

and her commitment to the Native peoples of our country.

One example is a bill that Senator HEITKAMP and I worked on together called the POWER Act. The whole focus is to get more legal representation for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. When we were working on this bill together, she was obviously a huge advocate, but she came back to me and said: We need to make this especially focused on the Native communities. That was her idea. That was in the bill. The bill was passed in the Congress and signed into law 2 months ago. I have no doubt that bill, for which she was the strongest advocate, is going to make lives better for women throughout our country who have gone through horrible experiences, particularly in the Native communities, whether in North Dakota or Alaska or New Mexico, and that was because of her hard work.

So I want to echo what so many others have said. In those areas and so many others, it has been my honor to serve with Senator HEITKAMP. I know she is going to continue to serve her community, State, and country in important ways. My best to her.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 1:18 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

MORNING BUSINESS—(Continued)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 2

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 3:45 p.m. today, the Senate vote on adoption of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will re-

sume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jonathan A. Kobes, of South Dakota, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kobes nomination?

Mr. ROUNDS. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 258 Ex.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—50

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

The VICE PRESIDENT. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 50. The Senate being equally divided, the Vice President votes in the affirmative, and the nomination is confirmed.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PORTMAN). The Senator from South Dakota.

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

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

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the 115th Congress is drawing to a close, and it has been a good 2 years. Our goal 2 years ago was simple: to make life better for American families—which is exactly what we have done. We knew that

a huge part of making life better for American families was in the expanding of opportunity and putting more money in their pockets, so we passed a historic reform of our outdated Tax Code that slashed tax rates for families and removed barriers to economic growth.

It is already producing results. Since we passed tax reform a year ago this December, we have seen unemployment drop to its lowest rate in almost 50 years, and we have seen job openings reach a record high. For the past 7 months, there have been more job openings than there have been Americans looking for work. We have seen company after company dispense raises or bonuses or boost benefits for their employees. We have seen the best wage growth since the great recession and more.

Most importantly, the economic benefits of tax reform are reaching the people who need them the most. During the Obama administration, what economic prosperity there was tended to be concentrated in large metropolitan areas, but under Republican government, growth and prosperity are reaching small cities and rural families and communities. Thanks to tax reform, a lot of families are finding it easier to pay their bills and to put a little bit away for the future.

Yet, of course, tax reform is far from the only thing we did in this Congress to improve the lives of the American people. Along with the White House, we lifted burdensome regulations. We enacted legislation to improve career and technical education programs. We passed legislation to make it easier for Main Street banks and credit unions to lend money to small businesses and farmers and ranchers. We passed the largest pay increase in nearly a decade for our men and women in uniform.

We delivered real reforms for our veterans through the VA MISSION Act. This legislation streamlined the VA's community care programs to help ensure veterans receive efficient, timely, quality care. Once fully implemented, it will also expand caregiver assistance to disabled pre-9/11 veterans—an overdue benefit for generations of our heroes. We also modernized the Veterans Benefits Administration's appeals system to develop a quicker, more responsive system for veterans.

On the national security front, we have reinvested in our Nation's military to ensure that our troops are equipped not only for today's missions but to meet the threats of the future. A recent report from the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission outlined how dangerously our military superiority has eroded—to the point at which it would be difficult for us to win a war against two major powers. This alarming reduction in our military's readiness is why Republicans have made rebuilding our military such a priority in this Congress. There is no better way to ensure peace for our country than to make sure that the

U.S. military is the strongest, best equipped fighting force in all the world.

On the healthcare front this Congress, we passed the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act to address the nationwide opioid epidemic. This bipartisan legislation reflected ideas and input from no fewer than 72 of our Members here in the Senate to support prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts.

We repealed ObamaCare's individual mandate tax, which forced patients to buy insurance that they didn't want and couldn't afford. We also eliminated ObamaCare's Independent Payment Advisory Board, which would have empowered a board of unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats to make substantial changes to Medicare.

We passed legislation to give terminally ill patients access to experimental care.

In February, we also passed the longest extension of the State Children's Health Insurance Program in the program's history.

Then, of course, there are the many excellent judges we have confirmed to the Federal bench—judges who can be relied on to uphold the law and the Constitution and to give anyone who comes before their benches a fair shake.

TRIBUTE TO ORRIN HATCH

Mr. President, as usual, more than one of our accomplishments this Congress would not have been possible without the leadership of Senator HATCH. He spearheaded the historic tax reform bill that is putting more money in the pockets of the American people, and he is also responsible for the longest extension of the State Children's Health Insurance Program in the program's history.

