

Our mental health system should be there for people at every age, from nursery to nursing home. It should be there for people everywhere along the mental health continuum, offering everything from preventive care, to ongoing therapy for chronic conditions, to crisis support for those in acute distress. It should also be there for people in every ZIP Code, and unfortunately, some of the biggest holes in our system can be found in rural areas.

As a Senator, I am proud to serve on the Agriculture Committee. I frequently meet with farm groups, and today mental health is one of the first topics to come up. Farming is an inherently stressful profession, especially these days, when the numbers for suicide prevention hotlines regularly appear in farm publications. But we need to include the entire rural community, from bankers and pastors to grocers and fertilizer sellers. We need to include them in this conversation, and we need to make sure that when people do reach out for help, there is help there for them.

Unfortunately, rural communities in general are often underserved by mental health professionals compared to cities and suburbs. Many still have inconsistent access to the internet, meaning that even online resources can be out of reach for someone who is struggling. That is why, in the last farm bill, we set up a rural health liaison in the Department of Agriculture—someone who understands the specific needs of rural communities and is charged with paying attention to a crisis that has too often lurked beneath the surface.

Last year, Senator MURKOWSKI and I worked together to pass a law that would provide mental health professionals in the National Health Service Corps with greater flexibility in where they practice and deliver care, increasing the resources available in underserved rural communities.

I hope my colleagues will join me in continuing to take action to address the mental health crisis, and I hope that sharing my own story will make it easier for more Americans to add their voices to this fight.

Still, there is no magic cure for depression. There is no magic bill to solve this problem. Mental health is a reality of life for millions of people in our country, and we can't legislate it away. If we work to help more Americans bring their struggles out of the shadows into the sunshine, if we reach out to people in need and connect them with people who can help, and if we understand the factors that make people vulnerable to these problems and focus our energies on making sure the net is there to catch them if they fall—if we do these things, then we can take steps in the right direction, one right after the other and one day at a time.

I still remember what it felt like in those weeks and months after I began to treat my depression—the sense of empowerment that came with finally

taking my mental health into my own hands, the renewed energy that came with finally feeling like today is better than yesterday and maybe tomorrow will be even better yet, and the joy that came with finally seeing hope on the horizon once again. So even in the midst of this public health crisis, I believe there is hope on the horizon for the millions of Americans who struggle with mental illness, but they are counting on us to make this hopeful vision a reality.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

REMEDY ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, if you watched “60 Minutes” on Sunday, you would not have been surprised that there was a segment relating to prescription drug pricing. Everywhere we turn, somebody is raising the question about why we are paying so much for prescription drugs and why the cost of these drugs has gone through the roof.

We want to encourage research. We want to encourage innovation. We understand that these are profit-making companies, so we understand we will pay for that. But what we are seeing in terms of the pricing of drugs across America now is inconsistent with any of the history that we have had. It seems as if pharma believes that if they own a drug, they can charge whatever they can charge, and no one will question them.

It makes a difference. Blue Cross Blue Shield, the largest health insurer in my State of Illinois, analyzed the cost of care in our State and nearby and asked: What is driving the increase in health insurance premiums? The cost of prescription drugs, even more than the cost of inpatient hospital care.

Look at all of those big hospitals and all of the important work they are doing and expensive procedures they are involved in. All of that cost does not equal the rising cost of prescription drugs. That is why our health insurance premiums are going up, so it is understandable that more and more of us are talking about this and trying to find practical ways to approach it that might make things better.

Can you consider one policy that might have the support of Democrats and Republicans, the American Association of Retired Persons, the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, 88 percent of Americans, and the Trump administration? What in the world could that be? Here it is: a measure I introduced in 2017 to require pharmaceutical companies to disclose the prices with new prescription drug advertising.

Last year, Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, Republican of Iowa, and I teamed up to pass a measure in the Senate to require pricetags on the television ads. We were stopped in conference by a single House Republican.

Think about those television ads. What do they tell us in those ads? For 60 seconds, as fast as they can talk, they tell us everything under the sun. If you are allergic to XARELTO, do not take XARELTO. Certain negative things may happen if you take this drug or the other drug. On they go for 60 seconds without stopping. Yet they never disclose the price of the drug.

After Senator GRASSLEY and I put our bill in last year, I got a call from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Alex Azar. He decided he wanted to pick up on our effort and join us. Think about that for a minute—a Republican Senator, a Democratic Senator, and the Trump administration agreeing on something. It turns out, he thinks it is a good idea, and I do too.

If we had price disclosure on these ads on television, it might open the eyes of a lot of people as to what it costs. What is the most heavily advertised drug on television today? HUMIRA. Why was HUMIRA invented or discovered? To treat arthritis, particularly psoriatic arthritis. Guess what they discovered. It also had a side benefit they didn't anticipate. You know the little red patch on your elbow—psoriasis? If you take HUMIRA, all of a sudden, that little red patch goes away. So if you are watching the ads on television, some of them are about arthritis, but some of them show ladies sitting by swimming pools with flawless skin because they are taking HUMIRA. It is very interesting.

There is one thing they leave out. Do you know what HUMIRA costs? It costs \$5,500 a month. This red patch on my elbow may trouble me when it comes to the swimsuit competition, but I am not going to spend \$5,500 to deal with it. I think they ought to have to disclose the price of the drug. We take their prices; we do not make up the price. The price they declare as pharmaceutical manufacturers—we believe that is the one that should be advertised.

On Monday, Senator GRASSLEY and I introduced the bill to codify this rule that the Trump administration is pushing for price disclosure and to ensure its long-term implementation. We are happy to have on board with us Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, Republican of Tennessee, and Senator KING, Independent Democrat from Maine. Disclosing prices in drug ads is a simple step to give patients a break at the pharmacy. We have to do a lot more. I think this is a good starting point, though.

American patients and taxpayers pay the highest prices in the world for most medications. Eli Lilly, out of Indianapolis, IN—they make a drug called Humalog. It is for diabetes. It is an insulin drug that can cost up to \$329 per dose here in the United States. Humalog, insulin, diabetes—the cost is \$329.

What does the same vial of the same drug made by the same company cost

in Canada? It costs \$38. It is \$329 here and \$38 there.

In 2017, Canadians could purchase AbbVie's HUMIRA, which I mentioned earlier, for \$20,000; for Americans, \$40,000. The worst part of this price disparity is that American taxpayers are the ones paying to develop these drugs in the first place. Our tax dollars at the National Institutes of Health provide the clues and the direction for these companies to take our federally funded research and turn it into a valuable drug, a valuable medical device, and then charge us more than any other place in the world.

All 210 drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration between the years 2010 and 2016 received funding from the National Institutes of Health, supported by nearly \$40 billion by U.S. taxpayers each year. I am all for that, incidentally—funding the NIH and leading to this research. But make no mistake, these breakthrough drugs start at the National Institutes of Health at taxpayers' expense. So American taxpayers get hit twice. We pay for the initial research, which leads to the drug, and then we, of course, pay for the drugs at the highest levels.

The heart of the problem is that our system does not function as a free market. There are too many forces at work when it comes to prescription drugs that limit competition. Often Big Pharma charges as much as they can get away with because they manipulate the patent system to avoid competition.

The theory used to be that if you discovered the drug, you could sell it exclusively for, say, 20 years, and then everybody could take your formula, make generic drugs, and there would be open competition so that the price would go down. That is not how it works.

The core issue is that roughly 10 percent of brand name, patent-protected drugs account for 80 percent of spending in America. The overwhelming prescriptions are for generic drugs, which are affordable drugs, but it turns out that even though 90 percent of the prescriptions are for generic drugs, they account for only 20 percent of all the spending. It is that 10 percent of brand name drugs that account for 80 percent of all prescription drug spending because they are so expensive.

In what other industry does the price of the consumer product increase year after year after being introduced on the market? Maybe a collector of artwork or baseball cards but certainly not when it comes to something that is a life-and-death commodity like a drug.

The point is, I don't believe our Founding Fathers envisioned a scheme where Sanofi's Lantus, insulin that was approved in the year 2000, would receive 45 additional patents after it was approved by the FDA, providing a massive 37-year monopoly by Sanofi on this insulin product. During that time, the price of insulin has increased from

\$35 to more than \$270 because Sanofi has successfully bought lower cost generic competitors, and it is not just Lantus or insulin.

Celgene's cancer drug, REVLIMID, has been awarded 96 patents, many of which were awarded after the initial FDA approval. As a result, REVLIMID, effectively, has gone 40 years without competition.

The same goes for Pfizer's nerve pain drug, Lyrica. You have seen that one advertised on TV. I have. That entered the market in 2004. Lyrica has received 68 patents, including filing more than 2 dozen after initial FDA approval. They are gaming the system to avoid competition to keep their prices high.

In fact, the top 12 best-selling drugs in America each have an average of 71 patents. Why do they get a new patent? Because they have decided that instead of a 150-mg tablet, there will be a 75-mg tablet, and they get a new patent. Or they put a new coating on the outside of the pill or they have a new manufacturing technique. They get the patent. They have exclusivity in the market for another extended period of time.

The top 12 best-selling drugs in America each have an average of 71 patents, and 74 percent of all new drug patents are for drugs that are already on the market. They are gaming the system.

We can and we should reward innovative research so that companies can earn a profit for good work and big ideas. But an abusive manufacturer should not be allowed to game the government patent system while being shielded from competition.

This month I am going to give what I call my Pharma Fleece Award. I made a special sign here so that pharma would know what we are talking about. This month we are going to give this Pharma Fleece Award to Celgene, Pfizer, and Sanofi for stacking excessive secondary patents to block generic competition. The net result, of course, is that American consumers pay more for their products.

To address this, I introduced legislation last month with Senator CASSIDY, Republican from Louisiana and a medical doctor, called the REMEDY Act. Our bipartisan bill reduces incentives for Big Pharma to "evergreen," which is a technical term in this application. It is an effort to amass endless quantities of follow-on patents that shield blockbuster drugs from competition from generics. You see, under an act, a law known as the Hatch-Waxman Act, when a generic drug manufacturer seeks approval from the FDA, they are routinely blocked by a maze of patents held by the brand name company.

The generic company has the option to say whether they think the patents covering the brand name drug are not valid or relevant. If so, that can trigger a patent infringement lawsuit. When this happens, the FDA issues a 30-month freeze on the generic company's application to hash out the issue. The problem with this 30-month freeze is it

extends the monopoly period for the drug again, and it incentivizes the filing of secondary follow-on patents that may not add to the safety or efficacy of the drug.

This automatic 30-month freeze on competition encourages pharma to amass large numbers of secondary patents and block generic companies from putting on the market a drug that would be in competition with their brand name drug. No matter how weak the patent is, how peripheral it may be—like the coating on a pill that I mentioned earlier—it works. For 30 months, there is another delay before there is competition.

The REMEDY Act, which Senator CASSIDY and I introduced, would restrict this 30-month freeze of FDA approval so that it applies only to primary substance patents. This removes an incentive for brand name manufacturers to continue to game the system by filing excessive follow-on patents, and it makes it easier for low-cost generic competitors to come to market.

