

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Charles P. Rettig, of California, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2022.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

#### REPUBLICAN AGENDA AND NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Senate recently completed what was easily the most productive August in memory. We passed six appropriations bills with full debate on the Senate floor. We passed the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act. We confirmed 25 appointees to important jobs in the administration. We confirmed 17 Federal judges to the bench, and we set up votes for another 8 earlier this month.

When I was home in Wyoming, I talked to a number of people around the State, and they were pleased to see how much we are actually getting done. I can state that they absolutely think we should keep up this pace.

Maybe the most important thing that people expect us to deal with quickly is confirming Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. I believe we are off to a good start with confirmation hearings for Judge Kavanaugh, which were held last week in the Judiciary Committee.

What people who watched the hearings learned was that Judge Kavanaugh is well respected, mainstream, and a highly qualified individual for this important job. What people also saw is that some Members of the opposite party—the Democrats in the Senate—are totally unwilling to give him fair consideration.

Senators have been given access to more than 500,000 pages of records from his time as a judge and throughout his career in public service. That is three times the amount of information that any other Supreme Court nominee has ever produced. For some nominees of the Supreme Court, these kinds of documents are very important. They can tell us a lot about how a nominee thinks and about how he or she might approach the job of being a Justice. It is especially important when that person under consideration has never

served as a judge before, and sometimes that is all we have to look at. But that is not the case with Judge Kavanaugh.

Judge Kavanaugh has served on the circuit court of appeals for 12 years, and he has written opinions in over 300 cases. If anyone wants to know what he will act like as a judge, then they can just look at how he has already acted as a judge for the past dozen years.

These documents, these opinions he wrote in the 300 cases on the court in which he is serving, are the documents that matter. They are the ones that tell us how he approaches being a judge. Senators have had access to these court opinions since the day Judge Kavanaugh was nominated 8 weeks ago. If Democrats would just take the time to read through these opinions, they would see that Judge Kavanaugh is extremely thoughtful and is independent. He is absolutely devoted to preserving the rule of law and protecting the separation of powers that is the basis of our Constitution. If Democrats don't want to read through all these documents and these decisions, well, they can focus on the 13 cases where the Supreme Court adopted Judge Kavanaugh's reasoning. That is how much respect other judges and Justices have for the careful and compelling decisions he has written.

One case dealt with a regulation put out by the Environmental Protection Agency. Judge Kavanaugh found that the Agency had exceeded its authority under the law when they wrote the regulation. Judge Kavanaugh wrote that "it is not our job to make the policy choices and set the statutory boundaries, but it is emphatically our job to carefully but firmly enforce the statutory boundaries."

The Supreme Court agreed with Judge Kavanaugh's reasoning.

One constitutional scholar pointed out that "Judge Kavanaugh commands wide and deep respect among scholars, lawyers, judges, and justices."

Another legal scholar said that Judge Kavanaugh is "one of the most learned judges in America on a variety of issues, ranging from theories of statutory interpretation to separation of powers."

A third law professor agreed. He called Judge Kavanaugh "a true intellectual—a leading thinker and writer on the subjects of statutory interpretation and federal courts."

Finally, if it is even too much for some Democratic Senators to read through all the glowing reviews of Judge Kavanaugh's career, they could just look at what he has actually said. Look at his own simple, straightforward summary of his judging philosophy. In a speech last year, he made it very clear. He said: "The judge's job is to interpret the law, not to make the law or make policy."

This view—that the judge's job is to interpret the law, not to make the law or make policy—and every example I have seen from Judge Kavanaugh's

record is squarely in the mainstream of America's thinking today.

Despite all of this information being available, some Democrats are trying to say that they still want even more documents. They are hoping against hope that if they request another 500,000 pages, they can delay things a little longer. Well, let me assure you, it is not going to happen.

I think that most Democrats who have been making the most noise really don't want more documents. That is because so many of the Democrats complaining the loudest are the same ones who said that they have already made up their minds and made announcements that they are planning to vote against the nominee. Some were saying it before the nomination was even announced.

From the very beginning, liberal activists called on Senator SCHUMER to do everything in his power to keep this seat empty for as long as possible. There are several Senators on the other side of the aisle who have gladly taken up this challenge from the far left corners of their base.

I hope that more reasonable Democrats will reject the calls for needless delays and dangerous obstruction. I hope there are Democrats in the Senate who are willing to listen to what Judge Kavanaugh actually said during his hearing. I hope there are Democrats who are willing to read some of the hundreds of thousands of pages of documents. I hope there are some Democrats who are willing to listen to the experts who are describing Judge Kavanaugh as "one of the most learned judges" in our country.

It is clear that Judge Kavanaugh has the right approach to being a judge. It is clear that he is a person of solid character and that he has a strong intellect. It is clear that America needs Judge Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court and that it is time for Democrats to give up this pointless obstruction.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

#### CONFERENCE REPORT TO H.R. 5895

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, the conference report that we are considering today is good news for our country. Along with providing funding for our veterans and supporting critical energy and infrastructure projects, it also includes \$4.8 billion for the agencies in the legislative branch.

The legislative branch portion of the conference report allocates funding in an appropriate manner. It promotes government transparency, as well as increasing security here at the Capitol Complex. This is very important.

In support of good government, this agreement includes a provision known as e-file, requiring U.S. Senate candidates to file campaign finance reports electronically, directly with the Federal Election Commission, as every other Federal candidate must do. Not

only does this provision increase transparency, it will reduce bureaucratic inefficiency and will save about \$1 million in taxpayer dollars.

