United States of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165 WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2019 No. 53

# Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

## PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, from whom all blessings flow, we thank You for the gift of this day. Inspire us to use these precious hours and minutes to glorify Your Name. Lord, give us the wisdom to number our days that we may have hearts of wisdom. Guide our Senators with strength, courage, hope, and love. Empower them to build bridges that will keep America strong. Use them to pull down barriers of contention and replace them with gates that lead to harmony and peace. Lord, do for our lawmakers more than they can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

## RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

## CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

## SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 268, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 15, H.R. 268, a bill making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute as in morning business.

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

### THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, yesterday, we had debate on the Green New Deal. I wonder how many Americans realize that this debate on the Green New Deal was not on a bill before the Congress that would become law but was on nothing but a nonbinding resolution. Rather than working on specific changes in the law, the authors chose vague aspirations for dramatic action in the future. That is the difference between an active environmentalist and an environmental activist.

I am proud of my accomplishments that have had a real, positive impact on the environment. For instance, I authored the production tax credit for wind energy back in 1992. During my leadership on the Senate Finance Committee in the 2000s, I oversaw the establishment, enhancement, and renewal of numerous clean energy tax incentives.

My point is not to say that I made some impact on the environment but to say that there is a difference between offering a bill and, in turn, just a nonbinding resolution, which—the Democrats haven't put forth any real law.

I yield the floor.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday, my Democratic colleagues in this body offered the American people a crystal-clear picture of what the Democratic Party stands for in 2019 and whom it represents. Nearly all of our Democratic colleagues wrapped their arms around the radical policy they have marketed to the public as the Green New Deal.

I am sure we will be hearing carefully crafted spin about the transparent political maneuvering behind voting present instead of voting yes. Not exactly ''Profiles in Courage.'' Not exactly ''Profiles in Courage.''

I am also certain that we will hear more indignant claims that I somehow sabotaged the legislation they said they support by actually bringing it to a vote. That is a fascinating sight in the Senate—the cosponsors of a policy complaining bitterly that they actually had to go on record to actually vote for a bill they supposedly support, but go on record they did. They can call it voting present. They can call it voting yes. But when every single Senate Democrat running for President has signed on as a cosponsor, when all of the energy and momentum in the Democratic Party is behind this, when just a tiny handful of Democratic Senators could bring themselves to vote against it on the floor, what we have is a Democratic Party that is fixated on satisfying the far left, even at the cost of crushing—crushing—working-class and middle-class American life as we know it.

Yesterday, the vast majority of Senate Democrats could not dismiss something as crazy as ending the production of American oil, coal, natural gas, and nuclear energy within a decade. They couldn't vote against that.

Senate Democrats could not dismiss something as absolutely ludicrous as a federally mandated overhaul of every building in America to meet the greenness—greenness—standards of Washington bureaucrats.

Senate Democrats could not reject a plan to take more control over where Americans choose to live, how they

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

choose to get around, and how they earn a living.

Senate Democrats could not even reject a plan that, according to rough estimates, could raise families' utility bills by hundreds of dollars a month and cost the U.S. Government more than the entire 2017 GDP of the whole world. They couldn't vote against that.

American manufacturing, American agriculture, industries, jobs, houses, farms, buildings, and cars that make up daily life for millions of working Americans—Democrats want Washington, DC, to declare war on all of that because it doesn't comply with the latest fashions in Brooklyn or San Francisco. They want to march the entire country toward extreme environmentalist goals that even President Obama's former Secretary of Energy has dismissed as impossible. That is what the Democratic Party of 2019 apparently has become.

Remember, their last Presidential nominee bragged, after her loss, that at least she had won all the places in America that are ''optimistic, diverse, dynamic, [and] moving forward.'' We can fill in the blanks and see how they view all the other places that millions of Americans call home, those places that just aren't enlightened enough to vote for Democrats, places where farm jobs and factory jobs really matter, places where expensive high-speed rail and electric cars and trucks simply will not get the job done, places where soaring electric bills represent a kitchen-table crisis and not just a minor inconvenience, and places that are actually home to the workers who would be, as the resolution breezily puts it, ''affected by the transition''—in other words, jobs shipped overseas and workers out in the cold. In Democrats' eyes, all of us in these places are just backward and out-of-date. People who live in those areas are just backward and out-of-date. Our lives need to be transformed by Washington, DC, bureaucrats, whether we like it or not.

The disruption isn't limited to just environmental and energy issues; there are so many more things Washington Democrats want to get their hands around.

Democrats are pushing Medicare for None, a scheme that would make it unlawful to provide the private health insurance policies that American families rely on and force everyone into a brandnew government scheme designed, of course, right here in Washington. It is ironic that this approach would mean long waiting lists for people with preexisting conditions and cause over 180 million Americans to lose the coverage they choose and rely on. Republicans are dedicated to protecting Americans with preexisting conditions. Republicans are the ones fighting for American families as they try to navigate the unaffordable wreckage of ObamaCare.

The story is the same on every issue: Democrats aren't interested in security and stability for American families; they are interested in Washington redesigning middle-class Americans' lives from scratch so they can conform better to leftwing dreams.

Forty-plus—forty-plus—of our Democratic colleagues, including all of their Presidential candidates, could not even bring themselves to vote against the obviously absurd socialist wish list we considered yesterday. This is what the modern Democratic Party wants to be. These are their plans for the country. At least the American people are certainly offered a very, very clear contrast.

DISASTER FUNDING

Madam President, on an entirely different matter, in recent months, natural disasters have occupied an outsized share of headlines across our country. We have seen counties in Alabama and Georgia bear the blows of a vicious tornado, and we support the loved ones of those 23 people whose lives it claimed. We have seen a spate of powerful hurricanes tear across the shores of Florida and the Carolinas, leaving tens of billions of dollars in damage behind. Flooding has repeatedly caused damage in my home State of Kentucky, and, of course, it is currently at major disaster levels in communities across the Midwest.

In some places, the process of rebuilding has already dragged on for months. Families have faced the daily struggle of getting things back to normal.

Others are still literally—literally—underwater. Residents are wading through the wreckage of homes and businesses. Normal seems a long way away.

From the gulf coast to the heartland, there are Americans calling for our help. Here in Congress we must have their back. We must take swift and comprehensive action. I am pleased to say, a number of our colleagues have crafted legislation that would allow us to answer these calls for help from our people.

The supplemental funding measure advanced by the Senate yesterday would deliver over $13 billion to help American communities recover and rebuild following recent natural disasters. It would mean more help for victims of tornadoes in our Southern States, victims of hurricanes from North Carolina to Puerto Rico, and the families in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas, who are still, as we speak, waiting for the waters of a truly catastrophic flood to recede. The legislation before us would equip the Department of Defense to conduct urgent repairs to bases and installations damaged by storms. It would help America's farmers and ranchers cover storm-related losses, and it would help get local schools, healthcare facilities, and major infrastructure back on track more quickly.

I am proud of the work put in by many Members to prepare this latest package so swiftly and thoroughly on behalf of our communities in need. We owe thanks to the leadership of Chairman SHELBY, along with the efforts of Senator PERDUE, Senator ISAKSON, Senator SCOTT, Senator RUBIO, and others who made this effort possible. Thanks to them, the Senate can take action soon on a comprehensive measure to support our fellow citizens.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H. CON. RES. 24

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 24, expressing the sense of Congress that the report of Special Counsel Mueller should be made available to the public and to Congress and which is at the desk; further, that the concurrent resolution be agreed to; the preamble be agreed to; and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, reserving the right to object. As I mentioned yesterday, when a similar unanimous consent proposal was propounded, I have consistently supported the proposition that the special counsel should be allowed to complete his work without interference, and I have consistently supported the proposition that his report ought to be released, to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the law and with the need to protect sources and methods and the need to preserve the integrity of ongoing investigations, including investigations the special counsel has referred to others.

The Attorney General has committed to as much transparency as possible in the release of the report, and he is working with the special counsel toward that end. I think we should be consistent in letting the special counsel actually finish his work and not just when we think it may be politically advantageous to one side or the other for him to do so.

Therefore, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to make remarks as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, last Friday, Special Counsel Mueller submitted his report to Attorney General Barr. On Sunday, the Attorney General provided a four-page summary of that report to Congress and the American people.

Unfortunately, the Attorney General's summary tells us little about what Special Counsel Mueller actually found. In fact, according to the summary, Mueller's office spent 2 years investigating, with a team of 19 lawyers and 40 FBI agents and other professional staff. The special counsel issued

more than 2,800 subpoenas, executed nearly 500 search warrants, obtained more than 230 orders for communication records, issued almost 50 orders authorizing the use of pen registers, made 13 requests to foreign governments for evidence, and interviewed approximately 500 witnesses. That is quite a record.

The fact is, a four-page summary cannot possibly illuminate what this thorough of an investigation uncovered. I find it so disappointing that so many are rushing to judgment without being able to see the full report or all of the underlying facts.

This report should be made public. As has been, I think, well stated, not only is the official government interested, but the American public is interested in our findings as well.

We know the Russian Government interfered with the U.S. election. That has been reported by the intelligence community and intelligence committee—I sit on that committee—and it has been reaffirmed by the special counsel's investigation.

We also know, from court filings, documents, and press reports, that the President and at least 17 people associated with his campaign had more than 100 contacts with Russia or Russia's intermediaries.

However, Attorney General Barr's summary provides no information about any of these contacts or multiple offers from Russian-affiliated individuals to assist the campaign, and that is a quote—''multiple offers from Russian-affiliated individuals to assist the campaign''—referenced in the Attorney General's summary.

Congress must determine the risks to national security, whether there was, in fact, misconduct, whether existing laws are sufficient to deter and punish election interference, and what next steps are appropriate. The American people also have a right to the truth about what happened in the 2016 election and to judge the facts for themselves.

Special Counsel Mueller also did not draw a conclusion, one way or the other, as to whether the President committed a crime through his efforts to obstruct the investigation. Instead, Mr. Mueller wrote: ''While this report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him.''

Since Special Counsel Mueller elected to describe the facts but did not decide whether to charge the President with a crime, we don't know why he made this decision, but clearly we do need to see the facts for ourselves to be able to make a decision about how to proceed and what, if any, additional steps are necessary.

While the Attorney General concluded there was no crime of obstruction committed, we knew that was his conclusion 9 months ago when he wrote a 10-page memo explaining why the President can't be charged with obstruction of justice. Special Counsel Mueller found that there is ''evidence on both sides of the question.'' Congress and the American people should be able to see that evidence and make a determination, including what the appropriate next steps are, if any.

I am very disappointed that some Republicans are saying Democrats need to move on before we even see the report or underlying evidence. Many of these Republicans called for eight congressional investigations into the Benghazi attack and demanded and received 880,000 pages of documents related to the Clinton email investigation. We have also already obtained documents related to Mueller's investigation, including classified FISA Court applications.

Of course, unwarranted foot-dragging is really not good, and really bad for this country. I had thought we were past that with prior events where we did take action, and we were able to see both sides. After 37 indictments, 6 of whom were indicted Trump advisers, as well as 7 guilty pleas, surely spending more than a week on understanding what happened and asking for the full report is warranted. How can we have 37 indictments, 6 Trump advisers, as well as guilty pleas, without being able to understand what actually happened and not be afforded the material to gain that understanding?

I hope this can be a bipartisan effort to ensure the full record is produced and the facts are uncovered. It is really puzzling to me why the Republican side would not want to do this. Do they presume guilt on their side, and therefore they want to hide it from the public? If you don't, why wouldn't you want whatever the true facts are to come out? The American people deserve no less.

On March 14, the House of Representatives passed a resolution calling for Special Counsel Mueller's report to be made public. The vote was unanimous, 420 to 0—420 to 0. Both sides of the House of Representatives said this should happen.

Senator SCHUMER, our minority leader, has now twice sought unanimous consent for the Senate to consider that resolution. These requests have been blocked by Republicans. I don't understand that. If the House can consider this, why can't we look at what the House has done? This, to my knowledge, in the quarter of a century that I have been in this body, has never happened before, where the Senate has actually refused to look at information.

I very much hope there can be a change of mind and allow the U.S. Senate to do its due diligence in this matter. Hiding the information will not solve the problem.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there is so much going on. So I will be addressing several topics today: healthcare, climate change, Mr. Mueller's report, and Puerto Rico.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, two nights ago, President Donald Trump and Attorney General Barr decided to escalate their 2-year war against healthcare to a whole new level. They declared that the entire Affordable Care Act, and the healthcare for tens of millions of Americans and protections for more than 100 million, is unconstitutional and ought to be eliminated.

Now, the President wants to go back to repeal and replace again? Make our day. The Republicans here in the Senate tried over and over to deal with repeal and replace. They couldn't because they have no replacement. The American people spoke loud and clear in the November 2018 elections and addressed the Republican antics by defeating them resoundingly. The American people resoundingly rejected the Republican plan of repeal and replace for healthcare. In fact, very few Republican Senators would embrace it when they were running as candidates.

Indeed, if the Republican Party wants to be, in Donald Trump's words, ''the Party of healthcare,'' God help the middle class. God save the middle class. God save people with disabilities. God save the hundreds of millions with preexisting conditions.

If the administration had its way, the elimination of the Affordable Care Act would send premiums soaring for millions of Americans. It would revoke coverage for tens of millions more who gained coverage through Medicaid expansions. It would strike protections for hundreds of millions, even people who get coverage through their employer. It would tell college students and graduates aged 21 to 26 that they could no longer be on their parents' healthcare.

Let's not forget that this decision would impose billions of dollars in new prescription drug costs for seniors on Medicare. Does the Republican Party really want to raise the price for senior citizens when they buy drugs? That is what they are doing. That is what President Trump is doing. I wasn't at the lunch where the President talked about this, but I didn't hear any reports of any Republican in that room rejecting what the President said when he said repeal and replace. This Republican Party is the Party of healthcare? Come on, now.

You can't undo all the healthcare for tens of millions, the protections for preexisting conditions for hundreds of millions, the drug costs for tens of millions of seniors, the protections for millions of young college graduates,

and say you are for healthcare. You just can't.

Compounding the injury, the President's latest budget wants to cut more than $1 trillion from Medicare and Medicaid. In doing so, the President is breaking his promise, blatantly and uncaringly. He doesn't care about what he promised people. He is breaking his promise to the American people that he would do no such thing. This is the party of healthcare? The Department of Justice's decision is a moral and institutional outrage. Not only would it harm Americans, but it would undermine the rule of law.

Today I am announcing a new plan—a new way for my colleagues to show that they mean what they say. I am introducing a simple amendment to the pending appropriations bill we are considering here in the Senate. It will very simply prohibit the Department of Justice from using any funding to litigate the downfall of ACA in the circuit court. Let's see how all of our Republican colleagues who said they don't want to take away protections for preexisting conditions, who said they don't want to take away healthcare for millions, and who said they want to lower seniors' drug costs vote on this.

Will the leader do what he has been so characteristic of doing in the majority and block a chance for this amendment? Will any Republican on the other side stand up and say: Don't block it, Mr. Leader; we have to protect the American people's healthcare.

We shall see.

My Republican friends, you are going to have the chance this afternoon or when they vote on this bill to show us which side you are on.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, the Senate finally held the Republican leader's promised political stunt vote on the issue of climate change and the results did not make the Republicans happy. The stunt was exposed for what it was. The whole issue of climate change—for the first time, really—was debated here and turned on our Republican colleagues. It became clear to the American people that our Republican colleagues have no plan for climate change.

We have heard what they are against. We haven't heard a peep about a comprehensive plan that they are for. The attempt by the Republicans to make a mockery of the issue completely backfired. Leader MCCONNELL was forced to answer some questions that he has ducked for a very long time. Whether or not Leader MCCONNELL intended it, the fact is, at the very least, that this Chamber is doing something it hasn't done in years. It held an actual debate on the topic of climate change.

MCCONNELL's stunt, again, boomeranged on him and his colleagues, and they finally had to discuss this issue rather than do what they have liked to do for the last 5 years and sweep it under the rug.

Yesterday, the day before, today, and continuing in the future, we ask our Republican colleagues three simple questions to which they owe an answer to their constituents. First, do you believe climate change is real? Second, do you believe climate change is caused by human activity? And third, do you believe Congress has to act immediately to deal with this problem?

We are finally getting some answers, thanks to MCCONNELL's trick that he eventually played on himself. No less than Leader MCCONNELL was asked by the press yesterday afternoon at his Ohio Clock press camp if he believes in climate change, and he said he believes it is real and he believes it is caused by human activity. Well, there is one more step if you believe all that: What is your answer—not what you are against but what you are for?

I want to commend Senators ROBERTS, ALEXANDER, and MURKOWSKI. They came to the floor and stated unequivocally and clearly that climate change is real and caused by humans. Make no mistake, in this glacial atmosphere controlled by the Republicans, when it comes to climate change, this is real progress, but, of course, it is not close to enough.

As to the third question, Leader MCCONNELL offered no solution. All we got was a sham vote that he voted against. So I ask Leader MCCONNELL: What is your plan? Some Republicans now seem to admit the challenges of climate change. OK, that is good. Now, what is your solution?

Turning the Senate floor into a campaign ad studio is not a solution to climate change, nor is it very effective even for their own purposes. Several Senators seemed to suggest that this problem can simply be solved by funding for more research. I support funding for research. It should be part of any climate plan. Yet I say to my friends—particularly, those from coal States—that is not going to solve the problem. Dealing with coal sequestration and coal technology will, at best, solve 1 percent of the problem. So I say to my friends: What about the other 99 percent, because 1 percent isn't enough? Temperatures will still go up. The oceans will still rise. The terrible kinds of disaster—flooding, tornadoes, and wildfires—that we have had will continue. To simply say that you are doing some research into how to deal with coal is not close to solving the problem.

Yesterday was a golden opportunity for this Chamber to come together and show the American people that Republicans are serious about tackling the threat. I asked to create a bipartisan select committee on climate change. Let's get some of the people who are most interested in this issue from different ideological stripes and from different places in the country to come together and come up with a solution. Of course, once again, the Republican leader blocked that genuine attempt. Unfortunately, my good friend, the junior Senator from Wyoming, objected when we asked for this. Instead, the Senate wasted the American people's time on a ridiculous charade featuring a sham vote that fooled no one.