Big Pharma is gaming the system at the expense of American patients, at the expense of the American health system, and at our expense when it comes to health insurance premiums. What are we going to do about it? Well, it turns out, we happen to be working in a place which makes laws, the U.S. Senate. We are supposed to take a challenge like this and do something about it—not just lament the fact that prescription drug pricing is out of control, but actually do something.

Lucky me, I serve on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which has authority over many of these issues, particularly when it comes to patent law. There are things we can do as members of the committee to bring down prescription drug pricing.

Honestly, if you follow the U.S. Senate, we can do something other than a nomination, which is all we have done around here for a long, long time. I am sure the American voters are happy to see us work on nominations, but they would be much happier if we worked on the high cost of prescription drugs. We have done little or nothing on this subject, other than talk about it for the last few months.

Senator McCONNELL, the Republican leader, has decided not to bring legislation to the floor of the Senate anymore. That is just from the days of yesterday when we actually debated a bill, offered amendments, had votes. People showed up on the floor because we were doing something.

Look at it now.

American patients need help from the high drug prices, not more unqualified, divisive nominees but actual legislation to help American families. What a break it would be if the U.S. Senate became the U.S. Senate again.

I hope Senator McCONNELL will allow us to put a bill on the floor of the Senate. It would be a great celebration here in the Senate. I think Republicans and Democrats would enjoy the opportunity to actually come to the floor,

have a debate, and pass a bill that may become a law that ends up helping Americans. For many of us, that is the reason we ran for office, and I hope we can return to that very soon.

NOMINATIONS

Once again, this week the Republican Leader has scheduled no legislation for votes on the Senate floor.

Instead, our Republican colleagues are spending another week rubber stamping President Trump's nominees.

This week, the Republican majority scheduled votes on three Trump judicial nominees. Each of these nominees has expressed views that are ideological and extreme.

First there was Michael Truncate, nominated to the District Court for the Northern District of Texas. Mr. Truncate gave a speech in 2011 where he outrageously called President Obama "an un-American imposter."

He described the Supreme Court's decision in Shelby County that gutted the Voting Rights Act as "a victory." He has called for defunding Planned Parenthood and said that he opposes the bipartisan DREAM Act.

He has called the Environmental Protection Agency a "job killer" and called for eliminating the Departments of Education and Energy.

Mr. Truncate also gave a radio interview in 2012 thanking the Tea Party movement "for what it has meant to our country and to our Republican party."

Despite all this, only one Republican Senator, Senator ROMNEY, voted against Mr. Truncate.

Then there's Ninth Circuit nominee Kenneth Lee of California, who has been advanced by Republicans over the objection of both home State Senators. That never happened before until this year, but this is now the fifth time we have seen a nominee advance with no blue slip.

Mr. Lee initially failed to provide dozens of his controversial writings to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I remember when President Obama's Ninth Circuit nominee Goodwin Liu initially failed to fully disclose articles he had written to the Judiciary Committee. Republican members of the Committee said it was "potentially disqualifying" and said it showed either incompetence or an attempt to hide his writings.

Senate Republicans ended up filibustering Goodwin Liu's nomination. Yet every Republican member of the Judiciary Committee voted for Mr. Lee's nomination. The double standard is obvious.

When we were finally able to review Mr. Lee's writings, we saw he routinely expressed extreme views. Here are just a few examples:

He wrote: "Charges of sexism often amount to nothing but irrelevant pouting."

He said: "homosexuals generally are more promiscuous than heterosexuals, and thus their risk factor [for AIDS] increases exponentially."

He called affirmative action "liberals' most sacred shibboleth."

And he called multiculturalism a "malodorous sickness."

Then there is Wendy Vitter, nominated to the District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

Like Mr. Lee, Ms. Vitter also initially failed to disclose more than 100 speeches and documents to the Judiciary Committee.

The matters she failed to disclose included a panel she moderated in 2013 at a Louisiana Right to Life conference. At this panel, she told the audience to urge their doctors to put in their waiting rooms a brochure entitled "The Pill Kills." This is a brochure about how birth control pills supposedly kill women.

Ms. Vitter also claimed in a 2009 speech that we are "throwing out our Constitution" by counting the full population in the national census.

All three of these judicial nominees have expressed extreme ideological views that raise serious questions about their judgment. Yet Republicans are rubber stamping all three of them to lifetime appointments on the federal bench.

Then there is President Trump's nominee for Deputy Attorney General, Jeffrey Rosen. Mr. Rosen simply does not have the right qualifications for this important job.

The Deputy Attorney General runs the day-to-day operations of the Justice Department and oversees its law enforcement components.

At this critical moment, we need a Deputy Attorney General who is familiar with the Justice Department, who has experience in overseeing criminal investigations and prosecutions, and who is committed to the Department's role of enforcing the law independently without fear or favor.

Mr. Rosen has no experience working in the Justice Department or handling criminal cases. When I questioned him about core DOJ functions and agencies he will oversee if confirmed, he wasn't familiar with them and said he would have to get up to speed.

For example, when I met with him and asked him about the landmark First Step Act, he said he had "begun getting informed about it."

When I asked him about the Deputy Attorney General's role in overseeing the Federal Bureau of Prisons and addressing their critical staffing shortages, he said he wasn't familiar and couldn't comment.

When I asked him about voting rights and voter suppression, he said he hadn't had occasion to study the issue.

When I asked him about the DEA's role in setting opioid production quotas, which he will oversee, he didn't know about it.

When I asked him about DOJ's role in immigration matters, including his priorities for the immigration courts he will oversee, he said he looked forward to learning more about it.

Mr. Rosen was a longtime colleague of Attorney General Barr at a law firm,

and he has held positions in other government agencies like the Department of Transportation. But that does not make him qualified to be the Deputy Attorney General.

Because my Republican colleagues used the nuclear option to change the Senate rules, there is now less time for the Senate to debate controversial nominees like Mr. Truncate, Ms. Vitter, and Mr. Rosen.

But the American people see what is going on. They see the rush by President Trump and Senate Republicans to confirm nominees who are ideological or who lack the right qualifications for the job.

I oppose these nominees. And I regret that the Senate's advice and consent process has become an exercise in Republican rubber stamping. This institution can, and should, do better.

I see that my colleague from Texas is here on the floor, and I don't want to take any more time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from Texas.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 5:30 p.m., all postclosure time on the Lee nomination be considered expired; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action. I ask that following disposition of the Lee nomination, the Senate vote on the cloture motions for the Vitter, Bulatao, and Rosen nominations; finally, that if cloture is invoked on those nominations, the confirmation votes on the Vitter and Bulatao nominations occur at noon on Thursday and the Rosen confirmation vote occur at 1:45 p.m. on Thursday, May 16, and that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

(The remarks of Mr. CORNYN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1480 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. CORNYN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LANKFORD. 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.

Mr. LANKFORD. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I am going to be on the floor with some of my colleagues in the next hour.

I thank my colleague from Iowa, Senator ERNST—Lieutenant Colonel Ernst, by the way, of the Iowa National Guard—for organizing the series of discussions we are going to have in the next couple of minutes on the Senate floor that will focus on Military Appreciation Month. I think we are all going to talk about how wonderful our military is, and we will probably do a little bit of bragging about our different States and how we support and appreciate our military so much.

I like to come down on the floor and talk in superlatives about my State, the great State of Alaska. It is true that most Senators love to talk about their States in all of their superlatives, which is good. We are proud States. We each think we live in the best State in the country. We all believe that. I happen to think my State is the best State in the country.

In talking about our military and its support and Military Appreciation Month, we certainly have a large military presence in Alaska. We have about 32 military facilities and 5 major installations. Roughly, 10 percent of the population is either in the military or is a family member of someone who is in the military.

I like to say that Alaska actually constitutes three pillars of our Nation's military might. Whether the attacks be from Kim Jong Un or the Iranians, we are the cornerstone of missile defense, which are the missiles and the radar that protect the entire country from attacks. This all resides in Alaska. We are the hub air combat power for the Asia-Pacific and the Arctic, and we will have over 100 fifth-generation fighters—F-22s, F-35s—by the end of next year. We are also a vital platform for some of America's best trained troops to be deployed anywhere around the world because of our strategic location. Alaska also boasts the largest number of veterans per capita of any State in the country. These are the facts, and they are all good.

What is so unique about Alaska—and, I would say, as in most States—is how proud we are of our military and how much the communities of Alaska—big communities, small communities—support the men and women who serve in the military. It is almost a part of our DNA in Alaska. Let me just give you one example.

I was in a group of community leaders in Delta Junction, which is in Alaska's interior. It is actually near Fort Greely, where we have our missile defense fields. It is right on the outskirts of what is called the JPARC, which is the biggest air training range in the entire United States. The airspace is actually the size of Florida. There is great training, and we have Red Flag

exercises. Our men and women in the Air Force, in particular, do some wonderful training there.

We were in this community meeting, and some Air Force pilot was flying low and fast. He probably broke the sound barrier because there was a giant sonic boom. It shook the whole building. It shook the whole meeting room. Now, I would say, in most States, that would probably result in having people complain and call their Congressmen and Senators in their being mad about what the military would be doing—shaking the buildings with sonic booms because they would be breaking the speed of sound as they would be training. Yet the mayor of Delta just looked at me and said, “The sound of freedom.” There were no complaints, just support.

Let me give another example.

In so many of our smaller Native communities—Native villages—across Alaska, one sees what I refer to as special patriotism. Alaska Natives and the lower 48 American Indians serve in the military at higher rates than any ethnic group in the country. That is a special patriotism because—let's face it—these great American patriots weren't always supported by their government when they came home after fighting in World War II or in Vietnam.

As a matter of fact, there was a documentary that was produced about the community of Hoonah, AK, which is in Southeast Alaska. The film was called “Hunting and Wartime.” It was about the fact that almost every single male high school senior in the late 1960s in these small communities went off to fight in Vietnam—almost every one of them.

That is special patriotism. This support for the military isn't a recent phenomenon in Alaska. In 1942, during World War II, Alaskans oversubscribed their war bond quota by 300 percent, which surpassed that of every State in the Union.

So many Senators—Democratic and Republican—are going to come down to the floor and talk about our Military Appreciation Month, as they should. There is some talk in the country about the 1 percent and the less than 1 percent. Well, the 1 percent I really care about is the less than 1 percent of young men and women who still, today, raise their right hands to support and defend the Constitution and to defend our liberty, knowing it could even cost them their lives by their joining the U.S. military.

We all have wonderful veterans and wonderful men and women in the military whom we support in the U.S. Senate. I tell my constituents that the one thing we are focused on doing is making sure, when you send your son or daughter to join the military, that it is the top military in the world, the most ready military in the world, and the most capable military in the world.

One thing we are doing is reversing a dangerous trend. From 2010 to 2015, defense spending for the U.S. military

was cut by almost 25 percent during the second term of the Obama administration—25 percent—and readiness plummeted. We are changing that because no man or woman in this country who volunteers to support and defend the Constitution by joining the military should be joining a military that is not at the highest level of readiness and lethal in terms of its getting the job done. So I am going to pass this on to some of my colleagues here. As the Senator from a State where communities support our military so much, I just want to thank all the members, regardless of where you live, for the great work you do and to let you know that the Senate supports you with all its heart and soul.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, while my friend and colleague from Alaska is still on the floor, I want to thank him for his many years of service as a marine.

