

only good for the planet but crucial for his constituents. Florida has already begun to feel the effects of extreme weather made worse by warmer temperatures, and Senator NELSON's work on the issue reflects his deep commitment to Floridians.

In addition to his global outlook, Senator NELSON has shown his willingness and ability to accomplish small changes that can have big benefits for his constituents. In the aftermath of horrific shootings in Florida, he didn't just offer condolences to the victims; he got to work to call attention to gun violence, and he issued calls to action. He partnered with me to introduce legislation that would give law enforcement agencies the tools they need to modernize efforts to combat gun violence. The small technical fix in this legislation—allowing the ATF to digitize its records—would make a world of difference to police trying to solve crimes across the country. I wish his calls to action, like so many of ours, were heard by Congress.

Senator NELSON has devoted his career to public service, and his role in elected office started back in the Florida House of Representatives in 1972. Since then, he has faithfully represented the State of Florida, and we have been fortunate to have him here in the Senate. I am sad to see him go, and the Nation will miss his strong voice on environmental issues. I wish Senator NELSON and his wife, Grace, the best.

TRIBUTE TO BOB CORKER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, BOB CORKER is a businessman. He is a husband, a father, and a grandfather. He is a U.S. Senator. But at his heart, he is a Tennessean.

Senator CORKER's success in business has translated into a successful Senate career. In these uncertain times, where diplomacy sometimes seems reduced to a tweet or a hashtag, Senator CORKER has shown a willingness to refuse to compromise American values for political expediency. Most recently, I was proud to join him and other Senators in sending a letter that triggered an investigation under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act to determine if Saudi officials are responsible for the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Senator CORKER also recognizes that reducing nuclear weapon stockpiles is an important step to a more peaceful world, and he was just one of 13 Republicans to vote for the New START treaty.

I thank Senator CORKER for his service here in the Senate and wish him and his wife, Elizabeth, well.

TRIBUTE TO CLAIRE MCCASKILL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Senator MCCASKILL has left an indelible mark on the Senate. A former prosecutor in Missouri, she brought the fight to pro-

tect the most vulnerable in her State and across the country to her work here in the U.S. Senate.

Her work to preserve the Affordable Care Act and protect victims of sexual harassment and violence speak to the depth of her convictions. She has also shown great talent safeguarding our Nation and holding our government accountable as a former chair of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and as a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Senator MCCASKILL has fought hard to protect college students from sexual harassment and assault on campus. Senator MCCASKILL has even spoken of the sexual harassment that she herself faced as a young woman in the Missouri State Legislature. Long before the Nation began talking openly about the extent of sexual harassment and assault across all sectors of our society brought into the open by the #MeToo movement, Senator MCCASKILL prepared a report on the extent of sexual harassment and assault on college campuses. But Senator MCCASKILL has never been a woman content with report-writing; she introduced a bill to help address the issue. And when the Senate didn't move on that bill, she worked directly with colleges, holding public roundtables to call attention to the issue.

That is just a glimpse of the determination that Senator MCCASKILL brings to all of her work on behalf of her constituents. She is a straight shooter. In the face of misinformation campaigns about the Affordable Care Act, Senator MCCASKILL has always stepped up to promote the truth. I have always admired her commitment to preserving that law that helps so many of her rural constituents.

As a former chair of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator MCCASKILL has dedicated much of her Senate service to keeping our country safe. I greatly appreciated her support for my National Guard Empowerment Act, which finally gave our National Guard the tools it needs to protect our Nation and take care of its members.

I will miss Senator MCCASKILL's tenacity, and I am sure that Missouri and the Nation will too. Missouri is losing a champion in the Senate. Marcelle and I wish her, her husband, Joe, and her family the very best in this new chapter.

TRIBUTE TO DEAN HELLER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Senator DEAN HELLER may have been a freshman Senator when he came to this body in 2011, but he was not short on experience. First elected as a Nevada assemblyman in 1990, Senator HELLER has served in government ever since.