Read the press today. Read the Wall Street Journal. Yesterday's vote on the Republican version of the Green New Deal was not just a cynical ploy—although it was—it was the ultimate ''tell'' that Republicans, for all their talk, have no real plan to combat climate change, no real plan on healthcare, and no real plan on climate change—just a lot of political stunts.

I am glad that finally, though—this is the good news here—some of my colleagues are starting to see the light and admit that it is real and admit that it is caused by human activity. Now, they need to put their money where their mouth is and work with us to take action that matches the scale of the problem. If our colleagues refuse to join us on a bipartisan basis in creating this select committee, we Democrats aren't going to wait. We will take action on our own.

Later today, we will be announcing our own path. We are going on offense on climate change, keeping a spotlight on this issue and making sure that this Chamber keeps debating this most urgent issue of our day.

We cannot play politics with our children's future any longer. I have a new grandson. By the time he grows up, I don't want the waters to be rising, the climate to be changing, and the whole world totally discombobulated so he can't live a good and happy life. We should all feel that way.

Avoiding the problem, whether it is because special interests are saying to avoid it—the Koch brothers, coal industry, oil industry, and everyone else—is not serving our country well.

PUERTO RICO

Mr. President, the Republicans and the White House are refusing to make several minor changes to the disaster bill under consideration today—changes that will help Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Puerto Rico was devastated by Hurricane Maria a year and a half ago—devastation we haven't probably seen in any other part of our country. It is reported that nearly $91 billion of damage was done by the hurricane.

Puerto Rico is still struggling to recover. These are American citizens. Let's not forget that. These are not people from some foreign land. Yet it has been publicly reported that the President has told his staff to find ways to limit Federal dollars from going to Puerto Rico. It was even reported that at yesterday's lunch with Republicans, the President complained that Puerto Rico has been getting too much aid. He said he ''doesn't want another single dollar going to the island,'' even though he has held up the dollars that Democrats and Republicans voted for.

We help Americans when there is a disaster. We don't pick and choose because they may not vote for us—or

vote at all—or because we don't like the elected official. These are people who are hurting.

What the President is doing with Puerto Rico is disgraceful but typical of his view to divide and pick winners and losers. What the President is doing is unacceptable and un-American.

I urge my Republican colleagues to come to the table, to accept the commonsense changes we have proposed to help the territories recover—the same proposals that passed the House—and to help us pass a disaster package that addresses the needs not of some but of all disaster survivors and that addresses the needs of all Americans who are affected, not just those he happens to like. That is not what any President before has done. That is not what America does.

MUELLER REPORT

Mr. President, finally, I want to say a few words on the report by Special Counsel Mueller.

From the start, the Democrats have argued that nothing short of full transparency will satisfy the American people's right to know what happened during Russia's attack on our election. That is why it is unacceptable that Mr. BARR, who reached his initial conclusions quickly—in 48 hours—now needs several weeks, he says, to review the report, and there are reports that he may now only release a summary of that finding.

First, let me talk about the time.

Attorney General Barr moved like a hare to get out the summary he wrote with the purpose of exonerating the President. He is now moving like a tortoise to issue Mueller's full report. People are going to ask: What the heck is going on? Is there some political motivation here? Americans are entitled to see the full report, not a summary.

We all know the intelligence community can redact parts of the report—small they will be—to protect secret sources, but we also expect the rest of the report to be issued, not a summary. Mr. BARR has issued one brief summary already, and many Americans don't trust that summary because they want to see the whole report before jumping to a conclusion. So we need the report now, without delay. We can't have political considerations enter into it. ''Oh, we will delay it for several weeks to let things cool off.'' I hope that is not what is happening.

In any case, we need the report now. This is too important for Mr. BARR to be playing politics. He can remove any cloud of suspicion by releasing the full report as the President and members of his party call for. When we read reports that Barr only wants to release a summary and that Leader MCCONNELL is unsupportive of transparency, something doesn't smell right.

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

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

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, the Senate voted on the Green New Deal—the Democrats' $93 trillion socialist fantasy.

How did the Democrats vote on this deal? They voted present. That is right. There were 43 out of 47 Members of the Democratic caucus who voted present.

This may be the first time in my experience here that I have ever seen a piece of legislation and people who authored that legislation—in this case, there were 13 Democrats who authored the bill, cosponsored the bill, introduced the bill, and indicated that action on the issue needed to be taken now—proceed to vote present. I have never seen that in my time either in the House or in the Senate. There was always an opportunity, as the Presiding Officer knows, in the House of Representatives, when you voted by electronic machine, to punch the yellow ''present'' option. You had red or green or present, but very rarely was that used. Yet I don't think I have ever seen, in the U.S. Senate, 13 U.S. Senators file a bill, introduce a bill, cosponsor a bill, talk about how important it is that we deal with it and deal with it immediately, and then proceed to vote present. That is what happened yesterday.

I want to step back for a minute and talk about the Green New Deal—the Democrats' plan to put the government in charge of everything from your energy to your healthcare.

The costs of this plan would be staggeringly high. One think tank released its first estimate that found that the Green New Deal would cost somewhere between $51 trillion and $93 trillion over a 10-year period—between $51 trillion and $93 trillion. The 2017 gross domestic product for the entire world—the whole planet—only came to $80.7 trillion, which is more than $10 trillion less than the Democrats are proposing to spend on the Green New Deal. This $93 trillion is more than the amount of money the U.S. Government has spent in its entire history.

So how do the Democrats plan to cover that $93 trillion? Well, they don't actually have a plan. The Green New Deal resolution itself makes a vague reference to ''community grants, public banks, and other public financing.''

Then, of course, the Democrats have their favorite funding source, which is taxing the rich. The problem is, there is no way taxing the rich would even come close to paying for the Green New Deal. One analyst found that three Democratic proposals—the New York Representative's proposed 70-percent top tax rate, the Massachusetts Senator's wealth tax, and the Hawaii Senator's financial transactions tax—would together pay for approximately 4 percent of the Green New Deal.

Taxing every millionaire in the United States at a 100-percent rate for 10 years would bring in only a tiny fraction of $93 trillion. Taxing every household making more than $200,000 a year at a 100-percent rate for 10 years wouldn't get the Democrats anywhere close to $93 trillion. Taxing every family making more than $100,000 a year at a 100-percent rate for 10 years would still leave the Democrats far short of $93 trillion.

The Green New Deal is not a plan that can be paid for by taxing the rich. This plan would be paid for on the backs of working families. The size of the tax hikes that would be required to even begin to finance this massive government expansion would sharply diminish Americans' standard of living and usher in a new era of diminished prosperity, and I haven't even mentioned the freedom of choice Americans would lose and give up under the Green New Deal.

Your car's engine would likely soon become illegal. Washington planners could force you to rebuild your house to meet strict, new, energy-efficient guidelines. Your ability to travel by air might be restricted or entirely eliminated.

The Green New Deal doesn't limit itself to massive government expansion in the area of energy.

Among other things, it would also put the government in charge of your healthcare. So, if you like your health plan, get ready to give it up. Then there are the millions of current energy jobs that would be lost under this plan. Plus, there would likely be significant job losses in other industries as small businesses and larger companies would find themselves being unable to cope with the Green New Deal's mandates and taxes.

For American families, the Green New Deal would mean smaller paychecks, fewer jobs, fewer choices, and a permanently reduced standard of living.

You don't even have to take my word for it. Here is what the AFL–CIO, which represents 12½ million workers in a number of unions, had to say about the Green New Deal:

> The Green New Deal resolution is far too short on specific solutions that speak to the jobs of our members and the critical sectors of our economy. It is not rooted in an engineering-based approach and makes promises that are not achievable or realistic. We will not accept proposals that could cause immediate harm to millions of our members and their families. We will not stand by and allow threats to our members' jobs and their families' standard of living go unanswered.

Let me repeat that:

> We will not accept proposals that could cause immediate harm to millions of our members and their families. We will not stand by and allow threats to our members' jobs and their families' standard of living go unanswered.

Again, these are quotes from the AFL–CIO. That is what it is saying about the Democrats' Green New Deal.

The American people have a right to know where the Democrats stand on

this massive government expansion. Are they for it or are they against it? Their Presidential candidates have embraced this plan. There were 13 Senate Democrats, as I mentioned, who sponsored the original Green New Deal resolution in the Senate, and there were 92 Democrats who sponsored the original Green New Deal resolution in the House. Yet, yesterday, just four Members of the Democratic caucus had the courage to make their positions clear.

As for the rest, well, it is actually understandable that most Democrats didn't want to go on the record as supporting, perhaps, the most irresponsible and costly resolution ever to come before the U.S. Senate. It is pretty difficult to tell your constituents that you support cutting their paychecks, eliminating millions of their jobs, and drastically reducing their choices.

I am sure there are more than four Members of the Democratic caucus who don't support this plan, but the Democrats are more and more enthralled with the far-left wing of their party, and, clearly, some Democrats were afraid to actually reject this plan with their votes.

So what happened? There were 43 out of 47 Members of the Democratic caucus here in the U.S. Senate who left the American people in limbo about their views, and they ended up voting present.

I would love to think that every Democrat who voted present yesterday has realized how damaging the Green New Deal would be to working families. But the scary truth is that while some Democrats may have voted present simply because they wanted to avoid angering the far-left wing of their party, other Democrats really believe—they really believe—in the Green New Deal.

The junior Senator from Vermont was asked if the Green New Deal goes too far. His answer? ''No. You cannot go too far on the issue of climate change.''

Really? You can't go too far? Not even if you saddle millions of families with exorbitant taxes and other costs just for miniscule gains? Not even if you permanently damage the American economy?

One of the Green New Deal's authors has actually stated that it is a legitimate question whether people should have children because of climate change. Is that something the Green New Deal supporters want to legislate too? Really?

The Democrats' Green New Deal extremism is disturbing, and I am deeply disappointed in yesterday's vote because the American people deserve to hear where every Democrat stands on this dangerous plan. Americans deserve to know whether Democrats are willing to hike their taxes, eliminate their jobs, and diminish drastically their freedoms.

I hope more Democrats will join the four who rejected this massive government overreach and will work with Republicans to develop responsible solutions to protect our environment—solutions that don't hurt American families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

CELEBRATING VAISAKHI

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise today to mark a very special day for the Sikh religion and the Sikh community across America and in Pennsylvania—and this is the holiday of Vaisakhi.

Although the youngest among the major religions of the world, Sikhism has emerged as a distinct socio-religious community. By the numbers, it is, I believe, the sixth largest religion in the world, with 30 million adherents worldwide, and approximately 700,000 Sikhs have chosen to make their home in the United States.

A large number of those Sikhs live in my State of Pennsylvania. In fact, there are several Sikh places of worship across Pennsylvania. They are known as a Gurdwara, and they are located in and around Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Allentown, and Erie.

Sikhism itself was founded in the 15th century in South Asia on the principles of equality, justice, and respect for all human beings.

Sikhs pray twice a day—in the morning and in the evening—and they pray for the welfare of mankind.

Over a period of 239 years, Sikhism was established by 10 gurus. The first among them was Guru Nanak. These gurus were learned, spiritual guides devoted to improving the moral well-being of their followers and the communities in which they lived.

In 1699, the 10th and final guru—Gobind Singh—founded a fellowship of soldier saints called the Khalsa Panth. Today, Sikhs celebrate this occasion with the holiday that they call Vaisakhi. This year, Sikhs across the United States and around the world will celebrate Vaisakhi on April 14.

For Sikhs, Vaisakhi is a very special time. It is a special time to celebrate and share their faith with their friends and their neighbors. The occasion is marked by dancing and parades. Everyone is welcome to attend these celebrations, and they attract Americans from all religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.

Vaisakhi celebrations are a really vibrant affair, and members of the Sikh community wear bright orange or yellow festive clothes to mark the occasion. These colors represent the spirit and the joy of the celebration.

It is interesting to note that when Vaisakhi is celebrated in the Sikh homeland of Punjab, the gold and yellow wheat fields are ready to be harvested.

This year, the Sikh Coordination Committee East Coast has organized a parade in Washington, DC, on April 6 to commemorate Vaisakhi as National Sikh Day. The theme of the parade is Sikh identity, Sikh culture, and the Sikh way of life. Thousands of Sikhs from all over the United States will be here participating and celebrating.

I came here this morning because I want to add my voice as one wishing the Sikh community great luck and great joy at this parade and in the very joyous celebration of Vaisakhi.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate had a significant vote. Senators made their voices heard on the Green New Deal, and after a lot of grandstanding from those Senate Democrats who initially rushed to support this proposal, not a single one voted for the proposal.

However, my Republican colleagues and I didn't vote present. We don't believe that is what our constituents sent us here to do. Instead, we voted against the socialist grab bag of policies that would set us back an estimated $93 trillion and would bankrupt the State of Texas. To be clear, voting no on the Green New Deal isn't a referendum on the issue of lowering carbon emissions or finding cleaner energy; it is saying no to the litany of far-left proposals that would leave American families footing the bill to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars each.

The Green New Deal promised things like free higher education. You might have thought this was really about the environment; well, it was a grab bag of government handouts and takeovers. It also included Medicare for All, which means that if you have employer-provided health insurance, you couldn't keep it. Even President Obama said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. But not now—not with this new, radical group of Democrats who now say: Forget that promise. We are going to take what you have, even if you like it.

There, of course, was the guarantee of jobs. I noted yesterday that the only thing missing from the Green New Deal is free beer and pizza for everybody.

It has been estimated that implementing the full list of the Green New Deal's promises would cost the average American family $65,000 a year, which is well over what many Americans make annually.

These ludicrous proposals were pitched as a way to uplift the middle class and create jobs, but in reality, they would have undone the economic gains we made these past 2 years under the Trump administration. We could say goodbye to the record-low unemployment levels and the growth we have been seeing. What middle-class American do you know who could afford an extra $65,000 each year to pay the Federal Government for the litany of Green New Deal line items, such as tearing down every building and replacing it with a green version?

Even the liberal AFL–CIO's energy committee had this to say:

We will not accept proposals that could cause immediate harm to millions of our members and their families. We will not stand by and allow threats to our members' jobs and their families' standard of living to go unanswered.

This is the AFL–CIO.

Instead of the Green New Deal, we should follow the Texas model of innovation. But it is not just Texas; there are some great private sector initiatives taking place that deal with this concern about $CO_2$ emissions in a much more practical, rational, free market way. We have a thriving energy sector in Texas, as the Presiding Officer knows, and it isn't stifled by overregulation. That is one reason it is thriving.

The Green New Deal would force us to rely on foreign energy sources because we wouldn't be able to produce enough here in the United States to keep the lights on. But with investment in innovative solutions and new technologies, we can ensure that our country can remain energy independent and deal with legitimate concerns about the environment.

I applaud our colleagues who voted against this legislation to ensure that the American people won't have to pick up the tab for the far-left wing agenda of our Democratic colleagues. Conversely, I stand ready to work on real, achievable solutions and to find ways to reduce emissions and lessen our environmental footprint without overregulating and overcharging.

DEER PARK, TEXAS

On another note, most people across the country hadn't heard of Deer Park, TX, until last Sunday. They were probably more familiar with nearby Houston, TX. But last Sunday morning was when the first reports came rolling out that residents were forced to shelter in place when a chemical tank at the Intercontinental Terminals Company, or ITC, caught fire.

ITC's tanks hold petrochemical liquids and gases used to produce gasoline—all highly flammable and hazardous. As many could have predicted, but certainly no one had hoped, the fire spread quickly to a nearby tank. By Wednesday, seven tanks were aflame. Firefighters fought for 3 days to extinguish the massive flames, and just when it seemed as if the fire was under control, it flared again last Friday, burning through 11 storage tanks in total. A massive fireball and billowing plumes of smoke could be seen for miles. This didn't stop, as new tanks caught fire, forcing schools and businesses to close and residents to rightfully question their safety.

Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there. By the end of the week, as ITC drained chemicals from the remaining exposed tanks, the containment wall surrounding the tank farm burst. Foam used to fight the fires and contaminants leaked, forcing a portion of the Houston Ship Channel to close and bringing a new round of health risks associated with the release of airborne and liquid toxins.

Earlier this week, officials from ITC said that cleanup crews had removed more than 33,000 barrels of an oily mixture from the ship channel. That is 1 million gallons, which is more than I can even imagine.

The chemical fire and resulting chemical spill not only brought grave health concerns to those who live and work around Deer Park and pollution to the air and environment, it also ground businesses in the region to a halt. Because of the chemical spill, nearly 7 miles of the Houston Ship Channel closed for 3 days, cutting off this booming area of our economy from the waterway and delaying shipment of goods up and down the ship channel. Some estimates show that the region's oil and gas and petrochemical sectors lost $1 billion in revenue as a result of the closure. This ship channel sees hundreds of shipments a day, with tankers and freighters moving various products and goods up and down the shoreline to businesses surrounding the Houston area.

The effects from the closure of facilities and companies in the area will require a costly and lengthy recovery. Folks along the ship channel in Southeast Houston will also be concerned about health consequences until we can find out more answers.

The ITC's tanks contain chemicals commonly used in the production of gasoline—xylene, naphtha, pyrolysis gasoline. Naphtha, in particular, can irritate and burn the nose and throat when inhaled. When exposed to fire, naphtha can produce poisonous gases. The health effects of these chemicals are of grave concern, but it is not just the short-term effects—the irritation and burning—that are concerning; contact with these chemicals can potentially have lasting, long-term effects, making it vital to discern the exact level of exposure to these chemicals caused as a result of the fire.

It is important that we get to the bottom of this, and I am proud that our local, State, and Federal officials have quickly jumped into action. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Environmental Protection Agency, local responders, and the Coast Guard were all on the scene quickly and have been working around the clock since the start of the first fire. The U.S. Chemical Safety Board and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA, have opened investigations into the fires. The Environmental Protection Agency, along with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, are conducting continuous air quality checks.

I appreciate the swift action by local, State, and Federal agencies to protect my constituents in the region and conduct investigations to ensure that we can prevent this type of event from ever occurring again. I will monitor those investigations closely as they progress and will ensure they have the resources they need in order to complete their work.

Sometimes when people hear us talk about regulation, they act as if our side of the aisle believes that no regulation is appropriate, which is entirely false. It is important to have regulations to protect the public safety of the American people and particularly in places around tank farms like this one in Deer Park. I think it is very important that any existing regulations—that we make sure those regulations and laws are enforced.

