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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.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, You have been our home through all the generations. Before the mountains were created, You are God, without beginning or end. Receive our prayers today and grant our lawmakers the mature wisdom to act as servants of this Nation that You have blessed with freedom. Inspire our Senators to be kind but firm, compassionate but resolute, possessed of quiet hearts, clear minds, and sound judgment. Lord, show them Your approval and give them success. Provide them with the strength and courage of those whose minds are focused on You.

We pray in Your Holy 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 (Mr. HAWLEY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will re-

sume consideration of H.R. 268, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 268) making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Shelby amendment No. 201, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell amendment No. 213 (to amendment No. 201), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 214 (to amendment No. 213), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 215 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 201), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 216 (to amendment No. 215), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 3 minutes for three different short remarks.

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

H.R. 268

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the Senate will soon vote on the disaster spending bill. That bill contains funds for the 2018 hurricanes and wildfires and renews the extra funds for nutrition assistance in Puerto Rico, which is about to expire.

The Senate amendment also expands eligibility to include ongoing Midwest floods like we presently have in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska, but other States will have it as well.

At a time when some families in Iowa have everything that they own underwater and the people of Puerto Rico are facing a funding cliff, now is not the time to play politics with the disaster relief bill.

To my colleagues across the aisle who have been spending a lot of time in Iowa lately as Presidential candidates, if you vote against moving forward with the Shelby amendment, how are you going to look Iowans in the eye and justify a vote against moving this disaster relief bill ahead?

TARIFFS

Mr. President, now I will talk about trade. I am calling on the administration, specifically on President Trump, to promptly remove section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Canada and Mexico. This will help to clear the path for the USMCA agreement and have it ratified not just in the Congress of the United States but in all three countries.

These tariffs and the retaliations are having a negative impact on Americans. The agreement for Mexico, Canada, and the United States is supposed to be a free trade agreement, but we don't have free trade with these tariffs in place.

As Finance Committee chairman, I look forward to helping the President with this important task. I had a chance to be at the White House with several other Senators on that very same issue. I said to the President something like this: You said you put the tariffs on because Mexico and Canada weren't going to negotiate. They have negotiated. Mr. President, you say that you have a good agreement, and I agree that you do have a good agreement. They negotiated in good faith. Then, wouldn't you think that the right thing to do would be to remove the tariffs so we can move ahead?

Now, one of the important things about this is the situation in Canada more than in the United States. Their House of Commons will adjourn in June for their elections in October. This must be done in the next 2 months. Well, I guess now you would say in the next 3 months, if this is going to be done this year, and I would think the President would want to get it done this year.

HOLDS DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

Mr. President, this is my last 1-minute comment. All Senators now have a copy of my letter sent with Senator WYDEN's signature explaining the holds on nominations and bills and the disclosure of those holds and the requirements that come with such holds.

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



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After many years of working on the issue, the two of us, meaning Senator GRASSLEY and Senator WYDEN, worked in good faith with the leadership of both parties to craft a measure everyone could accept, and it passed the Senate overwhelmingly in 2011.

The last I checked—and this is sad to say—Senator WYDEN and I are the only ones that have holds listed in the calendar. Surely, we aren't the only ones who are holding up nominations or legislation.

I urge all Senators to comply with the holds disclosure requirements. I also want to remind our leaders, meaning my colleague from Kentucky and my colleague from New York, that anyone with a hold, meaning any of the 100 Senators with a hold, must give permission to object in their name.

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

H.R. 268

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for almost a week, the Senate has been considering an urgent priority: aid funding for communities across the country that have been literally ravaged by natural disasters, like last year's powerful hurricane season, which carried torrential downpours and gale-force winds across the coasts of Florida and the Carolinas and left families sorting through literally billions of dollars of damage; the fierce wildfires that consumed millions of acres in California and across the West, damaging or destroying tens of thousands of homes and businesses in their path; the tornadoes that tore through communities in East Alabama and West Georgia; and the heavy rains and flooding that impacted part of Kentucky.

As Puerto Rico continues to get back on its feet following Hurricane Maria, an especially urgent concern today is funding for the nutrition assistance program. Hundreds of thousands of residents have already felt the impacts of dwindling food aid on the island. Preventing further serious reductions will take prompt Federal action. Even as we speak, communities across the Midwest are still underwater, trying to combat the severe floods that washed away homes and livelihoods.

From coast to coast and beyond, we have Americans rebuilding their communities, their local infrastructure, their livelihoods, and in some cases their own homes. Here in Congress, it is time to finish the good work our colleagues from Georgia have started and pass legislation to provide a helping hand.

I was encouraged last week when 90 Senators took the first step and allowed the full Senate to turn to disaster funding on the floor. Yet it has been unsettling to hear behind the scenes that our Democratic colleagues may now be toying with the idea of opposing Chairman SHELBY's comprehensive substitute amendment.

This is no time for our colleagues across the aisle to prioritize a political fight with the President ahead of the urgent needs of communities across our country. Chairman SHELBY has carefully assembled a comprehensive proposal that our Democratic friends ought to jump at the chance to support. It ensures that no affected region would be left behind. That includes \$600 million to immediately shore up disaster nutrition assistance for the vulnerable people in Puerto Rico.

Unlike the underlying House bill, which does not address this year's disasters, it would provide for a significant downpayment on relief and rebuilding in the flood-damaged Midwest. The House bill has nothing for the Midwest flooding, so it is a nonstarter for that reason and also because the White House has indicated the President would not support that legislation because of policy decisions made by House Democrats.

Chairman SHELBY's amendment is the only game in town. It is our only sure path to making a law with anywhere near the urgency these Americans deserve; it is the only bill on the table with any provision for the Midwest flooding; and it is the only bill on the table that could earn a Presidential signature in time to deliver urgent relief on the nutrition assistance needed in Puerto Rico.

In my view, this does not need to be a difficult partisan decision. Indeed, I can hardly put it better than my Democratic colleagues explained it themselves just a few weeks ago. As recently as the end of February, 11 of our Democratic colleagues wrote to all 4 congressional leaders to insist that this subject could not wait. They said: "Providing desperately needed relief to impacted communities should be a bipartisan, bicameral priority and continued inaction is unacceptable."

They said Congress had to fund disaster recovery and rebuilding "immediately."

Well, this afternoon, our colleagues will have the opportunity to make good on their words and vote to advance Chairman SHELBY's legislation. It is our way to help all the affected communities, including the Midwest, which the House bill would simply leave behind.

