who loved Burl. I urge my Senate colleagues to join me in paying tribute to such a remarkable Kentuckian.

REMEMBERING DON WATTENBARGER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in September the community of London, KY, lost one of its treasured residents with the passing of Don Wattenbarger at the age of 81. Don's remarkable life will be remembered for his kindness, his service to others, and his dedication to helping Kentucky's children celebrate Christmas. Overcoming a childhood bout with polio, Don never let his physical difficulties stop him from helping others, and as a fellow survivor of the disease, I admire him for it.

I would especially like to remember Don's work with the Laurel County Sheriff's Department, which he joined as a part-time deputy in 1986. His official responsibilities included working as a bailiff in court, but this community will remember him for his boundless care and generosity outside of his job description. Even after his retirement in 2007, Don hardly slowed down, continuing to be a force for good in his community.

Working with the Cumberland Valley Fraternal Order of Police, Don was instrumental in leading and maintaining the Shop with a Cop program in Laurel County. Every year, Don and his wife Virginia would collect donations to help children in need have a joy-filled Christmas. It is a heart-warming program that helps so many children in this community. One of Don's friends, Karlyle Young, remembered a particular family with several children who participated in the Shop with a Cop program. Their father had recently lost his job, and money was tight around the house. The children asked if they could use some of the money to buy food, instead of Christmas toys. Don and the other volunteers collected extra donations to help buy this family food and make sure the children also received Christmas presents. Working with the sheriff's department for more than 20 years, Don helped spread Christmas cheer to more than 5,000 local children.

Don also served as a longtime board member of the Laurel County Drug Abuse Resistance Education, D.A.R.E., program, teaching children about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. For his dedication to this cause, North and South Laurel high schools present an annual scholarship to a graduating senior in Don's honor. He was also an active member of the local Shriner's Club, the masonic lodge, and several other service organizations that helped those in need in Laurel County.

In 2018, the city of London recognized Don's incredible lifetime of service by honoring him as a ''Living Treasure.'' His respect, compassion, and charitable nature will continue to be remembered and appreciated by the thousands of lives he made better. I would ask my Senate colleagues to join me in expressing our gratitude and deep condolences to Don's family, especially his beloved wife of 51 years Virginia, his friends, and the Laurel County community that cherished him.

FIRST STEP ACT

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I am proud that the Senate has passed the FIRST STEP Act. As a cosponsor of this bill, I am heartened that Republicans and Democrats came together to address an issue that affects millions of Americans and their families.

Although one of my colleagues across the aisle has said that we have an ''under-incarceration'' problem, that is simply not the case. The United States represents only 4.4 percent of the world's population, but we hold approximately 22 percent of the world's prisoners. Over the past decade, Americans and Congress have taken a long hard look at who we incarcerate and why. This review has made us realize that too many elements of our criminal justice system are based on prejudice and have inflicted unnecessary harm in communities across the country. We should strive to ensure that ''liberty and justice for all'' is not just a phrase we say, but a promise we keep to all Americans.

The FIRST STEP Act allows prisoner rehabilitation so that they can return home ready to contribute to their communities. Education and job training opportunities provide individuals with a real second chance.

The bill incorporates important provisions that allows for the retroactive application of the Fair Sentencing Act, which removed the sentencing disparity between the crack-powder and cocaine. We were able to include provisions that prohibit the use of solitary confinement of juvenile offenders, prohibit the shackling of pregnant and postpartum women, and ensure that prisoners are placed in prisons closer to home. The bill also offers low and minimal-risk offenders the possibility of supervised release, home confinement, or release to halfway homes.

The three amendments offered to the bill by Senators COTTON and KENNEDY do not protect victims, are redundant, and are so broad as to subvert the bill's purpose. The first amendment requires mandatory notification to crime victims of an offender's impending release. However, current law and agency policies already allows victims to choose if they want to receive these updates. Mandated reporting harms victims who do not want to receive this information. That is why this amendment is opposed by organizations such as the Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice and the Fairness, Dignity & Respect for Crime Victims & Survivors Project.

