

So what does this mean for our men and women in uniform? It means putting a stop to the decline in combat readiness. It means knowing that our weapons systems will be delivered, maintained, and kept on the cutting edge.

Take it from Secretary Mattis. Yesterday, he explained just what this agreement will do. Here is how he put it: It will “ensure our military can defend our way of life, preserve the promise of prosperity, and pass on the freedoms you and I enjoy to the next generation.”

Our volunteer servicemembers aren't the only Americans this agreement will help. It also builds on the progress we have made for veterans and military families by providing for better care and helping to cut the VA's maintenance backlog.

It offers reinforcements to families on the front lines of our Nation's struggle with opioid addiction and substance abuse. According to the CDC, opioid overdose deaths increased fivefold just between 1999 and 2016. On average, this epidemic takes more than 100 American lives every single day. This agreement provides for new grants, prevention programs, and law enforcement initiatives to bolster existing national and State efforts.

The legislation secures relief for families who are still struggling to rebuild in the wake of last year's spate of natural disasters. This provision was only made possible by tireless work from several of my colleagues. Thanks to the leadership of Senator CORNYN, to Senator CRUZ's advocacy for Texas, and to Senator RUBIO, who led on behalf of Florida and spoke up forcefully for the people of Puerto Rico, help will soon be on the way.

The agreement also provides for new investment in our Nation's infrastructure, a shared bipartisan priority.

Now, I am confident that no Senator on either side of the aisle believes this is a perfect bill, but I am also confident that this is our best chance to begin rebuilding our military and to make progress on issues directly affecting the American people.

This is a bill for brave Americans serving our country, including the many servicemembers based in my home State of Kentucky. They deserve the pay raise we promised them and the confidence that when they leave our shores, they are combat-ready.

This is a bill for our distinguished military commanders, who have sounded the alarm on sequestration more times than any of us can count.

This is a bill for our heroes who have come home. They should be greeted by a better funded, streamlined Veterans' Administration that is equipped to meet their needs.

This is a bill for American families who have been victimized by brutal storms or the scourge of drug addiction. They deserve the assistance this agreement secures.

I hope each Senator will carefully review this bipartisan bill and support it.

We need to build on our historic year, seize the opportunity, and keep moving forward.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

CHILD PROTECTION IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2017

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 695, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 695, a bill to amend the National Child Protection Act of 1993 to establish a national criminal history background check system and criminal history review program for certain individuals who, related to their employment, have access to children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

McConnell motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 1922, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 1923 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 1922), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 1924 (to amendment No. 1923), of a perfecting nature.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 11:30 a.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

BUDGET AGREEMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, after months of painstaking negotiations, the Republican leader and I reached a 2-year budget deal. Not only will it end the series of fiscal crises that have gridlocked this body, it will also deliver large investments in our military and robust funding of middle-class programs. It will also give a sig-

nificant boost to our Nation's healthcare and provide long-overdue relief to disaster-stricken parts of our country.

As I said yesterday, it doesn't include everything that Democrats want nor everything that Republicans want, but it is a good deal for the American people, and it is a strong signal that we can break the gridlock that has overwhelmed this body and work together for the good of the country.

Let me run through a few of the benefits this agreement will provide.

Our military has suffered from the uncertainty of endless short-term spending bills. This budget deal puts that to an end. It gives the military a significant boost in support and allows the Pentagon to make long-term decisions about its budget. It is the right thing to do.

I want to credit two people—first, my dear friend Senator MCCAIN. He talked to me repeatedly, even when he was ill, about the need for funding defense. He also talked about the need for doing immigration and tried to make them go hand in hand. Senator MCCAIN has been our leader in this Chamber on both sides of the aisle in terms of making sure defense is funded, and I know that today he is proud of what we are doing for the military.

I would also like to thank Secretary Mattis. He visited me repeatedly. He is a Cabinet Secretary who seems to be doing his job, rather than focusing on an ideological path that divides people. He worked hard for this and deserves a great deal of credit.