I am here to talk about North Carolina and Military Appreciation Month. We have a special relationship with members of the military and their families in North Carolina. We have a million veterans in the State. Literally hundreds of thousands of people serve in the military.

You may have heard of the Global Response Force. The Global Response Force is out of Fort Bragg. When there is a crisis anywhere in the world, whether it is a military conflict or a relief effort, it is the 82nd Airborne that goes out to the green ramp down in Fort Bragg, NC, and goes wherever they need to go, sometimes with 48 hours' notice.

Just down the street from there, we have the marines at Camp Lejeune. The marines who are based in Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point and New River constitute about 45 percent of all the marines serving in the Marine Corps.

We can go up to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, and we have a proud number of men and women in the Air Force who are part of a base that will be the home to the new KC-46, a next-generation tanker.

To say we have a close bond with the military is an understatement. We love them, and we love their families.

I chair the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, so I have an opportunity to have a direct role in showing appreciation to not only the men and women who are serving in the military but also their spouses. It is a tough job. They are serving too.

As we think about Military Appreciation Month, let's make sure we are, first and foremost, thinking about not only those brave men and women who have sworn the oath to defend and protect our Nation but also their families, who are an integral part of their being capable and ready to do the job.

I also want to make sure we don't lose sight of the veteran population—a

million of them in my State alone. One-tenth of our population are veterans.

We should also talk about the National Guard and the reservists. If you take a look at a State like North Carolina, we have had a number of people in the National Guard who have been deployed multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan—some of the most dangerous places you could be. They do it with courage, and they do it with honor. During Military Appreciation Month, I think we should pay special attention to this special group of people. I hope that every day of the year, each and every one of you shows them the appreciation and the respect they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, like my colleagues and like people from around the country, North Dakotans are very proud of our military heritage. In fact, North Dakotans sign up at a rate four times the national average. I think you will hear that theme throughout the Midwest especially.

I am grateful to Senator ERNST for her leadership today as we stand and do something we ought to do every day. It is something we ought to do in church when we are sitting next to them in the pews and when we are talking to our neighbors who are serving or their spouses or family members. We are saying: Thank you. Forgive us for not saying it more often. Frankly, part of why we don't say "thank you" more often is because we go about our business in complete comfort, unaware of the dangers around the world because you all do your jobs so very well. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. President, North Dakota is home to two Air Force bases. I recently finished a tour of the military bases in North Dakota, and I want to speak briefly about the airmen at those two bases.

Grand Forks, ND, houses the 319th Air Base Wing, known as the Warriors of the North. Just last Saturday, Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson visited Grand Forks and redesignated this base as the 319th Reconnaissance Wing. This is one of only three of its kind. I am continually impressed with the mission of the Global Hawk. The Global Hawk mission that is headquartered out of Grand Forks is remarkable. I believe that Grand Forks is a place that is well-positioned for the future of warfighting.

To the west of Grand Forks a couple hundred miles is the community of Minot. Minot, ND, is home to the 5th Bomb Wing and the 91st Missile Wing at the Minot Air Force Base. This is interesting because, of course, the bomb wing operates the intercontinental ballistic missiles and the B-52 bombers at the same base. That is two of the three legs of the nuclear triad we hear so much about. You are not going to find

a stronger proponent of the nuclear triad than you will in me because it is the only base of its kind.

As the base's motto goes, "Only the best come North." Our greatest defense is in detouring our adversaries, and certainly the nuclear triad is important to that. Every day, the airmen in Minot wake up with literally the weight of the world, in many cases, on their shoulders. So for their service and their willingness to stand in the gap in the defense of the world, I am immensely grateful and always impressed.

Of course, I would be remiss to not also mention the airspace station in Cavalier. I think it is the Air Force's smallest base, but it is a very important installation. As we debate in this Chamber the need for a modernized space force, understanding the work this base does has further compelled me to stand in support of a modern, capable military unit able to defend the emerging domain that space has become. A special thank-you to those 40 or so airmen in Cavalier who do an incredible job far from home and in many cases far from a lot of other people around them.

On a more personal note, I want to say "thank you" to the military families and spouses of those stationed in North Dakota, as my colleagues have done. As we know, in a family, everybody serves. In a small community, everybody serves together. They come from all over the country, and they bless our local communities and our State with their work in North Dakota. They deserve a very special thanks for that service.

Our military community is not, of course, defined solely by our Air Force bases; it is also defined by our incredible Army and Air National Guard in North Dakota. In Fargo, for example, I am going to highlight this one unit—the 119th Wing of North Dakota's Air National Guard, known as the Happy Hooligans. They are frequent recipients of the Air Force's Outstanding Unit Award. In fact, earlier this year, they received their 20th Outstanding Unit Award. This is an award that is given to the units that distinguish themselves by exceptional service and outstanding achievement. No group better exemplifies that than the Happy Hooligans. In fact, no unit has received more Outstanding Unit Awards either in the active Air Force or in the Guard than the Happy Hooligans. Congratulations.

While we are talking about the Guard, I want to say a special thanks not only to the families—because, as I said, they all serve—but in the Guard, there are a lot of people who serve, including their employers. I don't think we say "thank you" to the employers often enough who accommodate—no, facilitate—no, encourage the incredible military personnel who do a great job for us on the homefront, as well as when called into action beyond our borders.

The mission of the National Guard is to provide ready units, individuals, and

equipment supporting our communities, our States, our Nation.

If I might elaborate a little bit on homeland issues, just a few short years ago, our State called on our National Guard to meet that mission. We were abandoned by the Federal Government, and the North Dakota National Guard was deployed to help keep the peace. It is appropriate today, on this Peace Officers Memorial Day, that we recognize this relationship. The National Guard was deployed to keep the peace as out-of-State activists with no interest, really, in North Dakota—they flooded our State to violently protest the legally permitted Dakota Access Pipeline. Absent Federal help, our Governor called on our National Guard as a last resort.

You would think that would have some serious ramifications. Well, the reality is, because of the quality of our guardsmen, they did what the previous administration would not—they stood up for the rule of law, and they stood in the way of radical protesters even while their own families were targets of the radical protests, the harassment of radical protesters from everywhere other than North Dakota. They put their lives at risk and did it without provocation, without escalation, and with a calming presence. They didn't run from their orders. They didn't balk at their commands. They answered the call to peacefully and professionally defend our State from the chaos that descended upon us.

Again, "thank you" is inadequate. It is all we can do today. I would just compel people to say "thank you" more often. As you see that neighbor, as you see that person sitting next to you, make it a point to say "thank you" out loud, in front of friends.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Thanks to the Senator from North Dakota.

The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, during Military Appreciation Month, we honor the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform, those who have worn it in the past, and those who have sacrificed their lives for our freedom.

As a Senator and a combat veteran with over 23 years of service between the Army Reserves and the Iowa Army National Guard, I am grateful to have the opportunity to get to know so many patriotic and selfless Americans, and Iowans are well represented in those ranks. Nearly 9 percent of our State's adult population are veterans. The national average is just above 6½ percent. From World War II to the global war on terrorism, Iowans have served with honor and distinction.

Military Appreciation Month is also a time to recognize our military families who sacrifice so much and faithfully support our men and women in uniform. They keep things running during long deployments and help during the transition back to civilian life—they help that family member—and, of course, long, long after. So to

all of our military families in Iowa and, of course, across the Nation, thank you for choosing to serve.

This month is also a good opportunity for those of us in the Senate to highlight some of the work we are doing to support our servicemembers, our military families, and, of course, our veterans. Next week, the Senate Armed Services Committee will be starting our yearly national defense authorization bill process. In anticipation of that process, I will be joining my Democratic colleague from Arizona, Senator SINEMA, to introduce two new bills to address military sexual assault—one to improve prevention and the other to streamline prosecution.

I will also be introducing a bill with Senator WARREN that will explore ways to better track traumatic brain injuries sustained by our warfighters. Helping our servicemembers with injuries sustained in battle is a top priority of mine. We owe it to our wounded warriors to seek out game-changing treatments and to help them heal and recover.

As the chairman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, I will also use the NDAA process to ensure that the bill fosters technological advancements to better equip our warfighters for success.

Military Appreciation Month is an important reminder of the daily sacrifice made by our servicemembers, our military families, and our veterans. It is also a solemn time to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice to keep America free, safe, and prosperous. We have many of our own Members who have served in the military, and I want to thank them all very much. So for those of us who have worn boots, we take a look at this legislation and find ways that we can better support those who serve.

In the Senate, members of our military, families, and veterans have our support and our gratitude, not only today but every day.

I know the folks back home in Iowa feel the same.

So from all of us to all of you who have worn the uniform and those who have supported those who have worn the uniform, thank you for your service, and God bless you.

God bless our great State of Iowa, God bless the great United States of America and those men and women who make it possible to be free.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first of all, let me associate myself with the remarks of the Senator from Iowa.

It is so important for all of us, particularly those of us who have had occasion to serve, to really pay attention to what is going on. This is Military Appreciation Month, and it is very significant, what is going on. Every month should be Military Appreciation.

As the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and as a veteran,

it is my great honor and responsibility to support our warfighters during and after their service.

Whenever they were needed, they were there, and so we have to do a better job in supporting them. We went through 8 years of not adequately supporting the military, and it is something that many of them are suffering from now.

Now, next week, as it was pointed out, we are going to do the Defense authorization bill. It is not very often you can stand here and say we are going to introduce a bill, and we know it is going to pass. The reason we know it is going to pass is because it has passed for the last 58 years. So this one is going to pass.

I can remember a few years that we actually had to go into September to get the Defense authorization bill passed. In the event it got to the end of December, and the same thing would be true this coming year, then we would have hazard pay that wouldn't be paid, and we would have flight pay that wouldn't be paid. There would not be adequate funding to take care of any of that.

So we can't let that happen, and we are not going to let it happen.

I am a little confused now because a month from today we will actually mark up that bill in the U.S. Senate. Yet the House isn't going to do it, it is my understanding, until the middle of June.

Then I also heard that they may, over in the House, actually do the appropriations bill first.

Well, if you do the appropriations bill before you do the bill we will be marking up, the NDAA, then there is no reason to even do the NDAA from the House perspective.

So we do know that good things are going to happen. We are going to implement the national defense strategy. We have talked about the national defense strategy several times on the floor and on how we have done, I think, a very good job in putting this together. Most importantly, we are supporting our All-Volunteer Force.

I may be the last person on the Senate Armed Service Committee who still believes in compulsory service.

I often wonder what would have happened in my life if I hadn't been drafted. I always remember coming back at Christmastime, Eisenhower was President, and I was enrolled at the University of Mexico, and I looked in the mailbox and there was a card. It was from the President, and I thought how nice of the President to remember me at Christmastime. It was my draft notice. So that changed my plans, and I often wonder where I would be today if I hadn't had that experience.

We are going to provide the Armed Forces with adequate funding, and I hope we will find a budget solution. We can't do it with a continuing resolution. We have asked all of our leaders in the hearings what would happen to us if we did a continuing resolution,

and it just wouldn't work. I think we all realize that.