As part of this investigation, I hope we will find out that there were no violations of existing regulations and laws, but if there were, then the people responsible should be held accountable. I am not going to prejudge at this early point before the investigation takes place whether there is any legal responsibility or whether anybody did things they should not have done consistent with the laws and regulations that do exist, but I will say that once the investigation is complete, if there were violations of regulations designed to protect the public safety or laws passed by Congress and signed by the President, that I will be the first to demand there be accountability for violation of those regulations and those laws.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

H.R. 268

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on January 16, more than 2 months ago, the House passed a supplemental appropriations bill, H.R. 268, which addressed the needs of all communities impacted by recent natural disasters. The House-passed disaster bill provided assistance to help people impacted by Hurricanes Florence and Michael, the Hawaii volcanoes, and the California wildfires. It provided aid to the people in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Guam, who were struck last year by typhoons, and the people of American Samoa, who were devastated by Cyclone Gita. It continued assistance for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to help them continue their recovery from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. They passed it 2 months ago.

Instead of moving quickly on this package to help those Americans in need, Senate Republicans, at the President's insistence, held up the House bill because it included assistance for Americans in Puerto Rico. Instead of giving aid to the people who need it, the President has chosen to delay it over petty grudges and political concerns.

The President's refusal to help Americans in Puerto Rico not only delays the important disaster bill that many of the other States are relying on to

speed their recovery efforts, it discriminates against the over 3 million Americans who reside in Puerto Rico, and that is wrong. We have never—certainly in my years here—had disaster bills in which we say that Americans in this State can be helped, but we do not like the Americans in this State, so they cannot be helped.

This is the United States of America. We are supposed to take care of all of our citizens when there is a crisis, not pick and choose who gets assistance based on who we are aligned with politically. I have voted for disaster relief for red States, for blue States, for purple States because they are part of the United States of America. I feel that as a country we have to come together to help each other when there is a disaster.

Certainly Republican Senators and Democratic Senators helped the State of Vermont when we were hit with a disaster a few years ago. Well, today it is Puerto Rico, and all of the Americans in Puerto Rico need our help.

A year and a half ago, it was hit by two back-to-back category 5 hurricanes. It is rare that anybody ever gets hit by two back-to-back category 5 hurricanes. An estimated 2,975 Americans lost their lives. Homes were demolished, communities destroyed. It was an extraordinary disaster, and it requires a commensurate extraordinary response.

I am glad we are finally moving to debate on the House-passed bill because we need that. We actually ought to just pass the House-passed bill, but, unfortunately, the Republicans say they will file a substitute that will take us backward, not forward.

Again, at the President's insistence, it eliminates critical assistance for the Americans in Puerto Rico provided for in the House bill, as well as assistance to other U.S. territories. It eliminates State-revolving funds that would help Puerto Rico rebuild damaged water systems and ensure they are resilient and can stand up to future storms. It eliminates a 100-percent cost-share for FEMA that would help cash-strapped Puerto Rico access Federal aid. It eliminates money to help Americans ensure that Puerto Rico is able to rebuild their electrical grid. It eliminates $68 million in Medicaid assistance for American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands, whose programs face serious shortages due to the increased need.

Some of my friends on the other side of the aisle claim that this money is not needed. They point to previous disaster supplemental bills and argue that we have already addressed the needs of Puerto Rico, and we should move on. Well, that is untrue. We provided Puerto Rico with significant assistance, as we should have, given the extraordinary nature of the storms that ravaged the island and given the extent of the devastation, but as damage assessments come in and the full picture of the devastation becomes clear, we must continually reassess and provide them what is needed to fully recover.

I remember when this first happened, back when the White House was saying there may be two or three or four or a dozen fatalities in Puerto Rico. Well, they were off by thousands. There were 2,975 people who lost their lives, not just a handful.

We don't simply appropriate the same amount of money to each State or territory that is hit with a disaster no matter the level of damage. We look at each place, and we provide what is needed for the people to rebuild their homes, their communities, and their lives.

I will give you one example of why one size does not fit all. With Katrina, we in Congress passed six supplemental disaster packages—not one, six—to help rebuild Louisiana and Mississippi because the storm was unlike anything we had ever seen. They needed the assistance coming in over time. I supported the help for Louisiana and Mississippi. No one at the time would have argued to stop after the first tranche of funding we provided and then leave them to fend for themselves, because they are Americans. We saw there were more problems, and we added money.

This is no different.

The President reportedly came to the Capitol and met with Senators yesterday and made his case as to why we should not continue aid to Puerto Rico. Let me repeat. The President of the United States—something I have never seen in my 45 years here with either a Republican or Democratic President—affirmatively argued that we should refrain from helping American citizens in need.

Of course, like so many things the President has said, it was not based in fact or reality. He claimed that Puerto Rico had received over $90 billion in Federal assistance, but it has not. He knows it has not. Why does he keep saying this when he has to know that what he is saying is not true? He claims it is using Federal money to pay off its debt. It has not. The President knows that is not true. Why does he keep saying it?

Some here in this body have claimed that Puerto Rico has in the bank $20 billion in previously appropriated money that they have failed to spend, and they argue that we should provide no more until it is drawn down. I do not know if they are getting their talking points from the White House or what, but that is simply false.

The bulk of the money to which they refer, which we Republicans and Democrats alike voted to appropriate over 1 year ago, is being held up by the administration in redtape and bureaucracy. It seems as though it is being purposely held back because of inaction by this administration. Billions of dollars that Congress approved over 1 year ago for disaster recovery efforts remain in the U.S. Treasury in Washington, DC, not where they belong—assisting the American citizens of Puerto Rico. There is no excuse for that.

They cannot have it both ways. The administration cannot simultaneously hold up recovery dollars for Puerto Rico and then point to Puerto Rico's failure to spend it as an excuse not to provide additional assistance. In other words, they are holding these billions away from Puerto Rico, saying: You cannot have it, but why are you not spending it?

Come on. You cannot do that. You cannot claim they are not spending the money that is being held back from them, and then say that is why they do not need additional assistance.

Yesterday, Senator SCHUMER and I sent a letter to the administration about these bureaucratic delays and demanded answers.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of a letter dated March 25, 2019, to Mick Mulvaney, Peter Gaynor, and Ben Carson.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
*Washington, DC, March 25, 2019.*

Hon. MICK MULVANEY,
*Director, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC.*
Hon. PETER GAYNOR,
*Acting Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Washington, DC.*
Hon. BEN CARSON,
*Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, DC.*

DEAR DIRECTOR MULVANEY, HONORABLE GAYNOR, AND HONORABLE CARSON, Last November, we wrote to express our concern about the significant and unsupported delays related to the immediate and long-term recovery needs of Puerto Rico in the aftermath of catastrophic Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Specifically, we highlighted the lack of effective Federal interagency coordination under the leadership of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which has and continues to impede on the Commonwealth's ability to finalize emergency repairs through FEMA's Public Assistance categories A and B programs, and subsequently its efforts to move toward permanent reconstruction. These delays are not unique to FEMA, as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has also been affected by OMB's micromanagement and excessive bureaucracy as they attempt to administer and oversee Puerto Rico's Community Development Block Grant—Disaster Recovery (CDBG–DR) funding. The lack of leadership and coordination, combined with delays in meeting the basic needs of the island, more than eighteen months after receiving a presidential disaster declaration, has left far too many children and elderly citizens in unhealthy and unsafe conditions, families in severely damaged homes, and communities without adequate infrastructure to sustain a decent quality of life.

The response that we received, several months later, was wholly inadequate and contained no information to respond to our concerns. Specifically, we raised concerns about OMB's failure to work expeditiously with HUD to finalize and issue a Federal Register Notice for nearly $16 billion in CDBG–DR mitigation funding that Congress appropriated in February 2018, of which $8.3 billion has been allocated to Puerto Rico. As a result, this critical source of funding remains unavailable for obligation more than a year after it was appropriated, and nearly

a year and half after the historic hurricanes made landfall. The purpose of the mitigation allocation was to provide not only Puerto Rico, but more than 15 other cities, states and territories the resources necessary to rebuild their homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure to updated construction standards in order to prevent the same level of destruction in future disaster events. As you are probably aware, some reconstruction has started to take place, but without the availability of the mitigation funding, Puerto Rico is unable to strategically adopt these improved standards, or leverage this critical resource toward a comprehensive island-wide rebuild strategy. Further delays in the availability of funding is unacceptable. We insist that you finalize the mitigation notice in the next 30 days.

It has also come to our attention that several issues have reached a critical point with FEMA that are hindering the recovery efforts in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands as well. FEMA needs to work with the territories to develop ways to expedite approvals and obligations of funding, especially for priority projects. In addition, FEMA needs to develop clear policies with regard to the issues laid out below, share them openly with Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and Congress, and ensure that they are being implemented in a consistent way.

First, finalizing the consistent implementation of the ''pre-disaster condition'' language from section 20601 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 is paramount. The intent of this provision was to facilitate the rebuilding of infrastructure, including the electric grid, in a way that is resilient to future weather events, reduces the need for future federal disaster assistance, and makes use of technology and modern standards when rebuilding. Congress specifically wished to avoid a situation where the islands would be forced to simply plug new pieces into antiquated infrastructure, which would only lead to more frequent failures in the future. It has come to our attention that there is a lack of consistency and transparency in the way that FEMA is implementing this language, and that FEMA's interpretation of this language may be contrary to congressional intent. For example, recent news reports indicate that FEMA has reduced its cost estimate for a Project Worksheet covering rebuilding of a number of schools because upgrades to meet industry standards were removed from the scope of work, after previously being discussed by the stakeholders involved. FEMA must immediately rectify this situation and issue clear guidance and expectations on its approach to implementing both the ''pre-disaster condition'' and the ''industry standards'' portion of the Bipartisan Budget Act. If FEMA needs additional guidance from Congress, we must be informed of this need immediately.

Second, we are also concerned about changing FEMA guidance and approaches leading to substantial replication of efforts and excessive delays in approving and obligating funding for priority projects in the territories. For example, according to representatives of the Commonwealth, in March of 2018 FEMA determined that the level of damage to the Vieques Hospital justified replacement of the building, instead of repair. Accordingly, in August of 2018, a scope of work was agreed upon by the stakeholders involved, and coordination between FEMA, COR3, and the municipality began on the cost estimate of the replacement project. However, two months later, FEMA representatives informed COR3 and the municipality that they intended to review the validity of the replacement decision that FEMA had previously made, sending the agreed upon decision to the Expert Panel for their review. A year after the initial decision to replace the building was made, the fate of the Vieques Hospital project remains in question, and it appears that no real progress has been made in addressing the long-term health care needs of the people of Vieques, who continue to rely on a mobile clinic.

Last, when FEMA provides disaster assistance, the receiving State or Territory is responsible for implementing financial controls to ensure that funds obligated for a project by FEMA are drawn down by the grantee for the approved purpose. Currently, FEMA applies additional fiscal oversight requirements specifically to Puerto Rico, which require the Commonwealth to provide detailed documentation to validate that any costs incurred with disaster assistance funding are for allowable expenses. FEMA manually validates a percentage of those actions. Negotiations to end these additional oversight measures and expedite the processing of recovery funding have been ongoing; however, it's unclear what remaining steps Puerto Rico must take to assume full responsibility of their recovery assistance. Until FEMA approves the transition of fiscal oversight to Puerto Rico, these extraordinary measures will stay in place. FEMA must be clear about the changes Puerto Rico needs to make in order to properly manage its own recovery expenses and eliminate any unnecessary bureaucratic steps.

As the territories continue to recover, it is crucial that FEMA address these issues and move forward with a stronger sense of urgency and consideration for the unique issues that they face. A recovery of this scale requires consistency, transparency, and constant coordination with territory officials.

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were hit by back-to-back Category 5 hurricanes, and the damage to the islands was catastrophic. An estimated 2,975 people lost their lives, homes were demolished, and communities destroyed. This extraordinary disaster requires a commensurate extraordinary response. We have a responsibility to come to the aid of fellow U.S. citizens in times of need, and this is certainly one of those times.

We ask for a detailed response providing an update on the status of these issues and the projected timeframe for their final resolution be provided without delay. Please respond by April 5, 2019.

Sincerely,

PATRICK LEAHY,
*U.S. Senator.*
CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
*U.S. Senator.*

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday the inspector general of the Department of Housing and Urban Development announced that it will review whether the White House has deliberately interfered with the timely distribution of hurricane funds to Puerto Rico. That is pretty amazing. I have never seen a case that I remember where the inspector general of Housing and Urban Development had to look into whether the White House was deliberately interfering with funds to go to a disaster area.

I know firsthand what it is like to see a State hit by disaster. Tropical Storm Irene hit Vermont in 2011, and it devastated our State. People lost their homes, roads were washed out, bridges destroyed, and communities forever changed. I saw bridges twisted like a child's toy. I saw farmhouses that had been on the north side of the river, which were now on the south side of the river, upside down and destroyed. I saw farmers' fields wiped out, businesses ruined, schools destroyed, roads necessary to bring medical supplies into villages gone. I know firsthand. I know as a lifelong Vermonter that in these moments the Federal Government is a critical partner in the effort to recover and rebuild.

It is the same in other States—North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands. They are all counting on us to get this bill across the finish line.

That is why, 3 weeks ago, I put a compromise on the table to create a path forward. I did it in my capacity as chairman of the Appropriations Committee. It was a reasonable proposal. It does not restore everything that had been eliminated from the House bill, but it was a compromise that focused on the most critical proposals and the immediate needs. Had Senate Republicans accepted this proposal, we likely would have seen quick passage of a disaster bill in a bipartisan fashion in both the Senate and the House. It actually would have eliminated the need for a conference and would have gotten the assistance to the people who need it sooner rather than later.

Unfortunately, it appears the President will not accept even this reasonable offer. It makes me think about when he closed down the government for over 1 month because the Congress gave him only $1.6 billion for a wall, and then he reopened the government when we gave him $1.3 billion. I don't know if they actually read the proposals and bills that we sent.

In this case, I think it is obvious what is happening. The President is willing to endanger the entire disaster package for all of the United States because he wants to pick winners and losers. When there is a disaster, there are no winners and losers. Americans come together to help everybody. Yet he wants to say who gets assistance in the wake of disasters based on his own arbitrary standards and political grudges. That is unacceptable. Where is it going to end? Which State will the President disfavor next? Remember that just a few months ago, the President, in a tweet, threatened to cut off aid to California as they were reeling from some of the worst fires in recent history. He sent a tweet telling millions of Americans he doesn't want to help. We are an independent branch of government. We have to have a responsible party in the room, and it should be Congress.

I think back to when Vermont was hit by disaster and hurricane flooding. As I was traveling around the State the day after, surveying the damage, I was receiving emails from a number of Senators, Republicans and Democrats, saying: Vermont stood with us when we had a disaster; we will stand with you today.

That is what I want to do. I want to help, just as I voted to help Louisiana six times and Mississippi for their damage. It wasn't for a political benefit for Vermont, but it was because we are Americans and we all stand together.

To think that we might consider a disaster package that picks and chooses which Americans are helped when they have all suffered equally from disasters, and to say: OK, you, American, we favor you, you get money. You, American, I don't like you. So you are not going to get money. That is not the American way. That is not the way the Senate should be.

Let's pass a bill that addresses the needs of all communities impacted by disaster and do it now. People are waiting. The needs are pressing.

I will file an amendment today with my recommended compromise. It provides a reasonable path forward—one that allows us to move quickly to get assistance to the people who need it now. I hope all Members will support it.

The Governor of Puerto Rico made a strong statement this morning.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a statement by Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

STATEMENT BY PUERTO RICO GOVERNOR RICARDO ROSSELLÓ

(March 26, 2019)

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO.—''The comments attributed to Donald Trump today by senators from his own party are below the dignity of a sitting President of the United States. They continue to lack empathy, are irresponsible, regrettable and, above all, unjustified.

''I want to be very clear: Not a single federal dollar has been used to make debt payments. This has been the most transparent recovery in the history of the United States, providing unprecedented access and collaboration with federal agencies. In fact, just yesterday we reached an agreement with FEMA on the transition of responsibilities for the reimbursement of recovery funds. An agreement predicated on the acknowledgment by the federal government that appropriate fiscal controls are in fact established.

''I can only assume that Trump is receiving misleading information from his own staff. I have now made several requests to meet with the President to discuss Puerto Rico's recovery and reconstruction, but up to this day we haven't received a confirmation or a date, even though Trump told me we would meet after his visit to Vietnam earlier this year.

''I invite the President to stop listening to ignorant and completely wrong advice. Instead he should come to Puerto Rico to hear firsthand from the people on the ground. I invite him to put all of the resources at his disposal to help Americans in Puerto Rico, like he did for Texas and Alabama. No more, no less.

''Of course, today the world knows the unpleasant truth that Puerto Rico is a colonial territory of the United States and are well aware of the democratic deficiencies we endure: We are not allowed to vote for our President nor have voting representation in Congress. Even as we have asked democratically for statehood twice in the past seven years, the federal government has delayed their responsibility to act.

People from all over the nation, and the world, have witnessed the inequalities Americans face on the island. The federal response and its treatment during these past months in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria is clear evidence of our second-class citizenship.

''Mr. President: Enough with the insults and demeaning mischaracterizations. We are not your political adversaries; we are your citizens.

''We are not asking for anything more than any other U.S. state has received. We are merely asking for equality.''

Mr. LEAHY. The Americans in Puerto Rico do not have representation in this body. Vermont is probably as far away from Puerto Rico as just about any State, with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii. They do not have anybody to speak directly on their behalf on such an important matter. The Governor has spoken out. I urge every Member to read what the Governor has to say. I agree with him. Americans in Puerto Rico should be helped just as Americans in Texas, Americans in Oklahoma, Americans in California, or Americans in New York, or wherever disaster has struck. We are the United States of America. Let's start acting like that on behalf of all Americans, not on behalf of political biases.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to join again my colleagues to speak of the need for bipartisan action to address climate warming.

Throughout the past year, we have received warning after warning about the warming and about the devastating consequences of climate change that are coming much sooner than some people actually expected.

I remember when I first got to the Senate. I was part of the Environment Committee, and we had military leaders come to speak. We had scientists, and they basically predicted everything that we have seen coming, from the wildfires in the West to the rising ocean levels, to weird weather events like more tornadoes, to the type of flooding that we are seeing in the Midwest as we speak and the type of flooding we have seen in Florida as a result of hurricanes.

They also talked about the economic consequences of this. I think it is really important that people don't see this as environment versus economics. If we do nothing, the economics are bad. If we do nothing, we are going to continue to see homeowners' insurance increase, like we have nationwide—a 50-percent increase in the last 10 years.