We Democrats have always argued that we want to fund our military and our middle-class programs. We need good help on both. A mother whose child has died from opioid addiction, a veteran who is waiting in line to get help, college students with great debt on their shoulders, pensioners whose pensions might be greatly diminished need help too. To say that our military needs help to the exclusion of all of these other worthy causes is not fair to them and not good for America. I have always argued that we can do both, and this budget shows we can. We can do both—fund the military and help fund the middle class. For those naysayers who said it could not be done, it sure can with this budget. I am proud of what it does for the middle class.

For a decade—we all know this; we all talk about it—our middle class has suffered from a needless and self-imposed austerity in Congress that has limited investments in jobs and education, infrastructure, scientific research, and more. This deal puts that to an end as well. For those who say we cannot do both, we can. I am proud of this budget, because it does. Let me go into a few specifics.

There are billions of dollars of support for childcare, for helping middle-class families shoulder the very heavy burden of childcare. They need to take care of their kids in a way that they can have confidence when both parents

work, and so often that happens. In single-parent families, that happens so often.

What about college affordability? The debt burden on the shoulders of those who have just gotten out of college and graduate school is huge. We are focusing on providing help here.

In this budget, we focus on police officers, teachers, and firefighters.

What about infrastructure? Our infrastructure is crumbling throughout America. Much of it was built 50 or even 100 years ago—roads and bridges and water and wastewater. We need to help those, and then we need new infrastructure.

How about broadband to rural areas and inner cities that are not getting it? Broadband is a necessity today. Kids cannot learn. Often, you cannot hold a job unless you can get broadband at home. In large parts of America, particularly rural parts, you cannot get it. We provide help, and rural America is very happy that we are doing this.

We provide billions to rebuild and improve veterans hospitals and clinics so that when our brave soldiers come home, bearing the scars of war, their country serves them just as well as they served us.

I mentioned opioids earlier. There is \$6 billion, finally, to guard against the opioid-mental health crisis. The opioid crisis is widespread. The President has set up a whole bunch of commissions and given a whole bunch of speeches, but he hasn't funded it. We in this body have. We Democrats have led the charge. We have so many Members, like Senators SHAHEEN and MANCHIN; we have so many Senators, like Senators HEITKAMP and BALDWIN; we have so many Senators, like McCASKILL, DONNELLY, and HASSAN, who have been talking about the opioid crisis for a long time. Their hard work has now produced the dollars that will give the treatment that so many who are addicted need and the infrastructure to prevent these bad drugs, particularly fentanyl, from coming into this country.

My guest at the State of the Union was a woman named Stephanie Keegan, from Putnam County. She was the brave mother of a veteran who got hooked on opioids in the depths of PTSD. He waited 16 months for his first appointment at the VA, but he died of an overdose 2 weeks before he could get treatment. Stephanie Keegan has been fighting for this. She is a brave, strong woman who is lighting the candle. She was my guest at the State of the Union, and she is a happy woman this morning because all of her hard work after her son's passing is coming to fruition.

Of course, there is so much more in this proposal that we can all be proud of as Americans, in that we will not be neglecting people who have been neglected for so long: support for community health centers, which serve over 25 million Americans; a full decade of funding for CHIP, or the Children's

Health Insurance Program; an effort to lower prescription drug costs for millions of American seniors who are caught in the Medicare Part D doughnut hole; disaster relief and recovery funding, not just for Texas, Louisiana, and Florida—important as they may be and are—but for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Western States; and a special select committee—we don't do this often—that will be empowered and under a deadline to deliver a legislative fix to the pension issue by the end of the year. It is this issue which has plagued so many working and middle-class Americans in many States, people who have paid into their pensions day after day, week after week, month after month, and who are now finding those pensions vanishing. We should provide relief for them just as we should provide relief for others. This commission is a strong, bright light that will focus on this issue and will create a path to a solution.

I salute so many of my colleagues who have worked so hard on so many of these pieces: Senators MURRAY, WYDEN, and TESTER, on healthcare; Senators BROWN, CASEY, STABENOW, MANCHIN, HEITKAMP, DONNELLY, KLOBUCHAR, BALDWIN, and SMITH, on the pension's piece; Senator NELSON, on the disaster package. Senator LEAHY, the ranking member of Appropriations, has done a great job on the whole thing. A lot of credit is due to each of them and to so many more of our Members because the final product is something that will benefit so many Americans over the next decade. Senator McCASKILL was also very much involved in the pension issue, as well as many others.