The second amendment will require wardens to notify victims of early release and review victim statements prior to determining if an offender is eligible for pre-release custody or supervised release. Again, this amendment diminishes the rights our current laws give victims by allowing them determine if they want to receive this information. Victims already have the right to submit statements of opposition or support prior to parole or early release. Additionally, prison wardens should not be burdened with calculating risk assessment. The bill establishes an independent review committee that will recommend and assess the best evidence-based tools to ensure that risk assessments are bias-free and objective.

Lastly, the expanded ''crime of violence'' definitions offered are vague, redundant, and would exclude the very population the bill is designed to help. On its face, the final amendment seems to be common sense but the language is so vague that one analysis claims that only low-level drug offenders and white-collar criminals would be eligible for earned credit. The amendment has a catchall to prevent anyone who has been convicted of any offense that involved substantial risk of physical force against a person or their property from receiving pre-release. The U.S. Sentencing Commission estimates that this amendment would exclude 30,000 prisoners from participating in the program. I believe that the goal of criminal justice reform is rehabilitation and reducing recidivism and restricting incentives would defeat that purpose. The bill has been carefully crafted to only include low-risk offenders.

The FIRST STEP Act is by no means perfect. For example, the bill does not include provisions to address the flaws in the money bail system or the discrimination in housing or employment that many offenders face upon release, nor does it prohibit the use of private prisons or address discriminatory loopholes in our Tax Code that make it harder for released offenders to finance their education.

But the bill's name is clear: This is the first step and not the last in our commitment to reform our criminal justice system.

FAIRNESS IN HIGH-SKILLED IMMIGRANTS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have asked to be notified before any unanimous consent agreement to process this bill because I oppose S. 281, the Fairness in High-Skilled Immigrants Act. High-skilled immigrants are a benefit to the United States. We welcome those talented individuals from across the world who can supplement our own domestic labor workforce. In Iowa, we have seen the benefit of high-skilled immigrant doctors, healthcare professionals, and medical specialists who serve our rural communities. These immigrants provide quality healthcare and immerse themselves in our communities. In turn, Iowans welcome them with open arms. I look forward to improving the integrity of our

H–1B program through regular order in a bipartisan manner. However, I have strong objections to S. 281 or the Fairness in High-Skilled Immigrants Act.

This bill would eliminate the per country numerical limitation for employment-based immigrants and increase the per country numerical limitation for family-based immigrants from 7 percent to 15 percent of the total number of family-sponsored visas. It would also do nothing to improve serious problems in our H–1B visa program. In fact, it does not address any employer abuses, fraud, protections for American workers or protections for the H–1B workers themselves.

Congress must deal with the visa backlog issue, but this bill is a bandaid over a bullet hole that I fear will lead to unintended consequences. First, eliminating the per country caps will not necessarily clear out the backlog. Inevitably, with tens of thousands of people waiting in line, a backlog will ensue from a processing standpoint regardless of whether or not there are per country caps. Second, this bill does not replace the per country caps with any sort of metric-based system or order. This is problematic at best. Of course, an immigrant's country of origin should not dictate their place in line for visas, but surely a clear corresponding domestic labor demand should.

Members on both sides of the aisle have said they are committed to a merit-based immigration system. Certainly then, if we eliminate per country caps, we should have a merit-based system that prioritizes not based on country of origin, but on what jobs need to be filled and a showing that there are not enough Americans to fill that position. Some of my colleagues have proposed a points-based system. I believe this could be a good starting point. Ultimately, however, a replacement system for the per country limitations should be discussed and fully vetted through hearings and debate. I am willing to work with any Member, Democrat or Republican, including the proponents of this bill, to create a smarter and fairer system.

President Trump and congressional Republicans promised the American people that we would address chain migration, but this bill does not do that. Instead, it more than doubles family-sponsored visas but does not limit this privilege to the nuclear family. Before we talk about expanding family-sponsored visas, we should right-size immigration in a manner that balances domestic economic demand with American values. Limiting family-sponsored visas to spouses, children, and elderly dependent parents seems both fair and prudent.