If we do something and we do it right and we do it smartly, we are going to see a bunch of new jobs in the field of green energy. We are going to see more solar. We are going to see more wind. We are going to see a whole new industry of an electric grid and things that we need to do to bring down greenhouse gases and be a leader once again in energy for the world.

Last October, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a special report explaining the potential impact of climate change if the Earth warms 1.5 degrees Celsius above historic global temperature levels dating back to before the Industrial Revolution started. That report predicted that in just over 20 years, we could see even more of what we have seen this last year: persistent drought, food shortages, worsening wildfires, and increased flooding—damage that could cost an estimated $54 trillion.

Then, in November, the ''Fourth National Climate Assessment'' issued a special report that concluded that without significant global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, climate change will threaten the health and safety of people, will slow economic growth, will damage our Nation's infrastructure, which we are seeing right now in the Midwest, and will impede the production of energy and food.

Finally, in January of this year, the U.S. Department of Defense released a report on the effects of a changing climate to U.S. military installations and their operational viability. All of these experts—yes, scientists, and, yes, military leaders—have made it clear that inaction is not an option for our economy, for our environment, for our country, or for our world.

Military and security experts have repeatedly reminded us that climate change is a threat to our national security. Look at the examples of refugees coming up from Africa—people who used to be subsistence farmers who no longer can make their livings. They used to eek by, which was not easy, but now they are moving up; they are moving to Europe. That is just one example of what we are seeing.

I am from a State of refugees. Our refugees are a major part of our economy, but we know we want to have a sensible refugee policy and that we can't have sudden droves of people moving up because of environmental catastrophes that are going on in their countries. Yet we are going to see more and more and more of that. At some point, we have to realize, you know what, we want thriving economies in Africa; we want thriving economies throughout the world; and climate change is going to be an impediment to that.

If you want to close your eyes to the rest of the world and pretend it is not happening, it is going to come knocking at your door. It is what is going to keep happening if we don't do something about climate change. There will

be more severe weather—heat waves that could reduce our water supply, extreme rainfall that could damage critical infrastructure, a decrease in agricultural productivity that could threaten, in my State alone, a $20 billion ag industry, which ranks fifth in the Nation. We cannot close our eyes to climate change because it is happening right now around us.

That is why it is all the more disappointing that the Senate has failed to seriously consider legislation that would address climate change. I have been here for these close calls. When I first came to the Senate, we were so close to getting a renewable electricity standard put in place nationwide. I had a bill that would have done that. It would have been combined with the renewable fuel standard, and I think it would have been a good way to have brought people in from both parties, from both sides of the aisle, and from all parts of the country. I remember standing in the back of this Chamber with Senator CANTWELL, bemoaning the fact that we were just one vote short of getting it done. That was over a decade ago.

Meanwhile, yes, States are taking action. With our having a Republican Governor at the time, Tim Pawlenty, my State was able to get a renewable electricity standard put in place—something like 20 to 25 percent by 2025—and we are making that. We wouldn't have made it if we had not set a goal, which, at that time, seemed bold, and we did it on a bipartisan basis—with Democrats, Republicans, and the legislature. We combined it politically with a renewable fuel standard so it would get some of our farmers and other people on board. We had two provisions in there—a strong renewable electricity standard and a strong renewable fuel standard, with a Republican Governor leading the way. Why? We could see ahead. We could see the effect climate change would have on our outdoor economy. We could see the effect it would have on hunting and fishing and recreation in our State.

Here is what happened. We barely missed doing something on the renewable electricity standard. Then President Obama got elected, and we were in the middle of a downturn. I had actually hoped we would have moved on renewable electricity, but the decision was made to go with cap and trade. I supported cap and trade. In the end, despite its passing in the House, we couldn't get the votes in the Senate, in part, because we were in the middle of a downturn.

Since then, we have done a few things on energy efficiency, which have been good, that Secretary Chu called the low-hanging fruit. We have done some things in the farm bill with conservation, with the sodsaver provision that I have with Senator THUNE, but we haven't done anything that significantly makes a difference.

Instead, the administration has taken us out of the international climate change agreement, which means we are the only country in the world that isn't in it. When the President first made his announcement, Syria and Nicaragua were not in it. Now they are. This is not what leadership is when we are the only country that is not part of this agreement. No, that is not what leadership is, and it certainly impedes our doing business around the world when it comes to green energy.

Other countries can go in there and ask: Why are you going to do business with this country? It is the only one that hasn't signed on to the international climate change agreement? That happens. I have heard from businesspeople. That happens. That is one thing that happens.

When it came to greenhouse gases, the standards we had in place at the EPA were a compromise that had been worked on over years. It is now on the cutting room floor because this administration went backward.

The gas mileage standard is something else we could do. Again, we went backward. Instead of working on these things—coming up with more comprehensive legislation—unfortunately, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle decided, yesterday, to play politics by bringing up the Green New Deal resolution with the explicit intention of trying to create a divide by voting it down.

Do you know what? The resolution, as I have said, is aspirational. It sets out some audacious goals. We know we can't meet everything that is in that resolution in 10 years. Yet what has it done that I think is so good? It has reignited the debate on how the United States can lead the way in addressing global climate change while building a clean energy future that benefits American businesses, factories, and workers.

We are a country that sets audacious goals. We put a man on the Moon, right? We won World War II. We are a country that sets audacious goals. Sometimes it takes us longer to meet them, which is OK. If we see a problem, we don't just put our heads down. We look ahead; we look at each other; and we figure out how we are going to meet the challenge. That is what we have to do with climate change.

At the same time that our Republican colleagues brought up the Green New Deal resolution for a vote, they declined to consider the resolution that was offered by Senator CARPER that simply says climate change is real, that human activity during the last century has been the dominant cause of the climate crisis, and that the United States and Congress should take immediate action to address the challenges of climate change.

The challenges we face are too great to waste time on show votes and political stunts. For years, we have heard of the things we can do to make a difference. There is not one approach; it is an ''all of the above'' approach. We know—and I have seen the models—what we can do to start bringing the temperature down to an international goal, by the way, of 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit. That is a lot, but our wanting to stay under that amount is actually a realistic goal right now.

Instead of spending time debating these kinds of show resolutions, we should be taking real action to combat climate change. We need a comprehensive approach that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote energy-efficient technologies and homegrown energy resources. That is what we should do. When Senator MCCONNELL brought up what was an aspirational resolution to bring people together, he did it as a show to divide people. That is not what we want to do here. We have people from all over the country who have some different views on this, and we should be coming together to figure out solutions. As I noted, I believe we must reinstate the Clean Power Plan rules and the gas mileage standards that the administration has reversed, which has rolled back the progress we have made.

I also want to talk today about my home State's work on these issues.

I am proud Minnesota has taken a proactive and innovative approach to energy use and sustainability, which is critical to addressing carbon emissions and climate change. As I noted, that 25-percent electricity standard would be met and is going to be met by 2025. This bipartisan bill was signed into law by Governor Pawlenty in 2007, and it passed the House back then.

By the way, that was 2007, right? Since then, everything we have learned has reinforced what we know, which is that climate change is happening. Back in 2007, we had not seen this big push against doing something about it. We had not seen all of the dark money that went in to take care of not doing something about it and to back up this inertia we are seeing. Yet, somehow, back in 2007, in my State, I guess we got it through—we got around some of this—because that legislation that was signed by a Republican Governor received overwhelmingly bipartisan support. It passed the Minnesota House by a vote of 123 to 10 and passed the Minnesota Senate by 63 to 3.

Earlier this month, our new Governor, Governor Walz, announced a proposal that would build on that earlier work by setting a goal of generating 100 percent of the State's energy from clean sources by 2050. We have also seen other Governors doing this across the country. I think that is great. Justice Brandeis once said that the States are laboratories of democracy, which is a good thing. We can't just sit there and expect States, on an individual basis, to change the national dialogue. Some of these things have to be done by us in this Chamber in Washington, DC.

Once we set those goals, which started with the Republican Governor of Minnesota and then moved on to two Democratic Governors, what we saw

was Xcel Energy—Minnesota's largest utility—as being the earliest supporter of the last administration's Clean Power Plan. This is an electric utility—the biggest one in our State—that recently announced plans to deliver 100-percent carbon-free electricity to its customers by 2050. As part of that pledge, it plans to reduce carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2030 in the eight States it serves. It is an electric company—a power utility—that has realized this is in its best long-term interest and that it is certainly in the best long-term interest of its customers.

If energy utilities like Xcel understand the need to reduce our use of fossil fuels and to embrace setting ambitious goals that will eventually get us to 100-percent clean renewable energy, then so should we and so should the administration.

We know energy innovation can't really take root—not in any kind of serious way—without there being certainty, stability, and a clear path forward. Yes, some of that can happen in the States, and that is exciting. It can happen in our businesses and in businesses in Minnesota, like Cargill—the biggest private company in the country—that looks at the world and sees what is going to happen to its investors and its employees if we don't do something about climate change. It has joined in an effort with major businesses to take this on. So, yes, States are doing things, and Governors are doing things.

Yes, electric utilities are doing things. Some of our small electric utilities in Minnesota have actually started creating incentives for solar panels. One of the most innovative ones will give its customers—this is a very small town in a small county—large water heaters that cost about $1,000 if, in exchange, they will get solar panels.

Senator HOEVEN and I worked on a bill to make sure people in this Chamber understood that these large water heaters were really helpful in the basements of farmhouses and that they were actually more energy efficient. Then this utility—a little electric co-op—took a step forward and actually offered a free water heater in exchange for buying a long-term interest in a solar panel. It is not as easy when you are a small electric co-op. I have a ton of them in my State, and I have worked with them extensively, but they, too, are starting to see the future and are starting to do their part.

In my State, we have big businesses like Cargill, big electric utilities like Xcel, and little electric co-ops. We have our Governors. We have businesses that are not in the electric business but that see what is happening to their customers around the world. We have universities, nonprofits, churches, synagogues, and mosques that want to retrofit and make their places of worship more energy efficient, which is another bill I have with Senator HOEVEN. When all of this is going on, how can we just sit here and do nothing and instead have negative show votes for no reason at all? We are going to keep talking about this and not let it go because what we need is action.

We need policies that encourage reduction in greenhouse gasses. We must leave our children with a world that is as good as the one we got.

There is an old Ojibwe saying—we have a lot of proud Indian Tribes in Minnesota—that says: You make decisions not for now but for seven generations from now.

You know what. That is our duty. But guess what. With climate change, it is no longer just seven generations now; it is for the pages who are sitting right here, because this is happening right now. The predictions are dire.

I was in Florida just a few weeks ago, and they predict that in a decade, 1 out of 10 of their homes is going to be flooded in their State—1 out of 10 of their homes.

You see what is happening in Norfolk, VA. You look at these pages and you think: This is not just seven generations from now; this is 7 years from now or 70 years from now. That is what we are dealing with. It is upon us. So it is our duty, our constitutional duty as elected representatives, to do our job. It is our moral duty to do the right thing for this country. So let's get to work and get this done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I come to the floor to correct the record concerning statements the President reportedly made yesterday afternoon when he met with Senate Republicans.

Apparently, in between his efforts to stiff hurricane victims in Puerto Rico and tear affordable healthcare away from millions of Americans, the President claimed that Democrats were holding up ambassadorial nominations in the Senate. Just weeks ago, we heard similar comments from the Senate majority leader, who claimed that GEN John Abizaid's nomination to be Ambassador to Saudi Arabia was ''being held up.''

Let me be clear. No one wants to see the State Department vested with all the resources it needs to effectively conduct American foreign policy, including qualified and capable staff, more than I do. We cannot promote our foreign policy, protect American citizens, advocate for American businesses, or advance American values without a robust diplomatic core.

I want all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to know that each time the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has received nominations, I have dedicated my time and staff resources to efficiently and diligently vet and advance these nominations. In the last Congress, the committee reported 169 nominations. So I reject the assertion that we have not done our part to ensure that the State Department is appropriately staffed.

Now let me speak to General Abizaid because no one can honestly claim that the Foreign Relations Committee has been anything but extremely diligent and expeditious with this nomination.

With my full support, General Abizaid appeared in the very first committee nominations hearing of this Congress, and I very much look forward to voting in favor of his nomination as soon as our chairman—our Republican chairman—exercises his prerogative and puts him before the committee for a vote.

As with all nominees, the timing of his consideration by the full Senate is under the control of the majority leader.

It is clear that President Trump has an inaccurate or dishonest view of the nominations situation in the Senate and particularly in the Foreign Relations Committee.

We cannot confirm diplomats we do not have. All too often, the committee has received nominations late or not at all. The Trump administration took nearly 2 years before it even bothered to nominate General Abizaid, leaving a gaping hole in our diplomatic posture to Saudi Arabia and the region.

To go nearly 2 years without putting forward a nominee is a failure of leadership, pure and simple. Saudi Arabia's actions over the past 2 years highlight the fact that we need an adult on the ground, which is why I wholeheartedly support General Abizaid and look forward to what I hope is his speedy confirmation.

Sadly, Saudi Arabia is not an isolated example. It took even longer—more than 2 years—for the Trump administration to nominate a candidate to be U.S. Ambassador to Turkey. Astonishingly enough, it was only this week that the President sent up an ambassadorial nominee for Mexico. We are now 26 months into the Trump administration, and we still lack ambassadorial nominees to critical countries such as Egypt, Pakistan, and our close ally, Jordan.

Let's be clear. This is the President's reckless abdication of a constitutional responsibility essential to projecting American power abroad. When you don't nominate someone, President Trump has only himself to blame.

Furthermore, there is unfortunately another severe problem that we cannot ignore with regard to the administration's nominees. When the Trump administration repeatedly fails to appropriately vet political nominations, Congress must exercise appropriate oversight. The President has nominated and renominated individuals with restraining orders for threats of violence; people who made material omissions, sometimes on a repeated basis, in their nomination materials; people who tweeted and retweeted vile things about Senators and their families and who have engaged in incidents that should, frankly, mean they should never have been nominated.

One nominee attacked my late colleague and good friend Senator John

McCain, claiming that John McCain, an American hero, was rolling ''out the welcome mat for ISIS on America's southern border.'' But unfortunately we know that attacking McCain does not cross any redlines for this President.

Another nominee has claimed, with no evidence, that Senator CRUZ's wife is part of a sinister cabal seeking to combine the Governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. This nominee called Hillary Clinton a ''terrorist with amnesia'' and retweeted someone calling Senator ROMNEY a ''dumbass.''

You can't make this stuff up.

Senator SASSE's office said that nominee should ''put on his tinfoil hat and visit our office with evidence for his salacious conspiracy theories and cuckoo allegations'' and went on to observe that ''People who want to serve Americans as our diplomats and spokespersons abroad should know that words and truth matter, even during campaigns. Cynics and nuts are probably going to have a hard time securing Senate confirmation.'' I couldn't agree with him more.

Yet the President thought highly enough of this individual and lowly enough of the U.S. Senate that he nominated him for an ambassadorship in two successive Congresses.

Another ambassadorial nominee was the subject of a temporary restraining order after she left a bullet-ridden target practice sheet on her doctor's chair.

Again, you cannot make this up.

As for being unresponsive to committee requirements for all nominees, I can understand that nominees may accidentally leave off a few businesses they were involved in, but we had one nominee who failed to inform the committee of dozens of businesses and another nominee who, even more egregiously, failed to mention multiple lawsuits he was involved in, including one in which he was alleged to have fired a female employee who complained of sexual harassment. Given the nature and frequency of these omissions, it is hard to believe they were unintentional.

So when the White House, either through negligence or incompetence, sends us unvetted, unqualified nominees—incapable and oftentimes offensive—my staff and I exercise due diligence on behalf of the American people.

To make this crystal clear, the President can speed up this process. All he has to do is start nominating Americans with appropriate credentials and honorable conduct in their careers. It is not rocket science.

The United States and our allies continue to face tremendous challenges around the world. We must continue to lead on the international stage and work in collaboration with international partners to achieve our shared security goals. But to have our diplomats in place, they must be nominated in a timely fashion and vetted properly. That is what the real holdup here is—not Senate Democrats. And I refuse to let the President point the finger at us when he should be pointing the finger at himself.

I yield the floor.

(Mr. SCOTT of Florida assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senate democratic whip.

S. 874

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak about the Dream Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation that would give immigrant students who grew up in the United States a chance to earn their citizenship. This is not a new topic. It was 19 years ago that I introduced the Dream Act. It hasn't become law yet, but it has inspired a movement of thousands of young people across this country.

Back in the day when I introduced this bill and talked about the Dreamers, people thought you were talking about a British rock group. In this case, the Dreamers happened to be a group of people living in America who were desperately trying to become part of America's future. They came to the United States as children, infants, toddlers, and kids. They are American in every way except for a piece of paper on their immigration status. They have gone to our schools. They sit next to us in church. They are the kids whom you see on the playground with your own kids, but they are undocumented. Because they are undocumented, they are subject to deportation at any moment in their lives.

They end up going to school, but it is tougher for them. They don't qualify for Pell grants or Federal loans. They have to find a way to save the money or find a way to secure a scholarship that just might be available to them, but it is rare. Most of the time it means a longer period of time in college before they can finish, as they save up the money. Ultimately, they are trained to become our teachers, our nurses, our doctors, our engineers, and even our soldiers.

Yesterday I reintroduced the Dream Act. My cosponsor is Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, a Republican from South Carolina and chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I want to thank LINDSEY GRAHAM for joining me in this bipartisan effort. Bipartisanship is rare in this Chamber, and on an issue of controversy, it is even rarer.

Senator GRAHAM and I have a long history of working together because we believe that Congress has an obligation to do the job we were elected to do and pass legislation that solves problems. Senator GRAHAM and I were partners in the Gang of 8—four Democratic Senators and four Republican Senators. That was the gang with the great John McCain, CHUCK SCHUMER, MARCO RUBIO, LINDSEY GRAHAM, Jeff Flake, BOB MENENDEZ, and MICHAEL BENNET.

We wrote a comprehensive immigration reform bill a few years back in 2013. We brought it to the floor of the Senate. We covered virtually every aspect of immigration law. Believe me, immigration law is a mess, and it needed that kind of comprehensive approach. We brought it up to a vote on the floor, and the vote was 68 to 32. It was a bipartisan vote. After months of working on this bill, we couldn't have been happier. We finally had a bipartisan bill to address the immigration challenge in America.

