

in their local communities and in their small businesses.

We also know that regulation is important, but overregulation is a job killer. We have rolled back overregulation that was stifling job creation, and we are creating an environment that fosters job growth. Our reforms have created a savings of at least \$50 billion for small businesses and entrepreneurs. That is why the economy is on fire.

We have also done important things to help improve access to healthcare. We have repealed the Independent Payment Advisory Board provisions of ObamaCare and repealed the costly individual mandate, which essentially was a tax on poor people and middle-income people when they couldn't afford to buy the ObamaCare policies with all of the coverage that they didn't necessarily even want or need, but it added to the cost of the policy. When they couldn't afford the policy, they were taxed by their own government and punished through the individual mandate.

What we have done is to try to restore the authority and the power of citizens themselves to make healthcare decisions for themselves and their families that they want and that they can afford by starting to recreate an individual market. To me, that is the best way for us to offer choice and to keep prices down—to create an individual market, not for government to mandate a one-size-fits-all approach, which is what ObamaCare did. It forced many young people to pay a lot more for their insurance to subsidize others who were covered by ObamaCare.

We also addressed the public health challenges we face in this country in another significant way. The Nation's drug addiction epidemic killed roughly 72,000 Americans last year. Some 72,000 Americans lost their lives to drug overdoses. Nearly 50,000 of those were related to opioids, whether a prescription drug or heroin or fentanyl. It has left many families in disarray and overwhelmed medical professionals and emergency personnel in many communities.

Through the collaboration of about 70 bipartisan proposals—people say nothing bipartisan happens here, but thanks to 70 bipartisan proposals—that were included in this landmark opioids bill, we are not only addressing stemming the tide of drugs coming across our border but also supporting those who are trying to recover from a drug addiction.

Among other reforms, the law requires screening of packages being mailed from overseas for substances like fentanyl. It increases access to treatment for people with substance disorders. It expands research into non-addictive painkillers, and it provides more money for enforcement and interdiction.

But healthy communities are also safe communities. In addition to the opioids bill, we took further steps to enhance the safety of our communities

and to help victims. With three new laws, we aimed to reduce the backlog of untested rape kits in forensic labs so that perpetrators of sexual assault can be identified with near certainty and those wrongly charged can be exonerated.

We also have assisted our law enforcement in prosecuting cold cases and eradicating the scourge of online sex trafficking. We didn't stop there, though. We kept communities' needs in mind and turned toward fixing our Nation's outdated infrastructure.

In October, we passed a major water infrastructure bill that helps to keep our communities safe by providing dams and levees and addressing the need for drinking water—clean, safe drinking water—and addressing the underdevelopment of wastewater systems across the country.

But our work on infrastructure extended far beyond public water systems. It also included passing the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act, which modernizes airport infrastructure, increases safety, and boosts industry innovation.

We also helped to support our men and women in uniform, past and present. By passing a Defense authorization bill, we gave our troops the largest pay raise in nearly 10 years and began to restore military readiness in an increasingly dangerous world.

The National Defense Authorization Act, named after our former chairman of the Armed Services Committee, John McCain, ensures that our troops have the resources, the equipment, and the training they need to defend our country and keep Americans safe.

For our veterans, we passed the VA Mission Act—again, a bipartisan piece of legislation. Access to healthcare had become a nightmare for many who sacrificed so much for our country. We saw them being met with difficulty getting appointments because they were backlogged so much, or they had to drive great distances to get access to basic healthcare. So we passed the VA Mission Act with an eye toward providing more efficient access to care in local communities.

Beyond that, we did the basic work of funding the Federal Government on time and through regular order. We haven't finished that job yet. We have until December 7 to finish the job, and I hope we do. It is not a particularly flashy topic, but it is one of the most fundamental duties of the Congress.

So our record is clear, and the voters responded by rewarding the majority with an even greater Senate majority in the next Congress. But we need to finish out the rest of this year strong. We are adding to our list of accomplishments this week by passing a bipartisan bill to provide critical funding for the Coast Guard. Our Coast Guard is made up of men and women who risk their lives to save others and to protect our ports and to stop illegal drugs from reaching our country. This bill ensures that they can continue that

work with the predictability they deserve.

