be under threat for drastic cuts, all so that Republicans can pay for their massive tax breaks for corporate special interests.

These attacks on our healthcare must stop. Our constituents understand the benefits of these programs,

and they want us to work together to safeguard them so that they are available and effective for our seniors, our children, our most vulnerable, now and in the future.

With the creation of Medicare and Medicaid, our country acknowledged an obligation to protect the health and wellness of our people, and it has acknowledged and it has seen the value of doing so—for individuals, for communities, and for our economy.

Fifty-three years ago, Americans made a promise to each other, as self-governing people have the unique privilege and power to do. I am going to continue fighting to make good on that promise for years to come.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before my colleague leaves the floor, I want to thank her for her thoughtful remarks in recognizing that as we talk about the future of Medicare and Medicaid, what we see is a constant need to update these terrific programs for the times. When I was director of the Gray Panthers, opioids were not an issue. Today, it is a dominant force in American life. My colleague is a leader in the effort to find smart, passionate, cost-effective programs to deal with those challenges, and I thank her for her thoughtful comments.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I thank Senator WYDEN for his leadership for our seniors, for our Nation's economy, and for all of our people.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank my colleague.

Mr. President, I have one brief comment to wrap up. I see my colleague from Florida here. My colleagues have essentially spent close to an hour talking about these programs that are literally a lifeline to millions of Americans, Medicare and Medicaid. As highlighted tonight, it has always been that we have had to play a lot of defense to prevent big attacks on these programs—we even saw them in the President's budget as I went page by page—when what we really would like to do is play offense and think about the future.

My colleague from Florida is here. He has a very large elderly population, as many Senators do.

When I was director of the Gray Panthers, Medicare had two parts. There was Part A for hospitals and Part B for doctors. That was it. If you had a broken ankle and you went to the hospital, that was Part A. If you had a horrible case of the flu, you went to the doctor, and you were taken care of in an outpatient fashion. That is not Medicare today. Medicare today is chronic illnesses—diabetes, heart disease, chronic pulmonary diseases. Eighty percent of the Medicare Program is going to be consumed by chronic illnesses in the days ahead.

Congress has just begun the effort to update the Medicare guarantee to incorporate those hugely important challenges—cancer, diabetes, heart disease. Those are chronic illnesses. I close by way of saying that this update means,

again, that the guarantee reaches into every nook and cranny of our community. That means seniors in traditional Medicare, seniors who secure their healthcare through Medicare Advantage, and seniors in accountable care organizations. All of them, wherever they get their healthcare, ought to be able to secure an updated Medicare guarantee that addresses the upcoming challenge of our times, the great challenge of our times dealing with chronic illnesses.

My colleagues have laid out what our job is all about, which is preventing the effort to go backward, when we like to think about going forward into the future in a fashion that updates the Medicare guarantee for all older people and those who look forward to those years, and protecting the great safety net of our time—Medicaid.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar Nos. 1017 through 1029 and all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force, Army, and Navy; that the nominations be confirmed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the Record; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be general

Lt. Gen. Stephen R. Lyons

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Brian T. Kelly

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Lt. Gen. Mark D. Kelly

The following named Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in

the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. Timothy J. Madden

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Lt. Gen. Jeffrey L. Harrigian

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Thomas A. Bussiere

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Lt. Gen. Kenneth S. Wilsbach

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Lt. Gen. Stephen M. Twitty

IN THE MARINE CORPS

The following named officer for appointment as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps in the United States Marine Corps, and for appointment to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 5044:

To be general

Lt. Gen. Gary L. Thomas

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Col. Susan J. Pietrykowski

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Jon T. Thomas

IN THE ARMY

The following named officers for appointment to the grade indicated in the United States Army under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Col. Gregory K. Anderson
Col. Christine A. Beeler
Col. Peter N. Benchoff
Col. Mark S. Bennett
Col. Gregory J. Brady
Col. Michele H. Bredenkamp
Col. Edmond M. Brown
Col. Robert M. Collins
Col. Kimberly M. Colloton
Col. David S. Doyle
Col. Thomas J. Edwards, Jr.
Col. Marcus S. Evans
Col. Brett T. Funck
Col. James J. Gallivan
Col. Brian W. Gibson
Col. Amy E. Hannah