

Shelby
SullivanThune
TillisWicker
YoungDuckworth
Durbin
Feinstein
Gillibrand
Harris
Heinrich
Hirono
Kaine
KingKlobuchar
Markey
Menendez
Merkley
Murray
Peters
Reed
Sanders
SchumerSmith
Stabenow
Tester
Udall
Van Hollen
Warner
Warren
Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—34

Baldwin
Blumenthal
Booker
Cantwell
Cardin
Carper
Coons
Duckworth
Durbin
Feinstein
Gillibrand
HarrisHeinrich
Hirono
Kaine
King
Klobuchar
Markey
Menendez
Merkley
Murray
Peters
Reed
SandersSchumer
Smith
Stabenow
Tester
Udall
Van Hollen
Warner
Warren
Whitehouse
Wyden

NOT VOTING—3

Isakson

Nelson

Toomey

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 63, the nays are 34.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining votes in this series be 10 minutes in length.

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

VOTE ON RETTIG NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all post-cloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Rettig nomination?

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 64, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 206 Ex.]

YEAS—64

Alexander
Barrasso
Bennet
Blunt
Boozman
Brown
Capito
Cardin
Casey
Cassidy
Collins
Corker
Cornyn
Cortez Masto
Cotton
Crapo
Cruz
Daines
Donnelly
Enzi
Ernst
FischerFlake
Gardner
Graham
Grassley
Hassan
Hatch
Heitkamp
Heller
Hoeben
Hyde-Smith
Inhofe
Johnson
Jones
Kennedy
Kyl
Lankford
Leahy
Lee
Manchin
McCaskill
McConnell
MoranMurkowski
Murphy
Paul
Perdue
Portman
Risch
Roberts
Rounds
Rubio
Sasse
Schatz
Scott
Shaheen
Shelby
Sullivan
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Wicker
Young

NAYS—33

Baldwin
BlumenthalBooker
CantwellCarper
Coons

Burr

NOT VOTING—3

Isakson

Nelson

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ENERGY AND WATER, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, AND MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session in consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 5895. The cloture motion is withdrawn.

There will now be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I will try to be brief. It is getting late.

A few months ago, I came to the floor and urged my colleagues to set aside partisan disputes so that we could focus on our most basic constitutional responsibility: funding the government in a deliberate and timely manner.

Most observers deemed the prospect dubious at best. Who could blame them? Like so much in Washington, the appropriations process was broken, but at the urging of Leaders MCCONNELL and SCHUMER and with the help of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—Vice Chairman LEAHY, in particular—we began to put the pieces back together.

Steadily, methodically, we passed 9 of the 12 annual appropriations bills in the Senate by overwhelming bipartisan margins. Today, I am pleased to present my colleagues with the first dividends of their cooperation.

The conference report before the Senate tonight contains the 2019 appropriations bills for Energy and Water Development, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and the Legislative Branch. It contains very critical funding to help transition our veterans to the new healthcare program they deserve and have earned under the VA Mission Act. It funds nearly 200 construction projects that are very important to America's military. It does a lot of other things, but I can say that this is an important package, and it is very important in what this package does not contain. It contains no poison pills—none of the partisan riders that have taken down appropriations bills

in recent years in this package. As a result, the conference report looks a lot like the package that passed the Senate a few months ago by a vote of 86 to 5.

We have a long way to go, but we are getting there with this first batch of appropriations bills. I want to take a second and thank the leaders of both sides, Vice Chairman LEAHY, the members of the Appropriations Committee, and all of my colleagues for their cooperation in this effort. I look forward to continuing to work together and urge you to vote for the conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly on this.

Today, the Senate will consider final passage of the “Minibus #1” conference report. This package contains the Legislative Branch, Energy and Water Development, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Bills.

I agree with what Vice Chairman SHELBY has said. When we first considered this package in June, we held our first real debate on the Senate floor on an appropriations bill in many years. We had eight rollcall votes on amendments. We adopted a managers' package that Senator SHELBY and I submitted. It contained 32 more—a step toward returning to regular order.