It puts people who are budget hawks, like me, and military hawks in a very awkward situation because we have a situation where, as a result of the 8 years of Obama, we have a thing called parity so that for every dollar you put in the military, there has to be a dollar that goes to the nondefense programs. This is something that doesn't work. So the continuing resolution, we all know, is something that should not be an option.

The responsibility carries a great weight now. We ask our men and women in uniform to do more in the face of danger and more in a dangerous and unpredictable world than at any time.

I think the Trump administration is right. They try to categorize the two threats that are out there, one being the threat of the rogue nations that are out there, and we are talking about North Korea and some of these other nations. At the same time, we also have the major threat of the great power threat, and this is one we face, and we know that. Yes, we are used to dealing with the threats of the rogue nations, but after the 8 years of the Obama administration, we watched Russia and China forge ahead of us in many areas. Hypersonic weapons are a good example, and that is something that is taking place now.

So during that period of time, during the last 5 years of the Obama administration, the amount of money that we had to run our military with was reduced by almost 25 percent. Now, we have made up a lot of this in fiscal year 2018 and in fiscal year 2019, thanks to the Trump administration. We have increased that funding back up to \$700 billion, then again \$716 billion, and this time I think we are going to be at \$750 billion.

There is some dispute as to what the exact figure will be, but nonetheless we have started to rebuild. So we will be modernizing our forces, including our nuclear arsenal now, in order to maintain our military superiority—or to regain is a better word than maintain because we have actually lost some of our superiority—well into the future. Our Armed Forces have long been the best in the world, but we have problems now in trying to rebuild, and that is what this is all about.

So we will support our troops and their families who sacrifice a great deal to protect our Nation. This includes making meaningful reforms to privatize on-base housing. We went through this housing trauma just the other day. We found out a lot of people are not being treated properly. A lot of the spouses of our members and our members are living in housing that is totally unacceptable, but we came to that realization and we are correcting that now and that is going to be corrected even further in the Defense authorization bill that we will mark up a week from today.

So we want to thank every man and woman who ever put on a uniform and those who are doing this in defense of the country, congratulate them and pay particular attention to them and support them in every way we can.

The fabric of our Nation is stronger because of the guys in uniform and those who have been in uniform, and we will endure for the years to come because of their service. God bless all of the men and women in uniform.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor as part of Military Appreciation Month. It is a time, clearly, to remember our brave service men and women, to reflect on their faithful service to this country and to recall the many sacrifices our troops and their families have made and continue to make in defense of this great Nation.

Many of us will be heading overseas for the 75th anniversary of D-day to commemorate the efforts of an incredible group of allies on the fateful day and the weeks and the months that followed.

As I stand here today, I think of those soldiers, and I think of my wife Bobbi's dad, Bob Brown—currently 92 years old, living in Thermopolis, WY, longtime postmaster. He still drives Meals on Wheels, as he says, “for the old folks.”

He was called to Europe in World War II, and he is one of those few who was in World War II in the European theater as well as in Japan as part of that first occupation and then called back to Korea as part of the 2-300 who continued in the fight for our freedoms.

He continues today to serve our United States. His wife, Jerry, who went through all of this in Thermopolis, WY, knows the sacrifices he and so many have made.

My dad, World War II, Battle of the Bulge. I still carry his dog tags from the Battle of the Bulge with me. I have them with me today on the floor of the Senate, and I carry them with me when I go to see our troops overseas.

He is the guy who had to quit school in ninth grade because of the Depression. In World War II—and I have gone through some of his old papers—I found pictures of him and a number of members of the artillery who were part of the liberation of France.

From the time I was a little boy, he would say: John, you should thank God every day because you live in America. You don't know how fortunate you are.

We are so blessed to live in this great country, and it is to the men and women who continue to protect this land, who fought for our freedoms—my dad, his wife, Louise, the sacrifices they have made on behalf of all of us.

Today we honor all of our Armed Forces, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Coast Guard, the Marines, the National Guard.

In particular, today I want to salute the members of the Wyoming Army

National Guard because they are now deploying to the Middle East. Some 300 Wyoming soldiers from six units will be sent to the Middle East between January and September—the largest Wyoming deployment in nearly a decade.

The deployments began in January with the G Company of the 2nd Battalion, 211th Aviation, a medical evacuation company—the most deployed unit in the Wyoming Guard.

The medevac unit that was sent to Afghanistan includes Wyoming soldiers from Bear River, from Casper, from Carpenter, from Guernsey, from Cheyenne, Laramie, and Wheatland.

This past week, Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon participated in a sendoff ceremony in Casper for 130 Wyoming National Guard troops headed to Texas ahead of a 9-month deployment to the Middle East.

The Wyoming troops from the 2nd Battalion of the 300 Field Artillery, the “Cowboy Cannoneers,” the group my father-in-law, Bob Brown, was part of—they are from more than two dozen communities from Casper to Lovell, to Cheyenne, to Moorcroft. This Guard unit will serve under the U.S. Central Command covering Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

Wyoming and the entire Nation owe an incredible debt of gratitude to these fearless fighters for our freedom.

God bless the U.S. Armed Forces, God bless our troops, our veterans, and God bless the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I am proud to speak today in honor of Military Appreciation Month.

Our men and women in uniform are true heroes. They risk their lives every day to protect our freedoms and our way of life.

I had the opportunity to serve in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam war, and my adopted father was one of the few who made all four combat jumps in the 82nd Airborne during World War II.

As Governor, I made it my mission to turn Florida into the most military-and veteran-friendly State in the Nation, and we succeeded. We championed important legislation and funding to support priorities that matter most to Florida's military families, and we took every opportunity to recognize veterans for their service.

Florida has 20 military bases and 3 unified commands—more than almost any other State. As Governor, I met regularly with Florida's base commanders to see how I could help support their missions and their troops. As a Senator, I continue to host base commander meetings to make sure our military has every resource they need.

America is blessed with the protection of the strongest military in the world. Our military provides not only for the safety of our country but also leads in supporting our allies and pro-

tecing freedom and democracy across the globe.

For decades, we have invested in building our military into the most lethal fighting force in the history of the world, but we live in a dangerous world, and we must avoid complacency.

Our military readiness was diminished by budget cuts and the sequester under President Obama, which reduced defense spending across the board. The dysfunction in Washington has many consequences, but a significantly weakened military is the most dangerous.

Our military superiority is never guaranteed. Russia and China continue to build up their militaries with a single goal in mind: to dominate the world stage.

To avoid a national security emergency, we must act now. That is why, as a member of the Armed Services Committee, I am fighting to match the President's request of \$750 million in defense spending, and I am fighting to secure a pay raise for our men and women in uniform—our heroes.

I have also sponsored the Pay Our Coast Guard Act to make sure military pay is never affected by a government shutdown.

We must also work together to pass disaster relief funding immediately, which will help rebuild Tyndall Air Force Base following the devastation of Hurricane Michael.

I will never lose sight of one of the most important roles I have as a U.S. Senator: to protect and serve the families of our Nation. None of us should lose sight of that.

I look forward to working closely with each of you to invest in America's greatest asset—the men and women of our Armed Forces.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I would like to echo the sentiments my colleagues have expressed in appreciation of the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces.

While it may seem like the Members of this Chamber, much like America itself, are strongly divided on issues of national policy, I can say, without a doubt, that we are all united in support of our troops and their efforts to protect and defend our Nation and its ideals. That is why I am appreciative of the opportunity to join with my colleagues today to thank the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast-guardsmen working tirelessly to protect the American people from the multitude of threats that face our Nation.

The men and women who wear our Nation's uniform selflessly serve. They are fully aware of the risks they face. Despite that, they bravely put themselves in harm's way to defend our country, ideals, and allies around the world.

They didn't choose this life to seek recognition, awards or honors. Like those who wore the uniform before

them, they chose the path of a higher calling. They chose it as a way to use their talents for the greater good. The men and women who serve in our military embody what it means to be a giver.

I know my fellow Arkansans share my gratitude and appreciation for all of our military personnel and their families who sacrifice at home while their loved ones are abroad.

Arkansas has a storied military heritage and a long and proud history of supporting our Nation's defense. Troops stationed in the State served our country honorably even before it was admitted to the Union. Today, Arkansans are stationed around the globe, and our personnel at the Little Rock Air Force Base, Camp Robinson, Ebbing Air National Guard Base, Pine Bluff Arsenal, and Fort Chaffee continue to make the Natural State proud.

We highlight their service during the month of May, which includes six military-related national observance days, as a way to express our gratitude. That gratitude endures in perpetuity.

We simply cannot thank our service-members enough for the tremendous sacrifice they made to ensure that we continue to live in the greatest, freest country that the world has ever known.

As the son of an Air Force master sergeant, I learned at a young age about the sacrifices our men and women in uniform make. I also learned very early on that military families face unique challenges. It truly is a family affair.

My father joined the National Guard while he was in high school, and while still in high school, his unit was shipped out to prepare for World War II. He remained in the Air Force long after the war was over, serving over 20 years in uniform. The example set by my father's military career—and the lessons we learned growing up in a military family—helped my siblings and me to prepare for a productive service-centered life. The experience taught us one of the most valuable lessons which I continue to carry with me today. Through their service to our country, the men and women of our military are part of something much bigger than themselves.

My father was not only my hero, but as a World War II veteran, he and his fellow servicemembers in my hometown of Fort Smith were embraced in the same manner by the community as a whole. The respect and admiration our community displayed for military members was not faked or forced. It was genuine.

It remains just as strong today in communities across our great Nation. While those displays may be more publicly visible during National Military Appreciation Month, the feelings of respect, admiration, and gratitude will carry on long after the end of this month. Our Nation is eternally grateful for the sacrifice of every service-member working to keep America safe, strong, and free.

It is a real honor to be down here with my colleague from Arkansas, and we greatly appreciate your service. Congratulations on your book, which tells the story of Arlington and what a very special place it is—truly hallowed ground.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, we are here in the middle of National Military Appreciation Month. So I am pleased to join my colleagues in showing our Nation's gratitude for every single soldier, sailor, airman, marine, and coast-guardsman who is serving or has served our Nation with honor.

This month is specially dedicated to our Armed Forces, but, of course, we have ample reason to celebrate and appreciate them year-round, because our troops serve year-round and around the clock and willingly accepting limitations on their own freedom and comforts so their fellow Americans can live in freedom and security.

Right now, thousands of American troops serve in dangerous conditions overseas far from home. Even now, at this moment, our troops are engaged in combat, surrounded by the enemy, fighting courageously.

We are all thankful and proud of their service and indebted for their sacrifice. But it is not only them. Two weeks ago I had the privilege of attending a medal ceremony in Arkansas where seven veterans of the Korean war were honored for their service and for actions they took in defense of our freedom nearly seven decades ago, so that these long-ago actions were not forgotten.

One week ago, I had the opportunity to thank our military spouses—the unsung heroes of our Armed Forces—for their work raising families despite the hardships of military life.

Those are just a couple of events from the last couple of weeks. Yet they are multiplied countless times every day across our country and around the world wherever our troops and their families are present. At airports, troops returning from overseas are greeted with hugs and cheers. The remains of our fallen heroes are greeted with odd silence.