In his 40-plus years of public service, he has been a powerful voice for the people of Utah and for all Americans. He has fought for economic growth and job creation, for trade policies that benefit American companies and American workers, for judges who will uphold the Constitution and the rule of law, and for fiscal responsibility and intellectual property rights.

Senator HATCH has long been a leader on the issue of religious liberty. Together with the late Senator Ted Kennedy, he authored the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to protect Americans' First Amendment right to live in accordance with their religious beliefs.

A stalwart conservative, he has nevertheless known how to reach across the aisle to get things done for the American people. No legislator alive today has had as many pieces of legislation that he or she has sponsored signed into law by the President.

It is difficult to imagine the Senate without ORRIN HATCH. I have been privileged to serve with Senator HATCH throughout my time in the Senate, including on the Senate Finance Committee, which he chairs. It is hard to imagine his not being there, but the impact he has had on the Senate will

not soon be forgotten. He leaves a record of legislative achievement and an example of character and leadership, of fierce conviction paired with a consummate gentlemanliness. There are few people to whom the word "statesman" can be applied more fittingly.

I wish him the very best in his well-deserved retirement. I know he will enjoy having more time to spend with Elaine, his wife, with his children and his numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well as, hopefully, having some extra time to follow the Utah Jazz.

I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

AGRICULTURE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2018—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session, that the Chair lay before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 2, and that the final 10 minutes before the vote be equally divided between the managers.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair lays before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 2, which the clerk will report by title.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2), to provide for the reform and continuation of agricultural and other programs of the Department of Agriculture through fiscal year 2023, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment and the Senate agree to the same: Signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of December 10, 2018.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as much time as I may consume.

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

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I rise today for the final time representing the great people of Indiana here in the U.S. Senate. My 6 years representing Hoosiers in this body and the 6 years I spent as a Congressman for the Second District of Indiana before this have been among the great honors of my life.

I am the grandson of immigrants—immigrants who came here with nothing except the dream of America—a dream that says that any opportunity can come true, that if you work hard, you can accomplish anything.

My dad was in the CCC. For all of our young pages here who have no idea what the CCC is, it was the Civilian Conservation Corps. It was for teenagers your age, back in the Depression, who were asked to go and try to help raise money for their family so that the other family members could eat.

My dad was shipped to Idaho to build bridges. Today we call that infrastructure. Back then, we said it was building bridges. He built bridges all throughout the Pacific Northwest, having grown up in the Lower East Side of New York City and having never been west of the Hudson River in his life until that point. It was America that gave him that chance.

My brothers and sisters were the first generation to ever go to college. That is how America works. You work hard, and each generation builds on the next. We are so lucky to live in this country that is so blessed and that gives us this opportunity, but we have a responsibility here to meet the challenges that have been given to us.

I want to take this opportunity to discuss some of the things I have learned in my time in Congress and to share a few thoughts on how the work that happens here, and how it will happen in coming years, is going to be absolutely essential to how our Nation moves forward and succeeds.

In my 12 years here in the Capitol, I have prided myself on the relationships I have built and on the bipartisan nature of working together. I have been found to be one of the most bipartisan Members. My friend HEIDI, who is down the aisle here, who gave a wonderful speech this morning, was my partner on so much of this. I would never have been able to achieve for Hoosiers so much of this without working together in a bipartisan fashion.

My friend TODD YOUNG is across the way. He is the other Senator from Indiana. Our focus has been on how to make life better, whether it meant assisting constituents or resolving an issue with a Federal agency.

In one case, a pizza parlor owner came up to me. He was 90 years old. Now he is 93. He said: My streetlight is out. You are my Senator. It needs to be fixed before the big game this weekend.

I called the mayor, and it was fixed. He was asked that weekend, and he said: Of course, I got it fixed. I called my Senator. That is what I did.

We are multitasking in this job. It is to make lives better.

I was blessed to work with my friend RON JOHNSON, the Senator from Wisconsin. We worked on legislation called the Right to Try Act. It means giving people who are sick the chance to get medication they need.

We were told: There is no shot. This can't get done.

We had zero votes at the time. When it was done, we had 100—100. A young man from my State, Jordan McLinn, has the chance to get the medication he needs now. People all over the Nation do. Other kids with Duchenne