

Murray	Sasse	Thune
Nelson	Schatz	Tillis
Perdue	Schumer	Udall
Peters	Scott	Van Hollen
Portman	Shaheen	Warner
Reed	Shelby	Warren
Risch	Smith	Whitehouse
Roberts	Stabenow	Wicker
Rounds	Sullivan	Wyden
Sanders	Tester	Young

NAYS—13

Barrasso	Johnson	Paul
Cotton	Kennedy	Rubio
Enzi	Kyl	Toomey
Flake	Lee	
Grassley	Murkowski	

The conference report was agreed to.
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The Senator from Montana.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY RELATING TO "RETURNS BY EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS AND RETURNS BY CERTAIN NONEXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS"—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 630, S.J. Res. 64.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the joint resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 64) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of the Treasury relating to "Returns by Exempt Organizations and Returns by Certain NonExempt Organizations."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the provisions of 5 USC 802, there are 10 hours of debate equally divided.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I just want to make a very short statement and then flesh it out a little further tomorrow.

The resolution we are about to take up will help to protect our democracy, and it will hold special interests accountable. I do not believe we can continue to allow special interests to hide under the cover of darkness, as they have such great influence on our elections. The American people have spoken. I think they have made it clear that they are very tired of the dark money in our elections and that the decision by the administration to allow megadonors and special interests to further hide is not acceptable.

The vote is simple. The vote is for more transparency by these special interests. Quite frankly, it has major impacts on our elections. I just went through one, and I will talk a little more about it tomorrow.

The bottom line is that this resolution is one that, I believe, will add more transparency, will help our de-

mocracy, will help both Democrats and Republicans know who is trying to influence the elections, and will also allow us to determine whether foreign entities—which is, by the way, illegal—are trying to influence our elections.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

2008 HOUSING CRISIS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, this is a special time of the year—Christmas. All of us are in a hurry to get home. Our children are waiting for us to get home. Our families can't wait to share the joy of the day. We want fun around the fire and the household. I would hate to be the grinch who stole Christmas in the Senate. I don't want to think that 10 years from now, if only I hadn't said this, this wouldn't have happened or, maybe, if I had seen it coming, I would have done something.

In 2008 and 2009, the Senator from Montana, Senator HOEVEN, and I, among others, went through the 2008–2009 housing crisis that ended up in mortgage-backed securities failures, in all of the trouble that happened on Wall Street—Dodd-Frank—and in the collapse of our economy. It was the worst collapse of our economy ever since 1927. We all remember what happened. We ended up getting the TARP. We ended up having crisis after crisis. Slowly but surely, we guaranteed enough stuff to get the market strong enough to begin to build back. Just now, it is back where it ought to be from the standpoint of values, which is a decade later.

Quite frankly, the housing market is not as strong. Its only strength is that there are not that many houses for sale. That is because people aren't putting them on the market. Builders can't build specs, and there is not near the credit that there should be. People who have resales are putting them off and fixing the houses up because they are staying longer. So they are selling them for more money.

On the Multiple Listing Service, in Atlanta, GA, when I left my company in 1998, there were 140,000 houses on the market in Atlanta in June of 1998. Now there are about 60,000. That is not because the market has failed. It is just that there is not that big a housing stock out there, and it is for all of the reasons I said. In terms of financing being readily available, it is readily available, and that is what I want to talk about.

I was thinking the other day. I heard an ad on the radio about no-doc loans, and I heard an ad about the VA's 100-percent loan—that we will approve what the banks will not—and stuff that I knew was patently wrong. So I turned to the business section, which I used to look at as a businessman every day but don't anymore because I don't have the decisions to make. I am glad that I did because it taught me a lesson, and I want to read you this from last Sunday's paper: How about a loan with no down payment, zero-down mortgages,

and jumbo loans? We will approve what the banks won't.

That is exactly the thing that took us down the wrong path in 2008 and 2009. Greed took over common sense. Then, common sense failed, and we did some bad things. All of the things in the mortgage-backed securities market took place all at once. What happened was, because money was chasing rates and rates were starting to rise—and now they are starting to rise; that is happening in our economy—the instruments that yielded higher rates than the going rate for regular credit started being created to be sold and packaged on Wall Street. You would make money on the sale of the security, but you would also fund the mortgage at a higher yield to you, the investor, which is just fine and dandy until the person at the lower end of the spectrum, who gets approved with a no-document, no-down payment loan, ends up qualifying for it, gets it, does not make a payment, and gets foreclosed on. All of a sudden, the credit is lost. The house is lost. The same thing that happened in 2008–2009 starts happening all over again.

I am not saying that we are on the verge of a collapse. What I am saying is that it is a carbon copy—I mean a carbon copy—of exactly what was happening in 2008 and 2009 when the markets collapsed. We can't afford another one. Banking is stronger today for a lot of reasons. It is mainly because there aren't nearly as many of them. There aren't nearly as many of them because a lot of them failed. In the South—in Atlanta, GA, my State—we lost more than almost anybody in the country, simply because the capacity was not there.

As I said about the housing market, the number of houses available in the marketplace is much lower than it was back in the 1990s and back in 2005, 2006, and 2007. It is down because there is not as much to put on the market. There is not enough credit to finance it and put it on the market and have spec loans. People are very tight with their money because a lot of them got burned in 2008 and 2009. They see their parents who lost their houses and their savings. They see values collapse. They couldn't get through their college by borrowing against their homes because their home equity loans died.

There are lots of folks out there who are trying to put together instruments and package them in an attractive way to sell them on the New York markets and through mortgage-backed securities and to attract low-credit borrowers or young borrowers who aren't totally prepared to borrow the way they should be. It is of higher risk for us. It is a high risk for our economy. The middlemen make a lot of money early, but on a 30-year mortgage, you don't want to just make your money early. You want to have somebody with skin in the game for all 30 years.

So I just want to say to all of my colleagues—and I am talking to myself as

much as I am talking to you; I am not talking at myself; I am talking with myself—that we have to be careful if we see things happening that happened in our recent past that we didn't learn from. If we let them happen again, they will be worse. Then you will just say: Well, I wish I had seen it coming.

It is coming. Read the paper with me. I am going to come to the floor a lot in the next few months just to kind of monitor it myself. I see the creep of easy credit, the creep of no documentation, the creep of no underwriting for the quality of the borrower, and the creep of greed coming into the marketplace. The greater it gets, the worse the economy is and the faster it goes bad, and we all go bad with it.

So I just came out to wish everybody a Merry Christmas. I don't want to be the grinch who stole Christmas, but it is happening, and it is being advertised in our newspapers. It is happening in our cities, and it is happening in our backyard. We need to make sure that we don't let it get away from us because, if we do, we will have only ourselves to blame.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my remarks, the Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY, be recognized.

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

DEFENSE BUDGET

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I don't know how, but a lot of people back home have gotten in their heads that defending America is a complicated issue and that it is the kind of issue they think is going to have to be decided in Washington by a lot of smart people and all that, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The reality is, defending America is just common sense. It is called priority—something we didn't have in the last administration. We all—every American citizen—need to be responsible for our own national security. I am going to be coming here each week to outline the common sense for our common defense—what we are working on here in Washington—for families back home.

Today I will talk about how we face the urgency in funding our national defense. It is very simple. Again, it is common sense. Without action to exempt the military from sequestration or to reach a budget agreement, once again, we will have to face the devastating cuts of the Budget Control Act in our military. We could handle it in other areas, and I am very supportive of it but not in the military at this particular time.

I will tell you why. We know what the result will be. We saw it during the Obama administration. Without sufficient, sustained, and predictable funding, we will squander the progress the military has made over the past 2 years, which is to improve readiness,

increase procurement for critical capabilities, and investment in future technologies. This is just in the past 2 years. We need to continue to make progress.

We also need to implement the national defense strategy. The Trump administration's national defense strategy correctly prioritized strategic competition—and that is with China and Russia—but the effective strategies are going to have to be matched with resources.

This chart is from the National Defense Strategy Commission. That is this document right here. This is put together by a number of very top people chosen by Democrats and Republicans. In fact, Senator JON KYL was a member of this Commission before he got to the Senate. He and I will be talking about this and complementing each on this tomorrow. This chart we are looking at right now gives you an idea of what is happening with some of the other countries. We have China, which is actually increasing—they are passing us in terms of their number of ships. This is true with everything else. It looks like they will pass us in about 2023.

In this country, we are kind of used to having the very best of everything. Ever since World War II, we thought that was our mission.

There is a quote out of this document we have right here that has been so brilliantly described by so many people. It says: "Put bluntly, the U.S. military could lose the next state-versus-state war it fights." These are the top military and nonmilitary people in our society who conducted this study. It has been heralded as the most accurate study by all parties having to do with our Nation's defense.

At a minimum, next year's defense budget should at least be \$733 billion. That is a floor, not a ceiling. I have to say, that represents a no-growth budget because, in fiscal year 2018, we went from \$700 billion. Then, in fiscal year 2019, we went to \$716 billion, and then this will actually be going up to \$733 billion. If that happens—do the math—that is an increase of 2.1 percent, which is not even a growth. It is a no-growth budget.

I have to say, General Dunford, Secretary Mattis, and the rest of them have called for fully implementing the national defense strategy, which would require between 3 to 5 percent of real growth.

On both sides of the aisle, we have had some individuals who are advocating for cutting defense spending because of the increased deficit. I am concerned about the increased deficit, but we also have to have this priority. We have to have America catch up. We are not used to having to catch up defensewise, but we are now.

Defense spending is not the primary reason for our increased debt. We could eliminate the entire Pentagon budget, and the deficit would actually grow. Here is why.