At dinners and restaurants, a uniform or even a veteran's hat will sometimes still earn a veteran or soldier a free meal from a grateful neighbor and fellow citizen.

Here in Washington, honor flights for our veterans still get police escorts with flashing sirens, and children salute those veterans, sometimes asking innocently about their memories at battle.

Across the river at Arlington National Cemetery, sentinels of the Old Guard stand at attention and walk the mat around the clock and in all weather—just as they have for the past 82 years—to ensure that those unknown soldiers and every person whose headstone graces those beautiful rolling fields rest in eternal peace.

I am proud to live in a country that honors its military in such a fashion, but, more importantly, I am proud to live in a country whose military is worthy of such honor. So to every soldier, sailor, airman, marine, and coast-guardsman, I extend my gratitude, my respect, and my thanks to you and your family for your honorable service, not just today, not just this month but every day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, in the United States we are known as the land of the free. There is a reason for that. It is because we are the home of the brave. Our military men and women represent the very best of America. In fact, the good Word tells us that "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

When a young man or a young woman volunteers to serve, he or she is writing a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount up to and including their life. In Montana, we are very fortunate to have so many heroes hail from our great State, including many who now work on my staff and on behalf of the people of Montana. Great Montanans like Christy Hagler, Denny Lenoir, Robin Baker, and Jim Korth. We are all so very fortunate to have Dillon Vaden and Doug Pack on staff here in DC currently serving in the Marine Corps.

Thank you for your service to our country. Thank you for your service to the people of Montana.

In fact, just last fall, I had the honor of visiting the men and women of Kalispell's 495th CSSB while they were deployed in Afghanistan. They flew over to Kabul and to Bagram Air Base. I had a chance to spend time with these great Montanans.

Just a few months ago, I had the privilege of welcoming these same soldiers home after they had been deployed for 9 long months. These men and women had been far away from their families and from their friends across the holidays. Many of them were with us that night on the tarmac as they were risking their lives to protect our freedom. Seeing them reunited with their loved ones was a powerful experience for both Cindy, my wife, and me. It is one that I will never, ever forget. But the sad reality is that some of our Montana heroes do not make it back. SSG Travis Atkins is a Bozeman native. In fact, Travis and I both went to the same high school. He was recently awarded the highest military distinction in this country by President Trump, and that is the Medal of Honor.

You see, Sergeant Atkins willingly laid down his life when he tackled a suicide bomber to shield the blast from his fellow soldiers in order to save their lives—a true hero. The sacrifice he made for his country and his fellow soldiers will never be forgotten.

Over in Fort Harrison, MT, MSG Jesse Edinger of the Army National Guard has been welcoming home the fallen since 2006. He knows what sacrifice looks like. He is no stranger to combat, having served three deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. He earned his national instructor certification and has taught over the years hundreds of soldiers within his region to be honor guard trained. He has also performed more than 1,100 military funerals for Montana veterans, which included the service for SSG Travis Atkins.

While we all appreciate our brave men or brave women who serve in the military every day, this month is Military Appreciation Month. This month is about giving these men and women the added appreciation they richly deserve.

I will continue to advocate for policies that strengthen our military and give our men and our women who serve the strategic advantages they need to win.

Thank you to all who serve and to all who have served. On behalf of a very grateful Nation, we honor you, and we appreciate you.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, the month of May is Military Appreciation Month. It is a time when we as a country can come together, pause, and recognize the sacrifices of those who have raised their right hands, worn the cloth of our country, and continue to serve the world's greatest military day in and day out.

They have exceptionally long days and difficult tasks. Sometimes they fight the fight of boredom while hanging out and guarding a spot. Sometimes they are in exceptionally stressful full-on combat mode. They are prepared for both.

Throughout the month of May, there are actually six different days of observation to honor our Nation's military and their families, who have sacrificed so much: Loyalty Day, Public Service Recognition Week, Victory in Europe Day, or V-E Day, Military Spouse Appreciation Day, Armed Forces Day, and, of course, at the end of the month of May, a pause for Memorial Day. All of these observances within 1 month, in May. It is a clear sign that our military is one of the most important cornerstones of our country and that their sacrifice is unmatched. So we should honor and celebrate it.

In addition to our servicemembers and veterans, I hope all Americans also recognize the service of their family members while their husband, wife, son, daughter, mom, and dad are wearing the uniform. They could be gone for months at a time on multiple deployments.

I had the opportunity to meet with many family members in Oklahoma. Their spouse, mom, dad, son, or daughter has been deployed multiple times

into several different theaters. While they are fully deployed, their family waits, and it is a long and difficult wait. It is tough for the family.

For those who serve in our National Guard, it is tough on employers. It is tough on their personal finances. It is a stressful environment. For those folks who have done it and continue to serve—that 1 percent of our Nation that defends the other 99 percent of our Nation—we could not be more grateful for them and for their family members.

To our Gold Star families, those who are left behind to continue the legacy of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, we thank you for your service and for your love of country.

As a nation, it is our duty to continue to support our Gold Star families, to encourage them, to check on them, and to live life with them.

Just last week, I introduced legislation with Senator CARPER to expand certain educational benefits to the survivors of guardsmen and reservists who have died as a result of their service. This is the least we could do as a nation to walk alongside those Gold Star families.

Over 33,000 Active-Duty Guard, Reserve, and Active-Duty personnel are currently assigned in Oklahoma. We have Oklahomans serving our country and protecting our interests, literally, all over the world right now. We are home to Altus Air Force Base, Tinker Air Force Base, Vance Air Force Base, Fort Sill Fires Center of Excellence in the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, as well as countless different National Guard locations all around the State. We train and equip our soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines, and I am proud of the Oklahomans who wear the uniform.

As we continue this Military Appreciation Month, I hope all Americans take the time to remember that 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, whether you are awake or asleep, someone is on guard watching our Nation right now, and someone is defending our freedoms right now. Whether you are hearing about Military Appreciation Month while you are at work, while you are at play, or while you are at rest, someone is not resting right now. They are defending your freedoms, and we are grateful.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

REMEMBERING KENDRICK CASTILLO

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, Kendrick Castillo was an 18-year-old senior set to graduate high school at the end of the week when his life was tragically cut short. On Tuesday, May 7, Kendrick Castillo sat in his British literature class, just like any other day in school, when two schoolmates burst into a classroom at the STEM school in Highlands Ranch and opened fire.

When faced with the unthinkable, Kendrick acted out of pure heroism as he put his classmates' lives before his own and charged the shooters. A class-

mate of Kendrick's described his heroism by telling NBC News about his actions, "giving all of us enough time to get underneath our desks, to get ourselves safe, and to run across the room to escape."

Brendan Bialy, a classmate who charged the assailants with Kendrick, told ABC News:

Kendrick Castillo died a legend. He died a trooper. I know he will be with me for the rest of my life.

John Castillo reflected on his son's actions by saying:

He did what he had to do, and I knew that was my son's nature. That was who he was.

Kendrick Castillo displayed courage well beyond his years. He was a member of the robotics club and wanted to study electrical engineering in college and loved spending his free time fishing and camping.

Today, Colorado mourns the loss of a hero as we say good-bye to Kendrick Castillo. As his friends, family, and community all gather at Highlands Ranch for a final farewell, we must pledge to never forget this young man. Kendrick Castillo lost his life saving his fellow classmates. The students of the STEM school in Highlands Ranch experienced an absolute tragedy and showed fearlessness well beyond their years as they took charge in the face of danger.

Now is the time to come together in tragedy to rise above it and remind every single student at that school that we love them, we are with them, and we will never forget them.

I also want to take a moment to honor the first responders who, once again, displayed true bravery in their response to this tragedy. The deputies of the Douglas County Police Department, South Metro Fire Rescue, and all of the neighboring first responders on the scene acted quickly to help stabilize the situation and lead the students and faculty to safety.

This week is National Police Week, a fitting time to reflect on those who protect our sons and daughters every day.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. President, in Washington, DC, this week, we are celebrating National Police Week, a time we take each year to thank law enforcement for protecting our communities and to remember the cost of providing this comfort.

Today, thousands of officers and their families will gather on the west front lawn of the Capitol to participate in the 38th Annual Peace Officers' Memorial Service, an event to honor all of those we have lost in the line of duty.

I hope the camaraderie and support they have experienced during the ceremony and throughout the week will bring a bit of comfort to law enforcement and our law enforcement community. I also hope it demonstrates the tremendous gratitude that we all have for these sacrifices.

Police Week also serves to show the law enforcement community that the

lawmakers in Washington have their back. We will continue to help departments all over the country afford life-saving equipment, like bulletproof vests to help as many officers as possible return home safely every day. In fact, just this week, the Senate is working on legislation to make sure we are providing lifesaving equipment through the Bulletproof Vest Grant Program. We are also working on legislation this week that will help address mental health needs, not just for law enforcement officers themselves but for their families, as well, because we know the pressure and strain that this duty can create and put upon the family.

I know my colleagues in the Senate will join me in thanking the many officers who have joined us in Washington this week. Their bravery and courage allow all of us to enjoy the safety and security we so often take for granted. It should not take a tragedy for any of us to reach out to a police officer, EMS, or a firefighter, to thank them for their work, and to let them know their bravery does not go unnoticed.

Yesterday I had the honor of joining the Colorado memorial ceremony at the fallen officers' memorial. There have been 320 Coloradans over the years who have been added to the fallen officers' memorial. That is 320 too many. Four were added this week: Adams County deputy Heath Gumm, El Paso County deputy Micah Flick, Las Animas County sergeant Matthew Moreno, and Littleton police officer Kevin Denner.

One of the most poignant moments at the ceremony yesterday was the comment made by a police officer who spoke to a widow of a fallen officer, who said: Support for the law enforcement community is needed long after the bagpipes have played. I think that is what we have to do as colleagues together. While the pomp and ceremony memorials end, it is after the bagpipes have finished that we must continue to stand with the men and women on that blue line of service to our communities.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor to address again today the Democrats' one-size-fits-all healthcare scheme. It is a radical plan to take over all of healthcare in America and to take away health insurance from millions of Americans.

Still, nearly every Senate Democrat running for President and 109 Members of the House of Representatives, Democrats all, have backed one-size-fits-all healthcare. Last week, former Senator Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota had words of wisdom for her fellow Democrats. She writes in the Washington Post: "Most Americans are satisfied with the healthcare they receive and do not want their coverage options

taken away and replaced," as she said, "with a one-size-fits-all government program."

I agree. The fact is, according to the Census Bureau, 90 percent of Americans have healthcare coverage. Of those, 200 million are covered by private health plans, and 180 million have employer-provided healthcare coverage. Most say that their current plan works well for them.

The 180 million Americans covered through their jobs work hard. These people go out every morning and support their families. According to a survey released last year, the vast majority of people with employer-provided coverage—71 percent of them, to be precise—like their current healthcare plans.

So who exactly are those workers on employer-sponsored plans? Well, many are union members. They negotiate their health coverage through their union representatives. Many are public employees, Federal and State employees, people who serve this country. So why do Democrats who support one-size-fits-all healthcare want to outlaw proven, popular, and predictable health coverage for millions of these working families?

