

American taxpayers wouldn't have to pay for this, that Mexico would. Now he says: Forget what I said before. Give me a check for \$5 billion more or I am going to waste hundreds of millions of dollars by shutting down the government. That is a cynical, political stunt.

The President's own budget request to Congress for fiscal year 2019 was \$1.6 billion for his wall, not \$5 billion. I opposed this request when he made it in the spring, and I still do. I don't want to appropriate another dime to advance a nebulous and ineffective agenda that I fundamentally oppose, knowing the President will not keep his word and have Mexico pay for it. Our system of divided government requires compromise, so we came up with a bipartisan compromise to meet the President's \$1.6 billion request, with restrictions on where the money could be used and what type of barriers could be built, such as bollard fencing but not a 30-foot concrete wall. Instead of taking "yes" and declaring victory, the President repeatedly moved the goalpost and redefined the fine print. So much for the "Art of the Deal," more the "Art of the Steal."

By manufacturing a crisis over his wall, President Trump appears willing to shutter the doors of the Justice Department, Farm Service Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, the Small Business Administration, the National Park Service, the Department of Transportation, among others—that is just a few—grinding vital services for the American people to a halt, services the American people have paid for with their taxes, all to protect his ego and satisfy his base.

Actions have real-world consequences for hundreds of thousands of Federal employees and their families and millions of Americans who pay taxes and depend on their government to function properly.

Taxpayers don't send their hard-earned money to Washington so the President can shut down their government. Our job is to be good stewards of taxpayer money, not bend to the whim of the President's tweets. Congress controls the power of the purse, not the President. It is our job to make responsible, thoughtful decisions.

There is a bipartisan path forward. We can pass a seven-bill minibus comprised of bipartisan bills that meet the needs of the country or we can pass a six-bill minibus with a continuing resolution for Homeland Security.

Republicans do control the House, the Senate, and the Presidency, and they are in the driver's seat. The only reason the government shuts down on December 22, 3 days before Christmas, is if the President wants it to and the Republican leadership lets the President close the government. Let's hope that doesn't happen.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order and pursuant to rule

XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Justin George Muzinich, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

Mitch McConnell, Chuck Grassley, Jerry Moran, Lisa Murkowski, John Barasso, David Perdue, Ron Johnson, Shelley Moore Capito, John Cornyn, Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, Steve Daines, Michael B. Enzi, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Lamar Alexander, John Kennedy, Deb Fischer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Justin George Muzinich, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 256 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Alexander	Flake	Murkowski
Barrasso	Gardner	Nelson
Blumenthal	Graham	Paul
Blunt	Grassley	Perdue
Boozman	Hatch	Portman
Burr	Heller	Risch
Capito	Hoeven	Roberts
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Collins	Inhofe	Rubio
Coons	Isakson	Sasse
Corker	Johnson	Scott
Cornyn	Jones	Shelby
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	King	Thune
Cruz	Kyl	Toomey
Daines	Lankford	Wicker
Enzi	Lee	Young
Ernst	McConnell	
Fischer	Moran	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Hassan	Sanders
Bennet	Heinrich	Schatz
Booker	Heitkamp	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kaine	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Manchin	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	Menendez	Warner
Duckworth	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Peters	
Harris	Reed	

NOT VOTING—2

McCaskill Tillis

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 55, the nays are 43.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from New York.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 299

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, reserving the right to object and to take a couple minutes to give the Members the facts they need to make a decision tonight, I want to say a couple things.

I am chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. There are many Members in this Chamber who know their responsibility to that committee is greater than any other. I come down tonight to speak on an issue that has been bothering me and has been festering for years, but nobody has ever done anything about it. Nobody has ever done the hard work of saying this is what we need to do, and this is why we need to do it this way.

Well, the House has finally done it this year, and we have done it.

Granted, this is a UC motion and not a debate on the floor. It is because we finally addressed all the issues everybody said about the blue water bill that they didn't like, except that some people would like to say it differently.