Today, we are going to take another step. This is not exactly the bill I would have written. I think it is safe to say it is not exactly the bill Chairman SHELBY would have written. We know you have to have compromise. You have to work things out. I also knew I could rely on his word, and he could rely on my word. That is why we are here today voting on this bipartisan package.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill includes significant new investments in mental health and opioid abuse treatment. We are not just talking about things we would like to do to address opioid abuse; we are actually including it in a bill. It invests \$1 billion in new funding over fiscal year 2017 levels for mental healthcare programs and suicide prevention and \$454 million over fiscal year 2017 for opioid treatment and prevention.

This bill also provides resources important to Vermonters. It increases funding for long-term, noninstitutional care programs like the Veterans Independence Program in Vermont, which partners with community providers to support veterans who prefer to continue living in their own homes, avoiding costly nursing home care and offering better quality of life. It provides funding for homeless veterans programs, such as the Grant and Per Diem program that offers supportive transitional housing to homeless veterans, and it includes a \$40 million increase for Supportive Services for Veteran Families to help veterans and their

families secure permanent affordable housing.

The bill nearly doubles funding for the popular Adaptive Sports Grant Program and expands it so that more service-disabled veterans, including those who suffer from invisible injuries like PTSD and brain injuries, can participate in lifelong sports in their communities, or train to showcase their mental and physical training at national competitions. This bill also includes a \$40 million investment for the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and its evidence-based approach to the treatment of veterans bearing the hidden wounds of war.

However, I am extremely disappointed that House Republicans and President Trump refused to accommodate funding for the costs associated with the VA Choice Program. The program is going to face a shortfall beginning in May 2019. We are not helping our veterans if we make promises we don't keep. We cannot just take funding from other programs for veterans or terminate programs to help low-income Americans or important research at the National Institutes of Health, even though the President is proposing it.

We must adjust the budget caps to accommodate programs for our veterans that have already passed Congress and been signed into law.

We made a promise to veterans. The chairman and I will work hard on making sure Congress keeps that promise.

In the Energy and Water Development appropriations bill, we make significant investments that support scientific research, make America more competitive in clean energy and increase funds for renewable energy.

Congress rejected President Trump's shortsighted attempt to eliminate ARPA-E, which researches and invests in new energy technologies, and increased its funding by \$60 million over fiscal year 2018. Thanks to the Bipartisan Budget Agreement, investments in the Office of Science are increased by \$1.2 billion over fiscal year 2017, paving the way for new and groundbreaking scientific research.

And with Hurricane Florence set to make landfall on America's East Coast, this package includes the highest ever level of funding for the Army Corps' Civil Works program of nearly \$7 billion. For every dollar invested, it is estimated that there is a \$16.60 return by mitigating flood damage and transportation rate savings from moving goods on our waterways.

The Energy and Water bill also makes important investments in our rural communities through regional commissions, including \$20 million for the four-State Northern Border Regional Commission. We once again provide strong funding for the Weatherization Program, which helps so many families in Vermont and other northern States who struggle with high home heating prices during the cold winter months. And I am pleased that

the bill supports much needed repairs and improvements in our environmental infrastructure and strengthens innovative ways to deliver these critical assets that will make Vermont and the entire country more resilient to the changing climate and violent weather events.

The Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill includes funding to pay congressional interns for the first time. A congressional internship offers an entrance to a career in public service, but many dedicated, young adults do not have the means to spend a summer working for free in Washington or in our home districts. By paying interns for their work, we open the door to a wider and more diverse pool of applicants looking to serve their country.

I have long realized the potential benefits to our country of providing this opportunity to talented young people from diverse backgrounds. That is why, since my first day in the Senate, in 1975, I made sure there were the resources available in my office to compensate our interns. I am glad this opportunity will now be available in every office, both House and Senate.

For the first time in the legislative branch bill, we are also requiring Senate candidates to file electronic campaign finance reports, something the House has required since 1995. This will increase transparency in campaign finance and finally bring the system into the 21st century.

This is a compromise bill. It makes significant investments in the American people. It was not an easy path to get to where we are, but the Shelby-Leahy-McConnell-Schumer agreement we entered into—the four of us—has laid the bipartisan framework for a path forward. This package does have bipartisan support. It is free of poison pill riders, and it is in line with the bipartisan budget agreement.

I commend my friend RICHARD SHELBY for his leadership. I also thank Senators ALEXANDER, FEINSTEIN, BOOZMAN, SCHATZ, DAINES, and MURPHY for their vital contributions.

This is the only successful path forward for the remaining appropriations bills, and I am hopeful that House Republicans will continue to engage with this process.

I also remain hopeful that President Trump will join this bipartisan and bicameral vision for the appropriations process.

However, the President's repeated shutdown threats are not helpful.

Just last week, at a campaign style rally, the President threatened to shut down the government after the midterm elections—an attempt that would avoid the immediate political consequences of his brash and short-sighted decision to hold the American people hostage for his useless and ill-considered border wall, which he has repeatedly promised Mexico would pay for.

A government shutdown is not a political talking point. It has real con-

sequences on real people, and I hope the President will leave his rhetoric at his rally and work with Republicans and Democrats in Congress.

In the Senate, we have come together, Republicans and Democrats. We have made more progress than we have in decades in appropriations.

I hope that we will continue down this path and pass the two additional minibuss appropriations bills that are in conference before the end of the fiscal year. Funding the government is one of Congress's most basic responsibilities, and we owe it to the American people to do our jobs.

Lastly, I often say I am a constitutional impediment to my staff—Chuck Kieffer, Chanda Betourney, Jessica Berry, Jay Tilton, and Jean Kwon, as well as Chairman SHELBY's staff, Shannon Hines, Jonathan Graffeo, and David Adkins, as well as the staff on both sides of the aisle for each of the three subcommittees. It takes a lot of people to get a bill like this across the finish line, and I thank them for their hard work and dedication.

I am ready to vote.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

All time is yielded back.

The question is on the adoption of the conference report.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

MR. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) would have voted "yea."

MR. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) is necessarily absent.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 92, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 207 Leg.]

YEAS—92

Alexander	Donnelly	King
Baldwin	Duckworth	Klobuchar
Barrasso	Durbin	Kyl
Bennet	Enzi	Lankford
Blumenthal	Ernst	Leahy
Blunt	Feinstein	Lee
Booker	Fischer	Manchin
Boozman	Gardner	McCaskill
Brown	Graham	McConnell
Cantwell	Grassley	Menendez
Capito	Harris	Merkley
Cardin	Hassan	Moran
Carper	Hatch	Murkowski
Casey	Heinrich	Murphy
Cassidy	Heitkamp	Murray
Collins	Heller	Perdue
Coons	Hirono	Peters
Corker	Hoeven	Portman
Cornyn	Hyde-Smith	Reed
Cortez Masto	Inhofe	Risch
Cotton	Johnson	Roberts
Crapo	Jones	Rounds
Cruz	Kaine	Rubio
Daines	Kennedy	Sanders

Sasse	Stabenow	Van Hollen
Schatz	Sullivan	Warner
Schumer	Tester	Whitehouse
Scott	Thune	Wicker
Shaheen	Tillis	Wyden
Shelby	Toomey	Young
Smith	Udall	

NAYS—5

Flake	Markey	Warren
Gillibrand	Paul	

NOT VOTING—3

Burr	Isakson	Nelson
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The conference report was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, S. Con. Res. 46 is considered and agreed to and the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 46) was agreed to.

(The concurrent resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, and I ask consent to speak for as long as I may require.

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

50 YEARS OF KENTUCKY
EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to celebrate one of the great public educational resources in my home State of Kentucky. This month, we mark the 50th anniversary of Kentucky Educational Television, KET, which has provided a vital service to the Commonwealth. It is my privilege to take a look back at the distinguished history of this organization and its impact on Kentucky families.

When KET officially signed on the air in 1968 under the leadership of its founding director, University of Kentucky professor O. Leonard Press, it did so during school hours on the second largest land-based network in the world. Its first instructional program was "Kentucky is My Land," which directly addressed KET's mission to deliver quality educational programming for all levels and to explore the beauty and heritage of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. That original goal has animated the remarkable educational and public affairs programming of this network for half a century.

During its first decade on the air, KET continued to expand and provide important services to its viewers, which included the debut of consequential Kentucky journalists such as Al Smith and KET's first nationally distributed instructional series, "Universe & I." In addition, the network began its televised coverage of the proceedings of the Kentucky General Assembly, providing unprecedented ac-

cess and public transparency to our State's legislature and a valuable civic education to our citizens.