Democrats certainly seem to be putting politics above principle. What is more, they clearly believe that Washington knows best. But shouldn't we be asking what these hard-working Americans who have good private health insurance want? Well, shouldn't we ask them what is best for them and what is best for their families?

Let's take the Teamsters Union, for example. In an article published in 2017, the Teamsters said:

The availability of high-quality health care has been a top selling point for those who belong to unions. It is a benefit these workers have bargained for, and oftentimes they have sacrificed higher pay for these excellent insurance benefits.

Let me underscore this point: The Teamsters Union believes their health benefits are excellent, and maybe Democrats should ask the United Steelworkers about their insurance coverage. If you go to the steelworkers' website, you will find their answer: "The Steelworkers Benefit Plan . . . provide[s] high-quality, affordable health and welfare benefits to USW [United Steelworkers] members and their families."

Basically, if you are a union worker watching this debate right now, you need to know that Democrats in Washington are coming for your hard-earned healthcare benefits. Make no mistake. Under the one-size-fits-all healthcare legislation offered by Senator BERNIE SANDERS and so many Democrats running for President, this high-quality health insurance program and their insurance will cease to exist.

It is no wonder that last year some high-profile public sector unions started sounding the alarm about losing their health benefits. When New York State debated a Sanders-like proposal

to take over healthcare, who raised the loudest objections? Well, it was the public sector unions, of course.

So again, we have millions of union workers, Federal and State employees, and their families, all with excellent healthcare benefits that are on the Democrats' chopping block. Instead of helping fix the Nation's healthcare problems, Democrats are looking to destroy what is actually working.

Remember, it is more than union workers and public sector employees who are threatened. Democrats' one-size-fits-all healthcare plan is gunning for retired military members' health insurance as well. We are talking about the TRICARE health insurance program for military families. There are more than 9 million military families enrolled in TRICARE. Our servicemembers have earned their TRICARE coverage through years of faithful service defending this Nation. I believe one of our greatest responsibilities is to provide for those who protect this Nation, both those who currently serve and our retired servicemembers.

Back home in Wyoming I talk with servicemembers, with veterans, nearly every weekend. These proud Americans want me to make sure that TRICARE works for them and to protect and strengthen benefits that work and that they have earned through their service. Still, far-left Democrats don't want to listen to reason. They are hell-bent on a one-size-fits-all approach to healthcare.

It is especially ironic that Democrats even want to ban ObamaCare plans—the plans they voted for and put in place. It has been less than a decade since Democrats passed ObamaCare, and now they want to repeal it and replace it, basically saying that ObamaCare has failed.

For years I have come to the floor to discuss the shortcomings of ObamaCare. Every time Republicans have offered to improve healthcare, we have heard from the Democrats that ObamaCare is off-limits and they can't possibly make any changes to that law. Now that the Democrats are running for President, suddenly they are singing a different tune. They are done defending ObamaCare. In fact, Democrats are happy to repeal ObamaCare so they can replace it with a one-size-fits-all healthcare plan for America.

Senator Heitkamp is actually warning them not to cast aside ObamaCare and start all over again with a one-size-fits-all plan.

Well, let me just say as a doctor, as a physician who has taken care of patients for decades, my focus continues to be on improving healthcare for American patients and their families. Americans want to focus on real healthcare reforms that make a difference for them and their families in terms of the cost and in terms of the quality of their care. These are the issues that Republicans are working on right now: protecting patients with

preexisting conditions, lowering prescription drug costs, and ending surprise medical bills.

Surprise medical bills are bills patients receive that come out of nowhere. These bills are an unfair financial burden on many families, completely unexpected medical costs that they can't afford and aren't expecting. Just last week I was at the White House with President Trump announcing a plan to help patients by ending these surprise bills.

Republicans also remain committed to protecting patients with preexisting conditions and to lowering the cost of prescription drugs.

Democrats have a choice to make. They can follow the far-left Democrats pushing their radical one-size-fits-all approach to healthcare. Again, this extreme scheme will mean the loss of health insurance coverage for millions and millions and millions of hard-working people, union workers and their families, our veterans, people who helped protect and save this country, Federal and State employees and their families, and all of the Americans who are currently enrolled in ObamaCare plans.

The better option for Democrats is to work with Republicans on common-sense, bipartisan solutions, real reforms that improve healthcare for all Americans. Let's reject one-size-fits-all healthcare that will make Americans pay more to wait longer for worse care.

That is the key. One-size-fits-all healthcare, I will tell people listening in today, means that you will pay more to wait longer for worse care. It is time to reject one-size-fits-all care for Americans. Let us work together to give all patients the care they need from a doctor they choose at a lower cost.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I came to the floor to speak about rising tensions and potential challenges with Iran, but after my distinguished colleague's remarks and as a Member of the Senate Finance Committee who helped write the Affordable Care Act, I wouldn't want to have my silence be an acceptance of his views.

For nearly a decade Republicans have sought to tear down the Affordable Care Act, which some derisively call ObamaCare, with no substitute, with no plan. This administration is actually in a Federal court, arguing that the law is unconstitutional—the very law that gives protections to everyone in this country who has a preexisting condition, such as a child born at birth with some heart disease, a husband who had a heart attack, a woman simply because she is a woman and before was discriminated against because she was a woman. Somehow that was a pre-existing condition and allowed insurance companies to charge twice as much as their male counterparts in the

same age group and same geography. It was the Affordable Care Act that ended that discrimination and created the protections.

It was the Affordable Care Act that ended lifetime caps so that if you had a major illness such as cancer, before you hit the ceiling on your insurance and you were one illness away from bankruptcy—the Affordable Care Act ended lifetime caps so that if you had a serious illness you were still covered.

The Affordable Care Act created the possibility for our children to be able to stay on our insurance until the age of 26. That was not the law before.

The list goes on and on. So it is that which Democrats have been about and, expanding upon that, the opportunity to create a universal system for everyone—something we all desire.

IRAN

Mr. President, as important as that issue is, I have come to the floor in alarm to demand answers by this administration about Iran, about its policy, about what intelligence the administration has. For more than a week we have seen press reports and heard rumors about the "threats" to U.S. interests and possibly American citizens by Iran.

For more than a week I have been demanding, along with others, that the administration provide senior level officials to brief Members of the U.S. Senate.

For more than a week, the administration has ignored these requests. For all intents and purposes, it has refused to provide Members of Congress with information critical to our national security—information it says indicates that American citizens and American assets may be in harm's way.

After specifically requesting information on security posture at our diplomatic facilities in Iraq on Monday, this morning, I read from press reports that the administration is ordering the departure of staff from our Embassy in Baghdad and our consulate in Erbil. As the ranking member—the senior Democrat—of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it is outrageous to be learning about the evacuation of an Embassy from media reports. There are only two reasons to make such an order: We have credible intelligence that our people are at risk, or there is some type of preparation for military action against Iran.

This behavior is unacceptable. By refusing to provide Members of Congress with critical information, this administration is blatantly disregarding the fundamental governing structures of the United States as outlined in our Constitution.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is charged with writing the laws that authorize the use of military force and of oversight of the State Department and the safety of those who work there. The administration must provide this committee with the information we need to judiciously and appropriately make policies.

While I hear there is a briefing for all Senators rumored for next week, that is not confirmed, nor is it an acceptable timeline. Next week may be too late. We do not need another Iraq weapons of mass destruction moment that led us to one of the worst, most disastrous military engagements when there were no weapons of mass destruction to be found. We need clarity. We need answers, and we need them now. We cannot make foreign policy and national security decisions while flying in the blind.

Make no mistake—I have no doubts that Iran continues to be a bad actor in the region and throughout the world. Iranian leaders continue to support dangerous proxy actors throughout the region. Iran continues to violate arms embargoes. Iran continues to oppress its own people. Indeed, I have spent the better part of two decades developing legislation and policies to stop Iran's quest for a nuclear weapon and attacks against our allies, including Israel.

Working across the aisle, often cajoling and prodding the executive branch and our allies, Congress led the effort to build an extensive economic and political pressure campaign to force Iran to the negotiating table. Our allies in Europe, Asia, and across the world, most of whom share our concern about Iran's ability to develop a nuclear weapon and its broader malign activities, have been critical to this effort.

When building a policy to effectively confront an adversary, you must have an end goal, you must have clear objectives, and you must take actions in pursuit of those objectives. With Iran, our objective was to ensure that Iran never develops a pathway toward a nuclear weapon. So I am all for putting on as much pressure as we can, but that requires also having a clear way of showing how it can be alleviated. There must be a viable, tenable, diplomatic track. If I were to put you in a room, lock the door, throw away the key, and tell you there is no way out and no way to survive, you would sure as hell start looking for ways to fight and break down that door.

For a campaign of maximum pressure, when the moment of maximum leverage is reached, it must be seized. That requires working with our allies to offer a real, diplomatic path to negotiations.

British Major General Chris Ghika, the deputy commander of the American-led coalition to fight the Islamic State, has called into question some of the credibility of the intelligence our officials say we have regarding Iranian-backed forces in Iraq.

Yesterday, Spain pulled a frigate from a U.S.-led naval group that had been scheduled for a joint training mission 2 years ago, saying the original mission had changed.

Our allies are critical not just in confronting Iranian malign activity but in securing our interests across the world.

Let me conclude with two points.

Now is the moment to invest in a diplomatic surge to meaningfully engage our allies and Iran in serious negotiations to end its pathway toward nuclear weapons and its malign activities.

Second, Congress has not authorized war with Iran. The administration, if it is contemplating military action with Iran, must come to Congress to seek approval.

I call on every Member of this body on both sides of the aisle to assert our institutional and constitutional prerogatives and demand information from this administration, demand classified briefings. When matters this serious are at stake, we have to demand more. We cannot and we will not be led into dangerous military adventures. The administration must provide this critical information to Congress, and it must do so immediately.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I think many of our colleagues here in the Chamber know that Senator ALEXANDER and I host a breakfast on Tuesday Mornings called Tennessee Tuesday. This week at the breakfast, one of our Tennesseans said: I have seen so many men and women in law enforcement uniforms in DC. What is going on? Is this normal?

It gave me the opportunity to say: Actually, this is National Police Week, and this is a week we set aside to honor those men and women who are in law enforcement.

There are tens of thousands of police officers and sheriffs and highway patrolmen across our country. My hope is that each of us will stop this week when we see them and say “thank you” to them for the service they provide our communities, because when it comes to fighting so many of the issues that affect our communities on a day-to-day basis—the issues we face because of drugs and drug trafficking, human trafficking, gangs—it is our local law enforcement that is on those frontlines, and we say “thank you” to them.

This year in Tennessee, three officers have lost their lives. During this week, we remember them and express our gratitude to their families for their service and their sacrifice. We lost Trooper Matthew Elias Gatti from the Tennessee Highway Patrol, who died on Monday, May 6, 2019; Sergeant Steve Hinkle from the Sullivan County Sheriff's Office, who died on Tuesday, February 26, 2019; and Police Officer Nicholas Scott Galinger from the Chattanooga Police Department, who died on Sunday, February 24, 2019. As I talk to our sheriffs and police chiefs and patrol captains, I know there are many more who have been injured, and we remember them.