Some people want another study even though we have studied it enough to do it. Some people want to wait until the VA says they need to do this, that, or the other. Some people say the VA could call and will tell you the other. Somebody said we don't even have the right numbers of how many people this might affect. Nobody has the right number about how many people will get sick in the future from a disease we don't know exists until the time they contract it.

What happened in this case is very simple. The Veterans' Administration, years ago, decided if someone contracted one of the cancers of which a contributing factor was napalm and Agent Orange, they qualified for benefits, except if they served on the blue water, which is not the rivers, and didn't serve on the ground, then they didn't. So in other words, we have ground troops who fought in Vietnam. We have river fighters in Vietnam who get the benefit. If you served on a Navy ship carrying napalm, but you never touched the ground and only stayed on the blue water, you are not eligible. So we have two classes of victims who are veterans of the United States of America who fought and risked their lives who have been trying for years to get an equal treatment with their other brothers.

This was done for many. I am not going to go over the things I have heard because some of them are outrageous. Nonetheless, everybody looked for a way to try and get some of the benefit back once the VA had it taken over.

What the Congress is about to do—and the House has now passed a bill unanimously this year that will benefit this motion. The Senate has had two hearings, and we have done a lot of work on it. I have done a lot of work on it because I knew how big the issue was. I talked to the people in the VA. I realize everybody in here can go find somebody who says they don't like it. There are people at the VA who don't like it, but let me tell you what I don't like: I don't like having two classes of beneficiaries for disease and health. I don't like not shooting straight with the same people who ought to qualify for the same thing. I really don't like putting off the decision 1 more year until we get one more study. This thing has been studied as long as it needs to be studied. We have the best information we possibly can get. I tried my best to give some of the Members the exact information they asked me for, but the CVA will not give it to me because they don't have it because it is predictive in the future, not present experience.

So I would ask every Member, before they consider casting a "no" vote against this UC, to think about what you are doing. You are saying no to those who had a benefit taken away from them by the VA itself. You are putting off a decision we are going to have to make in the future. You are not allowing us to do what we really ought to do. I would ask each of you to search your heart, search your past, and think about the veterans in your State and cast a vote for doing the right thing for the right people at the right time and not object to the motion made by the Senator from New York.

I have no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I appreciate my colleagues' work on this legislation. I am pretty sure I have never opposed a bill that Senator ISAKSON was involved in. If you are looking for thoroughness in legislation, he is the epitome of it, but on this bill, many of us have been recently made aware of the potential cost growth and budget-sharing and operational pressures that would happen at the VA. They are having a lot of problems anyway, but the VA's analysis shows that the cost could be nearly five times what Congress assumed it was when the House of Representatives passed it—and they did pass it by those strong numbers.

A recent letter from the Congressional Budget Office estimated an increased cost from their first estimate of about \$1.3 billion. So there is clearly more work to do just on figuring out

the spending and the administration of this and the deficit impact this bill will have, while we still want to make sure the veterans who are having the problems get the solutions they need.

There will be a report out in June that is going to maybe narrow down the risks. I am not that excited about any studies, but another concern I have heard from veterans is the pay-for. There will be an increase in the interest rate for housing for some veterans who are trying to buy a house. That isn't enough money to cover the renewed estimates of how much this is.

I think the bill can be made more specific—which is really tough for JOHNNY because he has been working on it, and it will be specific—but we need to get some way to justify the numbers that range between 63,000 people and 440,000 people. That is a pretty big gap on whom we let in. If they have a problem, and we need to take care of it, I think we need to spend a little bit more time doing it. I know that is difficult at the end of a session, but as a result I am going to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, the House of Representatives has already passed this bill unanimously, 382 to 0. The bill is fully paid for, and it is long past time that we do the right thing. We have to right this wrong and help these veterans.