Over the past 10 years, our national debt has grown 86 percent. During the same time, mandatory spending has grown 41 percent. All that time, defense spending has been cut by 3 percent. It has been cut by 3 percent. Meanwhile, constant dollar defense spending dropped \$200 billion between the years 2010 and 2015. In 2010, the total budget was \$794 billion. In 2015, 5 years later, it dropped to \$586 billion. That is a drop of \$200 billion. In percentage terms, it is a 24-percent drop. This hasn't happened since the end of the Korean war.

We have to do something about the growing debt. The only way we can actually curtail it is to address the growth in mandatory spending. There are a lot of programs in mandatory spending that could be cut. Again, if you cut out the entire defense budget, it would not reduce or eliminate the debt.

As mandatory programs drive spending growth to new highs, debt held by the American people has correspondingly increased. If we don't do something about this, interest on the debt will surpass defense spending by fiscal year 2023.

As we see from this gray line here, this is the net increase in spending compared to the total spending of non-defense. It passes nondefense in 2023.

The Obama administration viewed the world as they wanted to see it, not as it was. The assumption that Russia was a strategic partner was and is fundamentally flawed and profoundly misguided. It has cost us dearly.

Today we are faced with the reality that those decisions not only weakened our national security by sacrificing our military advantages over Russia, but it will be costly to recoup the capabilities that President Obama had chosen to cut with his lack of priorities for the military. That is the reality.

I think this President has done a good job in outlining who our pure competitors are. We are talking about countries that have things better than we have. We are going to be talking about that in some detail tomorrow.

When the military is forced to reduce spending, it is going to have to take tradeoffs between lowering readiness, reducing force structure, and just not modernizing. In this case, we suffered through all three of those in the last administration.

In the meantime, our adversaries—Russia and China—have increased their own military spending and focused on force structure and modernization. The size of the Chinese Navy will soon pass the size of the U.S. Navy. There it is right here. It shows we are almost ready for those lines to cross in 2018. They will cross in 2022.

Over the 2000 and 2030 timeframe, the U.S. Navy is growing at an average rate of about one ship every 2 years, while the Chinese Navy is growing more than 20 times faster, at an average rate of about 10 ships annually. The quality and capability of those ships is increasing as well.

As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I see no bigger imperative than this: to fully fund our defense and to fully implement the national defense strategy.

When I talk to people out in the real world—I am talking about going out to Oklahoma and talking to groups of people—and they find out it was true that ever since World War II, we have had the occasion of being No. 1 in all areas of our equipment, such as artillery and other things, they are shocked to find out that the Chinese and the Russians actually have equipment that is better than ours. We will be specifically talking about this tomorrow.

With that, I thank my friend from Iowa. By unanimous consent, I think he is the next speaker after my remarks.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Oklahoma.

H.R. 2

Mr. President, I want to thank Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman ROBERTS and Ranking Member STABENOW for their hard work in putting together the 2018 farm bill. It was a long and difficult process, and they negotiated in good faith.

I also want to thank my friend and colleague from Iowa, Senator JONI ERNST, for her dedication to reforming the Conservation Reform Program. In the Midwest, we refer to that as the CRP. The program's intent is to reduce land erosion, improve water quality, and help wildlife populations. Over the years, it has strayed from its intended focus.

Some landowners have been receiving more than \$300 per acre to enroll their entire farms in the CRP. That puts young and beginning farmers at a competitive disadvantage. In fact, even well-established farmers have had rented land taken away from them because it was enrolled in the CRP at lucrative rates paid by the government that the individual farmer could not compete with.

Farmers can't and shouldn't have to compete with the government, especially with the current debt our country has. Senator ERNST has been an advocate for these reforms, and these reforms have been accomplished as a result of her efforts.

Unfortunately, the 2018 farm bill did not include another critical reform that would help young and beginning farmers, that is my payment limitations amendment. This is a process I have been trying to get accomplished and have been unsuccessful through at least this farm bill and two previous farm bills.

Each time I have been successful in getting these reforms throughout the U.S. Senate—in the 2014 farm bill, I was able to get them through both the House and Senate in the same form—but do you know what? In the dark rooms of conference committee meet-

ings and phone calls, people who don't like to save the taxpayers money and who don't want to help young and beginning farmers and medium-sized and smaller farmers and who worry more about the wealthy farmers have been able to undercut the effort, even when a majority of both bodies has supported it.

I didn't give up as a result of the 2014 bill and the disappointment there. I got through the U.S. Senate those hard caps on what any one farmer can get and to make sure the people who benefited from it were, in fact, farmers, not nonfarmers who maybe had a distant relationship from some farming operation, maybe even being on Wall Street.

Once again, I was undercut in this effort to save the taxpayers money and to concentrate our farm bill on medium- and small-sized farmers who need the help, when things have happened naturally or politically or internationally that are beyond their control that drive down prices or acts of God such as a drought. It is the small- or medium-sized farmers who need the help from the government, not these big farmers and corporate farmers whom we are going to end up helping, the way this bill is written.

To say the least, I am disappointed that the bill makes more subsidies available to the wealthiest farmers and many nonfarmers. I would say that is a severe understatement. I am more than just a little disappointed, especially when the impact of large farmers being allowed to manipulate the system is that young and beginning farmers face even larger hurdles.

So far, the bill has not won much praise outside of the Washington lobby groups whose members will receive more taxpayer subsidies from a few select changes.

At its core, farm policy should be a limited safety net to help farmers weather the storm of natural disasters, unpredictable commodity markets, and other unforeseen challenges. This bill goes well beyond that limited safety net.

Today we have a farm bill that is intentionally written—I want to emphasize “intentionally written”—to help the largest farmers receive unlimited subsidies from the Federal Government. There is no other way to characterize what the conference committee has done in this area.

In the last farm bill, both bodies of Congress approved a commonsense amendment I offered that would have limited the abuses related to title I subsidies. This time the House would not even have that debate—no debate on my reforms. The Senate did, however, include it in their bill.

However, the 2014 conference committee put in a loophole that exempted family farms, which account for approximately 95 percent of farms, from the new rules. This bill makes their original loophole even larger. So as bad as the 2014 farm bill was, this new 5-

year farm bill widens that loophole almost beyond explaining.

The new farm bill will allow nieces and nephews to qualify as part of a family farm without any new requirements that they actually have to work. Despite what some of my colleagues may say, this is not about helping nieces and nephews get into farming. Why? Because every person who really farms already qualifies for title I payments by themselves without this new gimmick. So this new gimmick is just to award this big taxpayer money to people who aren't actually working the farm.

Allowing nieces and nephews to qualify as part of a large farm entity merely allows larger farmers to get more subsidies. They just need to hire the right lawyer to structure the farming operation in a certain way, and they can then receive unlimited taxpayer subsidies.

For years I have been using this figure about the top 10 percent of the farmers receiving more than 70 percent of the subsidies from the government. That is only one of the many reasons it is so hard for young and beginning farmers to get started.

I know it is hard to believe, but I have never heard a single young or beginning farmer tell me that the way to help the young and beginning farmer is to give more money out of the U.S. Treasury to the largest farmers.

Many farmers are hurting from the downturn in commodity prices. That has been a downturn over the last three or four years. Corn and soybeans have had significant price declines in those years. If only all crops were as lucky as cotton, with its high prices ensured by the Federal Government over the last year, then all people would be, what we say, “living in the clover.”

However, market corrections do not justify Congress expanding subsidy loopholes that only benefit the wealthy—especially at a time when our long-term fiscal situation is as bad as it has ever been.

The last time we passed a farm bill, our national debt was \$17 trillion. Today it stands at \$21.8 trillion, and we all know that it is growing. So whether it is talking about saving the taxpayers' money or whether it is talking about targeting the farm program to small and medium-sized farmers as opposed to the wealthy, or whether it is talking about getting young people into farming, Congress needs to get serious about spending.

This bill represents an open-ended spigot of taxpayer subsidies in the title I programs of the bill. Because of this, when we cast our vote about 1 hour ago, I voted against this farm bill, which, otherwise, is a pretty basic program. We could have done a lot more to save the taxpayers money, and we didn't.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about some very good

news. After months of bipartisan negotiations, the Senate has finally passed the new farm bill. This bill will probably not get as much attention as some other news going on right now in politics. That is too bad, because the farm bill is a significant piece of legislation that touches the lives of every person every day in Minnesota and throughout the country. This bill is crucial to our Nation's farmers, and our farmers are producing the food and the fuel that feed our Nation and the world.

It is also good news because Congress has come together to get this done. At a time when so many Americans are frustrated with divisive politics, it is worth pausing over the way Members of both parties have come together to produce such an important bill through hard work and compromise.

In the Senate, we came together with a wide range of priorities from every region of the country. Senators representing crops like cotton and peanuts worked together with Senators from States like mine, with soybeans and corn, to reach this final compromise. We were able to find agreement because of the leadership that was provided by Chairman ROBERTS and Ranking Member STABENOW on the Senate committee and Chairman CONAWAY and Ranking Member COLLIN PETERSON, from Minnesota, on the House committee.

When I became a Senator just under 1 year ago, I fought for a seat on the Agriculture Committee, and I immediately formed a farm bill working group in Minnesota so that I could hear from farmers and ranchers, foresters and researchers, rural community leaders and Tribes, as well as experts in nutrition, energy, and conservation, to make sure that Minnesota's priorities were included in this farm bill. From corn growers in Goodhue County in the southeastern part of Minnesota to sugar beet farmers in the northeastern part of the State, I heard the same message: We must pass a farm bill this year.

The farm bill is so vitally important to Minnesotans because agriculture is the foundation of Minnesota's economy. In Minnesota, agriculture generates \$121 billion in economic activity and supports 400,000 jobs. Minnesota is No. 1 in sugar beets, No. 2 in corn processing, and No. 3 in soybeans. We raise the second most hogs, and we raise the most turkeys.