We also say “thank you so much” to the families of these men and women who have chosen—you know, they real-

ly are called. This is their calling to public service, and we thank them for answering that call and that they choose to serve in our communities to keep us safe so that we know our communities are a place where we can rear our families, where we can enjoy camaraderie with family members, with friends, with our churches.

I will tell you, as I was thinking about this week, I thought, there are so many moms and grandmoms who I think are pretty much like me. Many times I will say I am a “security mom.” I want to make certain that my children and my grandchildren are safe, that our children are safe when they go to sporting events and when they go to school. We say a prayer when they get behind the wheel of a car. We are so grateful that there are law enforcement officers who are there at public events to keep them safe, who watch out if they are going to be speeding on the road and provide the security that is so essential to our way of life.

I have the opportunity as one of these security moms, if you will, to serve on our Senate Judiciary Committee. Just last week, Chairman GRAHAM brought forward three bills that we approved. These are things that are going to help law enforcement officers and their families—providing mental health support for law enforcement and their families, which is vitally important, and, of course, lifesaving bullet-proof vests, which are now essential, and ensuring that our first responders get the benefits they have earned by standing for that duty. When they get ready to retire, those benefits are going to be there.

This week, I have joined Senator CORNYN on his Back the Blue Act, and I thank him for his leadership. I think many of us who stand in this Chamber know that we stand to back that “thin blue line”—that line is the difference between order and chaos in our communities. This bill is going to create new penalties for killing or assaulting law enforcement officers and will protect officers from lawsuits when they intervene to stop a violent crime. It is a commonsense provision, and I am pleased to be in support of this bill.

As we talk about law enforcement and security and having safe communities, we also need to remember our Customs and Border Patrol agents and officers who are on the southern border. When you talk about being a security mom, of course you are going to talk about economic security, healthcare security, job security, and national security, but border security is a part of that. It is a way that we work to keep our communities safe.

We all know there is a humanitarian crisis on the southern border. Much of it is fueled by cartels that are big business. They deal in drug trafficking and human trafficking. It is our first responders who address this in our communities and on our city streets. The issues and the lack of security at that

border have created an environment where now, at this point, every State is a border State and every town is a border town because those problems that come across the southern border with the human trafficking, with the drug trafficking, with the gangs—all of this ends up on the streets in your community.

We are working on legislation that we hope is going to help with this situation. It will target traffickers of unaccompanied minors in the care of Health and Human Services. One of the things that has not happened and needs to happen is that Health and Human Services and Homeland Security need to be able to share all of the information they have on individuals who are bringing these unaccompanied children, individuals who say “I am a next of kin,” individuals who say “I am here, and this child is coming to me.” We want to make certain they are in the country legally. We want to make certain they have a relationship with these children so that we are protecting and looking out for the security of these children and making certain they are not being trafficked.

As we talk about our children, some of the trafficking—of course, much of the trafficking takes place in the virtual space. It takes place online. It seems impossible, but that is what happens with the human trafficking and the sex trafficking. The adverse impact that this has on young girls and women is horrifying.

Because of my work to prohibit these traffickers from working online, we are pushing forward with privacy legislation. You and I do not want our children to be followed online. That is what is happening, and it is why we need to make certain that moms have the tools they need—that parents have the tools they need—to guard the privacy of their families online.

I recently introduced the BROWSER Act. This is legislation I introduced while I was in the House of Representatives. It is one of the first bipartisan privacy bills we have had. The BROWSER Act will require you to give your consent if you are going to opt in and allow someone to share your information, to have access to your sensitive information.

In this Nation, we have a history of respecting informed consent, and that is what we are saying—that individuals need to give their consent to a company before that company looks at their private information or, worse yet, data mines or, worse yet, shares that information about those individuals with third parties—people they do not know, people they have never seen, people they never will see. Then that tech company—guess what—sells ads. It is paid with your information.

The BROWSER Act also prohibits companies from denying their services to users who refuse to waive their privacy rights. You have a right to privacy, and these companies should not deny you their services because you

say: You cannot share my information. You cannot share my sensitive information. I am not going to opt-in to allow you to do that, big tech company. I am also going to opt-out on non-sensitive data. I am not going to allow you to do that. I do not want my children followed, and I do not want you to be following me. I do not want you to sell my information. I do not want my spam to run crazy with ads and information I do not want.

Individuals deserve their privacy. Americans deserve to know they are protected and have that privacy in the online universe. They deserve to know they are not going to be followed and they are not going to be tracked.

While we are talking about technology, I'd like to bring attention to the global race for 5G, or fifth-generation wireless technology. You are hearing a good bit about this. It doesn't matter if it is in our commercial sector or in our military sector; we are at the forefront of this debate to make certain that we win this race on 5G—that China does not get a foothold, that Huawei does not penetrate our delivery systems—and to make certain that we win this race just like we did the race to 4G, which brought forward a lot of the technologies we all use and take for granted, like those devices we hold in our hands on which we receive our emails, make our phone calls, send text messages, pull up maps, get to a favorite site on which we want to make a purchase, and log on to social media accounts. This is all from a handheld device, and it is what 4G brought us. Well, 5G is going to be as revolutionary as going from analog to digital, and we are going to stay on top of this to make certain we win this race.

Because of this, we have a couple more pieces of legislation that I am going to discuss on the floor at a later date. We have the SECURE 5G and BEYOND Act. Senator CORNYN has the lead on that. I have the SUPPLY CHAIN Act, which will be focused on security in the virtual space and make certain that we will be rooting out these threats that may come to our supply chain and affect our private sector or our governmental sector.

We know it is imperative that, yes, we win the race in 5G but that we protect our networks and that we secure them so the American public knows that its information is not being exploited.

As a mom who values and puts a priority on keeping children and grandchildren safe, it is an honor for me to come to this floor to salute the men and women of law enforcement and to talk about what we need to do every single day from this Chamber to protect our Nation's security and to protect our citizens.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

REMEMBERING RICHARD LUGAR

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I honor the life and legacy of the late Senator Richard Lugar.

My colleagues and I in the Senate were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of our dear colleague and friend. His selfless service and tireless dedication to the State of Indiana and to this Nation inspired many to follow in his footsteps and govern using his principled commitment to the rule of law and desire for constructive compromise.

From an early age, Senator Lugar understood the value of hard work and dedication to what was important. He became an Eagle Scout and was the valedictorian of his classes in both high school and college. He was later a Rhodes Scholar at the prestigious University of Oxford in England. Senator Lugar's commitment to his education served him very well later in his career as a distinguished statesman.

As a fellow Eagle Scout, Senator Lugar knew that the knowledge and skills gained in Scouting always had a use and were a central part of the Boy Scout motto "Be prepared." He learned early on the importance of core Scout values, such as trust, loyalty, courtesy, reverence, and the rest. He displayed these values not only in his nearly four decades-long career in the Senate but also as a loving husband and father to Charlene, his wife, and their four sons.

These critical skills also served him well as the mayor of Indianapolis. As a former mayor myself, I know the need for every citizen to play an active role in the day-to-day lives of their towns and cities. Senator Lugar understood this, too, and the value in working together to make our cities, States, and Nation better places. As mayor, he envisioned the unification of the city of Indianapolis with the surrounding Marion County, and he did it. He ushered in steady, uninterrupted economic growth for that region.

In a nearly four decades-long career in the Senate, it is difficult to pinpoint Senator Lugar's greatest achievements. However, I think it is safe to say that some of his most important work came as chairman or ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Under his steady leadership and acute attention to detail, the committee considered critical issues at a milestone in the future of world diplomacy and democracy.

Senator Lugar's contributions were instrumental in, as its name suggests, the formation of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program in 1991, which was intended to dismantle nuclear warheads at the close of the Cold War. This program was enacted at a critical moment in the Soviet Union's dissident. If action had not been taken by Congress at this important juncture, dangerous nuclear weapons from the former Soviet Union could have been at risk of falling into the wrong hands.

These efforts laid the groundwork for the implementation of future programs that have been responsible for dismantling hundreds of nuclear warheads, bi-

ological weapons, and dangerous missiles. Quite simply, Senator Lugar's work changed the course of history—toward a safer world for the generations that followed.

I had the honor of working with Senator Lugar when I was on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. He was instrumental in the origination and legislation of President Bush's program, named the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR for short. PEPFAR was life-changing legislation for those stricken with potentially fatal diseases like HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Unlike many foreign assistance programs that do not impact those directly on the ground, PEPFAR taught people how to avoid contracting the HIV/AIDS disease and provided countries with the ability to care for their citizens who were already infected.

Senator Lugar was also a committed man of faith. As a member of the United Methodist Church, his moral compass was guided strongly by his faith. He was always one to do what he thought was right rather than what was the easiest.

The United States is a better place because of Senator Lugar's tireless service and commitment to what is right. I and Diana, my wife, send our deepest condolences to his loved ones and know he will find eternal peace and happiness in knowing he had a profound effect on all who knew him as a colleague, as a father, and as a friend.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMERICAN MINERS ACT

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to call for immediate action on the American Miners Act.

We have an obligation to the miners across America who served our Nation by providing us with the energy throughout our greatest advancements. They deserve to know that their pensions, which they rightfully worked for, will be funded fully, and they deserve to have accessible healthcare, which was guaranteed to them as well.

As the Senate fails to act, we continue to put our retired miners' healthcare and pension benefits in jeopardy yet again.

I have been working with everyone and from every angle in order to prevent our miners from losing their healthcare and retirement benefits, but, once again, they are facing a deadline that puts their whole livelihood at risk.

This has been a long fight, and it is far from over. Everyone who has joined me on this journey understands that

fighting for working people is what we were sent here to do.

These retired miners are walking the halls and fighting for what is rightfully theirs. I am doing this for them and their families. I promised them that this body would not abandon them, and I refuse to let them down.

The 1974 Pension Plan will be insolvent by 2022 if we do not act now. Miners who receive their healthcare through companies who went bankrupt in 2018 are at risk of losing coverage in the coming months if we fail to act soon. Unlike many other public and private pension plans, the 1974 Pension Plan was well managed and 94 percent funded prior to the crash of 2008. However, the 2008 financial crisis hit at a time when this plan had its highest payment obligations due to retirements.

If the plan becomes insolvent, these beneficiaries face benefit cuts, and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation will assume billions of dollars in liabilities.

To address this, we have to shore up the 1974 Pension Plan, which is heading for insolvency due to the coal company bankruptcies and the 2008 financial crisis; ensure that the miners who are at risk due to 2018 coal company bankruptcies will not lose their healthcare; and extend the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund tax at \$1.10 per ton of underground-mined coal and 55 cents per ton of surface-mined coal for 10 years.

West Virginia has more retired union miners than any other State. More than 27,000 retirees live in West Virginia alone.

I have two letters that I would like to read into the RECORD that explain what we are dealing with in all parts of our State.

This is Roy from West Virginia, and he says:

I am a 63 year old, 3rd generation coal miner. I started in the mine 3 days prior to graduating from high school. Unfortunately, I had to find other employment in 1999 after 27 years of mining because my mine shut down. Although the job that I was hired at paid a lot less (75% less), I felt that we would survive because of the promise of lifetime healthcare.