I hope this budget agreement will pass the Senate in large numbers on both sides of the aisle. It will be easy to say: Well, I didn't like this, and I didn't like that. Yet this is the time to come together. This is the time to stand up for our soldiers, our middle class, and those aspiring to the middle class. I hope we will get a large bipartisan vote.

To that point, I have some pointed words for some in the House's Freedom Caucus—the hard right—who are starting to squawk about this budget deal. They say it raises the deficit. They just voted and cheered a bill that would add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit in the form of tax breaks for mammoth corporations. They were willing to increase the deficit on the defense side of the budget, but all of a sudden, when it comes to our schools or our roads or our scientific research: Oh, we can't do it because of the deficit. It is blatantly hypocritical to ignore the deficit when it favors corporate America but raise the alarm when it comes to helping our veterans, our students, and those addicted to opioids. That is selective enforcement. That doesn't fly.

There is a lot of sophistry going on. Oh, when we reduce taxes, we will not have a deficit because it will keep the economy growing. Does anyone doubt

that education keeps the economy growing, that scientific research keeps the economy growing, that building infrastructure keeps the economy growing? There is a lot of hokum flying around here that only when you cut taxes for big corporations do you grow the economy.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander, and I think Americans are tired of the hypocrisy on the hard right, which treats a \$1.5 trillion hole in the deficit by cutting corporate taxes with cheers—primarily taxes on the wealthy—and then says you cannot spend money on those who need relief from the student debt loans they have or who need help for healthcare or food stamps. It is utter, sheer hypocrisy.

Let this budget go forward through both Chambers and go to the President's desk, where President Trump seems willing and ready to sign. President Trump was not involved in this process. He was not constructive when he spoke and tweeted. He asked for a shutdown. I think, in this body—and I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are learning this—oftentimes, we can get a lot more done when working with one another and letting the White House just sit on the sidelines, because you do not know what its positions are. As I once said, negotiating with the President is like negotiating with Jell-O, and, oftentimes, his positions are just so far over to one side of the political spectrum—Koch brothers-type positions—that they would never pass. So this is a good motto.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, now I have one more word on immigration.

Based on my continued conversations with the Republican leader, once we pass this budget agreement, we are ready to proceed to a neutral bill—a shell bill—on immigration next week. The Republican leader has guaranteed an amendment process, fair on all sides, where we will alternate amendments. That means some of the people who are on the very conservative side will get amendments and some on the very liberal side will, but so will there be an opportunity for a bipartisan compromise that will focus on the Dreamers and border security that will have a real chance of getting 60 votes. We should all be working hard to get that done in this Chamber.

I would say to my friends in America who care about the Dreamers to please let their Senators know, particularly those Senators who have not committed to helping the Dreamers, how important this is.

Next week will be one of the most vital weeks when we will be able to deal with the Dreamer issue in a fair, compassionate way. It has been swept under the rug for too long, but because of the agreement the leader and I came to a few weeks ago—and he has confirmed to keep his commitment—we will be able to deal with it. The House should be able to deal with it as well.

What Leader McCONNELL and I have agreed to should be something that

Speaker RYAN agrees to. To just put President Trump's bill on the floor means no immigration bill and no help for the Dreamers. We all know that. It will lose Republican votes as well as Democratic votes. It will not pass in the House.

I say to Speaker RYAN: Allow a fair and open process to debate Dreamers on the floor of the House, just as we are allowing in the Senate.

Leader PELOSI shouldn't have to stand and speak for 8 hours—I respect her for doing it—just to secure a vote on an issue as compelling and pressing as the Dreamers. What Leader PELOSI is asking for is the same thing that we have here in the Senate—no more, no less—a vote and an open process. That is undeniably fair. I hope Speaker RYAN will relent and promise a vote. There is an appetite on both sides and in both Chambers to get this done—both to help the Dreamers and do border security.