So working on the farm bill, one of my first stops was with COLLIN PETERSON in Ada, MN, where we met with farmers and rural development leaders, and everyone in that community told me how the farm bill directly affects them. So I directed my staff to continue these listening sessions, and I am proud to say that we had almost 50 of them around the State. Meeting with the working group and touring farms and rural development projects around Minnesota have made the issues facing rural America and our farmers one of my top priorities here in the Senate.

Minnesotans have given me some great ideas about what to fight for here in Washington, DC.

I heard from young farmers in Minnesota—like organic farmer Matthew Fitzgerald of Hutchinson, and Eric Sannerud, a hops farmer in Foley—about the difficulty beginning farmers face in accessing USDA programs. So I pushed for the farm bill to include provisions to support our next generation of farmers with my friend and colleague Senator HEIDI HEITKAMP of North Dakota and Senator ANGUS KING of Maine.

After visiting the Good Acre in Falcon Heights and learning about local food systems, I joined a bipartisan effort to better connect farmers with their communities. So I am grateful for the leadership of Senator SHERROD BROWN from Ohio and Senator SUSAN COLLINS from Maine on this important issue.

In March, I visited the Haubenschild Dairy Farm in Princeton, MN. Three generations of the Haubenschild family run this dairy farm. As we toured their impressive operation, this family talked to me about how dairy farmers have been hit hard by low commodity prices. This was a message that was echoed by dairy farmers across the State, who have been a really important part of my farm bill working group.

So when I got back to Washington, I was determined to help fight for strong safety net programs that support dairy farmers, along with many of my Senate colleagues. A bipartisan coalition of Senators from dairy States worked to make sure that this farm bill builds on the improvements made to the dairy safety net in the March omnibus bill.

The final version of this bill does just that. This farm bill expands gains made in the dairy safety net, especially for small and medium-sized farms. There are still a lot of challenges ahead for dairy farmers, but hopefully these provisions will help Minnesota's farmers who are facing falling milk prices.

Many farmers told me they were worried about skyrocketing healthcare costs. So during a visit to Fergus Falls, MN, healthcare leaders from Douglas County Hospital and Lake Region Healthcare spoke to us about the unique health challenges facing rural communities. In Minnesota we are focused on finding innovative solutions to address rural health challenges. It is clear that Federal agencies need to do more to examine the barriers people face who are accessing care in rural communities.

That is why I helped to shepherd the bipartisan Rural Health Liaison Act through the Agriculture Committee, and I helped to introduce this bill with Senator DOUG JONES of Alabama and Senator MIKE ROUNDS of South Dakota. The Rural Health Liaison Act will create a new position in the Department of Agriculture to ensure that the USDA is working with other agencies

and departments, like Health and Human Services, to coordinate efforts. This is an important step toward improving rural health across America.

When I talked to Minnesotans from the Red River Valley, I heard about how important the sugar program is to maintain their competitiveness. I fought during the floor debates to sustain this program on behalf of sugar beet farmers in my State and across the upper Midwest.

I advocated to make sure that the farm bill funds a preparedness and response program to national animal disease outbreaks and a vaccine bank to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease. This was a bipartisan effort, again, with my fellow Minnesota Senator, AMY KLOBUCHAR, and Senator JOHN CORNYN of Texas.

At the poultry testing lab in Willmar, MN, I heard about the need for vaccine banks and animal disease readiness. When Minnesota was hit hard by the avian flu outbreak that resulted in the death of nearly 9 million turkeys and chickens, we knew that this program was necessary.

Other Minnesota priorities came from conversations with folks across the State. This bill advances conservation programs so farmers have the opportunity to start conservation strategies and to keep them going long into the future to protect the environment and increase productivity. Minnesotans use these programs almost more than any other State.

Minnesotans know that the transition to clean energy presents a great economic opportunity for rural and farming communities. As the top Democrat on the Rural Development and Energy Subcommittee, I introduced legislation outlining a road map for a strong energy title in this farm bill, and a bipartisan coalition of Senators urged the committee to fund and strengthen these many successful energy programs at the USDA.

One example is the Rural Energy for America Program, which helps agriculture producers, local businesses, and rural communities to develop energy efficiency and renewable energy projects that create jobs, cut energy bills, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Rural communities will benefit greatly from the mandatory funding given to this program.

Another issue emphasized by rural development leaders across Minnesota is the need that people have for access to reliable and affordable internet service. Broadband access is critical to farmers using modern equipment and for rural families trying to access healthcare, education, and jobs.

This bill incorporates my Community Connect Grant Program Act to increase funding for this important effort to create better broadband access to unserved remote rural and Tribal communities. This provision is a step forward and one of the many things we need to do to connect Minnesota and people across the Nation with affordable, reliable internet service.

This farm bill also expands access to jobs and agriculture for returning servicemembers by encouraging the USDA to assist veterans in joining the agriculture workforce. I pushed for this provision, which will help veterans have the resources they need to take advantage of these opportunities.

Today, as our farmers face deep uncertainty regarding tariffs and the impacts they have, this bill includes bipartisan provisions to increase funding for USDA trade promotion activities, because we all know that international markets are essential to many farmers.

All farmers deserve these opportunities, and now there will be greater inclusion of Tribal products in Federal trade promotion efforts and activities to make sure that Native farmers aren't missing out on new international markets. I want to thank my colleagues, Senator JOHN HOEVEN of North Dakota and Senator STEVE DAINES of Montana, for working with me on this issue.

It is great that this farm bill includes these provisions, and I hope farmers will begin to feel some relief, but the core trade problem remains.

Don't get me wrong—I am committed to standing up to our trade partners and holding them accountable when they engage in unfair trade practices. But the chaotic approach we have seen to implementing these tariffs lacks a coherent message and a coherent strategy, and we need to solve this problem for the health of Minnesota and American farm country.

Farmers are on the frontlines of this trade war, and the cycle of retaliation has no end in sight. In this farm bill, we begin to increase access to international markets, but we still need a long-term plan to reopen and preserve the markets farmers rely on.

As I have already mentioned, the farm bill touches the lives of every American. The farm bill provides important stability and predictability to Minnesota farmers, ranchers, rural communities, and Indian Country, while also sustaining hundreds of thousands of Minnesota jobs.

It is important to remember that the farm bill reaches beyond rural development, commodity programs, and trade. The nutrition programs reauthorized by this farm bill are of vital importance, and the data backs this up. According to the Agriculture Department, in 2017, 15 million households with over 40 million people—including millions of children across the country—live in households that are food insecure, which is a fancy way of saying that many people have no clear idea of where all of their meals are going to come from in a certain week. We need to do better than this in America. That is why farmers and ranchers in my State tell me how important they think it is to support nutrition programs, and I am glad this is reflected in the final farm bill.

We have passed this bill in the Senate, and I hope the House will pass it in

the next few days. Then the President needs to sign it into law to give farmers and ranchers the certainty they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

FIRST STEP ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this morning the majority leader announced that the Senate will soon take up a revised version of the FIRST STEP Act, which will provide a number of long-needed reforms to our criminal justice system.

I have long been a supporter of these reforms after I saw the positive impact in my home State of Texas back in 2007. Then, in response to a steadily growing prison population, Texas began enacting reforms to reduce recidivism through programs like job training and vocational education. This, of course, allows prisoners to spend their time in prison preparing themselves for life outside of prison. The results were pretty significant. We saw a reduction in both incarceration and crime rates by double digits at the same time. Let me say that again. We saw a reduction in both incarceration and crime rates by double digits at the same time. Not only does this lead to massive savings of taxpayer dollars, it is an investment in the men and women who are committed to turning their lives around.

What we like to say is that Texas has long been known for being tough on crime. But in 2007, we finally decided to be smart on crime, too, recognizing that people who went to prison almost entirely got out of prison at some point. The question is, How prepared were those who were willing to work to turn their lives around for life on the outside?

For years, I tried to bring this successful Texas model to Washington, DC, and now we have a piece of this legislation before us that will take these reforms nationwide. More than 75 percent of the bill we will be voting on is my prison reform legislation that I originally introduced with Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island.

The great thing about the laboratories of democracy known as the States is that we can actually test some of our theories at the State level to see whether they work. In the case of prison reform, when they do work, we can then scale it up so it applies to the entire Nation.

Today, there are more than 180,000 inmates in the Federal criminal justice system. The Federal Bureau of Prison's budget has doubled to approximately \$7 billion over the last decade. We have an opportunity to save lives by reducing the crime rate for each of those prisoners who does not recidivate when they get out of prison and conserve tax dollars, as well as to create a criminal justice system that works for, not against, the American people.

Let me be clear. This is not about letting people out of prison who

shouldn't be let out of prison; this is about people who have served their time and are going to be leaving prison and making sure that they at least have available to them some of the tools they need in order to transform their own lives. I am not so naive as to think that every person will take advantage of that opportunity, but we know from experience at the State level that there is a significant percentage of offenders who will take advantage of the opportunity to turn their lives around. That is why I was proud to work with the White House and my colleagues here in Congress—especially, as I mentioned, Senator WHITEHOUSE and Congressman DOUG COLLINS in the House of Representatives—to advance these reforms.

Earlier this year, we passed the bill out of the House with strong bipartisan support, and I have worked with my colleagues here in the Senate as the bill has changed and developed—and, I believe, for the better. Unfortunately, some members of the law enforcement community have raised concerns about the bill. Out of my respect for our law enforcement organizations, I spoke with many of my Republican colleagues about the bill. Originally, they said they were unable to support it or were undecided because they wanted to make sure we were doing everything we could to address the concerns raised by law enforcement organizations. So we went to work trying to make improvements in the bill, which I believe we succeeded in doing.