This agreement also provides \$589.7 million for the Government Accountability Office to hire additional staff to bolster oversight of government programs and spending. Having spent most of my career in the private sector, accountability is a good thing. There is not enough of it here in Washington, DC. In fact, according to a report issued by the GAO, the GAO returns \$128 for every dollar invested in its budget. That is a good example of accountability and getting results for the American taxpayer. In fact, the resulting benefit of this oversight by GAO was approximately \$74 billion in documented savings for the taxpayers in 2017. That is where you get the \$128 return for every dollar invested in the agency.

The Capitol Police is fully funded at the requested level of \$456.3 million, allowing for the continued protection of visitors coming to the Capitol campus every year, as well as the Members and their staff.

These are just a few highlights of the bill, which allocates resources in a responsible way to maintain existing services, as well as providing critical investments across the U.S. Capitol campus.

Lastly, and importantly, I want to thank Senator CHRIS MURPHY, my ranking member, for working with me in a bipartisan manner throughout this process. This is my first year as chairman of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee. I would also like to thank Chairman SHELBY and Vice Chairman LEAHY for their leadership and efforts to return to regular order on a Senate appropriations bill. This is quite remarkable, but it shouldn't be. The bar has been set so low in Washington, DC, that Congress can't get their appropriations bills or spending bills passed before the end of the current fiscal year going into next year. Well, guess what. The fiscal year ends on September 30, and here we are on September 12, moving forward now on appropriations. That is a good thing for our country.

I urge my colleagues to support this conference report as we continue to move these bills forward to fund the government on time and in the right way.

I see my distinguished colleague, Senator MURPHY from Connecticut, is here as well, and it has truly been an honor to serve with Senator MURPHY to move this forward on behalf of the American people.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, let me express my thanks in return to Chairman DAINES for being such a fantastic guide and a fantastic partner on this subcommittee budget. I am excited to bring this to my colleagues this morn-

ing. I will note that he took over midstream from Senator LANKFORD, who began this process. I will also note that we didn't really get moving so quickly to a conference committee until Senator DAINES took over. I give him great credit for adding so much and being such a great partner in all of this.

I really don't need to go through all of the important initiatives Senator DAINES already did; maybe I will spend a minute doing so. I would note that we made progress on some issues that had been stalled in the Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee for a long time—such as intern pay or the requirement to file campaign finance reports online—I think because we were able to do this budget on its own, with a real process, with a real committee debate, and with a real conference committee. When these budgets get tied up in giant omnibus negotiations, it tends to be that only the top four or five issues in the omnibus get the attention from the folks in the room. These budgets are very important, but maybe because they are a little bit smaller than the budget for HHS or the Department of Defense, they go untended to.

As we return to regular order, not only do I think that is a breath of fresh air for democracy, it is not good news for anybody when the decisions over a budget get decided behind closed doors amongst a very small set of people appointed by the Democratic leader and the Republican leader. It is also good government because when we do these budgets one by one, we get to flesh out some very important and sometimes controversial issues that we might not get to address when they are all lumped together in a massive package.

I hope this is now the way we do things. I congratulate Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SHELBY for setting the tone. I know there are a couple of conference committees tomorrow on some other packages. I hope they go as well as ours did.

In this budget, we did some very good things. We have a long list of deferred maintenance here on this campus. We have 16.5 million square feet of buildings. We have millions of visitors who come to experience the U.S. Capitol. We provide \$734 million for the Architect of the Capitol to make those targeted investments.

Accountability and transparency were things Senator DAINES focused on as chairman. We will have 50 additional auditors and investigators at the Government Accountability Office. That is the office which makes sure that we are doing our job, that we are spending taxpayer dollars wisely. When they issue reports, the taxpayers save money, and now they have the ability to do more of that great work.

It also provides full funding for the Capitol Police. I want to specifically thank Senator DAINES for working with us to include in this budget an initiative that we started here in the Senate to improve protections and co-

ordination for Members' security off campus, to recognize the new and emerging threats that exist in and around Washington, DC.

Finally—I have said it before, but I will say it again—there is a breakthrough, a small amount of money to help compensate interns. Lives change when they get to experience something like working for their Member of Congress, for their Senator. It opens their eyes to a set of experiences that would not be available to them otherwise.

Under prior practice where very few Senate offices paid for those internship experiences, you had to be a child of means in order to get here. Now, hopefully, with this small amount of money we are giving to our interns, we will have a much greater pool of applicants and a much greater pool of young men and women who will be able to be here and work in our offices. I think that is good for this place, and I think it is good for the kids who are going to get to experience government. Faith in government and belief in civic participation couldn't be lower today. Giving more kids from diverse backgrounds access to the Federal Government is a very positive development.

Again, it has been a joy to work with Senator DAINES. It is great to be on a conference committee. I had heard rumors about conferences committees, and we got to sit on one and hammer out a budget with our House colleagues. I hope it sails through as we move to final debate and passage.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

#### FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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

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

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise before you today to express the importance of freedom of the press both around the world and here at home. Journalists take risks—often great risks—to tell the stories of war, genocide, hunger, poverty, and corruption around the world while facing unprecedented rates of intimidation and violence.

Freedom of expression is the bedrock of our democracy, but we must not take it for granted. It is how we hold ourselves to the standards set by the Founders and hold ourselves accountable and how we protect our institutions from falling into traps set by those who seek to abuse power.

Earlier this year, I introduced S. Res. 501, a resolution recognizing threats to freedom of the press and freedom of expression. This resolution was introduced with Senators RUBIO and WYDEN, and I thank my colleagues for their leadership on this important issue.

This resolution highlights the importance of the freedom of the press, condemns attacks against journalists, and reaffirms press freedom as a priority