

commercial vessel owners and operators of maritime fleets and, importantly, the workers in these important industries for decades—regulatory problems and challenges that these important industries and the important men and women who work in these industries have been struggling with for decades with no long-term solutions. At long last, this bill addresses these—the long-term, permanent solutions.

What am I talking about?

Currently, our fishing fleets throughout the entire country, as well as vessel owners and operators—again, throughout the entire country in rivers, lakes, and oceans—are forced to comply with a patchwork of burdensome Federal and State regulations that are well-intentioned but often conflicted for incidental discharges off the decks of these ships and for ballast water. Let me start with the incidental discharges.

Again, it is very important to my State but very important to any State with regard to the fishing industry and fishermen who work hard every day. If you are a commercial fisherman on a fishing vessel and you have caught some fish and you want to hose down your deck—because let's face it; fishing can be a bit of a messy business—through a long history of requirements and lawsuits, you are forced to report to the EPA these incidental discharges, and you need to get a permit to hose down your deck of a fishing vessel or you will face a fine.

Now, you don't have to be a fisherman to recognize that this is ridiculous and that people—Democrats and Republicans in this body—have been trying to address this issue for decades because it creates inefficiency, and it certainly doesn't help the environment. It adds to costs, inhibits economic prosperity, and hurts fishermen and the vessels they operate. This body has introduced short-term fixes for years to try and address this. Those have not been sufficient. So this bill addresses it for good.

Let me talk about another provision that tries to cut through the patchwork of burdensome State regulations—again, well-intentioned but often conflicted for ballast water and vessels. Currently, ballast water is regulated by both the Coast Guard and the EPA. They both have separate, inconsistent, and sometimes directly conflicting sets of Federal requirements that are interdispersed with requirements from States. This is literally a patchwork of requirements for vessels that move through different State waters. Let me give you an example.

You are the owner-operator of a commercial vessel that is going up the full length of the Mississippi River. You are moving commerce and keeping a strong economy stronger. As you do that, not only must you comply with inconsistent Coast Guard and EPA requirements, but you also will likely have to comply with different and separate requirements regarding ballast

water for Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. You get the picture. It is a patchwork of regulations—all well-intentioned—that has the impact of inhibiting commerce and, most importantly, of inhibiting job opportunities for the men and women in this commerce. Twenty-five States have been regulating ballast water under separate, inconsistent, and sometimes directly conflicting sets of requirements. This has not only inhibited U.S. economic growth, but it also actually makes it more likely that invasive species will accidentally be introduced into this ballast water because the requirements are so different, it is hard to keep up with them.

So, again, what this bill does at long last, working across the aisle—and trust me, we worked on this for over a year, on these provisions, Democrats and Republicans rolling up their sleeves, in good faith, getting to work. Because we know how important this is to our constituents, we looked at and focused on getting permanent solutions, not quick fixes—the way these issues have been handled in the past, for over a decade—to these significant challenges.

This bill will provide a permanent exemption on incidental vessel discharges for all commercial fishing vessels and commercial vessels under 79 feet in length. This is very important to the American fishing industry, the men and women in that industry, and it is something that they have been advocating for and Members of this body, of both parties, have been trying to get for well over a decade. Well, we did it today. That is important. As I said, without this exemption, small vessel owner-operators would be required, as they have been for years, to get an EPA permit to hose off their decks—not a good use of the EPA and not a good use of the hard-working time of American fishermen.

Similarly, this bill provides a comprehensive solution to this patchwork ballast water challenge that I just described, establishing a single, nationally uniform standard for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges, and the EPA and the Coast Guard, with input from the States, will work together. This uniform standard will have the impact of helping our environment and our maritime industry and fishing industry workers and the U.S. economy all at the same time. That is an important accomplishment, and that is why over 90 Senators voted for this bill today.

In conclusion, the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard do heroic work day in and day out. I am honored to chair the subcommittee of the Commerce Committee in charge of the Coast Guard. This bipartisan bill will support them and their incredibly important mission, and it was long overdue. It was long overdue, but we got it done.