Moving forward, we have a significant to-do list before we break for Christmas. We need to finalize the farm bill. We need to reauthorize a number of other bills, and despite the large number of nominations we were able to get done before we recessed, there is still a huge backlog of many executive branch nominations. For some reason, after the 2016 election, our Democratic colleagues decided they were going to obstruct or delay as many Trump nominations to executive agencies on the bench as they could. Unfortunately, they have been too successful in doing so, but I am confident that the Senate Majority Leader, Senator McConnell, will use the leverage of people wanting to get home at Christmastime and Thanksgiving to ensure that we get a maximum number of these noncontroversial nominees supported. These are people who will enjoy broad bipartisan support if we can just get our Democratic colleagues to quit the obstruction.

We have just a short time left to finish this Congress strong, but the past 2 years have been an unmitigated success for the country. We have delivered on promises we have made. We have put money back in the pockets of hard-working families. We enhanced community safety and fought for victims. We have modernized infrastructure and supported our men and women in uniform. I hope we can continue this momentum into the 116th Congress that begins in January.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

COAST GUARD REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to speak about the Coast Guard reauthorization legislation that just passed the Senate today. I thank my colleagues for all of their hard work on this important measure that literally has taken years to piece together. I thank Chairman THUNE and Ranking Member NELSON for working on this legislation and for incorporating many of the things that the people of Washington were interested in seeing as part of this comprehensive bill. I certainly want to thank Senator CARPER and the EPW staff for working on major provisions of this bill relating to ballast water and the solutions they put forward. This bill includes many provisions important to our Coast Guard, our environment, and to our shipbuilding community. It represents a true bipartisan effort to find solutions and to put those solutions into action.

Our State of Washington is rich in its maritime heritage. The Coast Guard is a large part of that. With so much coastline, and so many rivers and streams, the Coast Guard is so important. Our State is home to fishermen, shipbuilders, Tribes, trade operators, and a thriving tourism economy. So for places from Cape Disappointment and

Grays Harbor to Neah Bay and all the way up the Columbia River, our Washington State Coast Guard works tirelessly to protect the Northwest and our environment.

In our State, there are more than 2,000 Active-Duty coasties, 440 reservists, 192 civilian employees, and an impressive 869 volunteer auxiliary members in the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard plays an important role in the safety and oversight of our fisheries. Thousands of Pacific Northwest fishermen call Washington State home, and over 35,000 Washington State jobs are supported by the Alaska fisheries.

While we usually talk about big assets here on the floor, like icebreakers and national security cutters, Washington State is also home to heavy surf stations that serve in some of the most extreme conditions that people have to operate under.

This bipartisan Coast Guard legislation has many provisions that I would like to talk about this afternoon. I want to again thank my colleagues for their great bipartisan work on this legislation.

This legislation has many different solutions for many of the challenges our agencies face. I want to again thank Senator THUNE for working across the aisle on the various Coast Guard provisions that are included in this bill, and I want to thank Senator SULLIVAN for helping to cosponsor the authorization of the recapitalization of the Coast Guard heavy polar icebreaker, the *Polar Star*. The *Polar Star* is home-ported in Seattle and is our only operational heavy icebreaker, crucial for Arctic operations.

The language that we just passed improves the oversight of ships that pose an oil spill risk in Puget Sound. This is so important for us moving forward to have these types of assets in these critical waters.

This bill also includes language to strengthen the Coast Guard's family leave policies, as they moved forward to meet other branches in adding paid family leave. The legislation included language that helps to improve the flexibility of that paid family leave for various parts of our State that are most hard to serve.

The Coast Guard families should not be forced to choose between serving their country and supporting their families, and I so appreciate the incorporation of this language into this legislation.

This bipartisan deal also helps to protect good shipbuilding jobs at Dakota Creek Shipyard. I am a very strong supporter of the Jones Act, and I believe it is important that we continue to have the Jones Act in the future. I am proud that we were able to work together to find a solution to save good jobs at the Dakota Creek Shipyard, and I appreciate my colleagues working on the incorporation of that language.

