

them. We can't wait any longer to address these maintenance needs.

Even though we don't have Yellowstone Grand Teton, or Yosemite in Ohio—we don't have huge parks like those—we have a \$100 million backlog in deferred maintenance in our smaller parks in Ohio—\$100 million.

I toured Cuyahoga Valley National Park with Superintendent Craig Kenkel and Deb Yandala, who is CEO of the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Deb is also president of the national association of friends groups for our parks. These friends groups are fantastic. They provide a lot of funding for the parks, private sector funding. I think that is an incredibly important part of our overall park funding, but they can't afford these maintenance projects either.

Today, there is more than \$45 million at Cuyahoga Valley alone in unmet maintenance needs—\$875,000 for badly needed renovations for their welcome center. I have been there. I have seen it. They need it. More than \$3 million is needed to renovate parking lots that are crumbling, and more than \$2 million is needed for trail repair for the extensive trail system throughout the park.

I have also been to other parks in Ohio and have seen what some of the deferred maintenance is. At the Perry's Victory & International Peace Memorial up on Lake Erie, \$47.7 million is needed in long-delayed maintenance, which includes millions to repair the cracks in the seawall there to enable the rest of the monument to continue to exist, and the visitor's center has to be made ADA compatible and needs repairs.

Everything we talk about here in terms of the parks is normally very positive. Democrats and Republicans alike love the parks. People in America love our parks. But I think they are surprised to learn that just underneath the surface, our parks are crumbling. We have to do more to ensure they are going to be enjoyed for generations to come.

From 2006 until 2017, annual visitation increased by 58 million people. As these needs are growing, more people are coming, putting more and more pressure on the parks. Keeping up with this aging infrastructure and increased visitation has really stretched the Park Service and required them to focus on just the very immediate maintenance needs and postpone or delay these other projects. We can't continue to use these bandaids. We have to address the underlying issue.

I feel this is a debt unpaid. This is deferred maintenance that has built up over the last couple of decades that we should have addressed and we didn't, and now we need to go back and do it to ensure that it doesn't cause additional costs. So this week, I have reintroduced legislation I have worked on in the last three Congresses. I have reintroduced it with three of my colleagues—Senator MARK WARNER from

Virginia, Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER from Tennessee, and Senator ANGUS KING from Maine. Two Republicans, one Democrat, and one Independent—that makes it tri-partisan. It is called the Restore Our Parks Act—a common-sense solution to deal with this \$12 billion backlog of long-overdue maintenance projects.

I thank my colleagues for stepping up and working on this together, and we have. We have had different proposals out there. Senator WARNER came up with the idea of using offshore and onshore revenue from oil and gas drilling. We combined with the bill that Senator ALEXANDER and Senator KING had put forward. There are others who have great ideas. Senator STEVE DAINES from Montana is one of our strong supporters. He is chair of the National Parks Subcommittee of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. As he said, he grew up in the shadow of Yellowstone Park. We have lots of colleagues on both sides of the aisle who care about this and are involved, and I thank them for their hard work.

Senator ALEXANDER told me that in the 100-year history of our national parks, there has never been a single bill more important than this one. That is saying a lot. Since Teddy Roosevelt decided to acquire this land for our national parks, there have been lots of ways we have tried to help the parks, including, recently, legislation that I drafted on the centennial of the parks that helps us get more public and private money into the parks. That is good, but it is not enough to handle these incredible—\$12 billion—deferred maintenance costs we have now.

The legislation creates what is called a legacy restoration fund, which will get half of all the annual energy revenues over the next 5 years that are not otherwise allocated, and it will be used for priority deferred maintenance projects. These are royalties from onshore and offshore energy development. The Trump administration is doing more of that development, so there is more revenue coming in. The bill caps the deposits into the fund at \$1.3 billion annually, so no matter what, even if there is a lot more money coming in, we will have a cap of \$1.23 billion annually, which will provide a total of \$6.5 billion for deferred maintenance projects over the next 5 years.