It is our path to securing hundreds of millions in nutrition aid for Puerto Rico and doing so promptly. It is our shot at exactly the kind of bipartisan action that a number of our Democratic colleagues have actually been clamoring for, so let's vote to advance it later today.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk preceded to call the roll.

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

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

S. RES. 50

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, my Democratic friends from the other side of the aisle often come to me and ask me to cosponsor bills so they will be bipartisan, making it more likely we will get a result. Sometimes they come to me on a difficult issue, and they ask me, in their words, "to rise above politics" and support the institution and the Constitution, and often I do that. I think my reputation for that here is pretty secure.

So I have an offer, an invitation I made earlier to my Democratic friends to invite them to join me in rising above politics—it will be a harder vote for them than it will be for me—and help us change the Senate rules in the correct way to restore the Presidential nomination process to the stature that it deserves and work together to try to achieve what we did in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

On March 14, the Democratic leader came to the floor, and he said the following words:

There are times when loyalty to America, to our Constitution, to our principles, and to what has made this country great should lead Members to rise above and rise to the occasion.

He was talking about the vote on the national emergency declaration President Trump made.

The Democratic leader continued:

I hope and I pray that this moment is one of those times when Members choose country over party and when Members rise above politics for the sake of fidelity to our constitutional principles and this great United States of America.

That was the Democratic leader, the Senator from New York.

The next day, 12 of us did just that. We voted for the resolution to overturn the declaration of emergency, or, as I have explained to many of my constituents who have said something to me about it, I voted for the Constitution.

A month or so earlier, we were encouraged by the Democratic leader and our friends on the other side to vote to open the government. It was the same sort of speech, the same opportunity to rise above politics. Six of us did—six of us on this side of the aisle.

In 2011, 2012, and 2013, when Barack Obama was President and Harry Reid was the leader of the Democratic majority in the Senate, it occurred to me and others that the Presidential nominating process was in shambles. It was embarrassing to ask distinguished Americans to be nominated for a position and then say "You are innocent until you are nominated" or drag

things out for a long period of time. It was a bad process.

The President of the United States has 1,200 nominations to make to Federal appointees—1,200 today, but then, it was more like 1,400. One of the most important and perhaps the best known function of the Senate is advice and consent. Our advice and consent to the Presidential nominations is a crucial part of the checks and balances in our constitutional system that was established to keep one part of our government from having too much power. In other words, if the President wants somebody and we don't, that is it. If he does and we confirm, then that person knows us, knows this body, and knows about article I, and when he or she wants money for their Department, they have to come to the Congress elected by the people. That is the Presidential nominating process. That is why it is so important to the Senate and to the people of this country.

So in 2011, 2012, and 2013, Senators Reid, McCONNELL, SCHUMER, BARRASSO, Levin, McCain, Kyl, CARDIN, COLLINS, Lieberman, and I all, along with some others, worked to change the Senate rules to make it easier for President Obama and his successors to gain confirmation of Presidential nominees. As a Republican Senator during a Democratic administration, I spent dozens of hours on that project to make it easier for that Democratic President, with a Senate majority that was Democratic, to form a government.

We changed the rules the right way. In other words, we followed the rules, and the Senate passed standing orders, with large, bipartisan margins, to do a number of things. We ended secret holds. We removed 163 major positions from the necessity of advice and consent. We removed 3,163 minor positions from advice and consent. We created 272 positions that are Presidential nominations and made them privileged so they could come to the floor and then go on to be voted on if no one objected or required them to go to committee. We made it easier to bring legislation to the floor. We made it easier to go to conference. We simplified the forms you have to fill out if you are a nominee. We did all that in a bipartisan way.

One more thing: By a vote of 78 votes, we decided we would reduce the postcloture debate time for sub-Cabinet members to 8 hours and for district judges to 2 hours. As a practical matter, that means if the majority leader brings up a sub-Cabinet member on Monday, we have to wait an intervening day—that is Tuesday—and then we vote on cutting off debate on Wednesday. And how many more hours do we need to debate it? Then it was 30. Today it is 30. We said: Then let's make it 8 for sub-Cabinet members and 2 for district judges. That expired at the end of President Obama's time because we made it for just one Congress, but that is what we did.

I might add, Republicans did not insist that these new rules should be de-

layed until after the next Presidential election, when there might be a Republican President. You might say we rose above politics.

I might also add that today some people say: Well, they don't want to vote for anything that might seem to support President Trump because he is not popular in the Democratic primary. I can tell you that in 2013, President Obama was not all that popular in the Republican primary in Tennessee or in any other of the primaries, but we thought it was more important to defend this institution and preserve its traditional and constitutional role of advice and consent.

So, on February 25 of this year, I came to the floor and, in effect, invited my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to rise above politics—the same thing they often say to me. I invited them to work with me, Senator LANKFORD, and Senator BLUNT to speed up the confirmation of Presidential nominees, to rise above partisanship and to rise above politics for the benefit of the institution. It was a pretty easy ask, I might say, because I am basically inviting them to do what 78 of us agreed to do in 2013, which is to reduce the amount of postcloture debate time for sub-Cabinet members and district judges.

I don't think rising above politics ought to be a one-way street. At a time when many complained that the Executive has too much power, the Senate is deliberately weakening itself when we undermine our advice and consent role. What is the result of that?

Well, it diminishes our constitutional role to advise and consent because what happens in the executive branch is it just is loaded up with acting appointees who have never had to go through our confirmation process.

President Trump is probably pretty happy with that. He could just put an acting person in a particular position. That person doesn't have to go through the process and doesn't have to answer a lot of questions. He or she is just there and immediately there. Such as John Ryder, the TVA board member from my State, who doesn't have to answer a lot of questions or such as two district judges from my State—excellent individuals—who waited 10 months to be confirmed or such as the U.S. marshal for the Middle District of Tennessee, who had already been the U.S. marshal before, who had to wait more than 1 year. There was none of that. Just put in an acting person and run the government without regard to the Senate.

As the Democratic leader said to me 2 weeks ago and 6 weeks ago, I would ask him and others to rise above politics for the benefit of this institution and change the rules the right way to speed up the confirmation process.

The Senate Rules Committee gave us the right way. They adopted a resolution in the regular order. Basically, it is the same resolution, with a few differences, that we passed with 78 votes in 2013.

In my February 25 speech, I said to my friends on the other side: If you don't like it in exactly the form it is, please suggest something reasonable back. That is the way we do things. Let's amend it. Let's do it exactly the way we did it before in 2013.

I have been encouraged by some discussion by some Members on the other side of the aisle but nothing certain. The proposal offered by Senator BLUNT and Senator LANKFORD would not reduce the number of hours we debate Supreme Court Justices, wouldn't reduce the number of hours we debate Cabinet members or certain Board nominations, but it would divide the 30 hours of postcloture debate equally between Republicans and Democrats. Basically, it would put the Senate back in the place where the Senate has always been throughout the history of the Senate.