In the Senate, I know that everyone on the Democratic side and many on the Republican side are working hard to find a bill that can protect Dreamers and provide border security that can pass next week. We know this is a difficult task, and we know immigration is one of the more volatile issues in America, but we have to do it for the good of this country. The budget was a difficult process, but we came to an agreement. Let's do the same on immigration with a bipartisan agreement, where each side gives some, and we can all be proud that we got it done. The same effort and spirit that forged the budget deal should carry forward to the issue of the Dreamers. Let's get it done next week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to speak in support of two pieces of legislation I introduced that are included in the continuing resolution we will vote on today: the Social Impact Partnerships to Pay for Results Act and the Modernizing the Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act. Both of these bills are very important to Hoosiers, and I am glad we will finally see them become law after 6 years of working in a bipartisan way to get them across the finish line.

Let me tell you why these two measures are so important to Hoosiers and really to all Americans. The Social Impact Partnerships to Pay for Results Act empowers our public and private sectors to implement evidence-based social and public health interventions to address some of our Nation's most pressing social challenges.

America has a celebrated and vibrant civil society. We have a history of not

turning first to government to solve some of our thorniest social and public health challenges but instead turning to our neighbors, turning to our local communities, perhaps our local not-for-profit groups or our community heroes, and we discover that oftentimes they are better situated to address these thorny challenges than are government programs. That is not to suggest in the slightest that government doesn't have a very important role in addressing these broad social challenges. Government can indeed make a difference but so can these other organizations.

We have a growing evidence base without any partisan tinge to it. It is broadly agreed that we have a growing evidence base of those things that are working to address challenges such as homelessness, asthma in low-income communities, and getting the long-term unemployed back into the workforce. Name the social ill, and there is likely a not-for-profit group or even a for-profit group in each of our individual States which is making a meaningful difference on this front.

The challenge is, how do we scale up these evidence-based interventions in an era of scarce resources? Well, because social impact partnerships are focused on achieving results, taxpayer money is only paid out when desired outcomes are met. Government payments are made possible because when we really help somebody, when we really are able to help them achieve their goals and turn around their lives, that frees up government money. So we use those avoided costs and future government savings to pay back those who invest in scaling up things that really work to improve lives.

Let me give an example of what has also been called pay for success. There is a service in Indianapolis that connects registered nurses with low-income pregnant women. The Nurse-Family Partnership helps ensure both mom and baby are healthy throughout the pregnancy and through the infant's life. They hit specific metrics that save the Federal Government money. Under this legislation, a philanthropic organization like Indiana's Lilly Endowment could invest in the Nurse-Family Partnership to scale up their work. As long as the metrics continue to be met, as long as success is achieved, the investor is paid a return out of those future government savings.

It makes a whole lot of sense, which is why it passed unanimously out of the House of Representatives previously and why I believe it will be passed into law after passing this Chamber and be signed into law by the President in the coming days.

Social impact partnerships address our moral responsibilities to ensure that social programs actually improve recipients' lives and do so in a fiscally prudent manner. They also respond to the imperative of improving our economic health by harnessing the capabilities of every able-bodied citizen.

We ought to be treating every American like they are an asset to be realized, not a liability to be written off, not a consumer of programs but somebody with real potential. We want every American to achieve their full human potential.

To recap, who is going to benefit? Well, the recipients of these services, through the public-private partnership, will benefit—the least among us—taxpayers will benefit, and every American will benefit as our communities become strengthened, as more enter the workforce, as public health is improved, and so forth.

The next bipartisan measure, which I expect to get across the finish line today, is the Modernizing the Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act. This bill expedites the time it takes to place children into loving homes, and we will see why it is so important and so timely that we pass this legislation today as well.

Thousands of children in my State of Indiana have lost loving parents to opioid addiction. I have seen it up close and personal. I used to represent Scott County, IN. This was ground zero in our State for the opioid epidemic. It made national news, not in a good way. So many good people have been adversely impacted in this community, and I know there are communities like this across the country that are being impacted to varying degrees by the opioid crisis. I fear that if we do nothing, we will lose thousands in the next generation as well.

Modernizing the outdated interstate child placement process is one of a number of proposals that are urgently needed. This legislation will incentivize States to connect to an electronic interstate case-processing system that has already achieved substantial reductions in the time it takes to place these children into homes.

Frankly, before I dove into this, I just assumed that our foster care system was digitized; that it had found its way into the 21st century; that we weren't using paper files that were being mailed back and forth several times to process adoptions, especially under these very trying circumstances, but that is not the case. We need to make sure a child will spend less time being shuffled from foster home to foster home, and this legislation will achieve that.