As an affiliate of the Public Broadcasting Service, PBS, KET also brings nationally treasured programs into the homes of thousands of Kentuckians. Programs such as Julia Child's "The French Chef," "Masterpiece Theatre," and many of Ken Burns's historical documentary series have made an indelible impact on our country. As KET has grown, it has expanded its programming around the clock to provide educational opportunities to Kentuckians 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Throughout the years, KET has also grown its public affairs content, delivering news of the day and critical information to viewers. Staffed with top-notch journalists and featuring interviews with well-known Kentuckians, these programs are an important part of the network's overall mission. Throughout my career, I have enjoyed both viewing and periodically joining these programs to discuss vital issues to the future of Kentucky.

Keeping faith with its educational goals, the network has developed important partnerships with educational institutions and universities in Kentucky. In fact, Morehead State University began offering KET distance learning courses for dual credit, and the KET Fast Forward program has excelled as a learning system for GED test preparation.

I commend KET's 50 years of award-winning service to my home State. It is my privilege to congratulate the network on its success, and I look forward to many more years of quality programming in our Commonwealth. I urge my Senate colleagues to join me in celebrating KET's exemplary work.

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF HELEN
KELLER SERVICES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate Helen Keller Services, HKS, on its 125th anniversary, which will be celebrated at its gala at the Liberty Warehouse in Brooklyn, NY, on September 13, 2018.

Since 1893, the Helen Keller Services has been committed to improving the lives of individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or have combined hearing and vision loss. The talented and dedicated staff at the Helen Keller Services has made over 60,000 visits to the homes and communities of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Over 900,000 children ages 3-5 have received preschool vision screenings to ensure they are equipped for success in the classroom. The organization has placed over 14,000 individuals in jobs with the help of their programs. The totality of their impact over the past 125 years is hard to overstate.

This fall the organization will move its headquarters to a new 44,000-square-foot facility located at 180 Livingston Street in Brooklyn. This modern struc-

ture will house new classrooms and training rooms, a specialized gym for prekindergarten students, new offices and workstations, a Low Vision Center, and a new technology training space. This will aide HKS in serving the blind and visually impaired community for decades to come.

While the scope of its services has changed and expanded substantially over the past century and a quarter, allowing HKS to touch the lives of countless blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind men women and children, what has not changed is its steadfast commitment to Brooklyn, the surrounding communities, and the entire New York region. I congratulate the Helen Keller Services on achieving this milestone and thank them for their outstanding service to New York.

REMEMBERING SUVASH DARNAL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have spoken before about Suvash Darnal, an extraordinary Nepalese Dalit activist who was tragically killed in a traffic accident in Virginia on August 15, 2011.

Mr. Darnal was only 31 years old when he died, but he had already made more of his life than many people who live to be twice or three times his age. He grew up impoverished, with nothing to look forward to. In large measure because of the adversity he experienced and his inherent thirst for knowledge, he became a passionate advocate for his people at home and around the world. As I have said before, his integrity, his humility, his vision, and his dedication live on as an inspiring example of why caste discrimination has no place in the 21st century, in Nepal or anywhere else.

From 2008 to 2009, Mr. Darnal was a fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy. Carl Gershman, President of NED, was among Mr. Darnal's admirers and has helped to convey the lessons of Mr. Darnal's life to a wider audience.

I ask unanimous consent that Mr. Gershman's account of recent events in Kathmandu in remembrance of Suvash Darnal be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the kathmandupost]

(By Carl Gershman)

Aug. 28, 2018.—I visited Nepal recently to attend two days of memorial events held in honour of Suvash Darnal, an activist for Dalit rights who perished in a terrible car accident in Washington in 2011. I first met Darnal a decade ago when he was a Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the organisation that I head. I found him to be an unusually gifted democracy activist. He had a marvellously engaging personality, and he impressed many people in Washington as a sophisticated analyst of Nepal at a time when the country was just coming out of a civil war. He was also an ardent and effective spokesman against caste discrimination.

Darnal had the ability to make the Dalit issue come alive for Americans, partly by