When I went into mining, I felt that if I put in my time, I would be taken care of in my older years. Now that I am approaching that stage of my life and am faced with the fact of healthcare concerns of people my age group, I am fearful of losing the security that my pension and health benefits will provide to me and my wife of 43 years.

Fourteen years ago, my wife was diagnosed with severe rheumatoid arthritis. The cost of her medications alone would total more than my pension income, making retirement an impossibility. The idea of her not being able to receive the proper treatment for her condition is not an option. If necessary, I will continue to work to provide the medical care that she needs and deserves.

Senator Manchin, for the concerns that have been mentioned in this letter, I deeply appreciate the support that you have lent to the passage of the Miner's Protection Act and hope that your fellow legislators will consider the same.

This is Lisa from Fraziers Bottom, WV:

My husband was employed by a UMWA represented mine for the 34 years he worked in the mining industry. He worked a 6 day workweek. He turned down some very promising job offers because we were always led to believe that after 20 years of UMWA service, we would have family insurance for life. A large part of the reason he stayed loyal to the mining industry was because of the retirement pension and family health insurance we would have upon his retirement.

He was injured on the job in 2013 and was unable to return to work. We had the comfort of knowing that he would be able to receive his pension and that the two of us would have no worries about health insurance.

In April 2015, I was diagnosed with breast cancer that spread to my lymph nodes. I had chemotherapy from May 2015 to November 2015, followed by radiation that lasted until February 2016. I was hospitalized three times during treatment, had to undergo a lot of diagnostic testing, and a blood transfusion. Unfortunately, I was unable to finish my treatment due to this rigorous and intense treatment damaging my heart. I have to follow up with regular treatment by a cardiologist and now have frequent testing to make sure the cancer hasn't come back.

Another side effect I have from having had chemotherapy is chemo-induced peripheral neuropathy that effects both my hands and feet. My medications cost several hundred dollars a month. I am 53 years old and unable to work due to all the side effects from my having cancer. My medical bills and medications have cost many thousands of dollars and I don't have to worry about anything other than getting well, thanks to the UMWA insurance we have.

Since my husband can no longer work and I too am unable to work, our income has taken a downward turn. The security of having this insurance means the world to us. We [are] neither asking nor expecting nothing other than what we were promised. Please, please pass this Senate Bill, not only for the two of us, but for the many other UMWA retirees and spouses that are also in the same situation.

We have countless letters that come in on a weekly basis, and it is basically stories. The thing I would want to make sure that all my colleagues know and all of America knows is that the miners provided the energy that built the industrial might that we have—an industrial revolution. They built the factories. They mined the coal and made the steel to build the factories, and they built the guns and ships that defended this country. They have given everything they have had, and this was a promise by the U.S. Government in 1946.

Because of the bankruptcy laws that erupted and basically evolved over the 1980s, they were left with nothing, and that is what they have. They didn't take home in the paycheck extra money. They didn't take home anything else except the promise and guarantee that they would have their healthcare and the benefits of a pension.

The average pension for a miner retired is less than \$600, and most of those are for widows. This is something that we promised. This is something we worked for, we are fighting for, and I am not going to give up until this promise is fulfilled.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise today to join my colleagues in calling for necessary and long-overdue changes in how our country addresses the cost and affordability of prescription drugs.

You are going to hear today from, in addition to myself, Senator BLUMENTHAL, Senator SMITH, and Senator Kaine, as well as Senator DURBIN, who spoke on these issues earlier, to highlight this egregious public health issue facing our country.

It is unacceptable that lifesaving treatments and cures are increasingly out of reach for the people who need them the most. That is why the Senate must act now to pass legislation that would lower the cost of prescription drugs. Healthcare represents one-sixth of our economy, and out-of-pocket costs account for over 10 percent of our Nation's healthcare spending, from consumers to hospitals and nursing homes.

One report found that between 2012 and 2016, the price of branded prescription drugs increased 110 percent. That is not 11 percent; that is 110 percent. Even drugs that have been available for decades, like insulin, are no longer affordable. It is outrageous, it is dangerous, and it has real consequences for real people.

For most Americans, this is deeply personal. I know it is for me. I will never forget the frightening day when we learned my daughter had a nut allergy. She was a toddler, and we were actually in a cabin. We were out in the middle of nowhere, and she ate a cashew for the first time. Her throat started to close up, although we didn't really know that was what was happening.

I still remember us driving as fast as we could through the woods for about 45 minutes to the closest emergency room, where finally they were able to help her. That was when we discovered that she had a nut allergy.

She now keeps an EpiPen with her at all times. So when the price of an EpiPen increased by three times the original amount, I knew just how dangerous that cost increase would be to the people who rely on the medication, and I spoke out.

It wasn't just me. It was moms and dads across the country who spoke out. They spoke out by writing letters. They spoke out on email. They spoke out on their Facebook pages. They spoke out on social media. It was literally a nationwide effort to take this on. We successfully worked to bring that cost down, but companies shouldn't just respond when there is outrage over social media.

By the way, not every drug has a constituency like that of parents who have

kids that have nut allergies. There are a lot of rare drugs for which maybe only hundreds of families understand what a price increase means. There are drugs that have constituencies who are disabled or people who aren't going to be able to basically mob the halls of Congress to make a change.

Besides that, I don't think that is how we want to make change, anyway. Wouldn't it be better if we responded in a policy way, in a bipartisan way, and simply made some changes to the policies of our government and of our country to bring down the price of prescription drugs—not just the drugs that are most famous but for all drugs.

There are many examples of why prescription drug pricing is now out of control and why we have to take action. For instance, a Wall Street Journal article reported that the price for a multiple sclerosis drug went up 21 times in a decade—21 times. No one could explain that except that it allows the company that makes that drug to profit big time.

A Stat News story reported that the price for a leukemia drug was raised four times over the course of a single year, and it now costs nearly \$199,000 a year.

We know that the price of certain insulin products rose 700 percent, accounting for inflation, in two decades. When the State of the Union happened this year, I invited a guest, and that guest was a woman named Nicole Smith Holt, and it was her son, a young man named Alec, who was a 26-year-old restaurant manager. He worked in my State. He worked hard. He was a good guy, and he was on his parents' health insurance until he was 26. When that health insurance ended, when he could not get that health insurance, he then had to pay for the insulin himself since he was a diabetic. It was \$1,200 a month. He was unable to afford his insulin. So what did he do? Sadly, he did what too many people are doing in America right now. He started rationing that insulin. He rationed that insulin, and he died waiting for his next paycheck. He was a restaurant manager in the suburbs of the Twin Cities.

His mother sat at the State of the Union, looking down at the President, looking down at the Congress, to make the point that she needed action, and in the memory of her son Alec, she was going to make sure that action happens.

Congress has a duty to act, and the President should support these efforts. Committees in the House of Representatives, for the first time, have already advanced proposals to reduce the cost of prescription drugs, and we should be moving similar legislation here in the Senate.

Yes, it is true that there are two pharma lobbyists for every Member of Congress. That is a fact, and for years they have felt that they owned Congress. That has to change. They do not own me, and they do not own the people who are speaking up today.

STOP STALLING ACT AND CREATES ACT

Madam President, two of the bills the House Judiciary Committee have already advanced with bipartisan support are companions to bipartisan legislation that I am leading in the Senate with Senator GRASSLEY: the Stop STALLING Act, which addresses the abuse of the FDA petition process by pharma companies, and my bill to crack down on anti-competitive pay-for-delay agreements.

In addition to these commonsense measures, the House Judiciary Committee also passed a version of the bipartisan CREATES Act, which Senator LEAHY and Senator LEE and others have led and which I have been a co-sponsor of for years, to deter branded drug companies from withholding testing samples to develop new generics.

Recently, on "60 Minutes," there was a story of the work that is being done in Connecticut in response to what is going on between the generic companies and the pharmaceutical companies. That is what these bills get at—to get products out on the market, to stop the pay-for-delay, in which Big Pharma pays off generics to keep their products off the market.

Yes, we should take up these bills. It is very important, but we must do more. We must also make sure that Medicare negotiates for prices. Right now there is literally a ban on negotiation, so 43 million seniors cannot get the benefit of less expensive drug prices. That doesn't help just 43 million seniors if we lift that ban; it also helps everyone in America because they are such big purchasers of prescription drugs that it will bring down the cost for everyone.

The other bill I noted was the one about the petitioning process that was designed to allow interested parties to raise legitimate health and safety issues related to generic drug applications, but for years branded drugmakers have filed sham petitions to delay the FDA's approval of the competing generic drugs.

Studies show that the FDA denies more than 90 percent of petitions relating to generics and that more than 10 percent of generics between 2011 and 2015 were filed by branded pharmaceutical companies. Our legislation would help to deter those who engage in sham petitioning. According to the CBO—the Congressional Budget Office—that would save U.S. taxpayers \$117 million over the next 10 years.

These are ideas that have been out there for a long time. These are things that we believe would make a major difference.

SAFE AND AFFORDABLE DRUGS FROM CANADA ACT

Madam President, another one I would like to mention is a bill that I first introduced with the late Senator John McCain to allow Americans to bring in certain safe, less expensive drugs from Canada. I have continued this bipartisan effort by introducing

the Safe and Affordable Drugs from Canada Act. Senator GRASSLEY has now taken the place of Senator McCain, and we have introduced that bill.

LIFEBOAT ACT

Madam President, finally, we should act to hold drugmakers accountable for the opioid crisis they helped to create by passing the LifeBOAT Act, led by our colleague Senator MANCHIN, who was just in this Chamber, which would establish a permanent funding stream to provide and expand access to treatment for addiction. It is only fair that the companies made wealthy from addiction be held responsible to fund a pathway for recovery. There are many options, and, alone, none of these will fix this problem. But, together, along with other legislation that has been proposed by my colleagues, we can make a difference. We can no longer pretend this is happening. It is time for us to make a dent, to bring down the cost of prescription drugs, and to stop coddling the pharmaceutical companies.

This is about, as I mentioned, Nicole and her son, whom she no longer can share time with. He has left us, but she will not let it go.

This is about Jessica, a mother whose specialty drug costs to treat her arthritis are \$50,000 a year.

This is about a woman from Crystal, MN, who told me "I am practically going without food" to pay for her prescriptions. This is happening in America.

Madam President, I note that my colleague Senator BLUMENTHAL is here, and I know that he has remarks as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Madam President. I will be speaking in just a moment, but I understand the minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, is on his way to speak before me, so he should be here within moments.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. While we await for Senator SCHUMER, I want to mention just a few examples of what we are talking about here with drug prices—a woman named Paula. Paula has been prescribed a treatment for her multiple sclerosis. It costs over \$5,000 a month. She has been getting copay assistance from a grant but does not know how she is going to afford it and whether she is going to be able to afford her lifesaving medication.

Julie, another example, is covered under her husband's employer plan. She currently has to pay a \$500 copay for a drug that she needs—the same drug that was once offered in a generic form for \$50, a fraction of the new cost. The generic drug has been discontinued, creating an impossible choice between paying \$500 or not filling her prescription. Because of the high cost, she goes without this drug.

Diane—Diane has an EpiPen for bee stings and is unhappy with the high cost. She says: