contracting arrangements, like those between TransDigm and its 100 subsidiaries, are effectively a monopoly. It is like an octopus with 100 arms putting the squeeze on the Pentagon. Effectively, the Pentagon is at the mercy of TransDigm—which owns the intellectual property—to buy the spare parts it needs to build the Nation's critical weapon systems. That leaves the American taxpayer on the hook for exorbitant price gouging.

The inspector general report found that TransDigm's choke hold has added up to tens of millions of dollars overcharging to the taxpayer. This is a good time to refresh people's memories about my legislative and oversight work with anticompetitive business practices. It is pretty simple. Monopolies invite government regulation. If that is the road TransDigm wants to continue following, I am here to deliver a message. The jig is up on this cozy relationship. The buck stops here.

I have written a letter to Acting Secretary Shanahan about these flawed contracts and failures to identify price gouging. I have asked him to make measurable recommendations on how to restore accountability and end this price gouging. One thing is crystal clear. Transparency and competition are MIA—missing in action—when the Pentagon buys spare parts from TransDigm and its subsidiaries. Now, thank God the other body, the House of Representatives, its Committee on Oversight and Reform, called an oversight hearing this week to examine TransDigm and its price-gouging shenanigans.

Congress has a constitutional duty of oversight to keep check on taxpayers' money and hold government accountable. As I said earlier, we need all hands on deck to root out wasteful spending.

Once again, we are back to square one. The Pentagon has flunked a fundamental benchmark of fiscal responsibility and stewardship. It is one of Washington's worst kept secrets. Year after year, Congress shovels more money into the Pentagon coffers to ensure we maintain the best military in the world, and I express my support for the military. I express my support that a strong department of national defense is also a strong keeper of the peace because we might not be challenged, and we are going to be able to help keep peace around the world, but year after year, the Pentagon squanders hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. Some people at the Pentagon seem to think that paying $16 million in excess profits somehow seems to be small potatoes.

In my letter to the Acting Defense Secretary, I made it clear that I am not one of those people. I have asked him to answer a direct question. That question is this: What specific steps is he going to take to stop the profiteers from pilfering taxpayer money?

Contracts like I have described today between TransDigm and the Pentagon are shortchanging the troops, fleecing the taxpayers, and tarnishing its reputation.

As Justice Brandeis said, ''sunshine is said to be the best of disinfectants.'' So I am here today to pull back the curtains on the TransDigm audit. The American people need the sun to shine in on price gouging at the Pentagon so we can root out the wasteful spending here and elsewhere.

Transparency is the best ammunition that we have to chase away the dark fiscal crowd looming along the shores of the Potomac.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Iowa for always staying on top of things like this.

Mr. President, first, I would like to talk about Police Week. Today we observe Peace Officers Memorial Day, the heart of National Police Week. We all remember the men and women in law enforcement who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and we pause to say thank you to all of our police officers who work day and night to keep our communities safe.

I want to share a special thanks to all of our law enforcement members visiting from New York, who, in my view, are the gold standard in police work.

I grew up in a neighborhood where police officers lived. I played with their children at their houses. You would always know sort of instinctively, even as a kid, when that phone rang and the spouse—almost always, in those days, the wife of a police officer—heard the phone ring, what went through her head a little bit is this: I hope that is not the call I dreaded. This is the job of police officers and their families—that is, to risk their safety for our safety—and they do a great job.

As we recognize their contributions, we should acknowledge what we could do in Congress to make their jobs safer and easier. We can make our streets safer by passing comprehensive background check legislation. We can help law enforcement combat foreign opioid trafficking by passing the bipartisan Fentanyl Sanctions Act and the POWER Act, which provides handheld scanning devices. When a police officer is on a drug bust, they can tell if fentanyl is part of a crime scene there, and they can take precautions to protect themselves, because we know how deadly fentanyl is, even if it gets on your skin or in your nostrils. We can also do more to care for the families of fallen officers.

That is why I have been so proud to fight alongside my colleague Senator GILLIBRAND and so many others to make sure that the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund has the necessary funding.

Last Friday, the New York Police Department, or the NYPD, added the names of nearly 50 police officers to the 9/11 memorial wall, all of whom died in 9/11-related illnesses. It is our duty to take care of these families, and the first step is making sure that the Victims Compensation Fund has enough funds to compensate them.