I want to express my gratitude to Senator DURBIN, who is the principal Democratic sponsor, Senator LEE, Senator GRASSLEY, and others who worked on this and say how much I appreciate their willingness to try to get to yes and come up with something we can pass with strong bipartisan support.

I also wanted to make sure we talked to the stakeholders—the police officers who patrol the streets, the sheriffs who work in each of our States and counties—about their concerns. I believe we have worked hard and successfully to address many of them. I don't necessarily believe all of them will agree with every single piece in this bill, but I think, on the whole, it does balance the interests of our law enforcement personnel with the needs of our society to better prepare people so that when they come out of prison, they will not likely repeat their mistakes, in every case that is possible.

As I say, I think we made some big improvements. The revised legislation will keep dangerous and violent criminals who use guns to commit crimes from being released from prison early. They will not be eligible for any sort of earned time release. It will also limit the amount of time that offenders can spend on supervised release and ensure that the Bureau of Prisons will revoke prerelease custody for offenders who violate the terms of their supervision.

I appreciate all of the work of our colleagues in the Senate who chose to

roll up their sleeves and get to work rather than just complain about what was or was not in the bill. I am proud to announce that I will cosponsor this new and improved version of the bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues to review it and hopefully join me in supporting this legislation. I look forward to working with everybody in this body, as well as our colleagues in the House, to get this bill over the finish line.

I know, when we produce the bill in the House and the Senate, President Trump will sign it. He has encouraged the majority leader, Senator McCONNELL, to put this bill on the floor even in this short window of time we have during the lameduck session, and the majority leader has accommodated the President's request by saying that we will address this before we go home for Christmas.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. President, on another matter, the clock is ticking, of course, and we are quickly approaching the deadline to fund the Federal Government. My Republican colleagues and I stand ready to advance our remaining appropriations bills, but it really depends on what our Democratic colleagues decide to do.

Seventy-five percent of the government is already funded through bipartisan cooperation on the passage of appropriations bills, and that is something we haven't done for a long time. But there is still critical funding—particularly for the Department of Homeland Security, for the FBI, and for the Department of Justice—that needs to be taken care of before we break for the holidays.

Earlier today, we know that Democratic Leader Senator SCHUMER and Minority Leader PELOSI met with President Trump to figure out whether there is any room for agreement to resolve the dispute between them. The question is, really, What is the appropriate amount of money in this bill to fund border security? The President said he wants \$5 billion. Senator SCHUMER has said \$1.6 billion ought to be enough. Obviously, there is a gap between them.

Some people have said: Well, we ought to just shut down the government over this dispute. I don't see the wisdom in that because when you shut down the government because you are unable to resolve a dispute, when you reopen the government, usually what happens is that same problem is staring you in the face. What we need to do is to work together with the administration to come up with a solution rather than resort to tactics like a government shutdown with all the complications that involves. I don't think shutdowns play well for either Republicans or Democrats, for the White House or the Congress.

The problem, it seems to me, is that our Democratic friends are listening to some of the fringes of their own political party who are now telling them:

Don't do anything that President Trump wants. Anything President Trump wants, the answer is no.

Well, that is more about politics than it is about doing our job as legislators trying to solve problems.

It also appears that they seem to think that the continued status quo along our border is good enough, and they are more than willing to gamble with a partial government shutdown than work with the President to ensure that our border is secure.

Somewhere along the way, our friends across the aisle have forgotten that border security should be about protecting the American people from the drugs that come across the border—90-plus percent of the heroin consumed in the United States comes from Mexico—or the children and women who are trafficked for sex or the migrants who come from Central America, up through Mexico, and into the United States, and the cartels charging roughly \$8,000 a person. It is a huge moneymaking business, but the people who are getting rich are the transnational criminal organizations and drug cartels.

We have seen before what happens when the government shuts down. It affects millions of people across the country and often yields no different result. We have seen what happens when we fail to secure the border. That is why we need to finish our work funding the government and, by doing that, also recognize the importance of a secure border. This should not be about partisan politics or listening to your political base; this ought to be about doing our job. We had the midterm elections; now is the time to govern.

Just a few weeks ago, our friends across the aisle wanted to magnify the migrant crisis by focusing narrowly on the news coming out of Tijuana, Mexico, across the border from San Diego. Some talked about the crisis as if it were a one-off event, an isolated event.

They wanted us to look at this like we were looking through a soda straw and ignore all of the context and the consequences of failing to secure our border. They wanted to ignore how we find ourselves with this humanitarian crisis in the first place.

The caravans of men, women, and children who left their homes in Central America and made the long, dangerous journey to the United States are sadly symptoms of a far greater problem. Our border has been exploited for years, contributing to this crisis. That is why ensuring additional resources for border security is an essential piece of the puzzle.

My home State of Texas is on the frontline—1,200 miles of common border with Mexico. Texas is home to many vibrant border communities that greatly benefit from having some of the busiest land ports in the country, across which legitimate trade and commerce travels. As I said, we are also on the front row of the many challenges that come along with an unsecured border when it comes to public safety.

Yesterday I talked about some of those challenges: striking a balance between a secure border and a completely closed border. A secure border maintains the flow of legitimate goods and services while deterring cartels from shuttling illegal contraband across our borders. A closed border would cut off trade and commerce that is the lifeblood of our economy, which brings me to another challenge—something that I think in Washington there is simply not enough awareness of; that is, the cartels, gangs, and the transnational criminal organizations that get rich exploiting our porous borders.

Some like to think of these organizations as a “them, not us” problem because they have taken control over large parts of Central America and even Mexico, but the business of these groups does not stay there. What happens in Central America, what happens in Mexico does not stay in Central America and Mexico. It comes flooding across our borders.

These gangs and cartels are very shrewd and adapt to changing circumstances. They found, the more our borders and ports of entry are clogged with migrants and migrant families, the easier it is to traffic people, drugs, and contraband into the United States. That has a reciprocal effect, too, causing legitimate trade, travel, and commerce to slow significantly at our ports of entry.

It is not only exploitation of our border that poses a threat, it is the violence and the instability caused by the cartels and gangs. That makes it not just a border security issue but a national security issue as well.

My friend and fellow Texan, Representative HENRY CUELLAR—a true blue dog Democrat, as he says—has a great saying for how we should think about this. He likes to say that border security starts in Central America and ends at our border. I think that is exactly right. In other words, you don't mount a goal line defense at a football game. You actually start contesting the game farther down the field. In this case, the game needs to be contested in the places where these migrants and the drugs emanate, from where they start.

We are going to have to work more closely in partnership with Mexico and other Central American governments to address the violence these groups spread by restoring public trust in law enforcement and stabilizing the economy and these countries.

I spoke with my friend, the Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN. She represents a border State. She and I have partnered on a number of national security law enforcement matters. She said she was interested in working together in a bipartisan way to address the challenges presented by Central America and Mexico. I said: Absolutely. Sign me up.

Representing a border State, as you might suspect, I make it a point to talk to those who live and work in our

border communities. It is a unique part of the United States. I like to say, the concept that people in Washington, DC, have about the borders has been learned from movies and novels; it is not from talking to people or visiting with the communities along the border. That is not a criticism. That is just a fact of life.

When I hear from people like Manny Padilla, who is the Border Patrol's sector chief for the Rio Grande Valley, I can better understand how much is required to maintain situational awareness and operational control of the border, not to mention personal safety of the Border Patrol, who more and more are frequently assaulted with rocks and other makeshift weapons that endanger their safety and their lives.

For those who may not be at the border every day, it is hard to grasp the range of topography across the 1,200-mile border that Texas shares with Mexico. It can be hard to imagine how many resources are actually needed. In some places, there are high mountains and cliffs and others, there is thick brush. In the urban areas that surround our ports of entry, there is plenty of opportunity to race across the border and blend in, never to be heard from again.

There will be places where physical infrastructure will make the most sense. In some places, technology or personnel is more effective than a fence. The point is, the border security is complex. Better enforcement of our border will require a combination of infrastructure, technology, and personnel. That begins with ensuring we have the resources we need to implement a border enforcement strategy. That is what this issue is all about—the discussion Ms. PELOSI, Senator SCHUMER, and President Trump had today.

My question for our Democratic colleagues is, Why will you not help us secure the border? Are you satisfied with the status quo of drugs coming across the border through these transnational criminal organizations? Are you satisfied with the status quo of these caravans—thousands of migrants from Central America trying to storm our ports of entry and literally closing them down so legitimate trade and commerce cannot occur?

Securing our border and protecting our country should not be a partisan issue; it is something we ought to be able to work out and agree on. We know the challenges our friend Senator SCHUMER has—the Democratic leader on the other side. He has a cadre of people auditioning for the Presidential nomination in 2020, and they are trying to outdo each other in their impending runs for President. I think, in many ways, his hands are tied. Like every leader, he has to decide when to say yes and when to say no to the people in your conference.

Minority Leader PELOSI has a delicate task of trying to cajole her new and emboldened Members of the far-

left wing of her caucus. They are both trying to fend off outside groups that think that even talking to President Trump on this issue may mean it will be subject for the next attack or perhaps a primary campaign. I don't envy the spot they are in, but it is a game of political chicken, and they are playing it among themselves.

The reality is, President Trump is in the White House, and our Democratic colleagues need to work with him and us to try to move the country forward, to try solve these problems, as hard as they may be. The American people are the losers when their elected officials decide their political image and their political aspirations matter more than the people they represent in their respective States.

As I said, so far, the Congress has worked together in a bipartisan manner to pass roughly 75 percent of the government funding. We shouldn't let that bipartisan spirit fail us now. Finishing our work and securing our border shouldn't be an occasion to turn the end of the year into a political sideshow. I think the American people do not need any more sideshows and circuses in Washington, DC. They want results, and they want us to own up to our responsibility and do our duty.