I said \$12 billion earlier, and that is the amount, but for the urgent priorities, it is about \$6.5 billion. That is how we came up with that number. So what we are trying to do is—at least let's address the urgent priorities in the next 5 years using the revenues coming into our government from these offshore and onshore energy projects, oil and gas projects. Again, if it is allocated for something else, like the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we don't touch it. It is just funding that is not already allocated somewhere else.

Last year, we had 37 cosponsors here in the Senate for this legislation, Re-

publicans and Democrats alike—more than one-third of this Chamber.

A similar House bill, our House companion bill, had 234 Members cosponsoring it—more than the 218 needed, more than the majority.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee reported this bill out on a bipartisan basis last fall. I was on the committee. We had a good debate on it. We reported it out with a 19-to-4 vote. There is not a lot we do around here that is that bipartisan.

We received overwhelming support from conservation and outdoor recreation groups. This includes the National Parks Conservation Association, the Outdoor Industry Alliance, the Trust for Public Land, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and others. At our hearing we had on the legislation last year, the director of the Pew Charitable Trusts said it well: "Supporting this bipartisan bill is a wise investment for our National Parks System and has overwhelming support from the American public, generates hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars for the economy each year and provides access to world class recreation opportunities and helps preserve our nation's history."

Yes, the parks do all of that. That is why it is so important that we preserve them and ensure that this long-term problem gets addressed now.

I am proud to introduce legislation in the Senate this week, and I am proud that the House companion bill is being introduced today by Representatives BISHOP and KILMER. I look forward to working with my colleagues to get this bill across the finish line. I thank the Senators who have already signed up as cosponsors. I hope we can continue to build support for this and get this commonsense bill done to help preserve our national treasures.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

JOINT REFERRAL OF NOMINATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that PN175, the nomination of John Lowry III, of Illinois, to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training, sent to the Senate by the President, be referred jointly to the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and the Veterans' Affairs Committees.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING JOHN DINGELL

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I arrived in the U.S. Congress in January 1983—a new Congressman from downstate Illinois, the son of an immigrant mother—and I was in awe.

Just listen to this list of House Committee chairmen back then: chairman of the Rules Committee: Claude Pepper; Judiciary chairman: Peter Rodino; Veterans Affairs chairman: Sonny Montgomery; Interior Committee chairman: Mo Udall; Ways and Means Committee chairman: Danny Rostenkowski.

Yet even among these legends, John Dingell, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, stood out. He was a giant among giants, and not just because he stood 6 foot 3. A 26-year veteran of the House at the time, he was revered as the architect of Medicare and a driving force behind some of the most important civil rights and environmental laws in America's history. He went on to become the longest serving member of Congress in American history. But it is the quality and courage of John Dingell's service, even more than its length, that made John Dingell one of the most influential legislators of all time. He helped write most of the Nation's major environmental and energy laws. He helped save the American auto industry twice: in 1979 and again during the great recession.

His nickname—"Big John"—was a reflection not only of his commanding height but also of his moral stature. Of the more than 25,000 votes he cast in Congress, the one he was most proud of was his vote in support of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. That vote led to a brutal reelection fight later that year. It was the second time John Dingell ever had a cross burned on his lawn and the closest he ever came to losing a race. But John Dingell was unbowed. He went on to champion the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and—many more major civil rights laws.

John David Dingell, Jr. was born in 1926, the eldest of three children. His family, he once said, was as "poor as Job's chicken."

In 1932, when John was 6 years old, his father was elected to Congress, where he became a leading champion of the New Deal. He stood behind FDR as he signed the law creating Social Security.

In 1943, John Senior introduced America's first national health insur-

ance bill—to help seniors and children from poor families. The bill never passed.

In 1955, John Senior died in office from tuberculosis. That same year, at the age of 29, his son was chosen in a special election to finish his father's term.