We need to make sure a situation where children are taken in and out of school without a set routine is put to an end. For children caught up in a system struggling to meet community needs, we should do everything possible to get them immediately placed in a setting that is best for them, regardless of State boundary lines.

In summary, these bipartisan, bicameral bills were developed over 6 years, beginning during my time in the House of Representatives. I consulted with key stakeholders to make sure there would be broad support, and

there is. I have had countless discussions with Hoosiers and other experts about how to tackle these challenges.

The continuing resolution we will vote on today isn't perfect. I remain concerned about our spending levels, and I maintain that we need to take long-term action for the fiscal health of our country. However, with our commitment to our military and the inclusion of these two important pieces of legislation, I will be voting for the CR for the good of all Hoosier children, families, and communities.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak for up to 10 minutes followed by Senator CARDIN for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

DACA

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the need to protect our Dreamers from deportation. When we talk about Dreamers, we are talking about immigrants who came to this country as children. We are talking about immigrants whose parents brought them here when they were young to give them a better chance than they had in their own countries. We are talking about young immigrants who, when they were children, had no choice in the decision to come to the United States.

These Dreamers know no other home than these United States. Many of them have spent their lives in limbo, identifying as Americans but lacking legal status and under the constant threat of being sent back to countries that are completely foreign to them.

In 2012, President Obama took steps to protect some of these Dreamers from deportation. Through an Executive order, he established the program known as DACA or the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program. DACA created security and opportunity for hundreds of thousands of young Dreamers, allowing them to live and work in our great Nation without the threat of deportation. So what DACA really stands for is "Deserving a Chance in America," DACA, and a protection for these innocent young people who deserve a shot at the American dream.

I would like to take a moment to speak about one of these Massachusetts Dreamers who benefited from DACA. Her name is Estefany. She came to the United States at 9 years of age to escape violence in El Salvador. She was brought here by her grandmother, along with her two sisters and a baby cousin. The journey took 22 days. It was arduous. Estefany was so scared at one point she asked to be left behind. When she finally got to the United States, she found it difficult to adjust to this whole new world, but Estefany was overjoyed to be reunited with her mother, who had come to the United

States a few years before the rest of the family was able to come.

Estefany was grateful for the opportunity she was given and did not want to squander it. She wanted to succeed in school and live up to her mother's sacrifice. Estefany, who only spoke Spanish when she arrived, struggled with elementary school and tried to do her homework every night. Working as hard as she could, in 2 years she was moved on from her English as a Second Language class. Her hard work paid off in even greater dividends when she was accepted into the prestigious Boston Latin Academy for high school.

Her work ethic and desire to deserve her family's sacrifices were what motivated Estefany and got her through the many hardships that come with being undocumented—fear, uncertainty, anxiety. When Estefany began her college application process, she fully understood, for the first time, what it meant to be undocumented.

Although she wanted to go to college and have a career, she was afraid to tell her guidance counselor and her teachers of her fears about her legal status. Once Estefany opened up to them, she confronted applying and attending college the same way she had always faced up to the other struggles in her life—with strength, courage, and perseverance. She fought the battle that many aspiring college students wage—figuring out how to pay for it. It wasn't easy. As she researched and applied for scholarships, she found out that most were for citizens only. Because of scholarships provided by immigrant support organizations like the wonderful Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, MIRA, Estefany is now attending the University of Massachusetts in Boston, where she is pursuing a degree in international relations and a minor in public policy.

So it sounds like a happy ending, but, sadly, it is not. On Estefany's first day as a freshman at UMass Boston, President Trump repealed DACA. He callously terminated the program, with no guidance on what should be done next for these young Dreamers. That heartless action by the President left Estefany unable to focus on school. She no longer had any certainty about her future here in the United States and at UMass Boston. As Estefany put it, "After so many tears and sleepless nights, it felt like all my hard work was being thrown away."

Estefany is a fighter, and she is not giving up on her college education or career. I know she will succeed if she is just given the chance because she, like so many other Dreamers, deserves that chance.

Over the 5 years that DACA was in effect, the program protected some 800,000 Dreamers, nearly 8,000 in Massachusetts. These are young people like Estefany who study, who serve, who work, and who live next door to us every single day. They are our friends, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

They are not "too lazy." They are not "bad hombres." They are some of the best and brightest in our country.