Nominations have been decided by 51 votes—not 60 or 67 but by 51—and they have been decided reasonably promptly. Sometimes they were defeated, but they were decided. The Blunt-Lankford resolution would do just that. Nominations would be decided by 51 votes, and they could be decided reasonably promptly so we would not be diminishing the advice and consent role of the Senate.

Everyone in this body knows what the problem is. One hundred and twenty-eight times the majority leader has had to file a motion to cut off debate—we call that cloture—in order to advance a nomination. Let's say it is for a Tennessee Valley Authority part-time board member. So he will file the motion on Monday. We don't do anything on Tuesday. Nothing would change with that. We vote on cloture on Wednesday—that is 51 votes—and then we have 30 hours of debate. Now it is Thursday. So we could take a whole week dealing with a part-time TVA board member. That has been done 128 times. That was almost never done for previous Presidents.

We are faced with a truly miserable choice. We know this has to change. Our friends on the other side know it has to change. They know if they have a Democratic President in 18 or 20 months, there will be at least one Republican Senator who will do to them what they are doing to President Trump. The Democratic President will not be able to form a government, and so we will further diminish the Senate in its role. So we have a truly miserable choice: either we continue to diminish the constitutional advice and consent role of the Senate—we could do that—or we use what we call the Harry Reid precedent to change the rules of the Senate by a majority vote.

The problem with the Harry Reid precedent is, it doesn't really change the rules. It just says the rules don't mean what they say. It is as if the referee said: Well, the rule book says first down is 10 yards, but I am going to rule that it is 9. It is a Senate precedent, and the majority may do it, but we should avoid that if we possibly can.

I don't like the Harry Reid precedent. I believe it presents a truly miserable option, but even more miserable is continuing this debasement of the advice and consent role of the Senate—one I worked to do more about in 2011, 2012, and 2013 with the distinguished Democratic leader, the Republican leader, and so many Senators.

As my friend the Democratic leader, who I see has now come to the floor, said to me and other Republicans 2 weeks ago: "I understand the politics are difficult—much harder for you than for me—but our nation, our Constitution, the beauty of this government, demands that we rise to the occasion." Well, on the declaration of the national emergency on that occasion, 12 of us did; and on reopening the government a few weeks earlier, 6 of us did; and in 2011, 2012, and 2013, 78 of us voted to reduce the postcloture time for sub-Cabinet nominees.

I know it can be a difficult vote in the Democratic caucus, but I earnestly hope that between now and the time we vote this week, that we will not be presented with this truly miserable choice of continuing to debase the advice and consent tradition of the Senate or using the Harry Reid precedent to change the Senate rules by majority vote.

If some of us can rise above partisanship on article I to vote against the declaration of emergency, to vote to reopen the government, and to remove the delay in Presidential nominees when there is a Democratic President and a Democratic leader of the Senate, it is my hope that some of my Democratic friends will agree to do that this week and help us avoid what I have described as a truly miserable choice.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I will be speaking about rules changes in a minute, but I heard my friend from Tennessee when he said we will be faced with a terrible choice.

I would simply say that that choice is being foisted on us by Leader MCCONNELL and none other. You can't brag about passing more judges than ever before and then say the process is broken, and we have to change the rules. There is a total, total—there is a word that begins with "h" that I will not quite say. It ends in "y."

H.R. 268

Madam President, on Puerto Rico, as the Senate takes up the disaster package, I want to implore my friends on the Republican side to remember that Puerto Rico is still recovering from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. From city to countryside, the entire island has been decimated. Yet the administration's response to this catastrophe can be summed up in two words. The administration's response to Puerto Rico can be summed up in two words: cruel and nasty.

The administration has yet to disburse \$20 billion in recovery and mitigation funds for Puerto Rico that were already appropriated, and this is more than a year after they were appropriated by Congress. There is \$20 billion sitting there as people suffer.

Bureaucracy has similarly delayed crucial rebuilding projects at hospitals and schools and stoked real concerns that the administration is not interested in helping the island rebuild the way Congress intended.

It should hardly bear repeating, but every single American citizen deserves a Congress and a President fully committed to providing every resource necessary to rebuild in the wake of a natural disaster. Our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico are every bit as much American citizens—that is by law—as we are. Yet the President seems to want to treat them differently, cruelly, and nastily.

Now Republican Senators are attempting to strip away recovery funds from Puerto Rico and other territories from the disaster package that passed the House. They have even rejected a Democratic effort to speed up the release of the billions in already allocated funding. Those are no new appropriations. They have already rejected our efforts to speed up the release of the billions in already allocated funding that the Trump administration has locked away in the U.S. Treasury.

Now, because the House passed their disaster bill back in January, it didn't include any aid to assist those affected by the recent devastated flooding in the Midwest, but my friend Senator LEAHY is planning to offer an amendment to the House bill that would provide much needed aid to survivors of those recent disasters because they too deserve the aid they need to recover.

They said Emperor Nero fiddled while Rome burned. President Trump tweets while Puerto Rico suffers. I hope my Republican colleagues will join us in supporting this amendment and voting yes on the House bill to support all communities that need to rebuild.

HEALTHCARE

Madam President, on another matter, last week we were reminded of an evergreen truth: The Republican Party is still trying to take away the healthcare of millions of Americans. They are just sick and tired of being blamed for it, even though the blame falls right on their shoulders.

Just this morning, we read that some of my colleagues from across the aisle have begged Attorney General Barr to reverse the administration's wild decision to declare our current healthcare law unconstitutional—a decision that would throw the future of preexisting conditions and healthcare coverage for millions into doubt.

I have a better idea. If Republican colleagues truly oppose this decision, they can work with their leadership and come down and offer some solutions. Stop with the backroom phone calls. Stop waiting for someone else to

bail you out. Stop whispering: Oh, President Trump, don't do it and then be afraid to buck him publicly because Americans are depending on their healthcare.

This is a fiasco that Republicans spent years in making as they tried to keep voting on repeal and replace and couldn't come up with a replace. Everyone knows it. It helped shape the elections of 2018. It will be on the minds of voters in 2020.

You know, facts are stubborn things. If the Republican Party is truly sick of getting blamed for standing between Americans and their healthcare, maybe they shouldn't have voted again and again to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Maybe they shouldn't have voted to allow the President to sabotage, piece after piece, the healthcare net we have provided for people.