The Coast Guard's motto, "Semper Paratus"—"Always Ready"—is a

motto I think we can learn from here in the U.S. Senate. It is so appropriate for what they do for us. I want to make sure that the members of the Coast Guard who are watching or learning about this bill know that it is a signal that they have strong bipartisan support from the vast majority of the Members of the U.S. Senate.

Hopefully, this bill will get over to the House quickly. We have been working closely with the House on a number of these provisions, and they are going to pass it, we hope, and we will get it to the President soon for his signature.

Going forward, we have to work to make sure there is not an almost 2-year delay in getting the Coast Guard Authorization Act passed in the U.S. Senate. When we work together, we can see that it is very bipartisan.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, the Presiding Officer and I both know that the National Defense Authorization Act moves every year. What I think we need to do is make sure, when we start debating the NDAA in late spring, early summer every year, as we do, that we reserve time to move and debate and pass the Coast Guard bill as well. This is an issue I have raised with the leadership on both sides of the aisle, with the chairmen of the Commerce Committee and the Armed Services Committee, and I am hopeful that we can make some progress on that so we are moving a Coast Guard Authorization Act, as we should be, with the other services in the NDAA. But that is for tomorrow. For today, we have an important accomplishment for our country, an important accomplishment for the State of Alaska, and most importantly, an important accomplishment for the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard who continue to undertake heroic actions day in and day out on our behalf.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO STEVE MAGRUDER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Steve Magruder has devoted his life to helping working families. For more than 40 years, Steve faithfully served as a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers International Local 176. Last week, Steve retired as the business manager of Local 176, a position he held for 8 years.

The IBEW is as old as commercial electricity. In 1891, 2 years before electricity made Chicago the White City, the IBEW formed to protect the rights and safety of those brave workers willing to work on electrical and telecommunications. They would be the ones who brought power across the country, and today, they have a membership of 750,000 worldwide.

Steve started out in the storied electrical industry while he was still in high school. He worked as a shop assistant for Bradley Electric. He eventually became the owner of the residential division of Bradley Electric.

In 1975, he was initiated into the IBEW Local 963 in Kankakee, IL, as a residential wireman. The next year, the local IBEW chapters merged to form IBEW 176. In 1982, he became a journeyman wireman and moved into companies such as Comstock and Company and Meade Electric.

By 1990, Steve became an agent in the Local 176 business office. He founded the IBEW 176 sick, injured, and needy committee, which helps members in difficult times. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been used by the committee to help so many people through the tough times.

Through all of this, Steve stayed involved in politics and helped candidates who would help working families of Illinois. In 2010, he became business manager of Local 176 and apprenticeship program numbers increased. He also expanded political work by chairing the 176 PAC committee and a committee on political education. If a business hired in Kankakee or Iroquois County hired from outside, Steve was at the frontlines fighting for families to keep them from being left behind by the local economy.

Steve is retiring now to spend more time with his wife of 45 years, Candy. I wish him the best in his future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO SARAH CARPENTER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it is with great appreciation and a touch of sadness that I note the upcoming retirement of Sarah Carpenter. Her retirement culminates 20 years of dedicated service as the executive director of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, VHFA. Through her enduring commitment to affordable housing, Sarah has helped tens of thousands of Vermonters into homes and helped to establish and shape our State's affordable housing infrastructure.

Sarah's career spanned four decades during which time she was a consistent leader in the affordable housing community. As executive director of Cathedral Square Corporation between 1983 and 1998, Sarah worked to develop and manage housing that met the needs of differently abled and aging Vermonters. She oversaw the operation of 430 units of supportive housing and provided housing development and management assistance to 20 projects across the State.