During his Senate tenure, Senator HELLER has shown a great interest in

protecting American's data privacy, and he was an important partner in our efforts to pass the USA FREEDOM Act. He was a staunch advocate of that bill, even when many in the Senate were pushing for expanded surveillance powers over Americans. Both of us recognized that though the bill may not have included every provision we wanted, the best way to offer privacy protections was through compromise.

While his tenure here was brief, I have appreciated getting to know Senator HELLER and working with him on issues of great importance. I wish Senator HELLER, his wonderful wife, Lynn, and their four children the very best in this next chapter of their lives.

TRIBUTE TO JEFF FLAKE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know that Senator JEFF FLAKE believes, as I do, that the Senate at its best can be the conscience of our Nation. Lately, I believe the Senate has been less than that. In the closing months of his tenure in the Senate, however, Senator FLAKE has spoken about his hopes for this body and for our Nation. What is more, throughout his tenure, he has on many occasions reached across the aisle to bridge the partisan divide for the good of the Nation.

When I first approached Senator FLAKE about joining me in visiting Cuba, he was willing to come with an open mind. He recognized the failure of the continuing U.S. embargo, and his partnership helped us create a new path forward that culminated in the release of Alan Gross, an American long imprisoned in Cuba, and restored diplomatic relations between our two countries. The few minutes on the tarmac in Cuba while we waited to bring Mr. Gross back home after 5 years in captivity are some of the most meaningful minutes of my life. Senator FLAKE's partnership helped lead to that moment.

While the release of Alan Gross was the most dramatic event in U.S.-Cuban relations in a generation, Senator FLAKE has also partnered with me on initiatives to encourage Cuban entrepreneurs, open Cuban markets to American farmers and agriculture, and boost the Cuban Government's respect for human rights. His assistance from across the aisle has been helpful in shining light on the more than 50 years of failed policy toward this small island neighbor.

I have also watched with admiration JEFF's commitment of the last month in protecting one of the most pivotal national security investigations in our Nation's history—the special counsel's investigation into Russian interference in our elections. The security and sanctity of our elections is a cornerstone of our democracy. As he rounds out this chapter of his career, Senator FLAKE's stance and insistence that the Senate act to protect the work of the special counsel has been laudable.

I will be sad to see Senator FLAKE leave, and the Senate will be losing an

independent voice willing to pursue bipartisan progress. That is a voice that is needed now more than ever. I will miss working with my friend here in the Senate, and Marcelle and I wish JEFF and Cheryl all the best as they begin a new chapter.

TRIBUTE TO JOE DONNELLY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize the career and service of Senator JOE DONNELLY. Senator DONNELLY has spent more than a decade steadfastly representing the State of Indiana in both Chambers of Congress. He has resisted labels and rigid partisanship, consistently proving that he is open to any policy solutions that benefit Hoosiers.

I have been particularly moved by Senator DONNELLY's commitment to defending fairness in the workplace. He has fought for sustainable minimum wages and helped pass crucial protections for victims of pay discrimination. His work in Congress has made the workplaces of Indiana and the Nation fairer.

I was proud to work with Senator DONNELLY in 2015 to expand the resources available to victims under the Violence Against Women Act. We have also worked together to pass legislation to ensure that law enforcement have access to funds to purchase adequate body armor.

Senator DONNELLY's presence and his desire to bridge partisan divides will surely be missed in this Chamber. I know he will continue to do all he can to serve Hoosiers and our Nation, and I wish him and his wife, Jill, all the best.

TRIBUTE TO HEIDI HEITKAMP

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, you wouldn't guess it, but North Dakota and Vermont are more alike than they are different. Both depend on agriculture and small businesses to support rural communities. Likewise, Senator HEITKAMP and I are not all that different: We are both natives of our States, and we both are committed to working across the aisle to get things done.

Before running for the Senate, Senator HEITKAMP served as North Dakota's attorney general, where she worked to keep communities safe, much as I did as State's attorney in Vermont before I first ran for the Senate. One of her biggest achievements as State attorney general was forcing the tobacco industry to tell the public the truth about the health risks of smoking, and securing a settlement of \$336 million in damages for North Dakota taxpayers.