This legislation also included a critical compromise to address the threat

of invasive species and the threat they pose to our waterways in many different parts of the United States. We worked hard on this solution, consulting with the State of Washington, and believe that this version, which does create regulatory certainty for maritime operators but does so while still protecting our environment, is critical.

The bill allows the State of Washington, which has a strong history of protecting our waters from invasive species, to modify the west coast ballast water management practices, which is very important for us to protect our waterways for the future. It requires that the most rigorous scientific standards are used—including the Clean Water Act's best available technology standard so important to us in the Northwest. The bill also creates tools for emergency response to invasive species so they can be stopped before they take a stronghold in our environment. Lastly, it includes a permanent fishing vessel exemption for incidental discharges which do not pose a threat to our environment.

All of these things were part of a very comprehensive Coast Guard bill that tried to give us the best tools possible to continue to operate in our coastal areas of the United States, to have the right resources, to have the right oversight, to have the right assets, and the right protection of our environment.

Again, I thank our colleagues on both sides of the aisle for working so diligently to finally get this legislation over the threshold and on to the President's desk.

The Coast Guard represents such an important maritime piece of our economy. I hope our colleagues will realize we need to give the Coast Guard the resources and assets to do their jobs, not just now in this legislation but moving forward as well.

I also want to thank our Coast Guard fellow, Lieutenant Commander Michelle Rosenberg, for her time working on this comprehensive legislation for the last several years.

I, again, thank my colleagues.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, winter has arrived in Pittsburgh. Today, 11 3-foot-tall wooden Stars of David make up a sidewalk memorial in the city's Squirrel Hill neighborhood, and they will be brought inside the Tree of Life Synagogue to protect this display of the city's grief from the snowstorm.

Pittsburgh, the Jewish community and our entire country were shaken by

a horrific anti-Semitic attack that occurred on October 27, during Shabbat morning services. Members of three Jewish congregations were present: the Tree of Life, Dor Hadash, and New Light congregations. Eleven innocent people were senselessly slaughtered in the attack, and six others were wounded, including four police officers who responded to the attack.

Even within this act of evil, there were displays of amazing courage and humanity: the first responders, who rushed into danger to apprehend the shooter and protect others; the Jewish doctors and nurses who cared for not just the victims but the shooter as well. Like Dr. Jeffrey Cohen, president of Allegheny County Hospital—who is actually a member of the Tree of Life Synagogue—displayed an amazing, remarkable courage and humanity in visiting the shooter to ask him about his care and to try to make some sense of the attack.

After such an inexplicable event, all of us looked for the motivation of the perpetrator and asked why.

Well, let's be clear about what this shooting was about. It was a cowardly act of brutal violence, fueled by anti-Semitism, a corrupt and repulsive ideology that really betrays our most fundamental values and distorts history.

John Adams had an interesting quote. John Adams said:

If I was an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations. They are the most glorious nation that ever inhabited this Earth. The Romans and their Empire were but a Bauble in comparison to the Jews. They have given religion to three quarters of the Globe and have influenced the affairs of Mankind more, and more happily, than any other Nation ancient or modern.

Despite Judaism's incredible contributions to mankind and to our own country and our country's founding, anti-Semitism is still far too prevalent. We can't ignore it. We must condemn it. We must challenge it.

I think there is a lesson here from Dr. Cohen, whom I mentioned earlier. When asked how he could visit a patient with so much hatred, Dr. Cohen replied:

I thought it was important to at least talk to him and meet him. You can't on one hand say we should talk to each other, and then I don't talk to him.

I think Dr. Cohen's wisdom and insights in humanity could be useful for this body as well. I have spent a lot of time working with colleagues and others to try to find some commonsense solutions to address some element of the gun violence that plagues this country. Too often, it seems to me, we talk past each other rather than speaking with each other.

I know there are strongly held views on the Second Amendment, and I am one of the Senators who has strongly held views on the Second Amendment. I am a strong supporter of the Second Amendment, but I am also convinced