If our Republican colleagues are sick of blame, maybe they shouldn't have given this administration the green light to sabotage the exchanges and cut funding for programs that help people get covered and protect them from preexisting conditions.

If Republicans are really sick of getting blamed for sabotaging the American healthcare system, then, let me provide some friendly advice from across the aisle: Stop sabotaging the American people's healthcare.

Republicans can try to hide from their record, but the American people aren't fooled. Healthcare has been a defining issue for Republicans for generations. In the same way that the party has sworn fealty to tax cuts for the rich and handicapping the government, the modern Republican Party now swears fidelity to the cause of higher healthcare costs and diminished coverage for tens of millions of American citizens.

Tomorrow Senate Democrats will join our colleagues in the House to take action for ourselves against the Department of Justice's war on healthcare. We will set the record straight on the Republican's effort to steamroll American families who enjoy coverage for the first time thanks to this law. We will make clear that unless Republicans join us in taking action, they will continue to own this mess—and a sorry mess it is—when people's lives and health are at stake and our Republican colleagues do nothing—nothing—but make it worse.

NOMINATIONS

Madam President, on another matter, one of the Senate's core responsibilities is vetting any and all of the President's nominees. Unfortunately, if we have learned anything in the last 2 years, it is that this administration seems far too often willing to put nominees forward to the Senate without performing due diligence and careful background checks.

Just last week, we learned that the President's choice for the Federal Reserve Board of Governors may have serious personal financial issues. That is just the latest in a long line of red

flags in the records of Trump nominees. It is clear that we cannot falter in our role as a check on the administration.

So I was bemused this morning to read the Republican leader's case that the Senate needs to speed up President Trump's nominees to an even faster pace. Is this the majority leader's idea of an April fool's joke? Was his op-ed his April fool's joke on the Senate, on bipartisanship, and on America? It is the most ridiculous thing in print since Sidd Finch.

This is the double standard to trump all double standards. It is simply galling—galling—for the Republican leader to say that we aren't moving fast enough. When Barack Obama was President, qualified nominees languished to the detriment of our government. Take the example of Richard Cordray. For no good reason, he waited 729 days, more than 2 years, to be confirmed to lead the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and he was hardly an exception.

Of course, because of Republican obstruction in what the Republican leader called one of his "proudest moments," the Republican-led Senate refused to even consider Merrick Garland's nomination to the Supreme Court for nearly a calendar year.

But now, under President Trump, Leader McConnell has sung a different tune. Overnight, he has become a reformer in the cause of Trumpism. Working hand-in-hand with the Federalist Society, the Republican leader became, in the words of his own adviser, the principal enabler of the Trump agenda. At Leader McConnell's command, Republicans ended the blue slip rules for circuit court nominees and even refused to confirm Democratic nominees for bipartisan Boards and Commissions like the SEC and the NLRB. With these moves, the Republican leader has driven a stake further into the heart of comity and bipartisanship in the Senate.

Now, despite openly bragging about the number of Trump judges that he has led the Senate to confirm, Leader McConnell demands that the rules of the Senate be changed to speed up confirmation. On the one hand, there is too much obstruction. On the other, we proved we supported a record amount of judges and gotten them through.

Leader McConnell, you can't have it both ways. You can't have it both ways. Everyone sees through that.

The Senate needs to do its job. We should not be a conveyor belt for President Trump's radical and unqualified judicial nominees. So let's call this for what it is. This rules change is yet another power grab by Leader McConnell, the Republican Party, and its rightwing allies. It is a transparent attempt to further politicize our courts by packing them with President Trump's hard-right, ideological, and too-often unqualified nominees, and we will not be complicit in the Republican leader's games, which sacrifice much of

the comity and bipartisanship that this Senate used to represent.

SECURITY CLEARANCES

Madam President, on a final matter, I was extremely troubled to see yet another report that this administration repeatedly overruled career officials to provide security clearances to Trump officials, despite concerns about even blackmail and foreign influence.

Our Nation's intelligence must be protected. That is why 3 weeks ago Vice Chairman WARNER and Ranking Members FEINSTEIN, MENENDEZ, and REED called for a thorough review of compliance with security clearance policies and procedures. The Trump administration has flouted these rules again and again. The American people deserve some answers.

Where are the leaders of our intelligence community? Where is the inspector general of the intelligence community? Why would our Republican counterparts not let us confirm the Nation's top counterintelligence official? Director Coats and the relevant inspector general must investigate these allegations immediately and take whatever steps are necessary to protect our national security. This cannot wait a moment longer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I appreciate the remarks of the majority leader. If he would wait 1 minute, I just want to make a little offer to him. I am not going to get into an argument with him, but he brought up more things than I like to bring up in one speech, anyway.

I did want to remind him that I was one of the six that voted in the shutdown, and a day later we solved the problem that you couldn't have done unless the six of us who did vote for it in the Republican Conference voted for it.

I just want everybody that listens to this and watches it on TV to know that everything he said is not always true. He did speak to us obliquely on recognizing the fact that we did that. I just want you to know I was one of them. I am only telling him that now because I want a chip tomorrow on his vote, and I am going to try to impress that on him.

Mr. SCHUMER. Will my colleague yield for a brief comment?

Mr. ISAKSON. Absolutely.

Mr. SCHUMER. I have every confidence that if my friend from Georgia were running the Senate, we wouldn't be in this pickle.

I yield to him.

H.R. 268

Mr. ISAKSON. Thank you. I appreciate that, I think.

Madam President, I am not going to talk about judges and appointments and things of that nature. I could talk about them. That is a big issue for us coming up. I want to talk about people—American citizens, farmers, ranchers, people who make our food supply

happen, people who make our country happen and our economy happen, et cetera.

Georgia is one of a number of States that supposedly had gotten some kind of disaster benefit some time back. We have had hurricanes, floods, and storms. California has had great fires. We had an earthquake in Alaska. We had volcanoes in Hawaii. This has been one of the most devastating years—and the past couple of years now—we have ever had, and, historically, we have always passed disaster bills to help our citizens who are put out of business, basically, by disaster to at least get their feet back under them.

We have helped people get healthcare. We have helped people get housing benefits. We have helped people do a lot of things just to get their families put back together—people like these folks right here.

I just want to remind myself from this picture here that we have the Moss family. We have others who are here who raise cotton, raise peanuts, and raise pecans. Georgia is now No. 1 in the U.S. of pecans. Pecans are a huge cash crop for us. Of course, Savannah, in my State, ships ton after ton all year long.