The only thing standing in the way of this bill to help the Vietnam veterans is the U.S. Senate, and that is shameful. We have just days before the Congress is finished. Our blue water veterans are waiting for us, their families are waiting for us, and some of them are dying waiting for us.

These patriotic Americans went to Vietnam. They risked their lives. They were exposed to the chemical, Agent Orange, which we now know is highly toxic. Some of them were exposed on the ground, some while patrolling the rivers, and some were exposed while stationed on ships off the Vietnamese coast. These are called our blue water Navy vets.

Now, all these years later, Agent Orange has made many of them sick and they are severely ill. There have been four different health studies by the CDC about the detrimental effects of Agent Orange exposure, and the blue water Navy veterans have been shown to suffer those exact diseases at the same rate as the other exposed veterans, but some of my colleagues are wrongly insisting on a fifth study.

We do not have another year to wait. Some of our veterans will not last that long. Many blue water veterans have already passed away from the disease associated with Agent Orange exposure.

The 1991 bill to provide coverage for veterans exposed to Agent Orange didn't discriminate between those who served offshore and those who served on rivers or on the ground. Yet due to

a decision by a VA bureaucrat in 2002, the coverage for those who served offshore was wiped out. It doesn't make any sense, and we must help all of our veterans.

It would be tragic; it would be an absolute failure of this institution if we did not respond to this call for help from our veterans community. I urge my colleagues to reconsider their choice to block this legislation. The bill has had multiple hearings. It has gone through multiple drafts over the years. It has been subject to numerous studies.

I have a letter right here to the CBO from the Military-Veterans Advocacy association, literally going through each of the arguments that Senator ENZI just made to explain why those aren't true.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

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

MILITARY-VETERANS ADVOCACY, INC.,
November 30, 2018.

Re CBO Revision to the cost for H.R. 299.

Hon. KEITH HALL,
Director, Congressional Budget Office,
Washington, DC.

DEAR DIRECTOR HALL: I have reviewed the CBO letter of November 29, 2018 to Senator Enzi concerning the score for H.R. 299. By way of introduction I am a retired Navy Commander familiar with manning policies and surface ship operations during and immediately following the Vietnam War. I am currently the Executive Director of Military-Veterans Advocacy (MVA). MVA has been advocating for this bill since 2011. In January of 2015 we met with CBO analysts to provide relevant information.

I personally worked with the House Veterans Affairs Committee to define the geographic points for the current version of the bill. The geographic points are mirrored by the red line on the enclosed chart. The dashed line represents the boundary of the territorial sea which is 12 nautical miles seaward. In other words, the current language in H.R. 299 exactly mirrors the boundaries of the territorial sea. The bold line encompasses the entire theater of operations which, as you can see, is much larger than the area covered by H.R. 299. This same chart was provided to the CBO in January of 2015 and was used as the basis for all subsequent scoring. Accordingly, paragraph 2 of the CBO letter is in error. There was no change in the nautical area.

Additionally, it must be remembered that most ships operated close to shore usually within the 10 fathom curve. This was to maximize the field of fire for operations ashore. Logistics ships conducting underway replenishment would try to approach the gun line to reduce the time the gun ships were offline. Consequently any minor changes in the nautical area would have little or no effect.

In preparation for the CBO meeting, MVA conducted a manpower analysis of the ships that deployed. Records showed that 713 ships deployed to the Vietnam theater of operations. Congressional Research Service placed the number of personnel in entire theater at 229,000. The same CRS publication pegged the number of Navy personnel serving in Vietnam at 174,000. American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics (Feb. 2010) p. 11. Liaison with the

Naval Historical and Heritage Command by MVA and the offices of then Congressman Chris Gibson confirmed that the 174,000 number represented just those in the territorial sea, internal rivers and on land. A analysis by MVA showed 173,500 personnel deployed on ships within the territorial sea. This information was provided to CBO during the January 2015 meeting.

