

bills considered each year so that six would be considered in the first session of Congress and six would be considered in the second—each of them, of course, for 2 years to allow for more planning. By providing a more realistic and attainable schedule, we could allow for a more thoughtful process for considering individual bills. We would free up more time for oversight of Federal spending. We would actually get to look at some of the details of the dollars we are spending, and we would reduce the likelihood of continuing resolutions and large, year-end spending bills—with everything attached to it—that are inefficient and too often loaded with waste. We could also give agencies the certainty they need to plan and make wise decisions regarding how to implement funding.

But successful and timely enactment of the appropriations bills is only part of the solution. We also need to look at the mandatory side of the ledger and programs that don't have adequate revenue to maintain obligations—the ones we don't ever get to make a decision on. Any new mandatory programs should be self-financing or offset by the elimination of existing programs that we would continue to fund. In other words, nothing should be mandatory if it doesn't have a stream of money big enough to pay for it.

We also need to look at ending the spending bias that begins with a current baseline—current amount of spending—and automatically adjusts for inflation.

To address the long-term structural deficit problems, we need to create enforceable spending targets that are monitored and enforced annually to make sure lawmakers stay focused on deficit reduction and achieving a suitable Federal budget. The newly revamped Debt Control Committee should be empowered to establish its targets and enforce spending constraints. For example, if we followed my penny plan and cut spending by 1 cent out of every dollar each year for the next 5 years, we could balance the budget.

Once enforceable targets are agreed upon, we should conform the debt limit to them. I know that dealing with the debt limit in a responsible manner is a priority for many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I am ready to work with them on it.

We are not talking about sequester here; I am suggesting precision cuts on the low priorities. First of all, sequester happened late in the year, so there wasn't much money left to take the money out of, which made it a much larger reduction from those spending bills. They also picked the projects they thought would be most noticeable and cut those, realizing that the American public would rise up in arms and make sure that it was reinstated, and that happened. They always picked the most visible and the most painful.

What we have to do is get to precision cuts in the things we haven't even

looked at. I have a list of how many things we haven't looked at. Some programs haven't been looked at since 1983, but they continue to get an annual inflation increase anyway—sometimes greater than the annual increase.

Each of the above suggestions would improve our process, help us control spending, and meet our constitutional obligations. I plan to pursue them in the next Congress and look forward to working with my colleagues on these and other ideas.

However, while reforms are needed, the reality is there will never be a perfect process, and no reform by itself could force the hard decisions that are needed. What we need is leadership and a commitment from both sides to work together to do what we know needs to be done to confront these challenges.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on these critical challenges in the next Congress.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Iowa.

**Mr. GRASSLEY.** Mr. President, before I start my remarks, in case they go beyond the time for a vote, I ask unanimous consent to finish my remarks.

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

#### FIRST STEP ACT OF 2018

**Mr. GRASSLEY.** We are here today to begin debate on a piece of legislation called the FIRST STEP Act of 2018. This happens to be the most significant criminal justice reform bill in a generation.

Our country is based upon the rule of law. If someone commits a crime, they should be punished, and that punishment should be severe enough to deter others from committing crimes.

But for our criminal justice system to serve our society well, it has to do more than punish and deter. Recidivism rates are far too high and drive crime rates up. In the Federal system, 49 percent of prisoners are rearrested within 8 years, and 32 percent are convicted of new crimes. We must better prepare prisoners to leave behind their criminal past and to become productive citizens when they leave the prison system.

We also need to make sure that criminal sentences are tough enough to punish and deter, but not be unjustly harsh. Sentences should not destroy the opportunity of redemption for inmates willing to get right with the law.

The FIRST STEP Act is tough on crime, but it is also fair. To tackle the recidivism rates in our country, the bill establishes evidence-based programming that has reduced recidivism at the State level. We have evidence from the States of Texas, Georgia, Mississippi, and many others to justify that fact.

The bill provides incentives for inmates willing to put in the work to complete these programs. Under this bill, a prisoner may earn 10 days of time credit for every 30 days of success-

ful participation, which they can apply toward prerelease custody. However, access to these incentives is available only to those who pose little risk of committing new crimes.

The FIRST STEP Act requires the Bureau of Prisons to implement a risk assessment system to determine an inmate's risk of returning to crime after prison.

Access to the earned-time credits is limited to those who pose a minimum or low risk. The bill also makes clear that violent and high-risk criminals convicted of certain serious offenses are ineligible for the prerelease custody program.

The list of disqualifying offenses includes crimes relating to terrorism, murder, sexual exploitation of children, and gun crimes, among others that are listed in the bill. All fentanyl traffickers are disqualified from earning time credits.

The bill also makes sentencing fairer by returning some discretion to judges during sentencing. Some have called for eliminating mandatory minimums or cutting them back severely.

I happen to be a supporter of mandatory minimum sentences because it helps law enforcement take down criminal enterprises, but at the same time, I recognize there is some unfairness in how these mandatory minimum sentences are sometimes applied. The FIRST STEP Act leaves in place these maximum sentences but also addresses overly harsh and expensive mandatory minimums for certain nonviolent offenders. Locking up low-level offenders for needlessly long prison sentences diverts resources that are needed elsewhere to fight crime.

To address this, the FIRST STEP Act makes a number of changes to sentencing guidelines. First, the legislation clarifies that enhanced penalties for using a firearm during a crime of violence or drug crime should be reserved for repeat offenders of such crimes. That is what Congress had intended when it created the enhanced penalty in the first place.

Second, the bill would reduce the three-strike penalty for life imprisonment to 25 years. The 20-year minimum is reduced to 15 years. The bill also broadens the mandatory penalties, applying them to more of the worst criminals.