A pecan is an interesting nut, so to speak, because the tree has a lifecycle of about 12 years before it can make or produce pecans. When you invest in a pecan farmer, you are not investing like in a watermelon farmer. You get a watermelon the first year you plant them. You are investing in something that is going to take 12 years to mature and begin production. We had 50 percent of our pecan crop completely destroyed a few months ago now in southeast Georgia, and you can't reclaim it. It is difficult to finance.

It is an unusual tree, and it is unusual wood because it is not as strong as you would like to have it. Therefore, when it gets really mature and really produces, it produces so much weight on itself. Unless you are really doing a good job, you are going to lose some of them just because of the weight it produces on its own limbs.

Peanuts, everybody knows, because we serve those peanuts back in the cloakroom all the time to curb your appetite—Georgia peanuts. They are all laughing and looking at me. They know how good they are. That helps all of us make it for another day, until we get to another meal.

We do all kinds of things in here about this. Agriculture is 21 percent of my State's economy, but it is all of America's economy—a lot of it. Most importantly, it is what we all have to do—to eat three times a day. There is only 90 days' worth of food supply available at any one given point in time in the world. I mean, as food grows, you consume it, and you replant and you grow again.

We have a number of people from east coast to west and from north of the northern border and west of the west border who are in pineapples or

pecans or peanuts or whatever—cotton—and who need some relief that they have earned and need.

What is happening is that we have had multiple attempts in the last 5 months to pass a disaster relief package. It will be offered as an amendment that basically Senator PERDUE and I have offered as well in the past. It just takes those people in our country who have been hurt, who are eligible for programs that exist in the law, and gets that money out the door. For some of us, if we don't get it done in the next 2 weeks, it is just not going to get done. We have farmers who will go out of business.

You know, everybody says all farmers are all rich. Well, they are dirt poor. That is what they are. I was a real estate guy. I know how you do that. You make a great balance sheet on the value of the real estate, but all of a sudden, if you lose the value of the real estate and you don't have anything to offset the liability that you created to buy the real estate, you get in trouble. We have a lot of that in Georgia, a lot of it in Alabama, a lot of it in California because of the fire, and a lot of other places.

We need to get it straight, and the best thing we can do is to get these farmers in a position where they know this year, if they get their money in time to plant, they can make the money they need to pay the bank back rather than tell the government to give them a check for a disaster.

So we are not only talking about helping the farmer. We are talking about helping us. Every time we get the farmer back on his or her feet in order to go back into production, planting, and doing their job, then, they will produce income for that, and they will pay these loans off. Yes, they are not going to be as rich as they were before, but they will not be out of business. Some of these farms are 200 years or more in the family—post-Civil War farms. There are lots of people in our State who are just dying because of what happened.

Our cotton crop was killed. It was probably the best. We think it was going to be the best crop we ever had because the week before the storm started hitting, we did some picking, but then the storms came through, and in 1 day, one hurricane wiped out the cotton in Georgia.

It took out about 70 percent of the pecan trees in Georgia. It took out our blueberries—yes, blueberries. Everybody says Michigan produces the most blueberries, or Maine does. No, they don't. Georgia does. Agriculture is an entrepreneurial business in our State, but it takes the ability to raise the money to plant it, produce it, sell it, take the crop to market, and reinvest it. We are not talking about people getting rich. We are talking about people taking the risk of doing business like you have always done business.

So I am going to talk about this amendment for just a second. It is so

important. There is some misinformation out there. Leader SCHUMER obliquely referred to a whole lot of misinformation. I am going to correct one of them that he said in just a minute.

It is important to know what we are doing tomorrow. We are going to tell Renee Moss, Greg Mims, and Casey Cox—these families right here—that help is on the way for their cotton, their pecans, their peanuts, and their farms. It is help not to give them a handout but to give them a hand up and tell their bankers that we are going to stick with them so they can work overtime to make the money back to pay the bank back and also pay us back. That is what we ought to do, and that is what we should do, but if we don't do it before the month is over, we are dead.

As many of you know in here, the SNAP money ends this month. The SNAP money fix is in this. You are not going to have student nutrition programs if you don't get it added into the legislation and get it passed. They run out, technically, on March 31, and we have 14 days until that is passed, which will be April 14, to finally restore it. We have to restore it as fast as we can. We have to get it done. This bill does that.

Let me tell you what the bill does. You heard about Puerto Rico. I love Puerto Rico. When I was in the Air Force, we did field trainings at Ramey Air Force Base. I was a load master. We did runs down there to the east coast all the time. I love the people down there. I love the food down there. I love the beaches down here and the great folks. They have already gotten a number of millions of dollars that they talked about in a speech today. They want \$600 million that were now approved in this bill. Now, \$600 million is a lot of money.

They already got \$40 billion and haven't spent all of that. We need to make sure everybody gets their fair share for the disasters that took place and does not take the disaster money and use it as a payoff somewhere down the line.

Puerto Rico should be helped, but the rest of the country shouldn't be held hostage because of Puerto Rico. We have Florida, Alabama, North Carolina, and South Carolina with hurricane damage, California with the wildfires, Alaska with the earthquake, Hawaii with the volcanoes, and also include \$600 million for Puerto Rico. There is no money for CDBG, like some of them wanted, but the rest of the money for the SNAP program. That is what their votes are going to be about.

The Democrats are going to say, just as Mr. SCHUMER did—he was for this a while back. I don't know what happened. I guess he got upset about something; I don't know what it is. This says we are going to take care of people who had disasters that they didn't want and lost lots of money they couldn't afford to lose. They are going to go out of business, which we don't

want them to do. It is going to compound their problems in their States.

I know the Senator from Arkansas, the Presiding Officer, knows exactly what I am talking about. Rice is the main product in Arkansas, as well as other agricultural products. It is key to their economy. So we have to get them safe while we can.

It is about those crops. It is about their insurance. It is also about their economy. I wanted to bring this up. It is about global warming. It is about climate change. It is about a lot of things we don't ever brag about around this place. I am going to brag about it simply because people think these things are about one simple subject.

This is a report out of the Appropriations subcommittee that does a number of things to fix things that are broken, things that people around here talk a lot about wanting to do, things like \$20 million for the CDC to continue its research on epidemics, which saved us with Ebola when it hit us a couple of years ago, and it will save us again with measles. We are on the cusp of an outbreak of measles—an outbreak like we have never seen before. It is not there yet, and I don't want somebody to run out and say: He said it is there. But it is coming if we don't react to it or respond to it. It is critical that we do and see to it that we do it as fast as possible.

It is about \$600 million for Puerto Rico.

It is about emergency forest restoration programs where our forests have been destroyed by storms.

It is about nutrition assistance for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a province of the United States of America where people are starving right now and going into malnutrition.