Significant numbers of personnel deployed into the theater are not included in H.R. 299. This includes ships, mostly carriers, assigned to Yankee Station throughout the war. Yankee Station was located at 17° 30' N, 108° 30' E which is 30 nautical miles north of the Demilitarized Zone. Multiple carrier battle groups were kept on station in this area and seldom, if ever, transited south. A corresponding station off South Vietnam, Dixie Station, was the site of one carrier battle group designated for close air support missions in South Vietnam. It was abandoned in the summer of 1966 as more warplanes became available for use in land based airfields in South Vietnam. Dixie Station was located at 11° N and 110° E which is also outside the scope of the bill. Admittedly, some ships from Dixie Station may have entered the territorial sea but they should have been included in 174,000 number.

Navy ships at the time were not manned to full complement. The authorized strength reflected on the Enlisted Distribution and Manning Report (EDVR) included Reserves who in time of war would be mobilized to round out the crew. Instead ships were manned in accordance with the Navy Manning Plan (NMP) that was roughly 80% of the personnel allowance for the ship. Additionally, due to the length of the war, many senior people, both officer and enlisted, made multiple deployments. On the average, about 25% of the personnel deployed into the territorial sea made multiple deployments. This number is based on the rating structure for ships at the time and the pay grade distribution as well as personal and anecdotal knowledge.

As of December 2014, MVA estimated that 80,305 personnel of the 174,000 deployed were covered under existing law. This number, along with the analysis, was presented to CBO. Since that time, additional ships have been added to the ship's list. Additionally, an accelerated death rate has claimed many lives. It should also be remembered that on the average, only one in three Vietnam era veterans seek any kind of VA benefits.

VA claims that the bill will require them to hire additional people to prevent the unacceptable backlog from expanding. This is preposterous. A significant amount of personnel in the backlog are Blue Water Navy veterans. Establishing a presumption will actually help the VA to reduce the backlog.

We believe that the VA estimates are over-inflated and designed to mislead CBO as to the impact of the cost of the bill. Our current analysis supports the May 15, 2018 report and we believe that CBO, in light of the information provided herein, should revise their November 29, 2018 letter.

If you or your staff have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Additionally I will be in Washington, DC, next week and available for meetings.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

JOHN B. WELLS,
Commander USN (Retired),
Executive Director.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I hope all of us can come together to do the right thing by our veterans to make sure they get the coverage that they need and to stand by them in their greatest time of need.

I yield the floor to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, as the lead Republican on this bill, I want to thank my colleague Senator GILLIBRAND for her leadership on this very important issue.

I am a fiscal hawk. I look at every penny spent by the Federal Government. I respect Senator ENZI and Senator LEE and their views, especially on fiscal issues. I urge this body to pass the blue water Navy bill by unanimous consent. This is about justice. This is about a bureaucracy making a decision and really not following the intent of this Congress.

It is correct that something was done wrong in 2002, as Senator GILLIBRAND has already laid out so eloquently. Our U.S. Navy veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam have been denied proper care through the VA. Even though both Houses of Congress extended presumptive health coverage to all illnesses linked to Agent Orange, the VA thwarted congressional intent by choosing the narrowest possible definition of "service in the Republic of Vietnam," which included the country's territorial waters.

Our veterans deserve much better. It is unacceptable that a technicality in the law and a dysfunctional Federal bureaucracy have resulted in the prolonged suffering of thousands of our Nation's heroes. This legislation will ensure that the victims of Agent Orange-related disease receive the care and compensation they have long deserved. I will continue to fight for our veterans just as they have fought for us.

Thank you.

I yield to my fellow Montanan, Senator TESTER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. I want to tell you, the only thing standing in the way of this bill passing is the Senate.

I have a tremendous amount of respect for Senator ENZI. I know, as chair of the Budget Committee, he has a job to do, but we have a job to do.