As executive director of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Sarah advanced the agency's mission to finance and promote affordable, safe, and decent housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income Vermonters. Sarah oversaw \$2.2 billion in lending in Vermont, and in her time with VHFA, the agency closed over 10,000 home loans, making a significant contribution to homeownership in the State of Vermont. She has been an effective leader whose work has expanded the amount of permanent supportive housing dedicated to people experiencing homelessness. Not only was Sarah an inspiring leader, she was also a strong and compassionate manager. Since 2015, the Vermont Chamber of Commerce and Vermont Business Magazine have included VHFA on their list of Vermont's Best Places to Work.

Sarah's contribution to the affordable housing community extends into her community service. She is a founding member of the Housing Vermont board and a founding member of the Burlington Community Land Trust. She has been a member of dozens of boards and special committees dedicated to various aspects of housing finance and the promotion of safe, affordable, and decent housing for Vermonters of all means. Her service has been recognized by numerous awards, including the Senator Patrick Leahy Leadership Award from the Committee on Temporary Shelter in 2007.

Sarah is a lifelong Vermonter who has dedicated her career to ensuring those in her home State can afford a home. She was a key architect of the system that today creates and finances the production and preservation of affordable rental housing across the State. She has worked closely with my office to improve the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, including ensuring priority is given to projects that propose to target 25 percent of their units to Vermonters who have experienced homelessness. Sarah's informed advocacy has strengthened this and other Federal housing programs so they can work for Vermont and Vermonters. I commend her service to the State and thank her on behalf of the countless Vermont families that she has helped into homes.

NOMINATION OF JOHN L. RYDER

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise in response to a unanimous consent request from my good friend, the senior Senator from Tennessee, to consider the nomination of John L. Ryder of Tennessee to be a member of the board of directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority, known as TVA. As I mentioned in Mr. Ryder's confirmation hearing, I have long encouraged TVA to be an industry leader in the power sector, not a laggard, especially when it comes to clean energy and energy efficiency. While I am not prepared to object to Mr. Ryder's nomination at

this time, I am quite concerned about TVA's handling of the December 2008 Kingston Fossil Fuel Power Plant coal ash spill clean-up efforts and would like to say a few words about my concerns.

Last week, a Federal jury in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee found that the contractor used by TVA to clean up the coal ash spill, Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc., did not adhere to worker safety or health requirements, potentially causing sickness and death. Although TVA was not on trial, there were troubling testimonies from workers that called into question TVA's conduct during and after the clean-up efforts. The court decision allows for the families of the workers affected to seek compensation for medical treatments and damages. To date, reports show that over 30 Jacobs Engineering Group workers have died since working on the Kingston coal ash clean-up efforts and 250 workers are sick.

In his nomination hearing, I called on Mr. Ryder to commit to ensure TVA is a good actor in regards to the Kingston Fossil Fuel Power Plant coal ash spill and is transparent to the employees and families that are or may be affected by this issue. He promised me he would do so. However, I want Mr. Ryder and my colleagues to be on notice that I will be working on this issue as an oversight matter and will make sure all the members of the TVA board and the entire workforce at TVA are good actors when it comes to this issue. Thank you.

CONFIRMATION OF RYAN NELSON

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, along with my colleague Senator JAMES E. RISCH, I congratulate Judge Ryan Nelson of Idaho Falls on his Senate confirmation to serve as a judge on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Throughout his diverse legal career, Ryan Nelson developed the necessary tools to serve the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals as a sound and principled jurist. Since 2009, Ryan Nelson has served as general counsel of Idaho Falls-based Melaleuca, Inc. Before joining Melaleuca, Mr. Nelson served in the Federal Government as special counsel for Supreme Court nominations to the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee; as deputy general counsel to the White House Office of Management and Budget; and as deputy assistant attorney general in the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the United States Department of Justice, DOJ. At the DOJ, Mr. Nelson argued 13 cases in the U.S. Courts of Appeals and was division counsel for 50 briefs filed in the Supreme Court. Before joining the DOJ, Mr. Nelson practiced in the Washington, DC, office of Sidley Austin LLP, where he was a member of the firm's appellate, litigation, products liability, and religious liberties practice groups.