It is about American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and market facilitation programs for AGI waivers.

It is about the economic development assistance programs that are not working right now because they are not funded, and if we don't get them funded, they are not going to work for the betterment of our economy.

It is about \$200 million to repair the damage caused by Hurricane Florence to Marine Corps installations at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. I think you and I agree that the Marine Corps is very important. You might say, what emergency do they have? They were wiped out by the storm. If we don't rebuild these things as quickly as possible, we will have our marines without a place to bivouac, a place to sleep or a place to eat. We don't want that to happen.

That is what this is about. It is not about giving out perk money; it is about absolute essentials to the defense of our country, the food of our country, et cetera.

So I want to appeal to Senator SCHUMER. I listened to his remarks. Now, unfortunately, the Senator from Vermont has come. He didn't know I

was talking, I guess. I will talk about him a little bit too. Mr. LEAHY is a fine gentleman and a great friend of mine, but he has kind of let me down on this one. I want to talk about that. I am hoping maybe I can change his mind and maybe yours as well, Mr. President. We don't have a second chance at this. We had two chances that didn't make it. We voluntarily got off the other bills because we didn't have enough money to get on them, so we had to get something else passed. One of them was restoring the cuts before the shutdown—which, by the way, we got off of the shutdown vote to allow this to pass so we could cut out one of the arguments. I wanted to throw that in as well.

I see he is leaving already. He didn't want to hear what I had to say. He told me—and I will try to phrase this correctly—he told me: I have always voted for emergency money.

I have always voted for emergency money, too, for Yankees, for southerners, westerners, and northerners, because when we have an emergency in this country, it is America's emergency; it is not just an emergency for one region.

We don't want to bleed ourselves to death or wastefully spend this money, but by golly, if we become a country where we cannot depend on ourselves to help ourselves when times are tough—I don't know.

Senator ROMNEY and I talked before this a little bit ago about how we really ought to have a sinking fund and create a funding source that over time can accumulate money as a hedge against future disasters. We know we are going to have them; we always do. We know they are going to come; they always do. At least have more money in the bank to be prepared for them so we don't get into political battles like we are in now where we have tangential issues that we are debating all because of the amendment, et cetera.

So with the senior Senator from Vermont on the floor, I am going to cut some of my remarks short so he will have plenty of time to say whatever he has to say, but I want him to hear what I have to say.

This is about Puerto Rico. They are getting \$600 million, and they have already gotten some money. They aren't going to get everything they want, but they are getting everything they should get out of this particular bill, including SNAP.

The farmers in the South are going to get a chance to replant, a chance to borrow, and a chance to make the money to pay back over time. Otherwise, it is going to be on our backs anyway, so if we don't help them, we are going to be stuck. It is about doing the right thing at the right time for the right people. The right thing is to restore the commonsense bills we have passed that will allow them to farm or whatever it is they do. That is No. 1.

No. 2, we need to do it without arguing about regions or people or what

they do. We ought to do it as American citizens supporting other American citizens and what they do for their livelihood, and they pay their taxes because of that.

Lastly, there are times when we have great debates over things that are political in nature or funny in nature. I am serious as a heart attack about this. I told MITCH MCCONNELL, who was mentioned by Senator SCHUMER a minute ago, I told MITCH—I said: I can't go home this weekend and tell them the same thing I told them the last four weekends. I have to tell them we got the job done for them, or we are going to fail them.

I don't want to fail them. I want to vote for the amendment tomorrow that Senator SHELBY offered. If it loses, I am going to vote for the one the Democrats will offer, which will give us a chance to get something back in the conference committee. If both of those lose, we may as well go home. We will wake up one day in the next few months and say: What did we do? Why did we do that? We lost our perspective.

It is not just about Georgia; it is about America. It is not just about farming; it is about a lot of things. It is time for us to do what is right, what we should have done on the two bills before—that we approved. Let's make it happen the way we have always done, and let's do the right thing at the right time for the right people, for the citizens of the United States for America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The Senator from Vermont.
UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 205 TO AMENDMENT NO. 201

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, while my friend is still here on the floor, he was absolutely correct when he pointed me out as saying that I have long supported disasters, whatever State is involved, whether it is a red State, blue State, or purple State. I believe in helping Americans. We are all part of the United States of America.

I think we do waste time sometimes in having debates on things we should not. For example, when the Republicans controlled the House of Representatives and the Senate and we had a bill to keep our government open and to fund part of the barriers along the Mexican border, both the Senator and I voted the same way. We voted for the bill. It would have given \$1.4 billion that the Executive could use toward security. The President threaten to vetoed that, saying it was not enough even though the vast majority of Republicans and Democrats had voted for it in the House and the Senate. So he shut down the government for 35 days, which caused unprecedented hurt to Americans of all political persuasions all over this country. I believe the CBO said it cost the country about \$11 billion.

What did he then sign? The new bill we came up with, which had \$1.3 bil-

lion. He rejected the bill the Republicans and Democrats had supported that had \$1.4 billion, shut down the government, ruined the lives of many hundreds of thousands of Americans, cost our economy over \$10 billion, and then signed a bill to get \$100 million less.

I worry we are in somewhat the same situation now. We seem to be deciding which Americans are going to be helped based on a tweet. I believe all Americans should be helped, and I voted for disaster relief for the States of every Senator who is on the floor presently. I have never asked what their priorities were or what their political background was; if they had a disaster, I voted for it. I think it is the responsibility of the Federal Government to stand with American communities in crisis.

I praised Chairman SHELBY and his staff for their efforts to move this process forward. I know communities in Senator SHELBY's State recently experienced their own natural disaster. As vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, as a U.S. Senator, and as a Vermonter, I am ready to stand with the people of Alabama because that is what we Americans do.

When Tropical Storm Irene devastated my State in 2011, Members of this body came to me not as Republicans or Democrats but as American citizens eager to help their neighbor. When disasters have hit other parts of the country, I have done exactly the same.

But now we should know that for more than 1 year, one of our neighbors has been in crises. In 2017, Puerto Rico was hit by two back-to-back category 5 hurricanes. It is an almost unprecedented disaster—two back-to-back category 5 hurricanes. At first, the administration was saying: Well, there is only a handful of people who died. Well, it turns out that we estimated that 2,975 Americans lost their lives. That is one heck of a handful. Their homes were demolished. Their communities were destroyed. This was more than 1 year ago.

Today, if you fly over Puerto Rico, the landscape will still be specked with blue plastic tarps that serve as temporary roofs and shelters. From the ground, you see that the wear and tear of a year and a half has frayed that plastic. The boards haphazardly holding up these plastic roofs have warped, and they appear ready to collapse.