People sign up for our military, and promises are made. The promises that are made are the cost of war. The Vietnam war has been over for decades, and these folks are dying every day. This deal was Agent Orange exposure. If you served on the mainland of Vietnam, you are covered, but if you were on a boat on the ocean next to Vietnam, you were not.

I am going to tell you something. If you have been around weed spray, which is what Agent Orange is—it is a defoliant—and if you have been around it, you don't have to be sprayed with it to be exposed to it. All you have to be is downwind. These folks on the ocean were downwind. Why do we know that? Because there has been study after study showing that these folks who served on the ocean next to Vietnam

are suffering from a higher level of cancer, hypertension, and heart disease.

We have a job to do here, folks. There are 30 VSOs, maybe more than that—Veterans Service Organizations—that expect us to act and do the right thing here today. I will tell you, the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, JOHNNY ISAKSON, has done a marvelous job this Congress, doing what is right for our veterans and making sure the VA has what is needed to serve our veterans. This is not the VA.

I know there are some in the administration who don't want to see us do this. But the truth is, this is a cost of war. It is our obligation to meet the needs of those folks who have sacrificed for this country. It is time to step up today, folks. We are the only thing standing in the way of this bill being passed and doing right by our Vietnam veterans.

I want to close with one thing. Since I have been ranking member and since I have been a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have talked to a lot of Vietnam veterans. These are the folks who came back from war, and there was nobody at the airport waiting for them—nobody. They couldn't wear their uniforms on the streets of our towns. Now we are going to deny them the benefit that they have earned because they were exposed to Agent Orange. There is no doubt they were exposed to Agent Orange.

It is time to look at ourselves here in the Senate and step up and say: Do you know what? It does cost a lot of money. Do you know what? It has been studied to death, and it can be studied some more, but the bottom line is, we need to do right by the folks who were willing to serve in the Vietnam war. Some of them were drafted. Some of them signed up on their own. But the bottom line is, they all expected to get the benefits. This is a benefit they should get.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. I thank Senator TESTER, Senator ISAKSON, Senator GILLIBRAND, and Senator BLUMENTHAL.

This is the cost of war. This is simple. If you were exposed to poison while serving our country, you deserve the benefits you have earned—no exception. My office holds roundtables with veterans all over the State. We have held more than a dozen over the past several months. We hear Ohio veteran after Ohio veteran raise this issue time and again.

Joe Benedict from Cleveland talked about how important these benefits are to veterans like him. Last week, I met with Mike Kvintus, another blue water Navy veteran from Cambridge, OH. He is 71 years old, and he drove 4 hours from his home in Eastern Ohio to get here. He talked to Members of Congress about what a burden the senseless policy is for so many veterans he knows who have already sacrificed for this

country. He urged us to put politics aside.

That is what Senator TESTER and Senator GILLIBRAND and Senator ISAKSON have asked us to do. Last year, we introduced the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, which would guarantee that all Vietnam veterans exposed to toxic Agent Orange chemicals have equal access to the care and benefits they have earned.

A number of us, myself included, raised the issue with VA Secretary Wilkie, both in private meetings in our office and in the Veterans' Affairs Committee, pressing him to expand benefits to all veterans.

Mr. Kvintus and Mr. Benedict and all of the veterans in our States—Georgia, Connecticut, Montana, New York, and Ohio—we all hear this. We all know that these veterans put themselves in harm's way. It is the cost of war.

We need to show the American people we can work together. We should start by putting partisanship aside, passing this bill tonight, and finally getting the care for veterans that they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues Senator BROWN, Senator TESTER, most importantly, Senator GILLIBRAND, and our good friend Senator ISAKSON.

Senator ISAKSON and Senator GILLIBRAND and I worked together closely on this issue when I was the ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. We engaged the VA through hearings, through meetings, through any way that we could reach the VA so that it would grant the presumption to all veterans who served in the territorial waters of Vietnam during the Vietnam war and were exposed to Agent Orange, to give them simple justice, and to treat them with the same presumption of service-connected disability as their fellow veterans who served in the Vietnam conflict with boots on the ground. If they served in those territorial waters, they deserve that same presumption.