Border security is an issue where we should be able to find common ground, and funding the government is, of course, one of our most basic responsibilities. The point should be made that we have already found common ground on many of these issues before. Several of our colleagues on the other side who are still serving in this Chamber, including Senator SCHUMER, supported passage of the Secure Fence Act in 2006. How that is different from what President Trump is requesting now is lost on me, when they agreed that 700 miles of border should be secured by a fence.

I should also note that the Secure Fence Act was also supported by then-Senators Obama, Biden, and Clinton. This should not be a partisan issue. I hope all of our colleagues will choose to get to work, roll up our sleeves, and do our duty. Not only do we have the chance to fund the government and keep the lights on but we also have a chance to put ourselves that much closer to a secure border and helping end the migrant crisis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, while the distinguished senior Senator from Texas, deputy leader, is still on the floor, let me thank him for his kind remarks and express a word of appreciation for his patience through the long process of getting to a conclusion that we appear now to have finally reached on bringing criminal sentencing reform to a vote on the Senate floor.

This is at least the third Congress in which the Cornyn-Whitehouse bill to

improve the preparation of Federal prisoners for release, when they are going to be released, has been with us, and it has been a long process. I think the bill we are going to go to is, in majority, our original bill. For a long time, it has been the engine that I think all sides have seen as the means to solve the sentencing piece, which was much more difficult.

Over and over again, our efforts to move our bill have been held up in order to try to make a package, which is a pretty strong sign that our bill is a pretty good thing to get on board with. I want to thank Senator CORNYN for his patience through all of this.

Then I want to say a quick appreciation to Representative COLLINS and Representative JEFFRIES, whose bill on the House side was basically started like ours, and then they were able to negotiate what Senator CORNYN and I both agree were improvements—so that we adopted our bill to incorporate the improvements from the House side.

Other than that, we are about where we began with the sentencing improvements that have been added, and it has been a long trip, but I am indebted and appreciative of my colleague in all of this, Senator CORNYN, for having kept the faith through these many years and many Congresses in getting to this point.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the senior Senator from New Jersey, Mr. MENENDEZ, be recognized at the conclusion of my remarks, if he is on the floor.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this week, Nations of the world are gathering in Katowice, Poland, to review—and we hope amplify—their commitments to reduce carbon emissions under the 2015 Paris Agreement and to discuss how they will report and verify reductions in carbon pollution.

The United States of America is technically present in Poland in the form of a small delegation, but American leadership in Poland is decidedly absent. Why? It is pretty simple. The Government of the United States of America has fallen under the political control of the industry most responsible for this mess.

American leadership was essential to forging the global consensus on carbon emissions in the original Paris Agreement. I know because I was there in Paris in 2015 as Secretary Kerry and the U.S. negotiating team worked to seal the landmark pact.

What a pathetic difference a few years make. In 2017, President Trump announced that the United States would become the only country in the world to turn its back on this global agreement. The United States abdicates its leadership, just as the scientific warnings of the dangers of climate change grow clearer and

grimmer. In October, came a new report from the world's scientists working through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Just last month, our own Federal Government released its own sobering news about the worsening risks climate change poses to our Nation and our economy.

Our National Climate Assessment warned of hundreds of billions of dollars in losses we can anticipate due to climate change if we don't act to curtail carbon emissions. Trump responded first by describing his own—and I will quote him on this—“very high levels of intelligence.” Then he went on to simply deny all the science. He said: I don't see it.

Well, guess what. Pope Paul V didn't see it when Galileo demonstrated the Earth revolved around the Sun, but that didn't change the astrophysics.

The climate science—laid out in black and white by Trump's own government agencies—is that our planet is heating up due to our use of fossil fuels.

The science is even more incontrovertible than when Donald Trump said that climate science was incontrovertible back in 2009. Saying that he now doesn't see it is the very definition of climate denial.

So many people who are engaged in climate denial actually know better but, for a variety of motives, will not act, will not admit it. As to the President's not seeing it, “willful blindness” would be another term.

This takeover of our government by fossil fuel forces is having very real consequences in U.S. emissions numbers. After years of decline, U.S. carbon emissions rose in 2018, increasing by 2.5 percent.

This, of course, coincides with the Trump administration's efforts on behalf of its industry benefactors to delay, repeal, and weaken rules limiting carbon emissions from powerplants, from oil and gas wells, from industrial facilities, even from vehicles.

Of course all of these industries share a measure of the blame for not cleaning up their own mess on their own, and you can add to that their culpability for pushing the Trump administration to weaken the safety regulations that, in some cases, the industry had actually agreed to. The auto industry had actually agreed to the CAFE standards and then fought to undo them through its trade group so that they could keep their own hands clean.

Chinese carbon emissions increased in 2018, as did Indian emissions. Among major economies, only the European Union saw its emissions decline in 2018.

This is why international summits like Poland are so important. The world urgently needs to correct course, and we can best do so if countries together do their part to reduce emissions.

According to the IPCC, to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change, we need to cut carbon emissions to 50 percent below 2010 levels by

2030, which is just 11 years from now. We have to be 50 percent below our emissions in 2010, 11 years from now, in 2030, and we have to hit net zero emissions—carbon removed for all carbon added—by 2050. That is not that far away.

The IPCC report calls pricing carbon the central policy that will allow us to hold the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius or less. This is not some fantasy of the environmental community. Some of the world's biggest investors—\$32 trillion worth of investment represented by these groups—stood up in Poland to say: We need to fix this problem or there will be economic catastrophe ahead. They also said that a price on carbon and an end to the subsidy that the fossil fuel industry enjoys and is at the heart of its political intervention, which has prevented us from taking on climate change, needs to go.

You have to add a price on carbon, and you have to get rid of the fossil fuel subsidies. That is their prescription for avoiding economic catastrophe.

Well, maybe they don't know what they are talking about, but \$32 trillion worth of money thinks that they know what they are talking about because they put their money in the hands of these people to make wise investments for the future. A lot of people have bet their savings and resources behind these groups that are now saying: No price on carbon, no end of the fossil fuel subsidies, watch out—watch out for catastrophe.

On an ideological level, if you are sincere about market capitalism, where the costs of a product need to be in the price of the product for the market to work, this is pretty obvious stuff. The only reason this gets difficult is if you are a fake free marketeer who is really fronting for the fossil fuel industry.

But if you are not a fake on market economics when it is the industry that funds your party involved, it is pretty straightforward stuff. It is basic economic market principles.

You put the public harm externalities of a product—those costs—into the price of the product for the market to work—econ 101.

It shows the priorities around here when market capitalism and the principles of free market economics are so readily thrown under the bus by our friends once they cross the interests of big, big donor industries.

The good news is that many governments—from cities, States, and provinces to countries and regions—are already pricing carbon. This chart shows all of the various governments that have set a price on carbon, either through emissions trading—those are the green ones—or through a carbon price, a carbon fee—the various purple ones—and some do both, which is where they are mixed.

The carbon fee involved will vary. Sweden, for example, charges almost

\$140 per ton of carbon emitted, covering nearly 50 percent of the Nation's emissions.

The Canadian Province of British Columbia enacted a carbon fee in 2008, which has risen over time to its current price of \$35 per ton. In the 4 years following the British Columbia carbon fee, fossil fuel use decreased by 17 percent in the Province, compared to increasing by 1 percent in the rest of Canada. So it works at decreasing emissions, and British Columbia's economy grew faster than that of any other Canadian province.

Why would it not? One hundred percent of the revenues raised from British Columbia's carbon fee are returned to taxpayers in the form of other tax cuts. And it is popular; 70 percent of British Columbians support the policy.

So what about the United States? Well, California has put a price on carbon via an emissions trading system, as have the nine Northeastern States, including Rhode Island, that are members of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. For the moment, the prices in California and the RGGI are still relatively low—around 5 bucks for us in Rhode Island for RGGI.

Senator SCHATZ and I have introduced our American Opportunity Carbon Fee Act again to assess a carbon fee starting at 50 bucks per metric ton of emissions in 2019. It is the midrange of the Office of Management and Budget's 2016 estimates of what they call the social cost of carbon. The social cost of carbon is the name for the long-term damage that is done by carbon pollution, which the fossil fuel industry is fighting so hard to be a public subsidy rather than to be put into the price of their product.

Our market-based proposal is an appeal to true conservative Republican colleagues. As one Republican former legislator said: It is not just an olive branch; it is an olive limb that we have offered. But the fossil fuel industry keeps a stranglehold on the Republican Party, preventing climate action—even climate action using market principles.

Axios just did this chart. I saw it today and had it reproduced for the floor. This is the number of times climate change was mentioned in Congress in press releases, floor statements, and online by Members of Congress. This is how often the Democrats have mentioned it from 2013 to 2018. I am afraid I am probably a measurable piece of those blue columns.

But if you look over here, this is how often Republicans have mentioned climate change. Their best year was 678 mentions. For all Republicans in Congress, in all of their press releases, floor statements, and online communications, the grand total is 678 mentions—I mean, seriously—and it has gone down as it has gotten worse because I think it is difficult to talk about if you are a Republican.

Everybody is looking around at the wildfires; everybody is looking around

at the sea level rise coming up; everybody is looking at the storms; everybody is looking around at the science now, not only warning of climate change but being able to connect specific weather events to climate change, most recently, the massive heat wave that wiped out so much of the Great Barrier Reef.

So here is how often Republicans talk about it, and here is how often Democrats do. We should probably do better. But, anyway, that is where we are.

If that doesn't show the effect of the industry squelching debate and driving Republicans into alignment with their industry welfare, then I don't know what could express that much more clearly.

So I wanted to show that, and this is unlikely to change as long as millions of fossil fuel industry dollars slosh around Washington, protecting this corrupting industry from having to account, as economics would suggest, for the actual economic cost of its pollution.