I say to our law enforcement officers two words: Thank you. Thank you for your service. It is an honor to represent you in the Senate, and we are all grateful for the sacrifices you make every day.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, now on judges, during the same week that we mark the 65th anniversary of the historic ''Brown v. Board of Education'' decision, Leader MCCONNELL has scheduled votes on nominees whose views directly contradict the spirit of equality and justice that Brown represents.

It is appalling. These new people we are putting on the bench turn the clock so backward after we have made so much progress, many of it through the courts.

Consider the nomination of Michael Truncale of Texas. He has peddled conspiracies of ''widespread voter fraud'' and once called President Obama an ''un-American imposter'' who ''bows to Arab Sheikhs and other world leaders.'' This is a man who we are putting on the bench, a man who is supposed to be judicious, thoughtful, and sees both sides. What we are putting on the bench is hard-right ideologues who will do damage to this country for a generation. Mr. Truncale was approved by the Republican Senate yesterday for a seat on the district court in Texas, and he is going to sit on that bench for life—a man who says things like this and who thinks like this.

I have always tried to put on the bench people who are moderate. So many of us have. Bill Clinton did. Barack Obama did. Here we have a parade of narrow ideologues, and that is not who should be on the bench because they will make law rather than interpret the law.

Here is another one, Kenneth Lee of California. His past writings reveal shocking positions on race and diversity, affirmative action, educational opportunity, and women's reproductive freedom. He once wrote that multiculturalism is a ''malodorous sickness'' and that sexism—sexism, which we have all seen and heard about and a little more than half of our population experiences—is ''irrelevant pouting.'' That is a man who should be on the bench? If confirmed today, Mr. LEE may preside over cases dealing with gender discrimination.

Consider Wendy Vitter, nominated to the Eastern District of Louisiana. She once promoted the idea that contraceptives caused cancer and claimed that Planned Parenthood kills 150,000 women annually. She also refused to acknowledge that Brown v. Broad was correctly decided. On this very anniversary, that is who is on the floor to be voted on in lockstep by all the folks here on the Republican side. She refused to acknowledge that Brown v.

Board was correctly decided, saying instead that the decision was correct with the benefit of hindsight—whatever that means. In the same district, where 6-year-old Ruby Bridges became the first African-American child to attend an all-White elementary school in the South, the Senate will consider confirming someone who claims that hindsight was needed to understand why the decision that allowed Ruby to go to the same school as a White child wasn't correct. That is who we are putting on the bench.

These are not just conservatives. We understand that the President and Republicans will put in conservatives, but hard-right, narrow ideologues who show no understanding or sympathy for people who don't look like them or pray like them or marry like them—what is wrong here?

It is not hard. If you need the benefit of hindsight to understand that Brown v. Board of Education, which brought an end to school segregation and led to the end of American apartheid, was correctly decided, you shouldn't be a Federal judge. I urge my colleagues, in the spirit of the Brown anniversary and what it means, to oppose Ms. Vitter's nomination this afternoon.

PUERTO RICO

Mr. President, now on Puerto Rico, briefly, as negotiations on a final package of disaster aid continue, I want to stress to everyone that we must remain focused on reaching an agreement as swiftly as possible. Disaster-stricken Americans in the West, the South, the Midwest, and 3 million citizens of Puerto Rico are waiting on Congress to deliver relief, in some cases for disasters that occurred over a year ago.

Why is this held up?

We know why. Republicans are not willing to give aid to Puerto Rico. There was a bill that would never pass the House and something they didn't think originally, when President Trump said: Don't do it. And they just bowed down. They thought they could roll over the House and the Democratic minority in the Senate, who wouldn't stand up for certain Americans.

Well, we did. Now, thankfully, we are making progress. Republicans are realizing that Puerto Ricans cannot be left out of the package, but now we must avoid poison pills at all costs. President Trump, if he sticks his thumb into this again and asks for something unreasonable, will delay disaster aid once again, just as he did before.

To my Republican colleagues, let's do this together. Let's do it in the right way. Let's do it in the way that can pass the House.