Finally, this bill does not include overdue reforms to our H–1B visa program. This bill does not include any safeguards, such as requiring employers to recruit American workers prior to hiring an H–1B worker and increasing wages for H–1B workers. Too often we have seen employers undercut wages for U.S. workers by intentionally classifying H–1B workers at a lower wage level for the work they are performing. This bill also ignores harms that befall the H–1B workers, many of whom are underpaid, vulnerable to abuse, and frequently placed in poor working conditions. There is bipartisan agreement that we need to address the visa backlog and H–1B reform. I look forward to working with any of my colleagues on this effort in the next Congress.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR STEVEN FOWLER

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, today I recognize Maj. Steven Fowler for all of his hard work on behalf of myself, my staff, and the State of South Dakota while working in my Washington, DC, office.

Steven entered military service in 2004 and has devoted his career to the U.S. Air Force. Before his time in my office, Steven served as a full-time National Guard officer in the National Guard Bureau. He also received a master's degree in public administration from the JFK School of Government at Harvard University. Steven's experience and expertise have been a true asset to my office.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Steven for his service to our country. I wish Steven, his wife Cara, and their daughters MaKenna, Alexandra, and Abigail all the best in the years to come. As he continues his career of service, he bears the esteem of a grateful State and my utmost gratitude for a job well done.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO SANDY SANDERS

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the career of Edward ''Sandy'' Sanders who is retiring as Mayor of Fort Smith, AR, capping a lifetime of service in the public and private sectors.

Sandy Sanders received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Oklahoma and spent 32 years with Whirlpool Corporation, retiring as the human resources manager in the Fort Smith Division. During his corporate career, Sandy was well known as a volunteer and leader among countless community organizations and events. Locally he served as the chair and president of numerous charitable boards including the Fort Smith Symphony, the Old Fort Days Rodeo, Bost Human Development Center, Leadership Fort Smith Alumni, the Fort Smith Port Authority, and the Fort Smith Park Board.

His leadership skills were also appreciated at the State level and beyond. He was appointed by the Governor to the Arkansas Aeronautic Association and also served as President of the Arkansas-Louisiana District Exchange Clubs and National President of the Association of Community College Trustees.

Sandy has always looked for ways to improve opportunities for young people and create a well-educated workforce. His efforts included serving on the Governor's Apprenticeship Coordination Steering Committee and the Southern States Apprenticeship Committee. He was a member of the board of directors of the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce and continuously provided a bridge between business and community needs.

After his retirement from Whirlpool, Sanders was called over and over to fill positions of need in the community. First, as interim director of the Children's Emergency Shelter and then as first executive director of the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority, which was created to transition former military property into a job-creating asset for the region. This was supposed to be a temporary position, but Sandy stayed for 6 years and laid the groundwork for what we now know as Chaffee Crossing.

He probably thought he was officially retired when he left that position. However, the community called again, this time to run for public office. Sandy was elected mayor of Fort Smith in 2010. His combination of experience in the private and public sectors made him the ideal person to lead the city, help the area attract new jobs and improve services to the community. During his tenure, the city has seen impressive growth and success in business and the arts.

I know he is especially proud of the events he led during his last year in office to celebrate Fort Smith's bicentennial. In many ways, his leadership illustrates everything he hoped to highlight about the city. He has a rich history in the area, but has always looked forward.

Sandy has received many accolades for his work over the years, but I know from our visits that he is more interested in the success of others. His work to promote education and provide opportunities for young people will continue to benefit generations to come.

He is a man of great faith who uses his gifts however they are needed at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, whether that is serving on the building committee or singing in the choir. He and his wife, Dr. Sandi Sanders, have been married for 54 years and are very proud of their two daughters and six grandchildren. Beyond all of his personal accomplishments, he would tell you that his family is his greatest legacy.

I appreciate Sandy's friendship and am grateful for his years of service and efforts devoted to the State of Arkansas.•

125TH BIRTHDAY OF THE NEVADA SAGEBRUSH

• Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I come forward today to recognize the