The bill left here and went to the House of Representatives under a Republican leadership, and it died. They wouldn't even consider it, wouldn't debate it, and, certainly, wouldn't vote on it. Look at the mess we have today in the United States because of our immigration laws, and consider the possibility that 6 years ago we had finally found a path that could lead us to a bipartisan solution. That path is still there.

Part of that immigration law was the Dream Act, which we are reintroducing. In 2010 I joined with Republican Senator Dick Lugar of Indiana. We called on President Obama to use his authority as President to protect these Dreamers from deportation. In other words, if we couldn't pass the law, could the President do something to help protect them?

President Barack Obama responded. He created a program called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA. Here is what DACA said: We will give you, 2 years at a time, temporary legal status to stay in the United States and not be deported and be able to work in this country. If you want the temporary status that is renewable every 2 years, you have to report to the government, go through a comprehensive background investigation, pay a fee, and, then, we will give you a chance to stay here, go to school and work, and not be afraid of that knock on the door.

More than 800,000 Dreamers stepped forward. They came forward in an extraordinary way. I can remember the first day when then-Congressman Luis Gutierrez and I decided at Navy Pier in Chicago, which is a huge gathering place, that we would have a sit-down for these young people so they could fill out the forms and apply for DACA status. Initially, we thought we were going to have 1,000. We didn't know what we would do with it. Then, there were 2,000, and then 3,000, and it turned out that families literally stood in line all night long for the chance to come across that threshold to sit down with a volunteer and fill out their form for DACA status. Mothers and fathers were in tears with their kids thinking: At least my son or my daughter will have a chance not to be deported and to be part of America. More than 800,000 of these Dreamers came forward, and they received DACA protection because of President Obama's Executive order. Forty-three thousand were in my State of Illinois.

DACA has unleashed the full potential of these Dreamers, who are contributing to our country in so many ways—teachers, soldiers, engineers, and small business owners.

Then came the day with a new President—President Donald Trump. On September 5, 2017, President Trump announced that he would repeal DACA and the protections that it gave to these people. Hundreds of thousands of Dreamers faced losing their work permits and, even worse, being deported from the only country they had ever known and being sent back to places they couldn't even remember.

When President Trump announced the repeal of DACA, he called on Congress to legalize DACA. Since then, President Trump has rejected every single bipartisan deal we offered him on the subject. I am not giving up on the Dream Act, and I am not giving up on the Dreamers. You would think that after all these years and all these young people, people would be coming to the floor who are against the Dream Act and against DACA, telling horrible stories about the young people who we are talking about today. Strangely, that has never happened. I am sure there is going to be somebody to disappoint me. That is human nature. Overwhelmingly, these young people are just nothing short of amazing.

I have come to the floor of the Senate more than 100 times to tell their stories because I think that is the best way for you to understand why this issue is so important.

This is an amazing young woman. Her name is Karla Robles. Karla Robles is the 116th Dreamer whose story I have told on the floor of the Senate. She was brought to the United States from Mexico when she was 8 years old. She grew up in Chicago, where her mom and dad worked long hours in a pizza restaurant. Karla's parents told her and her brothers and sisters: No matter what happens, make sure to stay out of trouble and study really hard. It will all pay off one day.

That is exactly what Karla did. When Karla started school in the third grade, she didn't speak English, but she worked hard and quickly became an excellent student. Karla wrote me a letter and she said: ''Education has been an important part of my life and the teachers who took the time to guide my family and me are a big reason I want to go into this field.''

In the seventh grade, Karla received the American Legion Award—this undocumented young girl—which was given to one boy and one girl in the class who ''are deemed most worthy of the high qualities of citizenship and of true Americanism.''

In high school, Karla Robles was a member of the National Honor Society and the President's Club, and she was active in student government.

She participated in a program called TRUST, where she agreed to volunteer her personal time to mentor younger students. She was captain and MVP of the varsity tennis team. She received her associate's degree from Harper College. She is now a senior at Loyola University in Chicago.

Here is a special word about Loyola University in Chicago. This is an amazing campus that is doing its best to give people just like Karla a chance in life. They have created something called Arrupe College, which is a low cost approach to higher education for some of the poorest families in Chicago, and they don't exclude kids who are protected by DACA or are Dreamers. The Loyola medical school is one of the few in the United States with open competition where DACA students can apply. There are 32 medical students at Loyola in Chicago who are undocumented. They are DACA Dreamers. They desperately want to be part of America. Part of the agreement is if they go to medical school at Loyola and borrow money to do it, they have to pay back a year of service in an underserved area in the State of Illinois for the money that they are receiving to go to school.

Back to Karla.

During college, she was on the National Honor Roll and the Dean's List. She also volunteers with an outreach program for at-risk kids and with AmeriCorps VISTA, and she founded a tutoring program for elementary school students.

I know Karla a little better than I know some of the Dreamers because she interned here in my Washington, DC, office last year. What does she want to do at the end of this journey if she can stay in America? She wants to be a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools. She wants to pursue her master's degree and become a high school guidance counselor.

There are some people who look at this picture and say: This is not an American citizen. Tell her to leave. I look at this picture and think that we are lucky to have her, that this Nation of immigrants is lucky to have this young woman who simply wants to give back to America. That is all she is asking for—nothing special—just to let her give back to this country.

So we have reintroduced the Dream Act. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will come forward and join me and Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, my Republican cosponsor.

We think there are about 1.8 million young people who are eligible for the Dream Act in the United States. They have never known another country. In the mornings, when they walk into the classrooms in their schools, they stand up and put their hands on their chests and pledge allegiance to the only flag they have ever known. They were just kids when they were brought here. Shouldn't we do the right thing in America—this Nation of immigrants, this country of opportunity, this bright city on the hill, this shining city on the hill?

Yes, we should.

For the Dreamers and for their moms and dads, we have to renew our commitment that the next generation of Americans who will come from all over the world will continue to make this one of the finest countries on Earth.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Iowa.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, we rise to celebrate Women's History Month.

This month is, of course, very personal to me as a woman, a daughter, and a mother. One of the sayings I love is: ''Well-behaved women seldom make history.'' This is so true. I want to reflect on a few of these fearless females—trailblazers—who have made history and who have shaped our future.

These are women like suffrage leader Carrie Chapman Catt. She founded the League of Women Voters in 1920, which was 2 years after she helped women gain the right to vote. Catt relocated to Iowa when she was 7 years old, and she graduated from what is now Iowa State University, my alma mater. She was so committed to the cause of women that she helped found the International Woman Suffrage Alliance to help spread rights for women all around our globe.

I fast-forward to today, when one can see the fruits of her labor. In Iowa, we just elected our first female Governor—my friend and a fearless female, Kim Reynolds. We also gained two new women lawmakers with the election of ABBY FINKENAUER and CINDY AXNE and a record number of women in the Iowa State House, led by Speaker of the House Linda Upmeyer. In Congress, we have a record number of women who serve in the U.S. House and 25 who serve in the U.S. Senate. While we come from differing backgrounds and political stripes, I admire these women for jumping into the arena.

I also reflect on a woman named Deborah Sampson. Sampson is credited as the first woman to serve in the U.S. Army. This hero, who couldn't serve openly as a female, disguised herself as a male and joined the Continental Army in 1781. She led forces on a mission that helped to capture 15 enemy soldiers. She served as a scout, dug trenches, and endured battle wounds. She even extracted a pistol ball from her own leg so no one would know she was a female.

Fast-forward to today, when thousands of women are serving in the military and are taking on bigger and badder roles. They are all brave, fierce, and honorable. They are modern-day Deborah Sampsons.

I think of the wonderful women with whom I served in the Army and of all of those whom I commanded—my wonderful mechanics, my truckdrivers, my admin specialists. I think of my daughter, who is a cadet at West Point, as well as Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson, and so many other women who serve in Active Duty, as reservists, and as National Guardsmen. They all serve our great Nation.

Finally, I reflect on Gertrude Dieken. Dieken was from Grundy County, IA. She was an editor and the first woman vice president of the Farm Journal—a renowned magazine that is dedicated to farming. Savvy in business, economics, and journalism, Dieken established a book publishing division and became the first female member of its board of directors.

Iowa women are today exercising their girl power, making it happen on the shop floor, in the boardroom, on the farm, and in every occupation in between. Iowa is now ranked eighth for growth in the number of women-owned businesses.

As part of my 99 County Tour, I have met many of these phenomenal women and have heard their stories and dreams for their futures. I am continually inspired by these fearless females and the thousands of other women like them who have paved the path forward and broken—shattered—that glass ceiling. They are changing lives and are helping our economy and our communities grow.

We know it isn't always easy today to be a fearless female, just as it was not easy for the trailblazing women of the past. We must continue to take on the challenges that confront women from all walks of life—harassment, abuse, and discrimination. Keeping the economy strong, along with issues like childcare access, criminal justice reform, healthcare, and paid parental leave, are areas in which I am working to move that ball forward.

Melinda Gates often says, ''When women and girls are empowered to participate fully in society, everyone benefits.'' I believe that to be true.

The future is bright for women today—in particular, for young women—because of the sacrifices of those who have come before us. We have a common bond as females, sisters, mothers, grandmothers, and daughters. It is easy to look at these historical examples as a mere recitation of facts and figures, but I view them as a challenge—a challenge to all women to stand strong and reject the status quo, to achieve greatness, to be a friend and a mentor, and to prove all of those doubters wrong. Whether you are a stay-at-home mom or a woman in America's boardrooms or anywhere in between, you are making a difference.

As Peggy Whitson—famed astronaut and first female to command the International Space Station—once said: ''If a farmer's daughter from Iowa can be an astronaut, you can be just about anything you want to be.''

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, it is my honor to be here with my fellow woman Senator from the State of Iowa. I enjoy learning more about Iowa and about the strength of Iowan women and in our Nation.

I join my colleague to highlight and celebrate not only the women leaders in the Senate but the millions of women throughout history and across the country who have made and continue to make a difference in their homes, in their communities, and in society in general.

I am very proud to represent the State of West Virginia—a State with a long and rich history of female trailblazers. It is a State that respects and celebrates those women. Maybe you have heard that phrase ''mountain mamas.'' Well, Mother's Day was actually originated in West Virginia by Grafton resident Anna Jarvis in 1908. President Woodrow Wilson made it an official national holiday in the year 1914, and it is an annual reminder today to cherish and thank one of the, if not the, most influential women in many people's lives—their mothers.

I miss my mother every day. I know my mother, who was the First Lady of West Virginia, was an incredible role model for me and an inspiration. Seeing all she did for our State and for our fellow West Virginians through her public service was a driving force throughout my life. Not only that, she was a great and loving mother, and as I said, I still miss her every day.

Another West Virginia woman who has been an incredible inspiration is Katherine Johnson. Katherine was born in White Sulpher Springs, WV, in 1918. In her being brilliant with numbers, she attended West Virginia State College and was later one of the first Black students to integrate West Virginia University's graduate school in 1939. That is pretty notable in and of itself, but Katherine didn't stop there.

In 1953, she took a job at NASA and began working as a human computer. She literally calculated how to get men into space. Remember, with the launch of the Soviets' satellite Sputnik in 1957, the space race was on. America needed a win, and Katherine Johnson played a major role in facilitating that win. Her work put John Glenn into space and into history. The success of that mission marked a turning point in the space race altogether, and it made a significant impact in the future of space travel and exploration. Some may better recognize Katherine's name from the movie ''Hidden Figures.''

I am proud to say that in tribute to Katherine and her incredible legacy at NASA, I introduced legislation to rename West Virginia's only NASA facility after her. President Trump signed that bill into law last year, and Fairmont, WV, is now the home of the Katherine Johnson Independent Verification & Validation Facility. At 100 years young, Katherine still serves as a tremendous role model to me and to women everywhere.

Of course, all of our States are home to brilliant women. My home of West Virginia is home to numerous amazing women who have made significant contributions, and we are proud to claim them all.

I don't know if one remembers America's sweetheart of 1984, Olympic gold medalist Mary Lou Retton, who is a native of West Virginia; Mother Jones, who is a champion of the working class and a labor organizer who campaigned for the United Mine Workers; Pulitzer Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck; the host of the ''TODAY'' show, Hoda Kotb; actress and advocate Jennifer Garner; and Saira Blair. Many of you have never heard of Saira Blair. Several years ago, at the age of 18, she became the youngest person ever—male or female—to get elected to a State or Federal office. She served in the West Virginia House of Delegates.

These incredible women and so many others have helped to shape history and society, and they have paved the way for the next generation of leaders—girls and young women who might not yet have realized or achieved their full potential.

In 2015, I was sworn in as West Virginia's first female Senator. This distinction is a privilege for me, and it is an honor. It is certainly nothing I take lightly. I may well be the very first female Senator from West Virginia, but I am very confident that I will not be the last—certainly, not if I can help it.

So, shortly after I came to the Senate, I started an initiative called West Virginia Girls Rise Up because I want to inspire the next generation of leaders. Through that program, I visit fifth grade girls across the State. We talk about their dreams, what they can be when they grow up, and how they can be the best versions of themselves.

As a matter of fact, the Senator from Iowa mentioned the astronaut, Peggy Whitson. She was with me when I did two Girls Rise Up in West Virginia, and we talked about three different accomplishments that girls can do to reach their full potential—education, physical fitness, and self-confidence. I believe these are the building blocks for a successful future for whatever you want to do.

Then we set goals. Maybe it is reading more. Maybe it is eating healthier. Maybe it is raising your hand more in class. Most importantly, I challenged these girls to achieve these goals.

What I hope the girls get out of this is that you can reach a goal you set for yourself now—or at least really work hard to—and you can reach your next goal when you get older. Then you can reach your next goal and your next goal and your next goal, until you find yourself doing groundbreaking research in a lab, being a CEO of a Fortune 500 company, designing a skyscraper at an architectural firm, or working to make our country a better place from the floor of the U.S. Senate or, I will add, as President of the United States.

The possibilities are endless, but the common thread is this: Think about what it is you want, work hard to make your dreams a reality, and have confidence to never back down.

As I travel across West Virginia with my West Virginia Girls Rise Up Program, I am constantly amazed at the

potential of the young women I see. I know the same is true in States across this country.

I hope those girls are watching us here in this Chamber today. I hope they are hearing the stories of the incredible women and trailblazers who have come before us. I hope they are thinking to themselves: That could be me one day.

I am incredibly proud to be a part of what female leaders are doing right now, but I am more incredibly optimistic to see what our future female leaders will do in the years ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleagues in recognizing Women's History Month and celebrating the countless women who have shaped our Nation and those who continue to devote their time and energy to the pursuit of equality here at home and abroad.

Women have demonstrated incredible perseverance in the face of adversity. Their stories of fighting for equal opportunity are ingrained in the history of our country. We wouldn't be the great Nation that we are without those who paved the path for a more promising future for women.

We honor the individuals whose remarkable courage and dedication to challenging the status quo helped advance women's rights and those who followed their dreams while breaking the glass ceiling.

In 1932, Arkansas elected Hattie Caraway to the U.S. Senate, which made her the first woman elected to this body. She broke barriers, changed norms, and helped lay the foundation for the new role women were beginning to be recognized as deserving to play in the Senate throughout her legislative career.

Senator Caraway served nearly 14 years in the Senate, where in 1933 she was the first woman to chair a Senate committee and in 1943 became the first woman to preside officially over the Senate.

Arkansans are particularly proud that our legacy in the U.S. Senate includes electing the first woman to serve in this Chamber. The path that Hattie Caraway trailblazed for more women to enter the ranks of the world's greatest deliberative body has, without a doubt, made the Senate a better, stronger institution and has benefited our Nation immensely.

Today, more women are serving in Congress than ever before. We need to look no further than Hattie Caraway to understand the magnitude of her decision to step forward and serve her State and country.

More women are also answering the call to serve our Nation in uniform. Women are the fastest growing demographic of veterans, but many Department of Veterans Affairs facilities don't have the ability to provide equitable care or services to our women veterans.

This Congress, Senator TESTER and I have reintroduced legislation to eliminate barriers to care and services that many women veterans face. The legislation is appropriately named for Deborah Sampson—the Deborah Sampson Act—which honors the service and sacrifice of the American Revolution hero who actually disguised herself as a man in order to serve in the Continental Army.

We can be proud of Deborah Sampson and the countless women patriots who have followed in her footsteps.

We must update VA services to support the unique needs of our entire veteran population, including the growing number of women relying on VA for care.

While opportunities remain to advance women's equality, the United States recently took an important step to empower women worldwide. Congress approved and President Trump signed into law the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act. Senator CARDIN and I introduced the legislation to eliminate global gender-related barriers and empower female entrepreneurs around the world.

In some parts of the world, women are pushed so far to the sidelines that they are denied access to even the most basic financial services. Cultural and historical barriers prevent women from launching a business, building savings, and supporting economic growth in their communities. Leveling the playing field will help the world economy grow substantially.

Providing women access to tools for economic success supports global prosperity. Our country can lead by example and help deliver these tools and empower women. I look forward to seeing women succeed because of this legislative effort.

I am a dad of three daughters and a grandfather to two little girls. I want women across the globe to have the same access to resources and opportunities that my girls have because I have seen with my own eyes how limitless their potential is.

Earlier this year, President Trump launched the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative to empower women around the world to fulfill their economic potential. The Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act is an essential piece of this plan to deliver global results.

Empowering women strengthens families, communities, and our Nation. As we take this time to reflect on the challenges women have overcome and still face, let us continue the momentum started generations ago by hardworking, courageous, and determined women who envisioned a country full of opportunities for success for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, the Senate has unanimously rejected the so-called Green New Deal. In a display of political courage for the ages, 43 Democrats voted present, including many of the bill's own sponsors.

Now, many of them are running for President. In fact, these days, it seems that all of the Democratic Senators are running for President and perhaps may realize what a disaster the Green New Deal is for them.

The Green New Deal would force a transition in just 10 years—one decade—to 100 percent green energy, whatever that is. But it is an impossible goal that would require trillions of dollars of taxes and the effective nationalization of private industry in America.

That is not all—no, not all.

The Green New Deal would also overhaul or rebuild all existing buildings in the United States to achieve maximum energy efficiency—all—every single home and building in America. I guess you could call it the ''Extreme Home Makeover Mandate.''