Now, because of President Trump's unconscionable decision to end DACA, Estefany and so many young people like her are living in darkness again. It is heartbreaking to watch this administration strip protections away from people who are Americans in every way that should matter. Leaving them to live under a threat of deportation is unconscionable.

We should not abandon these young people whom we urged to come out of the shadows. We should not abandon the larger community of Dreamers who have no other home than the United States. The American people understand this. In January, a poll found that 87 percent of Americans favor allowing immigrants who were brought to the United States illegally as children to stay here—87 percent; nearly all Americans are with our Dreamers.

You would think that extending these protections would be a no-brainer for the Republicans. Right here, right now, we could pass a bill to protect these young immigrants, but, instead, the Republicans have decided to use the Dreamers as a bargaining chip in budget negotiations. They hope that by leveraging the lives and futures of Dreamers, they will get their laundry list of hard-liner immigration demands.

I am so glad that Senator MCCONNELL has agreed with Senator SCHUMER that we are going to open up a debate here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. We are going to try to find a way to resolve this issue, although there is no guarantee that President Trump will, in fact, agree with any resolution here. There is no guarantee that the tea party Freedom Caucus Republicans in the House of Representatives will agree with any understanding that is reached here on a bipartisan basis, if we can reach one on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

I just think, for better or worse, the Dreamers should know that we are going to continue to fight for them and that we are going to continue to work toward creating a pathway for them to be able to live in our country without fear. I think that is going to be the signature moment we can create for our country this year. Yes, we have a budget agreement, but we have so much more work to do to help these young people who will be great Americans once we create a path to citizenship for them.

At this point, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first, I want to thank Senator MARKEY and concur in his comments in regard to the Dreamers. Yes, we are pleased that we have a bipartisan agreement today. I am still in the process of reading all the details before making a final judgment, but it is certainly good news that the Democrats and Republicans—

the leadership—have come together in an agreement.

I join Senator MARKEY and am pleased that the majority leader is going to bring before the floor of the Senate in a fair manner next week the immigration issue to protect Dreamers. I would also add that those in temporary protective status, TPS, should also be considered.

We have a process, and I hope that the spirit that we have seen on the budget agreement will continue next week as the Senate works, as it should, in a bipartisan manner to protect the Dreamers and do what is right. I also want to acknowledge that there is no such commitment from the Republican leadership in the House. I join with Leader PELOSI in urging Speaker RYAN to set up a similar process in the House so that we can get a bill to the President and signed into law to protect the Dreamers. The President created this problem by putting a date on their backs, and it is our responsibility to respond in a timely way. I am glad to see that the Senate is prepared to take action.

PRUDENT LAYPERSON STANDARD

Mr. President, I took this time because I want to talk about one specific provision in healthcare that was passed by Congress in the nineties, but let me just preface that by saying that in this budget agreement, I am pleased to see there are bipartisan agreements on advancing healthcare in America. A bill that I have worked on since we imposed the therapy caps way back in the nineties, which made no sense at all, will finally correct that mistake permanently and allow those who are in need of the most severe therapy services—those who are stroke victims or in similar situations—to be able to get that care without a cap as to the amount of services they need.

I am also pleased to see that we are going to be dealing with telemedicine—an issue I have worked on and many Members have worked on—improving dialysis treatment. Some of the issues we have all worked on include community health centers, the 10-year extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program, and rural healthcare. There are a lot of good things in this bipartisan agreement to advance healthcare, and I am pleased about them.

I just want to remind my colleagues that if we are successful in getting that enacted into law, we still have to make sure it is implemented in the manner in which we intended. I give as an example the prudent layperson standard on emergency medical treatment. I was involved in that process in the 1990s. The reason this came to our attention is that insurance practices in the 1990s were such that it was not unusual for an insurance company to deny payment for emergency services. An individual would have the classic symptoms, for example, of a heart attack—the pain, the sweating—and then did what a prudent layperson would do, which is go to the nearest emergency

room to get treatment. Well, after the examination was complete, if they found out the person did not have a heart attack, the person would be discharged from the hospital and go home. A few days later they would get the bill for that visit and then almost have a heart attack when the insurance company would not pay the bill. We recognized that as not being right, so we took action to change that.