America is called the indispensable Nation, and American leadership is indispensable if we are to achieve a global response to this global challenge. But American leadership is sorely lacking because the dark money and sleazy operatives of the fossil fuel industry today control the Trump administration and swaths of the Republican Party.

There used to be a guy in this body who said "Country First." We could use a little of that now in this tragic, climate-denying Trump sleaze-fest.

I yield the floor, and per the previous order I think Senator MENENDEZ is here, to be recognized momentarily. I saw him come to the floor a moment ago.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss—and I appreciate the distinguished Senator from Rhode Island and the work he has done on this critical question of climate change. I am pleased to join him today on the floor in pursuit of what he has been doing.

I rise today to discuss the negotiations taking place in Katowice, Poland, to finalize the rule book on implementing the Paris climate change agreement. There is an immediate urgency for global action to reduce greenhouse gas pollution as emissions continue to increase. The longer it takes for us to fully accept and acknowledge the problem, the more aggressive the world will have to be to avoid the worst effects of climate change from becoming a reality.

For decades, the science has yielded increasing causes for concern. Today, the connection between manmade greenhouse gas emissions—primarily fossil fuel combustion—and climate change is undeniable. Three major reports on the growing climate crisis have been published in the last 30 days

alone. That includes reports from the world's top climate scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the U.N. Environment Programme. That includes the National Climate Assessment, which was assembled by 13 Federal agencies and 300 government experts—our Federal agencies and our government experts.

What the scientists are telling us is that robust and immediate action is necessary to prevent catastrophic changes in the Earth's climate—changes that have already begun to affect every single American.

There is a tendency to dismiss scientific reports as abstract, as hard to understand. The President seems to simply not believe them. So let me speak plainly: The consequences of climate change are anything but abstract—regional food and water shortages, inundation of island nations and coastal communities that are home to billions of people around the world, mass migration, and refugee crises.

Our own National Climate Assessment makes clear that the United States—with all our wealth and good fortune—is far from immune from the effects of climate change. If we fail to confront this challenge, the United States will experience effects that will cost American lives and billions in losses to our national economy.

While we shouldn't point to any single event as evidence, the changes in trends depicting climate change's harsh reality are undeniable. It is a fact that the average global temperature on Earth has increased by about 0.8 degrees Celsius—1.4 degrees Fahrenheit—since 1880, and two-thirds of the warming has occurred since 1975. It is a fact that the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events in many regions of the United States are increasing, including conditions that heighten wildfire risks. It is a fact that sea level has been rising over the past century, and the rate has increased in recent decades. In 2017, global mean sea level was 3 inches above the 1993 average—the highest annual average in the satellite record. None of these facts are new. None of these facts are deniable. The science predicted these climate change effects 20, even 30 years ago.

To echo a common sentiment among climate change leaders on the urgency of the situation, "We are the first generations to experience the effects of climate change and the last that can act to prevent the worst."

This urgency is fueling the negotiations in Poland this week. Deliberations on the various elements of these rules began shortly after the Paris Agreement's entry into force in November 2016, and the agreement requires that the rules be completed this year, making the COP in Katowice the most consequential conference of parties since COP21 in Paris.

The Paris Agreement establishes firm, albeit nonbinding, global emissions reduction goals—reductions sufficient to prevent a 2 degrees Celsius in-

crease in global average temperatures. The Paris Agreement also clearly outlined robust and transparent reporting so that parties can hold each other accountable via diplomatic engagement as opposed to binding legal punishment.

Of course, success comes down to execution. That is what makes the development of the implementation rule book so consequential and President Trump's decision to abandon the Paris Agreement so antithetical to our own interests.

The current administration's wholesale rejection of meaningful engagement with the global community is disturbingly naive and is bound to result in repeating past mistakes with detrimental outcomes.

China is emboldened by President Trump's plan to abandon the Paris Agreement. China effectively slowed progress at COP23 and will continue its efforts. In the leadership vacuum that President Trump has created, China is stepping in to write the rules.

It is completely absurd to assume that the United States, by withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, is somehow immune to the global economic implications of climate change.

The President couched his decision to abdicate American leadership regarding the Paris Agreement as putting "America first" in a June 2017 announcement riddled with inaccurate characterizations of the Paris Agreement and alternative facts on climate change.

There is no truthful, factual, or reality-based argument to justify how allowing every country in the world except the United States to build the clean energy economy of the future and confront our most pressing global challenge puts America first.

Continued U.S. leadership and climate diplomacy can only yield economic benefits for U.S. workers. More than 900 U.S. businesses support keeping the United States in the Paris Agreement, including more than 20 Fortune 500 companies.

Acting to prevent the worst effects of climate change holds tremendous economic and job-growth opportunities for New Jersey and our Nation. I am proud to say that New Jersey is a national leader in deploying clean energy technologies, creating clean energy jobs, and planning and investing in climate change resilience.

New Jersey is home to 417 solar energy manufacturing and installation companies employing more than 7,000 workers.

New Jersey is also competing hard to become the first Mid-Atlantic State to produce offshore wind energy, supported by the recent enactment of legislation establishing a 3,500-megawatt production goal for offshore wind energy.

New Jersey has also recently increased its renewable energy standards to 50 percent by 2030 and set a new State carbon emissions reduction goal of 80 percent by 2050.

New Jersey's leadership among the States working to combat climate change is rooted in our vulnerability to the effects of climate change. The fact is, if we continue on our current emissions trajectory, the world could see global average temperature increase by 3 degrees Celsius. This would devastate New Jersey, risking \$800 billion in coastal property value, along with the health, security, and livelihood of millions of residents. The potential losses from sea level rise and increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather associated with climate change would cost my State's economy billions in economic losses.

Just yesterday, the *Star-Ledger*—a statewide paper—published a column by Robert Kopp, the director of the Rutgers Institute of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, highlighting many of these consequences, as outlined by the recent National Climate Assessment.

Our winters have been warming faster than our summers. Pests like pine beetle and ash borer are no longer kept in check by winter freezes. Perhaps even more alarming, we have seen our crops begin to bud earlier and earlier, only to see them decimated by cold snaps later in the season. In the Garden State—famous for our tomatoes, cranberry bogs, blueberries, and other specialty crops—that is a big deal.

As temperatures rise, we also expect to see a surge in heat-related deaths and illnesses due to allergies and asthma, while disease-carrying bugs like mosquitos and ticks thrive in increased seasonal moisture.

Our fisheries—the life blood of so many of our coastal communities—have already begun to see how changing water temperatures are changing migrations, making it harder for us to manage historic fisheries and harder for our fishermen to earn a living.

Of course, perhaps the clearest threat to New Jersey from climate change comes in the form of coastal flooding from sea level rise and extreme weather events. We saw it with Superstorm Sandy, and we understand the devastating consequences it can have for our families, our communities, and our infrastructure.

There is no convincing me that ignoring climate change and walking away from the world's only mechanism for holding countries like India, China, and Russia accountable for their emissions puts New Jersey first.

The Trump administration's failure to recognize this potential and its refusal to recognize the growing market demand for clean energy is a stunning example of the transactional relationship this President has with the fossil fuel industry. He is putting wealthy, politically connected corporations ahead of the best interests of the American people. Proof of the administration's political favoritism for fossil fuels is exemplified by the only U.S. Government-sponsored event at COP24 in Poland, titled "The Future of Coal."

Never mind how insulting and tone-deaf it is to sponsor an event to promote dirty, coal-powered energy at a climate change conference while countries like the Marshall Islands, the Maldives, Mongolia, and Mozambique, which face existential crises from climate change, look on—even more than that, this public forum flaunts the administration's wholesale sellout to the industries the government is tasked with regulating. It also shows us this administration's contempt for the booming renewable energy sector in the United States, which, according to Trump's own Department of Energy, employs more Americans than the U.S. fossil fuel industries by a 5-to-1 reality. All told, nearly 1 million Americans work in the energy efficiency, solar, wind, and alternative vehicles sectors. That equals nearly five times the number of workers employed in the fossil fuel electric industry, which includes coal, gas, and oil workers.

As the ranking member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I believe that climate diplomacy must be a priority for U.S. foreign policy. Climate change poses an imminent and long-term threat not just to U.S. national security but also to the long-term prosperity of this country and of our world. Addressing the crisis requires collective action and cooperation by local and national representatives, small and large businesses, and every one of us.

If the United States is to maintain our status as the world's superpower, it is in our best interest to lead the global cooperative effort to address the serious challenges posed by climate change and to promote stability and resilience by helping developing countries reduce their vulnerability to the effects of climate change. If we stand alone on the sidelines as these changes and international economics take shape, we will ultimately be the loser.

I urge my colleagues to join me in calling on the administration to advance continuing U.S. climate diplomacy and reconsider the decision to withdraw. It is essential to U.S. national security interests, as defined by our own Department of Defense, and growing U.S. economic opportunity.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT

Mr. President, I want to take one moment to speak to a different topic, which is to support the Tester-Wyden Congressional Review Act.

This is an administration cloaked in secrecy and deception. It is an administration that doesn't want the American people to know what it is doing. So it is no surprise that in July, the Treasury Department issued their dark money rule. They don't want the American people to know that behind every bill, amendment, and Executive order is a big-money special interest. They want to make it easier for big corporations, billionaires, and even illegal foreign money to influence our elections. These special interests know that so long as the money keeps flow-

ing, there will be someone in Congress to do their bidding.

At a time when Americans want transparency from their government, this rule would allow special interests to hide their donors from the IRS.

It has been 8 years since the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision—a decision that gave corporations the right to spend unlimited, unchecked, and, more often than not, undisclosed money on our elections. For 8 long years, more and more money has flowed from corporate coffers into campaign ads and political expenditures, and Republicans have defended the dark money poisoning our politics every step of the way.