The Green New Deal also calls for taxpayer-funded college and jobs for every person in the country, even for illegal aliens and even if you are unable or unwilling to work. That is according to a press release the Democrats sent out and then tried to send down the memory hole when it was justly mocked, and understandably so.

Jobs for everyone who is unable to work and unwilling to work—there is a big difference between those two groups of people.

The radical nature of the Green New Deal cannot be overstated. The amount of control it would give to politicians and planners in Washington would be the envy of Soviet Russia. Actually, it would make Stalin blush. And it would take Stalinist tactics to achieve a Green New Deal.

To borrow from Churchill, ''Socialism may begin with the best of intentions, but it always ends with the Gestapo.'' Who else is going to come into your home and make sure that it is energy compliant? Who else is going to confiscate your gas-using pickup truck? Who else is going to ensure that you don't commit the terrible crime of eating a hamburger?

Perhaps we can come up with a better name for the Green New Deal—one that reflects its true lineage. Might I suggest the Red New Deal, the color of Communist regimes the world over, or perhaps the Green Leap Forward in honor of Mao.

I gather some House freshmen might actually feel pretty comfortable with those labels. They claim these radical ideas are necessary to stop the threat of climate change—a threat so dire, the Democrats insist—so dire that we will all be dead in 12 years—12 years—if we don't surrender to totalitarian levels of power over our lives to central planners in Washington.

Yet we gave them a chance to vote on this existential, apocalyptic threat and they all said: Meh, maybe later.

So this isn't really about climate change or even the environment. I

mean, come on. What do free college for rich kids and guaranteed jobs for lazy bums have to do with climate change?

The answer is: Nothing. And that tells you all you need to know about what the Democrats are up to.

The Green New Deal isn't a real policy proposal. It is just the Democrats' most fanciful and frightful dreams wrapped in one shiny package. I would call it a policy platform, but that would probably give it too much credit for substance.

The President put it very well. He said the Green New Deal is more like an undergraduate term paper, one written late at night after too many bong hits, judging from its botched rollout.

If you really feared a climate catastrophe, you would do a couple of simple things. First, you would build as many new, beautiful, carbon-free nuclear powerplants as you could. But the Green New Deal omits nuclear energy entirely, no doubt to please the Democrats' crony renewable energy lobbyists and the anti-nuclear know-nothings in the Democrats' base.

Second, you would get tough on the world's biggest polluters, especially on China. Foreign nations, after all, have driven almost all of the growth in global carbon emissions since the turn of the century.

But the Green New Dealers seem to believe America is the root of all of the world's problems, even though our emissions have been declining. It is just another case of the Democrats' guiding principle: Blame America first.

Of course, if we did something as stupid as pass the Green New Deal, most foreign nations would just laugh at us and keep building their economies and keep polluting while we tanked our own economy, immiserated our citizens, and lost millions of jobs in pursuit of a fantasy.

The Green New Deal would amount to America's unilateral disarmament on the world stage, which for some Democrats is probably a feature and not a bug. But sometimes even terrible ideas deserve a vote. So we gave them a vote on the Green New Deal, and the bill's own sponsors complained.

In any event, the Senate flunked the Democrats' term paper unanimously, and the only reason the Green New Deal got an F is that there is not a lower grade. So common sense prevailed this time, although I have a feeling this is not the last time we have heard of the Green New Deal.

Remember, this is not the hobby horse of some eccentric socialist fringe of the Democratic Party—oh, no, not at all. The Green New Deal has 90 Democratic cosponsors in the House. That is nearly two out of every five House Democrats, and the Democratic Presidential candidates have rushed to endorse the Green New Deal. Remember that when you step into the voting booth in 2020.

But let me wrap up on a more serious note. I have made a lot of jokes about the Green New Deal, and, believe me, the Green New Deal is laughable. But for many Americans, the Green New Deal is no laughing matter.

Imagine, if you will, a mom and dad and a couple young kids outside Little Rock, let's say. Every day, they drive the kids to school. They commute into the city where they work and back out to the suburbs, just so they can afford a home. When they are home on the weekends, maybe they try to fire up the grill on the patio to have a little cookout for the kids.

This working-class family is doing its best to live the American dream and pass it on to their kids. The Green New Deal is not for that family. It would outlaw their entire way of life, from the minivan in the garage to the hamburgers on their grill, to the house they call home.

The Green New Deal would be a death sentence for America's families. Yet the Democrats have the nerve to sell it as a rescue mission. I reject that fraud on America, and now so does the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, March is Women's History Month. A number of my colleagues have been coming to the floor and talking about the accomplishments of particular women in their States. I want to do the same thing.

When Virginia Minor, a St. Louisan, was denied the ability to register to vote in 1872, she took her case all the way to the Supreme Court. While she wasn't successful at the Supreme Court level, she remained a leader in the suffrage movement and later testified before the Senate Select Committee on Woman Suffrage in 1889. Remember that women didn't get the right to vote until 1920. So she was working on this with thousands of others for a long time. She is also one of seven women represented in the Missouri State Capitol's Hall of Famous Missourians.

Virginia Minor and her fellow suffragettes blazed a trail of political leadership that others followed. In 1952 Leonor Sullivan became the first woman in Congress from Missouri. During the 24 years that she served in the House, she became the first woman appointed to the House Democratic Steering Committee. She was elected secretary, one of the elected leaders, of the House Democratic caucus for five terms.

Our former colleague, Senator Claire McCaskill, won her Senate race in 2006. With that, she became the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from Missouri. Certainly, Senator McCaskill and I disagreed on plenty of things over the years, but, frankly, when it came to the big issues affecting our State, we always figured out how to work together to get things done.

Also from our State, I want to recognize Margaret Kelly, who in 1984 was appointed to the position of State auditor. When that happened, that made her the first woman to hold statewide office in Missouri. She was elected to a full term in 1986 and reelected two more times after that.

In Missouri, at least, you can't talk about politics and the impact on politics without talking about Phyllis Schlafly, who was a vocal and tireless advocate for conservative ideas. She was never afraid of a fight, but she also knew when to celebrate what was possible. One of the great things about Phyllis Schlafly was that she knew how to win, when you could win, and what you could win, when you could win it, and, then, how to come back and fight for what you didn't get the first time and continue to work for more. She was a friend of mine. I value her legacy. There is no question that she impacted the political landscape of the country.

As I mentioned earlier, there are seven women represented in the Hall of Famous Missourians. Two of them were committed lifelong to education. In 1873 Susan Blow, who was born in St. Louis, founded the first public kindergarten in the United States in the Des Peres public school in Carondelet. In 1818 Saint Rose Duchesne opened the first Sacred Heart school outside of Europe. The Academy of the Sacred Heart was the first free school west of the Mississippi and the first Catholic school in what would eventually become the St. Louis Archdiocese. I mentioned that this was Saint Rose Duchesne, one of the first women to be an American who rose to the level of sainthood.

There are also a few world figures in that hall of fame, like Josephine Baker, who was not only an iconic entertainer but also a civil rights activist and, interestingly, a member of the French resistance during World War II while she was entertaining in Europe. In our hall of fame, she is joined by other entertainers, like Ginger Rogers and Betty Grable.

The seventh woman honored in the State capitol is Sacagawea, who, of course, was part of the Lewis and Clark expedition into Missouri and up the Missouri River and other territories of the Louisiana Purchase.

To cover all of the notable Missouri women in history would be impossible. To talk about the countless women who are making an incredible impact in our State today would be impossible—people who are devoted to public service, who are successful entrepreneurs, who serve our country in the Armed Forces, and so much more. Those women and others continue to help lead our country and to inspire younger women. There is a reason that March is Women's History Month, and thousands and thousands—maybe millions—of Missouri women would easily qualify in that category of people who have made a difference in history.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, as we celebrate Women's History Month, I am proud to spotlight Wyoming's great history and achievements for women's equality.

Wyoming is the ''Equality State''—the first State to give women the right to vote and hold public office. We actually did it before statehood. Long before statehood, in 1869, the Wyoming Territory was the first to grant women the right to vote.

Louisa Ann Swain of Laramie became the first woman in the United States to vote in a general election in 1870, and Wyoming insisted on protecting women's right to vote as a precondition for even joining the Union in 1890.

Now, that is not all. The first elected woman Governor in the United States, Nellie Taylor Ross, was Wyoming's 14th Governor.

Wyoming women continue to hold key elected offices today, with strong leaders like U.S. Representative LIZ CHENEY.

The State owes a debt of gratitude to all of these extraordinary women leaders.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Now I would like to turn to this week's debate over the Democrats' so-called Green New Deal.

The Green New Deal isn't about protecting our environment. It is about increasing the size and scope of the Federal Government.

Every Democrat Senator running for President supports the Green New Deal. They have cosponsored it—each and every one of them, every single one.

By cosponsoring the Green New Deal, these Senators have shown Americans what they actually do support as candidates and as an agenda for America, and that is massively increasing the size of government.

This year the Federal Government is projected to spend over $4 trillion. That amount includes everything—Social Security, national defense, Medicare, all of it. If we were to pass the Green New Deal, it would cost up to $93 trillion over the next 10 years. That is $9.3 trillion a year—more than double what our government currently spends.

So, you see, the Green New Deal would massively expand the Federal Government, and that is exactly what Democrat Senators running for President want and plan to do, if elected. Don't be confused by Senate Democrats' ducking this vote on the Green New Deal. This is where Democrats would take our country if they were to retake the White House.

The Green New Deal would bankrupt our Nation, would wreak havoc, and would wreck the economy.

Republicans' pro-growth, pro-jobs policies have strengthened the economy and improved the lives of American families in their everyday lives at home. Because of tax relief, millions of families have more money now in their pockets to decide what to spend, what to save, and what to invest.

The Green New Deal plan would eliminate fossil fuels by requiring 100 percent renewable, carbon-free energy in just 10 years. Talk about having extra money in your pocket to fill your gas tank, but just putting gas in the car would be extremely difficult if the Green New Deal were to come to pass.

On the issue of climate change, climate change is real, but the Green New Deal is unrealistic. While it is important, in 2017 wind and solar energy generated just 8 percent of our electricity. Should we have more? Yes, but 8 percent of what we need is certainly inadequate.

Affordable and reliable fossil fuels, like coal and natural gas, power three out of five U.S. homes and businesses. Excluding fossil fuels would snuff out the bright lights of Americans' prosperity. It would threaten national security. It would threaten jobs. It would threaten our independence from foreign energy, and all Americans' higher standard of living.

What Democrats are proposing is essentially a pipe dream. It is no surprise that Democrats have yet to provide a cost estimate. They don't want Americans to know that the Green New Deal could cost up to $93 trillion over the next 10 years. That is roughly $65,000 each and every year for each and every family in America.

The Nation is already over $22 trillion in debt. So how are they planning to pay for this? By doing what they often plan to do—raising taxes.

Paying for a $93 trillion bill would empty just about every Americans' savings account in the country, and let's not forget that the Green New Deal would not actually solve the problems they are trying to solve. Really, the proposal amounts to unrealistic economic disarmament.

Plus, U.S. economic decline would harm the environment. That is what we are hearing from the Green New Deal. It would be unilateral harm to our economy and no improvement to the overall global climate. They want it done immediately. They want it done drastically. It is a level of alarm that is not in any way called for.

When you think about the American economy and what we are able to do in this country, it is a strong economy that allows for a clean environment. The stronger the economy, often the cleaner the environment is. That is certainly the case here, when you compare us around the world to other countries and their economies and their environments.

The label ''Made in America'' means more than just the country of origin. It means the better the environment. We are being asked to destroy—that is what the Democrats are asking us to do with this Green New Deal—our strong, growing, and improving economy and allow the largest polluters in the world to grow at our expense.

Right now, 13 percent of emissions comes from the United States, but 33 percent comes from China and from India, and emissions in the United States have been declining over the last dozen years, while they continue to go up in China and India and in other locations around the world.

Why do Democrats want to do this? Well, they would like to engineer a big government takeover—or, I should say, as they say, transformation—of the U.S. economy.

There is a real solution that will not wreck our economy, will not hurt our Nation, will not hurt people's jobs, and will not hurt American families. The solution is not taxation. It is not regulation. It is innovation. Republicans continue to work, and we do it in a bipartisan way to advance innovative strategies for reducing carbon emissions.

First, we are working to promote carbon capture, and then using that carbon and sequestering it, taking it away. That means taking carbon out of the atmosphere and using it productively. We can use it for medical projects, construction projects, and for extracting oil. You can push the carbon dioxide into the ground in the area of oil wells and get out more oil, as a result, leaving the carbon dioxide underground.

Last year, the Senate passed the bipartisan FUTURE Act. It was signed into law, and it expands tax credits for carbon capture facilities.

Now we are advancing the bipartisan USE IT Act, which will help to turn carbon that has been captured into valuable products.

A second way Republicans are working in a bipartisan way to reduce emissions is by supporting nuclear power. Nuclear power generates about 60 percent—60 percent—of American-produced carbon-free energy. By far, that is the largest source of American carbon-free energy. It is much more than double solar and wind power combined.

In late December, we passed the bipartisan Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act. This legislation had Republican and Democratic support and was signed into law by President Trump. This law will help innovators develop advanced nuclear reactors that are safer, cleaner, and more versatile. That is what we need to do. It is simplifying the process on the front end for the innovators to build state-of-the-art nuclear reactors. These advanced reactors are going to power the next generation of nuclear plants. We need them to expand the use of carbon-free energy. We also need to maintain our existing nuclear powerplants, and Congress needs to address how we manage nuclear waste. Nuclear power is an area with broad bipartisan support. We must continue to work together on nuclear power.

A third approach that Republicans are taking to reduce emissions is increasing the use of renewable energy. Republicans have repeatedly passed tax incentives to promote clean energy. These include tax credits for wind and solar panels, as well as incentives for biodiesel and compressed natural gas.

We know all these innovative strategies work. We see it in America's unparalleled success in reducing emissions. This progress is not the result of taxation; it is not the result of regulation; it is the result of American innovation. Our cutting-edge technologies can be adopted globally.

Republicans want to make America's energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, while investing in promising innovations for the future. Democrats want more government control. That is what they asked for with the Green New Deal—control of our economy and control of our lives, despite the cost to American families and American taxpayers.

Let's continue to pass real climate solutions, not these far-left fantasies. Let's focus on what works for our environment and our economy, not what works for Democrats who are running for President.

Republicans are going to continue to oppose unrealistic, unworkable, and unaffordable proposals like the Green New Deal. It is a big green bomb. The Democrats are ducking it, they are dodging it, and they are now distancing themselves from it by showing up on the floor of the Senate—those who have cosponsored it, those who have gone on TV and on the hustings around the country saying they would support it and be for it—and voting not for it but present. The Democrats are ducking this for a good reason: They know what a disaster it would be for our Nation.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I am on the floor today to talk about career and technical education and specifically legislation we have introduced that would provide a lot more training opportunities for people who need the in-demand jobs that are out there.

When people hear about career and technical education, sometimes they wonder what we are referring to. High school programs used to be called vocational education. Many in my generation might remember it as that. But it is not your father's Oldsmobile. It is not the old voc-ed programs you might remember. In fact, it is very impressive. If you go to these CTE schools today—and Ohio, luckily, has a lot of great career and technical academies and schools—you will see something amazing. You will see young people being trained for some of the most sophisticated jobs out there in bioscience and technology, welding, of course, and manufacturing—in Ohio, it is a big deal—and also CDLs for truckdrivers, commercial driver's licenses. You might see somebody there who is interested in going into firefighting or EMS. This morning, I had a chance to visit with a young man who is in a CTE program where he is going to be immediately hired by a fire department.

These are great opportunities for our young people. Right now, these CTE schools are incredibly important because the skills are needed, and the training is needed.

One of the challenges we have had, frankly, is that sometimes parents who are advising their kids are saying ''You need to go to a 4-year college or university like I did'' or maybe like their uncle or aunt did. Maybe that is the goal they have for their kids, and that is fine. For many young people, that is appropriate, but for others, what a great opportunity, to be able to get out of high school, get a job immediately—a good-paying job with good benefits—and then at some point, because often in these schools, including in Ohio, you get college credit while you are in high school, to go on to college later, and perhaps your employer will pay for that.

This morning, I was with a young woman named Jordan. She is at the Great Oaks career and technical center in Southwest Ohio. Jordan is becoming a welder, and, as I explained to Jordan, she is going to have amazing opportunities. She will have plenty of job opportunities because she is going to have a skill that is so badly needed in Ohio right now. Our manufacturing sector is desperate for welders, and they are willing to pay good money for welders. She can make 45,000, 50,000 bucks a year with good benefits at 18 years old as a welder instead of taking on student debt, which in Ohio is about $27,000 on average. Somebody graduating from community college or a 4-year college or university is taking on significant debt.

This is an opportunity for us to get more young people into career and technical education. We think we ought to do it. We have a good economy right now thanks to tax reform and regulatory relief. There is a lot of hiring going on, and wages are actually higher right now. In Ohio, we have a number of people who are looking for employees. The ''help wanted'' signs are out there.

We have about 148,000 jobs available in the State, if you look at OhioMeansJobs.com, which is the website that offers these positions. Now, there are about 250,000 Ohioans out of work. How does that make sense? Well, it makes sense because if you look at the jobs that are being offered, for many of the jobs, you have to have a skill. You have to be a coder or a machine operator or a welder, or you have to have some bioscience background to be a tech. So if we had the skills training, we would be able to fill these jobs, which is great for the companies and for the economy but also, again, a great opportunity for these young people.

In 2018, our economy added 223,000 jobs per month on average. That is about twice what the pre-tax reform baseline estimate was from the Congressional Budget Office of only 107,000 jobs per month. So we more than doubled it. We have also had strong wage growth over the last 12 months. In fact, wage growth in the last year was higher than at any time in the last decade.

In Ohio, frankly, for a decade and a half we have had flat wages. Finally, we are now seeing wages going up. Last month, the average was about 3.4 percent growth for private sector workers and, by the way, it is more for blue-collar workers than for white-collar workers, supervisory workers, which is all good news.

We have a lot of good things going on in terms of increasing jobs, increasing wages, increasing benefits. Much of that is due to tax reform. I have gone all around our State and talked to folks at roundtable discussions. I have been to over 25 businesses to talk specifically: What did you do with the tax savings? Every one of them has a great story, but with all these pro-growth policies kicking in, the thing I am hearing now is: Yes, the tax reform helped us. The regulatory relief is a good idea, but we need workers, we need people, and we need them to have the skills that go with the jobs we have. This mismatch between the skills that are out there and these jobs, that skills gap is the thing we need to close.