President Trump will sign the bill. We have to make sure this legislation gets across the finish line. Every time the President intervenes and Republican colleagues go along, it gets held up even further.

ABORTION

Mr. President, on the Alabama abortion bill, last night the Republican Alabama Senate passed, perhaps, the most draconian abortion law in the country. It bans abortion in every stage of pregnancy, imposes criminal penalties—criminal penalties—on any doctor who performs one, and includes no exception in the case of rape or incest, even if the victim is a child. If a child is raped, they have to have the baby.

The Alabama bill is as extreme as it gets. It is a clear attack on women's freedom. It contravenes a woman's constitutional right to make private medical decisions. It would deeply harm women, turn doctors into criminals, and deny the right of rape victims, even if they are children, to make personal medical decisions.

The Alabama abortion bill is plainly inhumane. It should never have passed. The Governor should not sign it. If she does, it ought to be swiftly struck down by the courts.

IRAN

Mr. President, on Iran, over of the past few days, it has come to light in public reporting that the Trump administration's national security team has reviewed a plan to deploy as many as 120,000—yes, you heard that right, 120,000—U.S. troops in the Mideast should tensions with Iran escalate. I was stunned to read this report in the New York Times yesterday.

The administration just started a maximum pressure campaign of sanctions against Iran, but is it simultaneously reviewing plans for war? That would make no sense.

Meanwhile, the President oddly denied the report while also saying he would ''absolutely'' send ground troops to the Middle East. But if he did, it would be a ''heck''—and I am paraphrasing—''of a lot more troops [than 120,000].''

Did we learn the lessons of the last decade? Do we know that we have to spend our time focusing on building up this country here, not build roads and bridges in the Middle East but do them here?

There is an alarming lack of clarity here. There is a lack of strategy, and there is a lack of consultation. The President ought to come up with a strategy and make it clear to Congress. An adventure like this—120,000 troops or a large number of troops—should have to be approved by Congress. It certainly should be discussed with Congress ahead of time. There need to be open hearings and closed briefings with the committees of jurisdiction immediately.

Any potential increase in our military presence in the Middle East should require consultation with Congress, and anything beyond that would require this body to act.

President Trump, what is your strategy? Where are you headed? Why aren't you talking to Congress about it?

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr. President, finally, on public housing, it was reported last week that the Department of HUD has proposed a rule that would bar families with mixed immigration status from receiving public housing assistance, even if everyone but one member of the family is a legal resident. So if it is a family of six—a mother who is an American citizen, four children who are American citizens, but a husband who is not and who is not here legally—they kick them all out. It risks displacing tens of thousands of legal residents and of American citizens, including 55,000 children. The administration has created crisis after crisis with the immigration community. Are they going to create another one and take 55,000 young American children, almost all of whom are citizens, and just kick them out on the streets when we know there is very little affordable housing? What a cruel and callous policy. It is another example of the Trump administration's desire to separate families and disrupt communities.

There is nothing to say about this proposed rule but that it is cruel, wrong-headed, and would lead to even more chaos than the administration has created already.

In an effort to appear even more punitive toward immigrants, the administration has conjured up a rule that could potentially force tens of thousands of children into homelessness or away from their families.

My message to President Trump and Secretary Carson is simple: Scrap this idea now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, it is an honor to rise today to speak in this Chamber on behalf of the people of Missouri. When I think of those who have served my State here before me, I am humbled. When I think of the true and strong Missourians who have sent me here, I am sobered, because to represent them will be a great responsibility indeed. I pledge to my fellow Missourians that I will work at this task with all the strength that God can give me, and I will serve without fear and without favor to any man.

We Missourians are known for our frankness, and today I will be frank because this is a moment of great need for my State and for our Nation. This Nation was born in a revolution by ''We the People'' and premised on a revolutionary faith that it is the people—the common man and woman who make democracy work—and it is the calling of every generation to renew that revolution for their day. In our time, our revolutionary faith is faltering, and in the heartland of this country, the great challenge of our age is unfolding.

I come from a town called Lexington, MO. It is a small place, but a proud one. It is a place where people wake early and work late to make a life for themselves and their children. It is a place where people value honesty and gumption and life's simple pleasures: a fine morning in a deer stand, reading