The New York Times wrote a story on the 1-year anniversary of the storms. The stories told are heart-breaking.

One woman, Martina Cruz Sanchez, described her hurried routine every time it rains. First, she has to climb a ladder to where her roof used to be before 100-plus-mile-an-hour winds ripped it off and scattered it around the island. Then, using a hose, she has to manually siphon off the accumulating puddles to keep the roof from leaking on what little she has left.

Ms. Cruz's situation is not unique. On a different part of the island, Pablo Figueroa is forced to live in the only corner of his small home that still has a roof. Two others described living out of a tent attached to their neighbor's garage. A fallen tree remains from where it first crashed through Paula Cruz Ortiz's home. Julia Rivera, a mother of nine, laments that she has "lost everything" except her "faith in God."

Across the island, water-logged walls have gone unrepaired and have begun to rot. A hospital that was flooded was overtaken by toxic mold—a hospital. A hospital that was flooded was overtaken by toxic mold. A year after the storm, it remained closed.

The mold in 82-year-old Leomida Uniel's home has stained the walls black. This 82-year-old person had a lung infection as a result.

When Carmen Cruz was asked about losing her home, she said: It was a little house—two bedrooms—but for me, it was a castle.

I tell these stories because these are American citizens. I would tell the same story if they were Vermonters or whatever other State they might be from. They are American citizens. These are our neighbors. These are human beings. Let's treat them as such. To do any less is an embarrassment to our country, this body, and our humanity. This was an extraordinary disaster and requires an extraordinary response.

What has happened? Let's be very frank. Let's be very honest about what has happened. Instead of standing with our neighbors, our fellow Americans, the President has chosen to hold petty grudges, which is way beneath the Office of the Presidency. He wants to pick winners and losers by deciding who gets assistance based on his own arbitrary standards. That is wrong. This Senator says that is un-American.

I know firsthand that the Federal Government is a critical partner in the effort to recover and rebuild. North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, California, Texas, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands just to name a few are all counting on us to get this bill across the finish line. I have urged Senate Republicans to take up and pass the House bill, H.R. 268, since the House first passed it in January. The Republican leadership has refused. So they have forced Puerto Rico to begin to cut back nutrition assistance weeks ago.

I am glad to see that the Republican substitute amendment finally includes money for Puerto Rico's nutrition assistance program. We should get that money to the island soon, but nutrition assistance is not enough. Puerto Rico needs to rebuild. I have offered a compromise path forward from what the House passed, but it would address the needs of Puerto Rico. It would unlock billions of dollars in additional assistance for the mainland. Keep in mind that billions of these dollars are just sitting there.

If Senate Republicans would accept this proposal, we could quickly pass this disaster bill. Even though it is different than the House bill, we could pass it in the Senate, and I believe the House would pass it and forego the need for a conference and get assistance to the people who need it sooner rather than later.

I agree with my distinguished colleague and friend that we should do that this week. We could do that today. In a moment—and I alert my colleagues on the other side—I will ask unanimous consent to take up and adopt this amendment, but if the amendment is not adopted, I will vote against the cloture motion on the Republican substitute.

We cannot advance a bill that picks and chooses among Americans and says that some Americans are lesser than others. We cannot advance a bill that does not address these critical needs.

H.R. 268, the underlying House-passed bill, is a good bill. It provides for much needed relief of victims of Hurricane Florence, victims of Hurricane Michael, and the Hawaii volcanoes, and California wildfires, just to name a few of the disasters. It also continues critical assistance to Puerto Rico.

Today I filed an amendment to extend relief to the victims of the recent tornadoes in the Southeast and the flooding in the Midwest. H.R. 268 was drafted before that flooding occurred. My amendment would ensure that they receive assistance, as well.

I am about to ask unanimous consent that this amendment to the House bill be adopted, as well. I believe that it is the responsibility of the Federal Government not to pick and choose which Americans are really Americans. It is the responsibility of the Federal Government to stand with all American communities in crisis. We have to do it now. The needs are pressing. The people are waiting. When somebody serves in the Armed Forces—whether they are from Puerto Rico, Alabama, or Vermont—they don't pick and choose and say: Well, I will go to bat if this matter tells me to, but not this one.

I alert my colleagues that I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to offer amendment No. 205 to Shelby amendment No. 201 and that the amendment be agreed to with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Is there objection?

Mr. ISAKSON. Reserving the right to object and I will yield to the Senator from Alabama.

I want everybody to listen closely. Senator, please listen to me closely. You are a great friend. I love you to death. But do you know what you just did? When you read off the States that deserved money and ought to get it, and you read them one by one, you left out one—Georgia. That is why I am down here.

Mr. LEAHY. I said these are among other States, if you look at what I said.

Mr. ISAKSON. I am not saying it to be ugly. Facts are facts, and I am

scared that a Freudian slip—which I am sure that probably was or something like that—might be something that causes us to get lost again. No. 1, I want to point out that in your own remarks, from your own memory or from your own notes, that is exactly what was said.

Mr. LEAHY. If the Senator would yield.

Mr. ISAKSON. Absolutely.

Mr. LEAHY. I said in there, "just to name a few." I did not leave anybody out.

Mr. ISAKSON. I don't want to cut anybody out, but I want to make that point.

I yield to Senator SHELBY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. I want to follow the distinguished Senator from Georgia. I also reserve the right to object here, and in the proper time, I will object.

If my colleagues are interested in supporting legislation here today that helps the people who are impacted by the 2019 storms and legislation that can actually be signed into law, then, I would say they should vote to invoke cloture on my amendment No. 201 today.

I am afraid they are not going to do that, but I will speak on my amendment in greater detail shortly, if I am permitted to.

At the moment, I object to the unanimous consent request offered by the distinguished Senator from Vermont.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 234

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to offer amendment No. 234 to the language proposed to be stricken and that the amendment be agreed to with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object. I will object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, 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. SHELBY. 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 Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, this afternoon I rise to urge my colleagues to vote for cloture on the pending Shelby amendment on the floor.

My amendment provides critical resources to those impacted by a wide range of natural disasters in 2018—fires, earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, and tornadoes, among others. It also includes funding to begin to address some of the 2019 disaster damage.

This funding, I believe, is essential to aid our fellow Americans who are working to pick up the pieces and move on. There is a broad agreement, basically, on both sides of the aisle—Democrat and Republican—that this legislation should address 2019 disasters, and, both, my amendment and the underlying bill, do this.

There are, however, two glaring differences that I would like to discuss briefly. First, the Shelby amendment provides assistance to those affected by the 2019 disasters. The underlying bill does not. Secondly, the Shelby amendment has the support of the President. The underlying bill does not.