There are lots of ways to do that. The National Skills Coalition estimates that nearly half of all job openings between now and 2022 will be middle-skill jobs that require education beyond high school but not a 4-year degree. If you have a career in technical, with opportunities in high school, and then when you get out of high school, you have a certificate or you can get into a course where you can learn how to do one of these skills—although you are not getting an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree, you are getting a certificate, often a stackable certificate that can lead to a degree later—that is what is going to be needed.

In its most recent skills gap study, Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute highlighted the fact that there are so many jobs out there that need these skills. They estimate there are about 2.4 million positions likely to be unfilled between 2018 and 2028. The economic impact of not having these jobs filled is about a $2.5 trillion hit to our economy. This is why all of this is so important.

About 6 years ago, we started the Career and Technical Education Caucus in the Senate. At first, there were two of us, Senator KAINE from Virginia and myself. Now we have 27 Senators on the CTE Caucus. Why? Because Members are hearing back home about this,

which has been good to raise awareness for career and technical education. It has been helpful for us to put together some bipartisan legislation that helps to promote career and technical education.

Last year, in the Perkins bill, for instance, Senator KAINE and I got legislation in that helps to improve the quality of CT programs all around the country, ensuring again that college credit can be offered, helping to hold up programs to make sure young people and their parents know about this opportunity.

Just a couple weeks ago, Senator KAINE and I reintroduced legislation called Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students Act. The acronym is the JOBS Act. The JOBS Act is something we introduced in the last couple of Congresses, but I really feel its time has come. I feel it is an opportunity right now for us to move forward with the JOBS Act. One, we are hearing from all around the country the need for this, but, second, we have the likelihood of a higher education bill moving this year, which would be the perfect place to put the JOBS Act.

It is a commonsense solution to help solve the skills gap problem we are talking about. It says, with regard to Pell grants—which is for low-income students—instead of just making them available for community colleges or 4-year colleges or universities or for longer term courses, why not allow Pell grants to be used for shorter term training programs? That is what is needed right now.

I think this is a fairness issue. When I talk to students, as I did this morning here in Washington, as I do back in the State of Ohio, what they tell me is: ROB, I don't have the money to get a driver's license and go through that process, much less to get a certificate to become a welder or to become a coder or to become a tech in a hospital setting. The government will give me a Pell grant to go to a junior college or a community college or a university, but I can't get a Pell grant to help me get the training I need to actually get out there and get a job that I know is right there, ready, good pay, good benefits.

To me, that shows how our system is not working with regard to the modern economy and the needs we have right now, and it is not fair to those students. I think we ought to allow students to use Pell grants for shorter term training programs of less than 15 weeks. I also think it is a matter of efficiency of the Pell grant and the taxpayer.

Unfortunately, most people who take a Pell who go to a college don't graduate. There are lots of reasons for that. I think the main reason is because many of them have to drop out because they have to work, but, in the meantime, they don't have the degree. So they have the Pell, but they don't get the degree, not even a certificate; whereas, in these short-term training programs, a 15-week training program—trust me, if somebody starts off in one of these training programs, it is much more likely they will end up getting the certificate. They can see just around the corner where the job is. In a sense, the certificate is the ticket to that job, and it is a shorter term prospect. I think it is a very efficient use of the Pell grant, and we should expand the Pell grant, not take it away from colleges and universities—not at all. Pell is an incredibly important program, but let's allow it to be used for short training programs.

I was at the CT Program in Akron, OH, recently. I also went to Stark State Community College. They have a new campus. We had a roundtable on workforce development. We had a lot of local businesses there talking about how great these programs have been for them. We had students there. The chamber of commerce was there. Mayor Dan Horrigan of Akron and Summit County executive Ilene Shapiro were there. I heard from students in high school and in community college who were already working for some of the local employers, businesses like the K Company, an HVAC company based in Akron. They work with Stark State; they work with local high schools; and they get young people on the right educational track to be able to work in the HVAC field where there are plenty of jobs right now. If you are an HVAC tech, you can get a job. It has been a great example of where they are helping the economy, they are helping a particular business, and they are really helping students to get a great job.

Stark State president Dr. Para Jones is very innovative, working with our high schools and working with the business community, trying to ensure we are all working together on this. Dr. Jones, the employers who were around the table, the educators who were around the table, and the students who were around that table—all of them—were really excited about the JOBS Act. They know it is going to work. They know this will help them deal with exactly the problems they are seeing in the local community.

Last week, I also toured a company in Hubbard, OH, Warren Fabricating and Machining. As always happens, I heard about the need for skilled workers. It is a great example of a company taking full advantage of the tax reform and tax cuts. They bought a beautiful, new machine that is incredibly important for their effectiveness as a company to be able to compete with China and others. They have also been able to raise people's salaries and increase the benefits with their tax savings, but their issue now is getting the workforce. They want to operate at full capacity, but they can't find the people. They have openings right now.

I also visited an advanced manufacturer called Rhinestahl Corporation in Mason, right outside of Cincinnati. They manufacture high-precision parts for the aerospace and defense industry. Other employers were there, as well as Butler Tech, which is a local CTE program which has done really incredible, innovative work.

There, I had the opportunity to meet with a lot of students. One of them was a high school student named Jake. He is a chemical operator at a nearby manufacturer called Pilot. He is a veteran who has completed his certificate training, and his employer is now paying for him to continue his education and get a degree while working for them. Connor was there, a high school student who is running machines and learning advanced manufacturing while working at a place called RB Tool. Torez is a 19-year-old who went to the program and is now in charge of calibration and making sure precision tools are up to speed at this company, Rhinestahl.

The teacher of all these students, a guy named Dave Fox, was there. He said his last class of 28 graduates had a combined total of more than 100 job offers. Think about this. These young people going through these certificate programs, 28 young people, had more than 100 job offers. These are good job offers. We are talking about $40,000, $50,000 a year, jobs that pay $18 to $20 an hour and good benefits, and a lot of employers will pay for them to continue their education, should they choose to do so.

Last week, President Trump came to the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center in Lima, OH. This is an incredible manufacturing facility that does something unique in America, which is they build tanks. The kind of welding they have to be trained on is incredibly sophisticated and difficult to do. The kind of machine work they have to do is really difficult. Cutting the tanks' steel is an incredibly difficult task, plus some other alloys they use to protect our troops in the field. They need to hire about 400 additional workers in the next year or so, partly because, with the defense buildup, we are putting more money into the plant. I am very pleased to say President Trump in his budget put more funding into the Lima plant this year, but they need workers, and they need help training people. They need skilled welders, machinists, assembly workers, and various types of engineers.

These are good-paying jobs and great opportunities for young people. Whether they are coming up through the ranks in high school or whether they are midcareer changing jobs, it would be great for us to help them get the people they need, and the JOBS Act, they all say, would be exactly what they need to help to do that.

At a roundtable discussion at Staub Manufacturing in Dayton recently, the CEO of the company told me he believes welders coming out of high school will be better off financially than many attorneys or doctors.

I asked him what he meant by that. He pointed out that while an attorney

or another professional might make more coming right out of school, by the time they get out of school—law school, as an example—and get out of debt and start investing, the welder is well on his or her way to building a significant nest egg.

It is true. When you think about it, a welder makes, let's say, $50,000 a year starting at age 18. Let's say there is no student debt because, again, through the certificate program and through a Pell—if we get the JOBS Act passed, in particular—this person is able to do so without any student debt. Using an online calculator and assuming about 8 percent growth, if that individual sets aside 10 percent of his or her income toward retirement, from the age of 18 up to 67—and this assumes a person gets no raise at all, which of course is not going to happen. A person is going to have a higher salary over time as the person gets more seniority, but assuming no raise, $50,000 a year: $2.8 million in retirement savings at age 67. That is a nice nest egg to be able to live comfortably in retirement with peace of mind.

Compare that to an attorney, let's say, making $100,000 a year in a big law firm, starts investing at least at 30 years old, after they get through school and paying off their debt. It may be later, but let's say 30 to be conservative. If that person sets aside 10 percent of his or her income: $2.2 million by age 67. So even though the attorney had a higher salary and was investing twice as much each month, the welder making $50,000 a year is going to be better off.

Part of this is getting people into these jobs and getting them into jobs when they are young, where they can begin to make investments in their retirement but also make investments in a car, buy the house, start putting money aside for their kids' education, just to have the peace of mind that comes with knowing you are going to have this profession and this opportunity to get ahead early in life.

I am hoping we can get the JOBS Act passed. It would help provide so many people—particularly young people—these opportunities. If we can shift the paradigm, stop this notion of thinking that everybody who is going through high school needs to go to a 4-year college or university right away and instead think about, how do you ensure that this young person can have an opportunity to get ahead in life, learn a skill where there is an immediate need, and actually help our economy? Because our biggest challenge right now, as I see it—not just in the manufacturing sector, where it is particularly obvious, but across the board, in bioscience, certainly in moving, transportation, truckdriving, and other professions, the biggest challenge we have right now is workforce. This would do both.

The JOBS Act has been endorsed by the National Skills Coalition, the Association for Career and Technical Education, the Association of Community Colleges and Trustees—I know community colleges have put this highest on their list—and other groups.

I am also pleased to say, again, it is in the budget. President Trump puts together a budget every year. This year's budget actually has our JOBS Act included in it. It is one that is totally bipartisan.

Senator KAINE from Virginia and I have been the coauthors of this legislation over the years. We continue to work closely together on this. We have 10 cosponsors already, having just introduced this a couple weeks ago. It is a bipartisan group, mixed, Republicans and Democrats. We also have a lot of outside stakeholders supporting it, and, again, it is now in the President's budget.

The reason we are getting all this support is it works. It works. It will cover programs that, at a minimum, require 150 hours and 8 weeks to complete. There are some alternative programs that limit them by requiring them to be 320 hours. I will tell you our community colleges tell me none of their short-term training programs would qualify for that higher number of hours—programs like welding, precision machining, electrical trades. All those programs would fit into the JOBS Act but not into some of the alternatives that are being discussed.

We need the JOBS Act now, and we think there is a great vehicle for it—which is the Higher Education Act—this year. A big fan of career and technical education is the chairman of that committee, Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER. He understands the need for us to provide the kind of skills training needed to fill the jobs that are out there that companies are desperate to fill. He sees this in his own State of Tennessee, where he has a lot of manufacturing jobs, including auto manufacturers that are looking for more skilled workers every day.

As we work to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, my hope is colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join us in ensuring that the JOBS Act is included in that. Let's be sure that we deal with the fairness issue here and that we have a sense of understanding about our economy and what the needs are right now.

A lot of that need is in skills and the kind of skills that the JOBS Act would provide. It just makes too much sense.

If we make career and technical education a priority and if we enact the JOBS Act I discussed today, we are going to help tens of thousands of our young people be able to achieve their dreams, whatever they are, and to have better opportunities. Just as important, we are going to be able to help our economy—help to ensure that here in the United States we have a growing economy where we have better tax policy, better regulation policy, and also, for the workers, ensure that the companies don't pick up and move because they don't have the workforce. Companies tell me in Ohio: You know, ROB, we could do what we are doing here in other places, and not just Indiana, which is next to Ohio, but maybe India.

We don't want that. We want to have the workforce that is needed to be able to keep these good jobs and keep these companies here in this country, to ensure that we can keep moving in a positive direction, and, again, to ensure that Ohioans can develop the skills they need to grow in the career of their choice and to fulfill their potential in life.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

CHILDCARE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an issue that I know is on the minds of many, many Americans, especially folks who are in the middle class or who are struggling to get to the middle class, and that is the issue of childcare.

I think most of us in this Chamber agree that all children born in this country have a light inside of them. For some children, that light will shine very brightly without a lot of help as they have innate abilities or they have circumstances they are born into for which they don't need a lot of help from public policy or from programs or from legislation. Yet there are a lot of children who have a light inside of them that can burn to the full measure of its potential if we do our job. When I say ''our job,'' I mean the job of elected officials. I think it is the job of every elected official at every level of government and of those who work with them to do everything they can to make sure that the light inside of every child burns as brightly as at least the full measure of his or her potential.

We know, just by way of one example in the context of childcare, that affordable, high-quality childcare enables parents to work so they can support their families. Also, quality, affordable healthcare helps give children the early learning experiences they need to develop and succeed in school. When children learn more and it is early in life, they will earn more much later in their lives. That connection between learning and earning isn't just a rhyme; all the research shows that there is a direct connection. When that child learns at a younger age because of early education and quality childcare and so many other strategies, we are all better off. Not only is that child better off in his or her family, but we are all better off. We will have a higher skilled workforce; we will have a more productive workforce; and we will grow and be able to out-compete any country in the world if we invest in early learning.

Unfortunately, we know the challenges. The cost of childcare has increased by 25 percent in just the last decade, which has created significant

financial strains for those same middle-class families. According to data from Child Care Aware, which is in my home Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the average cost of full-time, center-based childcare is about $11,560 for an infant and about $8,712 for a 4-year-old. This is about 12 percent of a married couple's annual income in Pennsylvania, and it is nearly 46 percent of a single parent's annual income—46 percent. That is not sustainable. That is not a number that anyone should be satisfied with. Frankly, I am not sure that 12 percent of the annual income for a two-parent family is sustainable. We should get that number into the single digits. The bill I will talk about in a moment seeks to do that.

Just this past week, when we were all back in our States and were able to travel for the better part of a week, I had the chance to get to six childcare centers in cities across Pennsylvania, and I spoke to more than 25 families who shared their stories about their struggles. The struggle, of course, in this case, was the struggle to afford high-quality childcare.

I was in Philadelphia, Pottstown, Gettysburg, Verona, Erie, and Reading. If you had charted those cities on a map, you would have literally gone from the furthest corner of the southeastern part of our State, which is Philadelphia, to the most remote, northwestern corner of the State, in Erie. I went to communities below Erie and to the northeast as well—so literally every corner of the State. Across those communities, we heard a lot of the same challenges, a lot of similar stories.

For example, one single mom in Philadelphia told us recently what, I think, is emblematic of what is happening in a lot of communities:

> I struggle every day to make ends meet. I am not eligible for any public assistance, so I juggle my bills just to make ends meet. I have to become very creative in making sure that I pay my mortgage, utilities, and childcare.

Then she goes on from there to write:

> Then I decide if I can pay for anything in addition to that, such as healthcare, food, necessities for my child or my home. I knew I would not be able to afford childcare. Luckily, I have the support of loved ones in my life who support me when I fall short. Most do not have this.

Then this single mother goes on to write the following:

> All of my family and friends struggle to pay for childcare because we are middle class individuals who make too much money to qualify for childcare assistance or any other programs, but we also don't make enough money to actually afford childcare out of pocket. Oftentimes, we have to choose a childcare based off of a price and not based off of the quality of education they will provide our children at the childcare facility.

Notice what she wrote at the end there. She is making a decision about the childcare she will provide for her children based off only one consideration—the price. It is not based on the quality.

Therein lies the problem that we have to try to solve. If we have millions and millions of families—middle class or who are struggling to get to the middle class—making childcare determinations based solely on the cost, we will all be in trouble over time. That is not what we should be doing. It doesn't mean the price will not be a challenge for so many, and it doesn't mean the price will be irrelevant, but if they are not able to find quality childcare that is affordable, that child will be worse off over time; that community will be; and the rest of us will be. We will not have the high-skilled workforce that we need. We will not be able to compete and win the battle across the world that we need to win, and that is the battle to create the highest skilled workforce in the world and to maintain that advantage.

When I was in Gettysburg this past week, I heard from two parents who had adopted two children, one of whom has significant medical issues and has been in and out of the hospital. They have struggled to find a childcare center that is able to handle the behavioral and developmental needs of their children. The father, who is a small business owner, has had to make adjustments to his work schedule and sell off some of his business assets to make ends meet. He has had to choose between paying for his own health insurance or that of his children. He has had to give up his own insurance to ensure there will never be a lapse in coverage for his children. He makes too much money to qualify for childcare subsidies but lives with constant anxiety over his financial situation.

Part of his testimony and that of his wife was very emotional because of the stress and the pressure on that family—the stress and pressure of the healthcare itself and also of the stress and pressure because of the cost of childcare.

I was grateful he was willing to share his story. In a public setting, it is not easy to talk about the burdens that you live with every day in order to push a policy forward so as to make life better for another family. Like a lot of these parents, I was grateful they were willing to help us better understand those struggles so that we could better propose good policy.

We also heard from a single mom who works long hours as she tries to advance and work her way up the corporate ladder. Prior to her current circumstance, she was waitressing and barely making $11,000 a year. When she was hardly making any income, she was able to make ends meet with the assistance of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and CCIS, which is our State's childcare program that helps families. Now she is in a different circumstance. She works full time—an achievement that she is quite proud of. She is no longer eligible, though, for these programs because her income has gone up.

The good news is her income went up, and she has a full-time job. The bad news is that it knocks her out of eligibility. She must pay the full cost of childcare and be away from her children. She doesn't know what she will do during the summer as she will need to increase the time her children are in care, which will result in higher costs when her children are on summer break. So that is the dilemma she faces—working harder and getting a full-time job but then not being able to afford help. She needs help from us as well.

I spoke with a mother in Verona, PA, in Allegheny County, who has an 11-month-old child who is in childcare now. Though both she and her husband work full time, they struggle to afford care. They would like to grow their family, but, again, the cost of childcare is their main reason for not doing so. We know that childcare helps children grow and learn, that it helps parents work and provide for their families, and that it helps employers retain a productive workforce. Yet families across the country are unable to afford care. That is why it is so important that we increase Federal investments in early learning and childcare.

For example, in fiscal year 2018, the Childcare and Development Block Grant program was funded at $5.27 billion here in Washington. That was an 83-percent increase—the largest single increase in the history of the program. In that same year—the last budget year, the last appropriations year—Head Start received a little more than $9.8 billion, and that was $610 million more than the program got in 2017.

Both of those were good results. It doesn't happen every day in Washington, we know. These historic, bipartisan investments were continued in the last fiscal year. So there was an increase in this last fiscal year. It was nowhere near the increase of the prior year, but there were extra dollars to sustain funding. These investments are already making an impact in States like Pennsylvania and across our country, but there is so much more unmet need and so much more work to be done. So it is good news on the block grants, but, of course, that is not the whole story on childcare.