Let me demonstrate the sheer magnitude of the dark money that has been pumped into our recent elections. In 2016, outside groups spent more than \$1.4 billion, much of it funneled through trade associations and nonprofits. In 2018, outside groups spent more than \$1.3 billion.

These funds were not spent by the candidates' campaign committees but by groups that did not have to reveal their donors and disclose them to the public.

Spending by independent, outside groups reached an alltime high of \$49 million in this year's congressional elections in my home State of New Jersey. State and county parties spent about \$8.1 million. In other words, outside groups this year outspent formal parties by over 600 percent.

All of this secret cash and dark money undermines the ability of the American people to hold their government accountable. Yet, for the President and some of my Republican colleagues, that is not enough.

Ask yourself: Under these rules, what is to prevent anonymous foreign corporate donors that have unlimited amounts of cash to influence the American political system and help elect candidates who benefit them and then exert influence over those candidates once elected?

It is no wonder this administration would want to make it harder for the American people to know who is behind donations to tax-exempt organizations. It is the wrong direction and is a dangerous one.

As we now know, the President benefited from this dark money, particularly money that came from the NRA. What is baffling, however, is that the administration would make it easier for hidden money to flow through these organizations when we know that the Russian Government and its agents have used them as a conduit to try to influence our political system.

The recent indictment and guilty plea of Maria Butina shows this is not fantasy but reality. The Butina case came about because she was discovered to be an unregistered foreign agent. Yet she may just be the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Russians who are trying to pass money into our electoral system.

Under this administration's rule, uncovering those efforts will be made harder, not easier. That is why, tomorrow, I will be urging the FBI and the FEC to investigate whether other covert Russian sources may be behind political contributions the NRA made during the 2018 electoral cycle to any House or Senate candidate. We need to know who is contributing millions of dollars to influence the political system right now.

In our democracy, the size of your wallet should not determine the power of your voice. I urge my colleagues to listen to the American people, who have been loud and clear that they want disclosure, that they want to reduce special interest influence in our politics, and that they want this government to work for them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

(The remarks of Ms. MURKOWSKI pertaining to the introduction of S. 3739 and S. 3740 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. MURKOWSKI. With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I have the honor of representing Louisiana in the U.S. Senate, and it gives me no pleasure to say that in Louisiana we have a crime problem.

In Louisiana and, frankly, in other parts of America, I regret to say, criminals are turning neighborhoods into war zones and small towns into drug dens and, in the process, families are being destroyed.

Now, some people make a youthful mistake, and they could benefit from a second chance. I think most Americans agree with that, but other people never change. I don't know why it is. If I make it to Heaven, I am going to ask, but there are some people out there, they are not mixed up, they are not confused, they are not sick, it is not a question of whether their mama or daddy loved them enough—they are just bad. Unfortunately, they are just bad.

For that reason, I think we all recognize that prisons are a necessary fixture that make our communities safer.

As we prepare to hear a bill or bills on changes to sentences for Federal prisoners, I wanted to share with the Senate a cautionary tale from my home State of Louisiana.

People in my State are being killed, and people in my State are being hurt because of these so-called "criminal justice reforms"—I put that expression

in quotation—that were put in place by my Governor.

Louisiana, about 14 months ago, started letting prisoners out of our prisons. The overall goal of the Governor was to save money. So far, I think he has let out about 2,000 prisoners. Now, the inmates he let out were not vetted. They weren't vetted by the probation boards, they weren't vetted by the parole boards to see if they were a threat to public safety. These prisoners he let go weren't paired with programs to reduce recidivism. He just let them go. He did it under a statute he named and called the Justice Reinvestment Act. It certainly wasn't any reinvestment in justice for the victims.

His law is failing the law-abiding public in my State. So far, 22 percent of inmates have been rearrested. Now, that is over 14 months—a very short period of time. The Governor and his Department of Corrections said: Well, we are only going to release nonviolent criminals. Well, somebody forgot to tell the criminals they were non-violent.

In the 23rd Judicial District Court in Louisiana, which encompasses small towns and three parishes, one in three inmates that the Louisiana State government let go has been rearrested. That is higher than the 22 percent I just quoted. That is a recidivism rate of 33 percent in a little over a year.

I have talked to Louisiana's law enforcement officers and prosecutors. They don't support what the Edwards administration has done. Now, they are scared to say anything because the Governor controls a lot of their budgets and their money, but if you ask 9 out of 10 law enforcement officials in my State privately if they support it, they will tell you no, and the 10th is probably lying.

The head of the District Attorneys Association, in fact, has publicly said that Louisiana's streets are not safer because of this so-called criminal justice reform. He also noted that simply reducing prison population is not a measure of success. He is a wise man.

Louisiana State government now seems to care more about criminals than it cares about those criminals' victims. In fact, I have never heard my Governor talk about victims at all. It is always criminals.

I recently received a letter. We all get letters from constituents, but this one really—this one really shook me up. I received a letter from a constituent in South Louisiana about what this failed experiment of criminal release in Louisiana has cost his family. His words—this gentleman's words—have been weighing on my heart and on my mind since I read them, and I would like to read a bit from that letter now.

I am quoting: My name is Gary Prince, and my youngest son Jordan was killed by a drunk driver in May of 2015. He was only 18 years old, and he had just graduated high school 12 days

before this accident. The man that killed him was driving the wrong way on Highway 90 near New Iberia and crashed into my son head-on. His blood alcohol level was .16, which is twice the State's legal limit.

He was sent to jail with a sentence of 15 years, but this person that killed my son served only 18 months in jail.

Mr. Prince, the father, goes on: There is a State law which States that anyone convicted of a DUI with vehicular homicide, with a blood alcohol level of .15 or greater, has to serve a minimum of 5 years without the benefit of early release. This was not taken into account for this criminal. My son was a good kid. He had a bright future. He wanted to follow in my footsteps and become a machinist. I feel that my family deserves better than this. I want you to know that when I say my prayers at night, I pray for a better Louisiana.

Mr. Prince, I want you to know how sorry I am for you and your family's loss. While the State of Louisiana might consider this a nonviolent crime, your family paid a horrific price for this man's behavior. I can't imagine anything worse than a man or a woman having to bury his or her son, especially a teenager. For your son's killer to be out on the streets after 18 months is more than just salt in the wound. It is a miscarriage of justice, and it is precisely what happens when policies like criminal release programs are pursued without considering the victims or their families. It is not justice.

I believe in justice. I think most Americans do. What is justice? We talk about it a lot. I agree with what C.S. Lewis said: Justice is when someone gets what they deserve.

I am not saying that deterrence and rehabilitation are not important in a prison system. They are. They have nothing to do with justice. They have to do with the effectiveness of your prison system.

C.S. Lewis said: Justice is when people get what they deserve.

Justice is when the people of Tibet, for example, get to worship the Dalai Lama because they deserve religious freedom.

Justice is when a rapist is sent to prison and stays there for a time commensurate with his crime. That is justice. He is getting what he deserves.

C.S. Lewis didn't just say that. Immanuel Kant said that. He said our penal laws are a moral imperative. He didn't say rehabilitation is unimportant. He didn't say deterrence is unimportant, because they are both important. They just have nothing to do with justice. Hegel said the same thing, and St. Augustine said the same thing—all of the great thinkers in history—that justice is when you get what you deserve.

It doesn't have anything to do with the cost of government. It doesn't have anything to do with deterrence. It

doesn't have anything to do with rehabilitation. Those are all important factors, but this has nothing to do with justice.

A criminal release program gone wrong has had other effects in Louisiana, too. It frees people like Tyrone "Smokey" White. Let me tell you about Mr. White. Our Governor let him go. He is a career criminal. He repaid the State promptly by robbing two roofers at gunpoint. Somebody forgot to tell Smokey that he was supposed to be nonviolent, too. Less than a week later, Mr. White was released under Louisiana's criminal release program, despite having more than 60 arrests on his record.

A criminal release program gone wrong looks like a convicted felon named Richard McLendon who, upon being granted early release, illegally gets himself a gun and uses it to fatally shoot another man in Bossier Parish. He then leaves his victim to die like roadkill on the side of the road with multiple gunshot wounds.

A criminal release program gone wrong in Louisiana, anyway, looks like a Dwayne Watkins. He is a pedophile. He had more than 21 arrests for child abuse and other assorted crimes on his record. He got to walk out of jail early—not just once but two times. Watkins earned 10 years for illegally possessing a gun as a felon, and he got out early, and he promptly sexually abused two young girls. He earned 3 more years in jail, and then, thanks to Louisiana State government and the Edwards administration, he got out early again. Give me a break.

In October, less than 2 months after his early release, he approached Kelly and Heather Jose at a shopping mall in Caddo Parish. When he asked to borrow their phone to call a cab, the couple offered him a ride. In Louisiana, we help each other. Well, Mr. Dwayne Watkins decided to repay their generosity by kidnapping them, shooting them, and burning them to death in their own car so badly that their bodies couldn't even be recognized. He is now awaiting trial for murder.

Kelly Jose, one of the victims, was an Air Force Reservist—God rest his soul—in Barksdale Air Force Base. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1998. Heather Jose, the other victim, was a small business owner. She loved working in the ministry of a church. They were good people. They were just trying to do a good deed. This was a senseless tragedy, and it did not have to happen.

Just this weekend, our sheriff from Caddo Parish rightly asked a question. He said: Why is Dwayne Watkins out of prison after violating his parole and sexually abusing two young girls? And many of us are asking that same question in Louisiana right now. But the answer is very simple—the Edwards administration's failed criminal release program.