Third, the bill provides for more judicial discretion by expanding the existing Federal safety valve to include more low-level, nonviolent offenders. Consistent with the existing law, the judge cannot apply the safety valve unless the defendant has fully cooperated with law enforcement.

Lastly, the bill also allows for the retroactive application of the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010, which reduced the 100-to-1 disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine.

I want to acknowledge President Trump's leadership on criminal justice reform. Without the President's engagement, we wouldn't be here today.

The President deserves credit for brokering a deal that improves fairness and supports law enforcement.

A tremendous amount of credit is also due to my colleagues in the Senate who helped to forge a bipartisan compromise on complex issues. I emphasize "bipartisan compromise" because the people in the grassroots of America, even in my State of Iowa, think there isn't much bipartisanship going on here.

I would especially like to thank my colleague, Senator DURBIN. He has been a partner through this entire process.

A bipartisan cosponsor includes Senator LEE, who has done a tremendous amount of work on this. In fact, he started with Senator DURBIN before I even got involved. We also have cosponsorships by Senators BOOKER, GRAHAM, WHITEHOUSE, SCOTT, FEINSTEIN, CORNYN, and LEAHY. They all deserve praise for reaching this deal.

The product of years of negotiating and listening to each other is a bill that will reduce crime, strengthen faith in our judicial system, support law enforcement, and give thousands of people a better shot at living good lives.

As we go to this very important first vote on this bill, which is to invoke cloture, I urge all of my colleagues to join with President Trump and our bipartisan coalition of supporters to support the FIRST STEP Act.

I yield the floor.

#### SAVE OUR SEAS ACT OF 2017— Continued

##### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

##### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 756, a bill to reauthorize and amend the Marine Debris Act to promote international action to reduce marine debris, and for other purposes, with a further amendment numbered SA 4108.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Lee, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Orrin G. Hatch, Tim Scott, Steve Daines, Jerry Moran, Todd Young, Susan M. Collins, Pat Roberts, Bill Cassidy, Lamar Alexander, Lindsey Graham, Jeff Flake, Rob Portman, Joni Ernst.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 756, to reauthorize and amend the Marine Debris Act to promote international action to reduce marine debris, and for other purposes, with a further amendment numbered 4108, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. Alexander) would have voted "yea".

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 82, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 267 Leg.]

##### YEAS—82

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Grassley	Paul
Blumenthal	Harris	Perdue
Blunt	Hassan	Peters
Booker	Hatch	Portman
Boozman	Heinrich	Reed
Brown	Heitkamp	Roberts
Cantwell	Hirono	Rubio
Capito	Hoeven	Sanders
Cardin	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Carper	Inhofe	Schumer
Casey	Isakson	Scott
Collins	Jones	Shaheen
Cooms	Kaine	Shelby
Corker	King	Smith
Cornyn	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Tester
Crapo	Leahy	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Udall
Daines	Manchin	Van Hollen
Donnelly	Markey	Warner
Duckworth	McCaskill	Warren
Durbin	McConnell	Whitehouse
Ernst	Menendez	Wicker
Feinstein	Merkley	Wyden
Fischer	Moran	Young
Flake	Murphy	
Gardner	Murray	

##### NAYS—12

Barrasso	Kennedy	Rounds
Burr	Kyl	Sasse
Cotton	Murkowski	Sullivan
Enzi	Risch	Toomey

##### NOT VOTING—6

Alexander	Graham	Johnson
Cassidy	Heller	Tillis

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 82, the nays are 12.

Three-fifths of Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for a few moments; that at the conclusion of my remarks, my colleague from Arkansas, Senator COTTON, be recognized; and that at the conclusion of his remarks, I be recognized again for a unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

##### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 379

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, one of the things that marks service as a U.S. Senator is the chance to meet really remarkable individuals, and among the remarkable individuals I have had the chance to meet in my time in the Senate, there are few, if

any, who are more impressive or memorable than those who have been diagnosed with ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Competing with them for being impressive and noteworthy are the friends and family and advocates who become their support system and their caregivers. It is not just those with the diagnosis, but it is also the family, friends, and caregivers who face incredible bravery. I remember someone once saying that a special kind of courage is maintaining good morale in the face of terrible circumstances, and few circumstances are more terrible than a diagnosis of ALS amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

We know how it ends. We know it is always fatal. There is no treatment. There is no cure. There is nothing to halt or reverse the effects of ALS. Those of us who have ALS patients visit us watch the decline as they move from people who can walk to people who need a wheelchair, to people who need an increasingly complex wheelchair.

For all this suffering and for all the certainty of how it ends, we still make ALS patients and their family members wait 5 months before they can begin to receive the Social Security Disability Insurance benefits they earned by contributing into Social Security.

The logic, I am told, of this 5-month waiting period is that it allows temporary conditions to abate, but ALS is not a temporary condition. It does not abate. It does not reverse. Sadly, some ALS patients lose their fight with the disease before even receiving benefits.

I have been working with Senator COTTON to pursue bipartisan legislation to eliminate this 5-month waiting period for ALS. Chairman HATCH, in one of his final acts as chairman of the Finance Committee, expressed his approval of this and his desire to help me bring it forward, and Ranking Member WYDEN on the Finance Committee has helped get it to the floor so we can have this opportunity to pass it by unanimous consent.

I hope very much that as a simple act of humanity, we can step aside from bureaucratic considerations and allow this small population of Americans who face the extraordinary blow of this diagnosis to move immediately to the benefits they signed up for by contributing to Social Security.

With that, I would yield the floor to Senator COTTON of Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Rhode Island for his work on this important issue. I have had numerous ALS sufferers and family members of those who suffer from ALS approach me about this bill early in my time in the Senate, and I have been grateful for the opportunity to work with the Senator from Rhode Island to try to address this very sad problem.

ALS is a progressive and disabling disease for which there is no cure. It is