I am pushing for both increased funding for the next fiscal year—the one we are working on now, 2020—as well as two bills that will make high-quality childcare accessible and affordable for low- and middle-income families. The first is the Childcare for Working Families Act, and the second is the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit Enhancement Act. I will discuss them in that order.

The Childcare for Working Families Act would first provide direct financial assistance to working parents to help pay for childcare and early learning to ensure that no parents would pay more than 7 percent of their household incomes for childcare if they earn less than 150 percent of the State's median income.

These numbers change between median household income and median

family income, but if you are just looking at the median household income in Pennsylvania, it is about $57,000. If you do 150 percent of that, you will be into the eighties, roughly. We don't know where the line would be drawn for certain State by State, but if we can come up with a way to keep costs below 7 percent for folks who are in that income range—say, roughly, in the low eighties down—we can help these families do two things: go to work while providing childcare for their children that is quality childcare and also be able to afford it.

The second part of the bill—and it is, basically, three parts—will be universal access to high-quality preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds.

The third part would be to improve workforce compensation by ensuring that all childcare workers are paid a living wage and that early childhood educators are provided parity with elementary schoolteachers who have similar credentials and experience. So there are three parts to that bill—childcare help, early learning help with preschool, and paying the workforce more.

People in both parties say it all the time: We care about our children, and we care about our seniors. But sometimes the folks who provide care to both groups of Americans—those who provide care and early learning to children and those who provide skilled care in nursing homes and other settings to seniors—are among the lowest paid workers in our society. So we say we prioritize those Americans, and we don't lift them up with the kind of workforce that they sometimes need.

The second bill I will talk about—and then I will wrap up—I will soon reintroduce with Congressman DAVIS. It is a proposal to improve and expand an existing tax credit which we know as the child and dependent care tax credit, not to be confused with the child tax credit, the tax credit you may have eligibility for if you have a child. This one focuses on child care and dependent care.

This bill would help families pay for childcare expenses by doing the following: first, increasing the maximum amount of the credit from just over 1,000 bucks—about $1,050—to $3,000 per child, and it could go up as high as 6,000 if you have more than one child, making the full tax credit available to most working families with incomes up to $120,000 a year.

Now, under the current law, that credit starts to lose its value once you hit only $15,000 of income—not that high of an income level. By raising that number, you are going to get a lot more middle-class families that will benefit, as well as some trying to get to the middle class.

The third part of the bill would ensure that lower income families are better able to benefit from the credit by making it fully refundable.

You have this strange dynamic where folks are working and they have an income, but the income is rather limited and the credit is not refundable. So they don't get anything back from that credit. So it isn't worth much to them in many cases.

The last part of the bill will retain the value over time by indexing the benefits of this child and dependent care tax credit and raise those thresholds based upon inflation.

In conclusion, I think it is pretty simple. All children deserve the chance to learn and succeed, regardless of where they are born or regardless of their family's income. That is why it is so important to make sure that all families have access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early learning. Together, these proposals will help to bring us closer to that reality and, I would argue, closer to meeting our obligation as elected officials at every level of government—this being the Federal level in the Congress, the Senate and the House, meeting our obligation to make sure that the light inside of every child burns to the full measure and shines to the full measure of its potential.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

## THE FEDERALIST SOCIETY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this week the Senate conveyor belt of President Trump's judicial nominees grinds on. So far, the President and the Senate leader have an unprecedented pace in confirming Federal judges, especially powerful Federal appellate judges. They seem to have no higher priority.

What is a little weird about this is that nearly 90 percent of Trump's appellate judges and both of his Supreme Court Justices are members of the so-called Federalist Society. On the Supreme Court, Kavanaugh, Gorsuch, Alito, and Thomas all are members. Now, that is a little weird.

What is really weird is that through this Federalist Society vehicle, big, special interests are picking Federal judges.

In effect, there are three Federalist Societies. The first one most lawyers know from law school. It is, for the most part, a debating society made up of like-minded aspiring lawyers drawn to conservative ideas and judicial doctrine. They organize seminars and invite academics, judges, and attorneys to speak. That is terrific—no problem there.

The second Federalist Society is the parent organization of the campus debating society—a sort of highbrow think tank seeking to further conservative and libertarian judicial principles. It convenes fancy forums with conservative legal luminaries, from Supreme Court Justices to big-name politicians, to renowned legal scholars. It issues newsletters and produces podcasts and policy recommendations. Through this, they hope to ''reorder priorities within the legal system'' and create a network of members ''that extends to all levels of the legal community.''

I disagree pretty strongly with the system of law they are trying impose, and their funding is suspiciously obscure, but this debate is a fine thing to have—so no objection there either.

Then there is the third Federalist Society. This one doesn't have much in common with the law school debating society, and it certainly doesn't operate like your run-of-the-mill Washington think tank. This Federalist Society is the nerve center for a complicated apparatus that does not care much about conservative principles like judicial restraint or originalism or textualism.

This Federalist Society is the vehicle for powerful, commercial, and industrial interests that seek not simply to ''reorder'' the judiciary but to acquire control of the judiciary to benefit their interests. This third Federalist Society understands the fundamental power of the Federal judiciary to rig the system in favor of its donor interests and, as the Kavanaugh confirmation so clearly illustrated, is willing to go to drastic lengths to secure that power.

I am here today to talk about that third Federalist Society.

The story of the third Federalist Society is partly the story of a man named Leonard Leo, the society's executive vice president.

Mr. Leo is now the most influential person shaping America's Federal judiciary. Don't be surprised if you are listening and you have never heard of him. He has never been elected. He is not accountable to any voter. Instead, he is the front man for interests that want to use the Federalist Society and its surrounding network of front groups and PR shops and think tanks to acquire control over our courts.

Renowned court watcher Jeffrey Toobin describes Mr. Leo as ''Trump's subcontractor on the selection of Supreme Court Justices.'' More accurately, Mr. Leo is the subcontractor for a network of big corporate interests and front groups.

In the summer of 2016, it was Leo who delivered the list of potential nominees to fill the vacancy left by the death of Antonin Scalia and the blocking of Merrick Garland. It was Mr. Leo who was involved in the Trump transition, helping to conduct outreach to potential Supreme Court picks, including Neil Gorsuch.

Mr. Leo even orchestrated a $1 million donation to Trump's inauguration.

The role of the Federalist Society has been confirmed by President Trump's own legal counsel, Don McGahn.

McGahn told a Federalist Society gathering in 2017:

Our opponents of judicial nominees frequently claim the President has outsourced his selection of judges. That is completely false. I have been a member of the Federalist Society since law school, still am, so, frankly, it seems like it's been in-sourced.

Ha-ha, so funny.

The Federalist Society does more than pick the judges. They prepare them. They study the prospective nominees and the Senators who will ask them questions. They gather murder boards for nominees to practice for confirmation hearings.

Mr. Leo is proud of this operation. During the confirmation hearing for Justice Neil Gorsuch, Leo told Toobin, with considerable satisfaction:

You know, the hearings matter so much less than they once did. We have the tools now to do all the research. We know everything they have written. We know what they've said. There are no surprises.

In the Judiciary Committee, we see the result over and over—meaningless committee hearings where nominees parrot empty words about applying law to fact and respecting precedent. Then, once confirmed and on the bench, those nominees deliver dependably for the partisan and corporate donors behind this Federalist Society operation.

It is bad enough that judicial selection has been outsourced—or insourced—to a partisan private entity. Worse is how nontransparent this all is. It is hard to find out who is behind it. It is a very nontransparent problem, but here is what we have been able to piece together. The evidence is that the Federalist Society is funded by massive, secret contributions from corporate rightwing groups that have big agendas before the courts.

In 2017 the Federalist Society took $5.5 million via an entity called DonorsTrust. DonorsTrust has as its sole purpose to launder the identities of donors to other groups so that Americans don't know who the real backers are of the groups. It is an identity removal machine for big donors. Through the hard work of investigators, journalists, and researchers, we have learned that the Koch brothers are among the largest—if not the largest—contributors to DonorsTrust. The Federalist Society's total annual budget is about $20 million. So this $5.5 million in funding, laundered through DonorsTrust, provides more than a quarter of its entire budget.

Other shadowy corporate and rightwing organizations also donate millions to the Federalist Society. In 1 year, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, a rightwing trust, gave over $3 million to the Federalist Society. Koch Industries, several other Koch-network foundations and trusts, and nearly a dozen wholly anonymous donors have given over $100,000 each to the Federalist Society. Tax documents from 2014, uncovered by the New York Times, show a donation of more than $2 million from the Mercer family, the secretive donors who helped start Breitbart News and bankrolled the Trump campaign.

How do we know that these groups have a big agenda before the courts? We know that because they also fund a fleet of front groups that file so-called amicus briefs before courts signaling what results the big donors want. The Kochs, the Bradleys, the Mercers, and their ilk spend millions to pursue an anti-regulation, anti-union, and anti-environment agenda, and they use the Federalist Society to stock the judiciary with judges who will rule their way.

The Federalist Society, as a 501(c)(3) organization, is supposed to stay out of politics. The Judicial Crisis Network is a 501(c)(4) organization which can, and does, get involved in politics. The Judicial Crisis Network is led by a disciple of Leonard Leo's, a former clerk for ultraconservative Justice Clarence Thomas. The Judicial Crisis Network has been described in conservative circles as ''Leonard Leo's PR organization—nothing more and nothing less.'' When it comes time to muscle a judicial nominee through Senate confirmation, the Judicial Crisis Network swings into action. Media campaigns, attack ads, and big spending—that is the Judicial Crisis Network's world.

Like its Federalist Society partner, the Judicial Crisis Network gets massive sums of dark money, and it spends massively too. It spent $7 million on campaigns to block Merrick Garland from getting a hearing on his nomination to the Supreme Court, and it spent $10 million to support the nomination—blockade enabled—of Neil Gorsuch—and $7 million and $10 million—and it received one anonymous donation of $17.9 million. One donor gave $17.9 million to this operation to influence our judiciary. I will say that we need to know who that donor was. Because we are in the minority, we are going to be spurned and rejected if we try to get that information. On the House side, where they have the power of subpoena, we need to pursue that. It ought to be public information when one donor can spend nearly $18 million to influence the selection of a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

Judicial Crisis Network then got $23 million from something called the Wellspring Committee. You will have to forgive some of this because it is very obscure. These are peculiar groups that aren't involved in any ordinary business or regular activity. The Wellspring Committee is a Virginia-based entity with ties to—you guessed it—Leonard Leo, and the Judicial Crisis Network then promised to spend as much on the Kavanaugh nomination as they had for Gorsuch.

Add to this mix of peculiarly funded and obscure organizations the BH Group, a shell corporation that gave $1 million to Donald Trump's inaugural. The BH Group received over $1 million in something called consulting fees in 2017 from something else called the Judicial Education Project. Who is Judicial Education Project? The Judicial Education Project is—guess what—the 501(c)(3) side of the Judicial Crisis Network. Why does a shell corporation give money to the Trump inaugural and also serve as a consultant to a legal organization fighting for the confirmation of specific Justices? What consulting did they do? Was there any consulting done at all? Great questions. Leonard Leo probably knows the answer. In 2018, he told the Federal Elections Commission that the BH Group was his employer.

While this apparatus may be complex and difficult to track, its goal is simple. Don McGahn explained it succinctly: ''Regulatory reform and judicial selection are . . . deeply connected.'' Translated, that means that the Federalist Society's goal is to pack the judiciary through judicial selection with judges who will deliver what is called regulatory reform, an extreme anti-regulation, anti-union, anti-environment agenda for those corporatist Federalist Society funders.

Let me give you two examples.

The Senate just confirmed Neomi Rao to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. Rao comes right out of the deep bog of special interest dark money. Her bio appears on the Federalist Society website, along with the list of 26 times she has been featured at Federalist Society events—26 auditions, as one might describe them.

This is a person confirmed for the DC Court of Appeals who has never been a judge. She has never even tried a case. What has she done? She served as the Trump administration's point person for tearing down Federal regulations as head of the White House's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Among her greatest hits was taking one of Scott Pruitt's proposed regulatory rollbacks for the climate-change driving-gas methane from the oil and gas industry and tipping that regulation even further in favor of fossil fuel polluters. Out-Pruitting Scott Pruitt for the fossil fuel industry is hard to do. That may have been another audition for the court.

Rao also funded the so-called Center for the Study of the Administrative State at George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School, which is devoted to conjuring ways to roll back as many regulations affecting these corporations as possible and is funded by these same secretive groups.

I asked Ms. Rao about the funders of her center at the Scalia Law School. She claimed in her answers—and, by the way, I will add that these were questions for the record—written questions that she had time to consider, review, and respond to. This was not a surprise attack of an unprepared witness at a hearing. She had weeks to answer. She claimed in her answers that, to the best of her knowledge, her organization had not received any money from the Federalist Society, from Koch Family Foundations, or from anonymous funders.

Well, that was simply not true. A Virginia open records request revealed

that an anonymous donor and the Charles Koch Foundation donated $30 million earmarked specially for her organization. Guess whose interests she has been conveyed onto the DC Circuit Court of Appeals to protect.

Now consider the case of Kisor v. Wilkie, a case currently before the Supreme Court. It hasn't gotten much attention. On its face, it is about an obscure administrative law doctrine, but Kisor has been described as a ''stalking horse for much larger game''—whether administrative agencies can continue to have the independence they need to regulate in the public interests. At stake could be the power of the EPA to protect our air and water, of the Department of Labor to continue to protect workers in the workplace, and of the Securities and Exchange Commission to protect investors against financial fraud.

Many corporations hate regulation. The problem is regulations are pretty popular. Politicians may talk about cutting redtape, but their constituents really like clean air and clean water. They want safe workplaces and the peace of mind that their investments are sound.

That is where judges like Neomi Rao and cases like Kisor come in. For decades we have operated in a system where Congress passes laws and administrative Agencies fill in the details and implement those laws using their regulatory power and their time, patience, and expertise to deal with complex problems. It has worked extremely well. Cases like Kisor, however, slowly chip away at that system, shifting more and more power from expert regulatory agencies to courts and to courts filled with more and more judges like Neomi Rao.

The Daily Beast influence reporter Jay Michaelson wrote:

> Sometimes thought of as a legal association, the Federalist Society is actually a large right-wing network that grooms conservative law students still in law school (sponsoring everything from free burrito lunches to conferences, speakers, and journals), links them together, mentors them, finds them jobs, and eventually places them in courts and in government.

Within this Federalist Society is this operation I have described, funded by dark money and designed to remake our judiciary on behalf of a distinct group of very wealthy and powerful, anonymous funders. Add to that the dark money funding the so-called Judicial Crisis Network. Add to that the dark money funding the amicus briefs telling these judges what to do. Then look at the outcomes when the Federalist Society-selected appointees get a majority on the court. It is not a pretty sight.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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.

## MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in 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.

## ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

● Mr. BENNET. Mr. President. I wish to honor the distinguished career of Bruce Benson, the outgoing president of the University of Colorado. Through his tenacity and hard work, Bruce made the university and the State of Colorado a better place. CU is one of the Nation's great universities, and Bruce's contributions, including the record-breaking growth in research funding, have made it a source of statewide pride.

Bruce would admit that he was originally reluctant to take the job and with good reason: He had already enjoyed a long and fruitful career in politics, philanthropy, and business. However, those experiences and relationships were exactly what made Bruce so effective. As only he could, Bruce was able to use these experiences to further CU's standing as one the Nation's prominent public universities and research institutions.

Under Bruce's leadership, the university's research funding reached record levels, surpassing $1 billion during the last academic year. This money allowed for critical research in biotechnology, healthcare, energy, and aerospace and a number of other fields. Additionally, CU had its 6 best fundraising years during his time at the helm, including a record $440.4 million between 2017 and 2018. All the while, Bruce guided efforts to implement operational efficiencies, cut bureaucracy, and improve business practices at the university. Successes like these solidify Bruce's legacy and his commitment to the future of Colorado. It is worth noting that he is retiring as the longest serving CU president in more than half a century.

Bruce has always been a tireless champion for Colorado's young people. He worked to make the DPS Foundation into the great civic organization it is today. He has also done extraordinary work at Children's Hospital Colorado.

Bruce has consistently worked to change the lives of children and students across the State of Colorado, from the youngest of kids to college graduates. I know I speak on behalf of all of Colorado when I say that we are all grateful for his service.●

## RECOGNIZING TREASURE COUNTY

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of congratulating Treasure County for 100 years of as one of Montana's 56 counties.

Although one of the least populous counties in Montana, Treasure boasts many historic buildings that incorporate the rich history of Big Sky Country from the Yucca Theater with its beautiful Spanish mission style architecture that provided hope and entertainment during the Great Depression, to the 1950s contemporary style courthouse in Hysham. With a population less than a thousand, Treasure County's rich lands provide a bounty for ranchers and farmers alike.

Treasure County is an important part of Montana's cherished history and remains a vital part of our State's landscape. I congratulate the folks down in Treasure County on celebrating 100 years of excellence in local government.●

## REMEMBERING SAMYA STUMO

● Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, Samya Stumo, a University of Massachusetts Amherst graduate and resident of Sheffield, MA, was tragically killed aboard Ethiopian Airlines flight 302. Samya, just 24 years old, was a champion of social justice, with a goal of revolutionizing global health. Her undergraduate fieldwork in Peru challenged unjust social services; her master's work in Europe gave a voice to marginalized patient groups living with viral hepatitis; and, most recently, she was working to disrupt the status quo in global health systems to help countries achieve universal healthcare coverage. She strove for all people and patients to be treated as human beings, particularly in context of their culture, family, and individuality. She was a beacon of hope for Massachusetts, the Nation, and all of the lives she has touched.●

## UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI'S BICENTENNIAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION WEEK

● Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the University of Cincinnati on their bicentennial celebration honoring 200 years of extraordinary research.

In January of 1819, two colleges were chartered by the state of Ohio: the Medical College of Ohio and Cincinnati College. Both are predecessors to today's University of Cincinnati. The opening enrollment of Cincinnati College was roughly 70 students. Today, the University of Cincinnati has an enrollment of nearly 46,000 students, making it one of the largest universities in the Nation. UC stands as a Carnegie Research 1 university, with a living alumni base of more than 300,000; a world-acclaimed campus and top programs in music, health, design, science, and more; plus a $4.2 billion economic impact in its tristate region of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana.

Next week, UC will be celebrating its Bicentennial Research and Innovation Week. The week will be honoring UC's