At the start of every new Congress, John Dingell introduced a bill to create a Medicare Program to provide health insurance for older adults. He never gave up on fulfilling his father's dream. When Medicare finally came up for a vote in 1965, he was given honor of presiding over the House, in memory of his father. He lent the gavel he had used that day to Speaker NANCY PELOSI when the House voted to pass the Affordable Care Act in 2010. John Dingell sat by President Obama's side when he signed the Affordable Care Act into law in 2010. Millions and millions of Americans can afford to see a doctor today and retire with a bit of security and dignity because of John Dingell.

Chairman Dingell's father taught him that public service through politics can be a noble calling. He treated everyone with dignity. He cared about people who struggle, as his own family struggled when he was young. The priest who officiated at his funeral mass in Dearborn yesterday told a story about a woman who approached him recently and told him, "If not for John Dingell, I would not have been able to put food on the table."

Last week, on the day he died, John Dingell dictated some reflections to his wife, Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL. She was John's partner and his rock for 40 years, and she now holds the seat that John and his father once held. John's "parting thoughts," as he called them, were published in the Washington Post. They are profoundly moving and wise. One in particular stands out for me. Chairman Dingell said that it always grated on him to hear it said that a person "has" power. "In democratic government," he wrote, "elected officials do not have power. They hold power—in trust for the people who elected them."

I'll close with one last story—one final more bit of wisdom—from my friend John Dingell.

In 1944, when he turned 18, John enlisted in the U.S. Army. The following year, he was supposed to be among the first wave of American soldiers to invade mainland Japan. Only the surrender of Japan saved him from what would have been near-certain death. All of his life, he remained proud of his service and deeply committed to other veterans and to their families.

When President George H. W. Bush died shortly after Thanksgiving, Chairman Dingell wrote a posthumous tribute—the last World War II veteran to serve in Congress, writing to honor the last World War II veteran to occupy the Oval Office. It was published in the Detroit News. This is what John Dingell wrote:

Both of us understood how fragile this American democracy was and the atrocities

that were occurring in the world. Both of us signed up immediately when war was declared and knew our moral responsibility to defend America and fight for the freedom of mankind.

He went on to say:

We were from a political generation that understood delivering for the American people was more important than political wins. The success of government and good public policy is the success of hard-working men and women.

He closed with a plea, almost a prayer:

May the stories of my good friend help us find our way back to a society that promotes dialogues, not demagogues, and that it helps us to remember we, the people, have the ability to restore this great nation to common ground rather than letting it continue its downward spiral into constant chaos.

In closing, Loretta and I send our deepest condolences to John's wife, the love of his life, Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL moreover, to John's three surviving children: Chip, Christopher, and Jennifer; and their families, including John's three grandchildren; to his brother and sister; his countless friends and the countless more who thought of him as a friend and mourn his passing.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in his tortuous attempt to make a case for billions of taxpayer dollars to wall off our southern border, President Trump claimed that a wall would stop human trafficking, which has been touted as a priority of this administration.

On several occasions, the President has depicted human trafficking as women and girls smuggled across the border with their hands and legs tied and duct tape across their mouths. No doubt there are such cases, but the overwhelming majority of trafficking victims in this country are U.S. citizens, and among non-citizen victims, nearly 80 percent cross through legal points of entry. As we have seen time and again, President Trump makes short shrift of the truth and relies on scare tactics, rather than evidence, to garner support for his misguided policies.

Not only would the President's border wall do next to nothing to combat the most common instances of human trafficking in the United States, his administration's policies have actually harmed trafficking victims, especially non-citizen victims.

Last year, the administration announced that applicants who are denied a T visa—an immigrant visa that enables certain victims of sex or labor trafficking to temporarily remain in the United States—may be required to appear in immigration court, the first step in deportation proceedings. This policy has reportedly had a self-censoring effect on victims and victims' advocates who are hesitant to apply or to encourage their clients to apply for a visa that may ultimately land them in immigration court.