This assistance is not just for those whose lives were destroyed by the tornado that recently hit my home State of Alabama. It is also for those whose homes, crops, and livestock have been swept away by catastrophic flooding in the Midwest that we all witnessed recently.

Thus far, my Democratic colleagues have been unwilling to help these people unless their demands are met. What are their demands? Not more resources for 2018 or 2019 disasters, which is what the thrust of this bill is about. No, instead they demand nearly \$1 billion more for Puerto Rico. We all agree that Puerto Rico was devastated in 2017 by Hurricane Maria. That is why Congress provided Puerto Rico billions of dollars in aid in a supplemental last March right here in the Congress. Yet much of the funding that we provided has not been spent yet—billions of dollars. In fact, the Department of Housing and Urban Development recently reported that Puerto Rico has \$1.5 billion in community development block grant funding available but has only spent \$42,000. Think about that.

Why, then, are my Democratic colleagues seeking to include \$431 million more for community development block grants for Puerto Rico but not \$1 for folks in the Midwest who continue to watch the floodwaters rise as we speak?

The one piece of Puerto Rican funding we agree is essential—in fact, it is urgent—is nutrition assistance. They need it, and they need it now. That is why my amendment includes \$600 million to provide the people of Puerto Rico the food safety net they need now.

I believe we need to move forward with this disaster package so that those who have thus far received nothing from this Congress and those in desperate need of assistance can move on with their lives. We should not further delay, I believe, this assistance. Those in need must not be forced to wait any longer.

I also wholeheartedly agree with my colleagues who said in a recent letter to Senate and House leadership: “Providing desperately needed relief to impacted communities should be a bipartisan, bicameral priority and continued inaction is unacceptable.”

I hope we will all join together to provide assistance to those who ur-

gently need it today, regardless of whether the State we represent has been struck by disasters covered in this bill.

Only one of the two options before the Senate seeks to help everyone impacted by disasters and can be signed into law, and that is the Shelby amendment. Again, I urge my colleagues to vote yes on cloture.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

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

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Senate amendment No. 201 to H.R. 268, making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Roy Blunt, Richard C. Shelby, Johnny Isakson, Pat Roberts, Steve Daines, Mike Rounds, David Perdue, Rick Scott, Lamar Alexander, John Barrasso, John Hoeven, John Thune, John Boozman, Shelley Moore Capito, Tom Cotton, Rob Portman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on Senate amendment No. 201, offered by the Senator from Alabama, Mr. SHELBY, to H.R. 268, making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), the Senator from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) would have voted “yea” and the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) would have voted “nay.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 44, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 55 Leg.]

YEAS—44

Alexander	Gardner	Portman
Barrasso	Graham	Risch
Blackburn	Grassley	Roberts
Blunt	Hawley	Romney
Boozman	Hoeven	Rounds
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Collins	Inhofe	Sasse
Cornyn	Isakson	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Jones	Shelby
Crapo	Kennedy	Thune
Cruz	Lankford	Tillis
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Perdue	

NAYS—49

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

NOT VOTING—7

Burr	Lee	Toomey
Cassidy	McSally	
Harris	Sullivan	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 44, and the nays are 49.

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

The majority leader is recognized

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to reconsider the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on H.R. 268, making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Josh Hawley, John Thune, Shelley Moore Capito, Johnny Isakson, Mike Crapo, Richard Burr, James Lankford, Tom Cotton, Roy Blunt, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, Bill Cassidy, John Cornyn, Rob Portman, Steve Daines, John Kennedy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on H.R. 268, a bill making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.
The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), the Senator from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) would have voted "nay."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 46, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 56 Leg.]

YEAS—46

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

NAYS—48

Alexander	Ernst	Paul
Barrasso	Fischer	Perdue
Blackburn	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Braun	Hawley	Romney
Capito	Hoeven	Rounds
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Collins	Inhofe	Sasse
Cornyn	Isakson	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Kennedy	Shelby
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	McConnell	Tillis
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Enzi	Murkowski	Young

NOT VOTING—6

Burr	Lee	Sullivan
Harris	McSally	Toomey

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 46, the nays are 48.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I enter a motion to reconsider the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 8.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey Kessler, of Virginia,

to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Jeffrey Kessler, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

Mitch McConnell, Steve Daines, John Thune, John Cornyn, James M. Inhofe, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Barrasso, Jerry Moran, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Johnny Isakson, Thom Tillis, John Hoeven.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 32.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Roy Kalman Altman, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Roy Kalman Altman, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Mitch McConnell, Johnny Isakson, Roger F. Wicker, Chuck Grassley, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, Deb Fischer, David Perdue, Todd Young, John Thune, Rick Scott, Mike Rounds, Marco Rubio.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sen-

ate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

BICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF RABBI ISAAC MAYER WISE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleague from Ohio, SHERROD BROWN, to mark the bicentennial anniversary of the birth of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise founded the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1889, and this year, its members are celebrating the 130th anniversary of its establishment at their annual convention in my hometown of Cincinnati, OH. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise is widely acknowledged as one of the fathers of American Reform Judaism. We would like to recognize the bicentennial anniversary of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise's birth, as well as his extraordinary professional achievements, which have had an indelible effect on the religious life of the American nation.

He created three major American institutions, all still vibrant today: the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, now the Union for Reform Judaism, in 1873; the Hebrew Union College, HUC, in 1875; and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, CCAR, in 1889. As founding president and faculty member of HUC for 25 years, Wise shaped and established Jewish seminary education in America. As CCAR president, he guided a fledgling American rabbinate to take its place within the broader American clergy as equal partners. Celebrating the 130th anniversary of its founding in 2019, the CCAR is today the world's oldest and largest rabbinical association.

In 1854, Wise founded and edited a weekly newspaper, the Israelite—later, The American Israelite—in Cincinnati. The following year, Wise founded and edited a German language newspaper, "Die Deborah." Wise was also a scholar and educator. He authored over a dozen volumes, both fiction and nonfiction, many of which dealt with intergroup relations and the place of the Jew within American society.

It is a deep source of pride to us and so many Ohioans that the roots of Reform Judaism run through Cincinnati and endure there. We are so proud of Hebrew Union College and all who serve there and learn there now, and we know that all leads back to the man we honor today, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise.

Isaac Mayer Wise was an American icon. His writings have been studied by scholars of many disciplines and backgrounds and we are proud to recognize him today.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I join my friend and colleague, Senator PORTMAN, in rising to recognize the 200th anniversary of the birth of one of