Senator HEITKAMP was a strong cosponsor of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013. We worked together closely to include provisions to protect Native American victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault. These protections were sorely needed, and it was an

honor to fight with her for their inclusion. She also introduced and helped usher into law the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children Act, which works to ensure that Native children and families have access to critical economic and educational resources.

North Dakota, like Vermont, struggles with affordable housing and a rural housing shortage. As a member of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, Senator HEITKAMP worked to help families achieve stable housing. She sought housing finance reform and relief for community banks and credit unions, giving more rural families access to the economic tools they need to thrive.

Senator HEITKAMP and I have served together on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, working most recently to pass a comprehensive and bipartisan farm bill to support the hard work of our farmers, who are the backbone of our rural communities, and to address nutrition and food insecurity challenges across the country and abroad. Senator HEITKAMP has been committed to ensuring we invest in our rural infrastructure and business development, and North Dakota is stronger for that.

Senator HEIDI HEITKAMP has been a tireless champion for the people of North Dakota for longer than just her term in the Senate, and although I will miss her, I know she will continue to serve her State in other ways for years to come. Marcelle and I wish her and Darwin the very best.

SYRIA

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today in response to the President's announcement on the withdrawal of troops from Syria.

Like many of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle, I am deeply concerned that prematurely withdrawing American troops from Syria is contrary to the advice of senior national security officials and that the President's announcement will have negative consequences for our country's national security interests. I am also concerned about the implications of U.S. withdrawal for the security of our allies and for innocent civilians in Syria.

Since August of this year, the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and National Security Advisor have all suggested that the Syrian conflict requires sustained U.S. commitment. Just last week, the administration's Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS said that "we can't just pick up and leave" Syria. This week, the U.S. Special Representative for Syria Engagement said that the U.S. would remain in Syria until the U.S. achieves three objectives: ensuring the defeat of the Islamic State, reducing Iranian influence, and reaching a political solution to resolve the crisis. The President's announcement contradicts the advice

of our diplomats and military leaders and fails to address these issues.

These concerns are shared by our key allies, including Israel and Jordan. The withdrawal of U.S. troops will also abandon the Kurds, who have been our partners in the region. Once again, we see the U.S. abandoning critical alliances in favor of narrow and ill-defined aims.

I have seen firsthand the devastating effects of the ongoing Syrian conflict and resulting humanitarian crisis, which has led to the worst refugee crisis since World War II. In 2015, I visited a Greek refugee center and met with officials who are dealing with the crisis. I saw groups of children who had traveled alone to try to find better lives, but when we tried to ask one little boy about his story, he did not want to tell us because he and all his friends were afraid that they would be sent back home. I also visited the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, where we heard about atrocities taking place in Syria that one refugee said would "make stones cry."

This crisis is not over, and it requires an international response and clear U.S. policy. There are no easy solutions in Syria. But what we need is leadership and a comprehensive plan based on the expertise of those on the frontlines, not hasty and ill-informed decision-making.

Thank you.

REMEMBERING GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to former President George Herbert Walker Bush who died on November 30 at the age of 94. Henry Clay once said, "Recognize at all times the paramount right of your Country to your most devoted services, whether she treat you ill or well, and never let selfish views or interests predominate over the duties of patriotism." Beginning at the age of 18 when he joined the Navy and served in World War II, President Bush's life was a life of service and of a greater commitment to his country. Over several decades and in numerous roles, President Bush served with honor and decency offering his country the best of his wisdom, experience, and dedication. When he lost reelection in 1992, he left a note to his successor that ended with "Your success is now our country's success. I'm rooting hard for you. Good luck." Even in defeat, President Bush's focus was on the future of the country and its success.

While many commentators have highlighted his achievements in foreign policy, we should remember as well his domestic policy accomplishments, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. George Bush was a great supporter of people with disabilities even before he became President. As Vice President to Ronald Reagan, he met with disability advocates Evan Kemp and Justin Dart, forming both a policy partnership and friendship with