I want to take a moment and consider what price we might be asking

the families back home to pay for these criminal release programs. In my State, innocent people are scared, and rightfully so, that they might become victims of violent crime. We are reneging on the justice we promised the victims like Mr. Prince, who lost a child. Do you want to put a price tag on justice? Have at it. I don't.

In Louisiana, we also failed the Joses' three children. They don't have parents anymore. Mr. Dwayne Watkins took care of that. He should have been in jail serving his time. That is justice.

Louisiana's failed experience has cost law-abiding folks dearly in every corner of my State.

I just want to implore my colleagues in the Senate to please think about more than just the criminals. Think about more than just the money. Think about the lives of the victims and their families, as well, because they are supposed to count too.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

H.R. 2

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, a few months ago, I had a chance to go up to the Colorado-Wyoming border to spend a night at the Ladder Ranch. It is a beautiful property—that is an understatement—situated in the Little Snake River Valley. If you were designing a postcard for the American West, you would struggle to do better than this place.

The ranch is owned by Pat and Sharon O'Toole. It has been in the family for six generations, dating all the way back to 1881. To give you some sense of how long that is, at the time, the State of Colorado was just 5 years old, and the Ottoman Empire was still around. Our world has been transformed since then, but the Ladder Ranch has endured through the Depression, the Dust Bowl, the two World Wars, and the transformation of our economy.

Of course, none of that happened just by chance. It happened because the family looked ahead and made hard choices to deliver that ranch from generation to generation. Pat and Sharon are continuing that legacy today, and they are joined on the ranch by their daughters, and their son, and a whole bunch of grandkids.

I am sharing the story of the Ladder Ranch because in many ways, it is the story of farmers and ranchers across my State and across the country—of people applying their ingenuity and common sense to hand more opportunity to the next generation.

One of the privileges of representing a State like Colorado is that I have had the opportunity to learn about places like the Ladder Ranch and the legacy of every one of our farms and ranches represent.

When I joined the Senate Ag Committee, the truth is that I had no idea how hard it can be for our farmers and ranchers. Like many people, I had very little appreciation of where our food comes from. If you are in agriculture, you can do everything right and still

fall behind because of forces beyond your control.

Today, farmers and ranchers in this country are facing tremendous uncertainty. They have persistent drought, which is growing worse due to climate change and threats of wildfire. They have low commodity prices and challenges with finding people who can work, because of our immigration debate here in Washington, and to find the seasonal labor they need. Dairies are struggling to hire the workers they need.

Now, on top of all of that, they have the confusion of the existing trade policies of the United States. Two weeks ago, the USDA announced that farm incomes are projected to drop 12 percent this year. When you add it all up—the uncertainty, the policy, the politics—farm income is going to be down 12 percent this year. All of this acts like a weight on our farmers and ranchers, making it even harder for them to pass on the legacy of their work to the next generation.

Earlier this year, our Agriculture Commissioner in Colorado, Don Brown, who is himself one of the most successful farmers in our State, said: "You're only 22 once." By that he meant that there is an entire generation out there deciding whether or not to pursue a career on the family farm or ranch, and they are looking at all of this uncertainty, and a lot of them are deciding that it is not worth it. That is why the average age of farmers is what it is in the United States.

We owe it to our farmers and ranchers to provide consistency where we can and to help to preserve the legacy of American agriculture for years to come.

By passing the 2018 farm bill, that is exactly what we have done. This bill means more certainty for America's producers in this volatile environment. This bill maintains crop insurance, and it makes risk management tools more effective. Most important to Colorado, this bill helps our farmers and ranchers to diversify their operations for the first time in 50 years.

This bill fully legalizes hemp. The majority leader was out here earlier. I want to congratulate him on his work to do that. In Colorado, our hemp growers have operated under a cloud of uncertainty for years. Our farmers worry about maintaining access to their water. They couldn't buy crop insurance or transport seeds. Some ran into redtape opening a bank account or even applying for Federal grants.

Despite these challenges, hemp cultivation in my State grew sixfold over the last 4 years. Again, it is interesting that the majority leader has wanted this, as well, because the climate in Kentucky and the climate in Colorado have almost nothing in common. But hemp grows in Kentucky, and it grows in Colorado.

We see hemp as an opportunity to diversify our farmers who manufacture high-margin products for the American

people. Now, Coloradans will be able to grow and manufacture hemp without a cloud of uncertainty hanging over them.

This bill also helps farmers and ranchers hand more opportunities to the next generation. It increases funding for conservation easements and makes it easier for people to secure them.

It invests in America's farm economy to drive innovation in agriculture and to keep up our competitiveness in the 21st century. It doubles funding to help communities in places like my State to deal with forest health, and it protects our watersheds better.

Working with the Presiding Officer, we increased funding for wildlife habitat and provided more opportunities for hunting and fishing on private lands.

We worked with Senator BOOZMAN of Arkansas to give rural communities new ways to improve housing and infrastructure.

The bill also provides new resources to help farmers and ranchers adapt to major challenges like climate change. For example, it creates tools for farmers and ranchers to sequester carbon, improve soil health, and become more resilient to drought.

We increased resources in this bill for renewable energy and energy efficiency for rural businesses.

All in all, this 2018 farm bill is an excellent piece of legislation, and a lot of credit lies in the approach we took on the Agriculture Committee. It should be like this for all of our committees. It is a committee on which we don't have partisan differences. If we have differences, we have regional differences, and we work them out. That is why that committee, which I am proud to serve on, is one of the only functioning committees in the Senate. We passed a 5-year farm bill the last time there was a farm bill, not a 6-month one, not a 6-day one, but a 5-year farm bill. This is another one because Republicans and Democrats both know we have to support our farmers and ranchers, not create even more uncertainty for them.

The other privilege of being on that committee is that I spend a lot of time in my State in counties where it is unlikely that I am ever going to win 10 or 20 percent of the vote, but I keep going back and back, not because I think I will win but because I think, as a country, we have to find a way to bring ourselves together and solve problems.

Our farmers and ranchers are a model for that. They are applying their ingenuity to things like climate and drought every single day. They don't have the luxury—and I would say we don't have the luxury—of pretending that politics is the only thing that matters. They are focused on delivering their farms or ranches to the next generations and handing more opportunity, not less, to them. That is all that matters, and that is the ethic we should be applying to our national politics.

BLUE WATER NAVY VIETNAM VETERANS ACT

Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to call on the Senate to pass the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act.

The bill extends critical VA benefits to veterans who were exposed to toxic chemicals while they served in the waters off Vietnam.

There is no reason the Senate shouldn't pass this. Our country already provides these benefits to veterans who served on land, and it is well past time we extended care to those who served at sea.

This bill is the result of a lot of good bipartisan work in the Senate, and the House has already passed it. To get this across the finish line, we should look to the example our veterans set for how to come together and fight until the job is done.

In Colorado, the United Veterans Committee has advocated strongly for this bill, and veterans from across our State have spoken out on behalf of their colleague veterans who deserve justice with the passage of this bill. Their example reminds us that there is no obstacle we cannot overcome to provide every veteran who has served in the United States of America with the greatest healthcare in the world as a reflection of their service. In this moment, we should rededicate ourselves to that goal by passing this significant bill.

Let me end by thanking Senator GILLIBRAND and the Presiding Officer for their leadership, along with Chairman ISAKSON and Ranking Member TESTER for getting it to this point.

We need to pass this bill in the Senate before we go home. It is the right thing to do.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PERDUE. 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.

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

TRIBUTE TO JOE DONNELLY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to join my colleagues in thanking our friend, Senator JOE DONNELLY, for his service to his State and our Nation.

When he was about 30 years old, while he was practicing law in South Bend, JOE DONNELLY sought the Democratic nomination for attorney general in Indiana. Two years later, he ran for State senate. Both times, he lost.

Then he did something truly astonishing: He walked away from politics. For 10 years, he practiced law and ran a small stamp-and-ink business.

In 2003, local party officials asked him to run for Congress. They didn't expect him to win—just be a respectable sacrificial lamb.

He came closer to winning than anyone but he expected.

Two years later, he was elected, in a rematch, to the U.S. House.

As someone who also ran and lost three times before winning an election, I feel a natural camaraderie with my friend from Indiana.

I think I may also have some insight into why he was willing to try one more time.

You see, JOE DONNELLY grew up in New York. He moved to South Bend for college, and he is a Hoosier, through-and-through, but he is also a member of the great White Sox Nation.

In 2005, the Chicago White Sox won the World Series for the first time in 88 years—proof, some would say, that anything is possible if you persevere and work hard.

The next year, it was JOE DONNELLY's turn to score the upset victory by winning election to Congress from a red district in a deep-red State.

In his 6 years in the House, he voted to create the Affordable Care Act.

During the financial crisis of 2009, he voted for the American Recovery Act, to stop America's slide into a second great depression that could have brought down the entire global economy.

When free market hardliners said, "Save Wall Street but let the American auto industry die," Barack Obama said no—and so did JOE.

In November 2012, Hoosier voters sent JOE DONNELLY to the U.S. Senate, the first Democrat to hold his seat since 1977.

In a political era that often seems often to reward snark over substance, JOE DONNELLY is a soft-spoken throwback to an earlier era, when working across the aisle was viewed as a talent, not as treason.

JOE is decent, honest, and direct. You may disagree with him on an issue, but you will never doubt his motives.

His values are classic Hoosier: hard work, common sense, bipartisan compromise, and a disdain for grandstanding.

As a Senator, he has done what he believes is needed to level the playing field for "regular Joes," for farmers and factory workers and, as he says, "the people who go to work in the dark and come home in the dark."

I particularly want to thank him for his work to improve mental health care for military members and veterans. That work will save lives and families.

Like all nations, the White Sox Nation has some laws. One of my favorites is: "Respect the past . . . people that are shoeless . . . and anyone named Joe."