In response to these dangerous and unfair requirements, Maryland enacted the prudent layperson standard in 1992. If it was prudent to go to the emergency room for care, the insurance company had to reimburse it. Later, in 1997, I led the national effort to extend the prudent layperson standard to all Medicare plans and Medicaid managed care plans as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. I worked with President Clinton, who eventually signed an Executive order in 1998 to have the standard apply to all government insurance programs.

Then I fought to have my patient's bill of rights amendment, which included the prudent layperson standard, enacted as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act for individual and group health plans. So now it is effective for all plans in this country. There is a definition of what an emergency medical condition is and when it is prudent to do that. It is spelled out in the statute dealing with the seriousness of the symptoms, as it could deal with bodily harm, et cetera.

Despite the Federal law, private insurers are, once again, using tactics to prevent people from seeking care in an emergency room. Several newspapers, from the Los Angeles Times to the Columbus Dispatch, have reported that Anthem—one of the Nation's largest insurers—has implemented an avoidable emergency room program to reduce what it deems as unnecessary ER visits and address rising healthcare costs. This program has been rolled out in several States, including Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, Georgia, and New Hampshire.

According to these news reports, patients who believe they have emergency symptoms go to the ER for emergency medical care. After several tests, the physicians and nurses determine there is no emergency medical condition. The patient returns home, relieved to be OK. A few weeks later, they receive a letter from the insurance company refusing to cover the care received in the hospital. This is wrong. We said it was wrong in the 1990s, and we took steps to change that. We now have laws that make it very clear.

The Anthem avoidable ER policy forces people who are in some sort of acute distress to determine, before they even leave their homes, if their symptoms are really serious enough to go to an emergency room. What we had back in the 1990s was preauthorization for emergency care. Can you imagine trying to make a phone call before you

go to an emergency room to talk to somebody as to whether you should go there or not, wasting valuable time, or being told to go to a hospital different from the closest hospital, again, causing really serious jeopardy? That is what we had. People should not be forced to act as their own doctor and second-guess themselves when they truly believe they are having a medical emergency.

A wrong decision based upon economic considerations—the ability to pay the bill—could be deadly. We should not discourage people from seeking necessary medical treatment, and we should not allow insurance companies to return to the time when they could callously refuse to cover emergency care provided to individuals who genuinely and reasonably believe they need it.

As we will be considering shortly additional improvements in our healthcare system to eliminate the cap that we have on therapy caps, to make it clear that we want to make telemedicine more available, to help dialysis patients, to deal with our children in the Children's Health Insurance Program, to deal with rural healthcare, let us also make sure that we set up the ability to make sure that our policies, in fact, are carried out. We should not allow an insurance company such as Anthem to act as if what Congress did does not exist. I think that is our responsibility.

I look forward to working with our colleagues in a bipartisan way to improve healthcare and access for all Americans.

With that, I yield the floor.

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 the Senate amendment to H.R. 695, a bill to amend the National Child Protection Act of 1993 to establish a national criminal history background check system and criminal history review program for certain individuals who, related to their employment, have access to children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Jerry Moran, Richard Burr, David Perdue, Tom Cotton, Shelley Moore Capito, Deb Fischer, James M. Inhofe, Pat Roberts, Roger F. Wicker, John Hoeven, John Barrasso, John Boozman, Steve Daines, Mike Rounds.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

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 the Senate amendment to H.R. 695 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 Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 29 Leg.]

YEAS—55

Alexander	Fischer	Murkowski
Barrasso	Flake	Nelson
Blunt	Gardner	Perdue
Boozman	Graham	Portman
Burr	Grassley	Risch
Capito	Hatch	Roberts
Cassidy	Heitkamp	Rounds
Cochran	Heller	Rubio
Collins	Hoeven	Sasse
Corker	Inhofe	Scott
Cornyn	Isakson	Shelby
Cortez Masto	Johnson	Sullivan
Cotton	Kennedy	Thune
Crapo	Lankford	Tillis
Cruz	Lee	Toomey
Daines	Manchin	Wicker
Donnelly	McCaskill	Young
Enzi	McConnell	
Ernst	Moran	

NAYS—44

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

NOT VOTING—1

McCain

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 44.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

HONORING HOMETOWN HEROES ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany H.R. 1892.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 1892, a bill to amend title 4, United States Code, to provide for the flying of the flag at half-staff in the event of the death of a first responder in the line of duty.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the

Senate to the bill, with amendment No. 1930, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell amendment No. 1931 (to amendment No. 1930), to change the enactment date.