Beyond the abstraction here, I want to talk about the face and voice of this problem, which, for me, is my good friend Gerry Wright.

Gerry Wright rode across this country on a motorcycle. The mantra on the motorcycle was "Sprayed and Betrayed." Gerry Wright is a victim of Agent Orange. He suffers from some of the same conditions as those brave veterans who served with boots on the ground. He joined me, along with Paul Scappaticci, Cynthia Johnson, and Gary Monk on Veterans Day. Just as he rode across the country, we came together to raise awareness about this issue.

If Americans saw and heard those faces and voices, if my colleagues heeded their call, there would be no objection in this body to this legislation. It is all of us who share a responsibility, and it is the VA that has to acknowl-

edge responsibility, as well, for its opposition over the years and its actions blocking simple justice for these veterans.

In the absence of justice from the VA, we have fought over these years—just as the blue water Navy veterans have fought for decades—to achieve that justice, and 5 months ago, that justice seemed within reach when the House unanimously passed, 382 to 0, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act.

The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing on this legislation in August. Members had more than sufficient time to consider the language. There are more than ample funds to cover it. There is no reason—none whatsoever—for delaying this legislation, which has such broad support from the Veterans Service Organizations, stakeholders, and members of this body.

I want to remind my colleagues that this legislation also includes a provision that I led with Senator MORAN and Senator TESTER that would treat with fairness our Korean veterans. It is called the Fairness for Korean DMZ Veterans Act, ensuring all veterans who served in the Korean DMZ, when Agent Orange was used there, that they will also receive the healthcare and benefits they deserve. This measure is about justice for our Vietnam veterans, for our Korean war veterans, and it is a symbol, as well as a tangible and profoundly significant benefit of our commitment to cover the cost of war. This measure is not about a gift. It is not about charity. It is about what we owe the veteran. It is about keeping faith, making sure that we leave none of those veterans behind, and that we give them the simple justice they deserve. They have fought for this recognition over years, and "sprayed and betrayed" will be the appropriate designation if we fail in this duty for them.

Again, I thank Senator GILLIBRAND and Senator DAINES for their leadership, and I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in 1948, in the wake of two World Wars that caused death, destruction and atrocities on a massive and unprecedented scale, the world came together at the nascent United Nations to establish the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These rights, envisioned as the "foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world," included article 19, the right of everyone to freedom of opinion and expression. This, of course, mirrors our First Amendment, which for more than two centuries has served as the cornerstone of our democracy. Article 19 also includes the ability to "receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers," as necessary to the realization of that right. The free and independent press has fulfilled this essential role around the world ever since.

Today is the 70th anniversary of that landmark declaration; yet as we commemorate that historic achievement, I have never been more concerned about the state of freedom of the press. Increasingly, around the world and even here in the United States, governments are actively trying to intimidate and silence the independent media. This year alone, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, over 43 journalists have been murdered for nothing more than publishing facts and informing the public. Countless others have been harassed and threatened. President Trump, who has called the press an "enemy of the people" and routinely denigrates journalists who do not portray him in a favorable light, has inspired the world's autocrats to decry "fake news" and imprison and even assassinate journalists who courageously report on corruption and other government misconduct.

Eleanor Roosevelt, one of our country's greatest defenders of human rights, served as chairwoman of the UN commission that wrote the Universal Declaration. Its commitment to the "inherent dignity" and "equal and inalienable rights" of all people is a testament to her vision of a more humane, just, and peaceful world, but like any such statement of principles, the declaration is aspirational. It has tangible meaning only to the extent that people apply it in practice. As the oldest democracy whose First Amendment has inspired countless people on every continent, it is incumbent on us all to defend the right of free expression enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration, here and around the world.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, last week the Senate passed a second continuing resolution for fiscal year 2019, providing short-term funding for