McConnell motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 1932, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 1933 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 1932), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 1934 (to amendment No. 1933), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, is it proper to speak as in morning business?

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

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in strong support of the bipartisan Budget Act which will hopefully pass later today.

This bill, as the name implies, is the result of rigorous, bipartisan, and bicameral negotiations. I am pleased to have played a part in this endeavor, and I am gratified to note that in addition to keeping the government open and providing much needed resources for our troops, the bill before us addresses a number of longstanding priorities of the Senate Finance Committee, including many that I have personally been working toward for years now. Indeed, this legislation, once passed and signed into law, will be the combination of years of work put in by members of the Finance Committee on both sides of the aisle.

I want to take some time to say a few words about some of the bipartisan victories that will be achieved through this legislation. I should warn my colleagues that this will take a few minutes because there are quite a few provisions to discuss.

For starters, let's talk about healthcare. Among the more prominent victories in this bill is an extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program for an additional 4 years. As we all know, last month Congress passed a historic 6-year CHIP extension, which was eventually signed into law. The bill before us would add another 4 years on top of that 6-year provision, providing a total extension of 10 years—10 years. That is remarkable. I have a long history with the CHIP program. I was the original author of the program, and I have always been an outspoken champion of it.

We have had some back-and-forth here in the Senate about CHIP in recent months, and some of it has gotten pretty fierce. However, today the Senate will pass legislation—bipartisan legislation—to provide unprecedented security and certainty for the families who depend on CHIP and the State governments that need more predictability to map out their own expenditures.

I am sure my friend, former Senator Kennedy, is up there watching. I am very happy he came on this bill in the early stages and helped to put it through.

In addition to the CHIP extension, the budget bill includes a bipartisan Finance Committee bill entitled the "Creating High-Quality Results and Outcomes Necessary to Improve Chronic Care Act of 2017"—a fairly long title. Senator WYDEN, the Finance Committee's ranking member, and I have been working for years on this legislation, which, once enacted, will improve health outcomes for Medicare beneficiaries living with chronic conditions. It will also help bring down Medicare costs and streamline care coordination services.

We have been working with our colleagues, stakeholders, and advocates for quite some time. We moved the bill through the committee last year, and the Senate actually passed it once already without a single vote in opposition. This legislation will finally get the CHRONIC Care Act to the President's desk.

I thank Senator WYDEN for the time and effort he has put into this action. I also thank our other colleagues on the Finance Committee, particularly Senators ISAKSON and WARNER, who joined us on a working group to develop this important legislation and move it forward. This bill, as promised, will relieve a great deal of suffering for Medicare beneficiaries and will do so in a fiscally responsible manner.

The budget bill also contains a package of bipartisan provisions that have come to be known as Medicare and health extenders. These provisions are high priorities for a number of our Members throughout the Senate, and I am very pleased we were able to include them in the final package of the spending bill.

While these are all important, I would like to highlight that there are a few provisions we were able to permanently resolve and not just extend. One such provision will repeal a flawed limit on the amount Medicare would pay for outpatient physical and other therapy that threatened access for some of the most vulnerable patients. I worked with other Members in both Chambers to find a lasting solution to this decades-old problem, again demonstrating that Congress can tackle hard problems and not just kick the can down the road.

In addition to the Medicare extenders, the bipartisan funding bill also includes some key reforms to the underlying Medicare Programs. These include expanding access to in-home treatments for patients with Medicare Part B and improved means-testing for the premiums paid by high-income earners under Medicare Parts B and D, all of which will help improve the overall fiscal outlook for Medicare.

Furthermore, the bill repeals the Independent Payment Advisory Board that was created under the so-called Affordable Care Act. This, too, is a step that has garnered bipartisan support, as it should, showing that many Democrats have joined Republicans in recognizing just how ill-advised the creation of this panel really was.