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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARTHA MCSALLY, a Senator from the State of Arizona.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, inspire our lawmakers to commit to accomplishing Your purposes in our Nation and world. As they seek Your wisdom, teach them Your precepts and direct their steps. May they live lives of obedience and abundance as they follow where You lead.

Lord, provide them with courage to do right as You give them the ability to follow Your footsteps. Help them to make glorifying You their top priority.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 26, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARTHA MCSALLY, a Senator from the State of Arizona, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. MCSALLY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2020, AND HEALTH EXTENDERS ACT OF 2019—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4378, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4378) making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2020, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12:15 p.m. will be divided in the usual form.

If no one yields time, time will be charged equally to both sides.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The majority leader is recognized.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, exactly 1 year ago, the administration announced the most significant trade deal in a generation—a landmark agreement with Mexico and Canada to strengthen two of our Nation's key trading relationships.

The USMCA is the most consequential update of trade policy on this continent in a quarter century. It is a huge opportunity to notch new pro-Amer-

ican policy victories and keep our North American neighbors close while we tackle other challenges, such as China.

Here we are, months after all three countries' leaders signed the agreement, and we are still waiting on the House Democrats to let it move forward. Mexico has already passed it, and Canada is waiting on our move. The Senate is ready and eager to ratify it, but the Senate can't go first. The clock is ticking.

Month after month, even as the House Democrats have continually made vague statements that they support the USMCA and want to see it passed, we have yet to see any real progress. Canada, Mexico, and millions of Americans are waiting for Speaker PELOSI to remember that serving the public interest requires more than just picking fights with the President; it actually entails addressing the people's business.

Mexico and Canada are vital partners at every level of the U.S. economy. They provide enormous, growing markets for American-made products. They, together, buy more than \$500 billion in U.S. goods and services every single year. It is a half-a-trillion-dollar export market. Every State, every industry, every corner of our country is involved.

For 90 percent of America's manufacturing sectors, Mexico or Canada ranks as the No. 1 or No. 2 export destination. For American farmers and producers, our two neighbors buy almost two-thirds of all the agricultural exports we sell to all of our free-trade partners combined. We aren't just talking about Big Business. Tens of thousands of small- and medium-sized businesses count on their Mexican or Canadian customers to succeed.

These realities affect Americans' real lives. In the last 25 years, as trade with Mexico and Canada has quadrupled, 12 million U.S. jobs have come to depend on cross-border commerce. Many of

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



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those jobs belong to workers in Kentucky, where our biggest industries, from auto manufacturing to bourbon production, depend on this export economy.

With so much at stake, the American people deserve to have an excellent trade deal in place, one that levels the playing field for American workers and reduces the incentives to ship American jobs to Mexico and one that expands American farmers' and manufacturers' access to these neighboring markets.

This is exactly what the USMCA delivers. It upgrades the playing field for American workers, farmers, ranchers, and job creators. It builds on the pro-growth, pro-innovation policies that encourage their success here at home with an upgraded, modern runway to markets beyond our borders.

The USMCA looks specifically at key sectors where outdated rules or exploitive practices threaten Americans' job security and hurt homegrown industries. It strengthens intellectual property rights to protect American innovation; it upgrades our digital trade policy; and the USMCA wins greater market access for U.S. exporters, with there being opportunities to sell more dairy and poultry into Canada, a better playing field for auto parts and investment, and enforceable labor standards so hard-working Americans aren't unfairly priced out of their jobs.

What does all of this add up to? I will tell you. According to the independent U.S. International Trade Commission, the USMCA would generate more than \$68 billion in GDP growth and create 176,000 jobs right here in the United States.

Frankly, there is very little else we could do in Congress that would deliver this kind of boost to American prosperity and brighten prospects for so many American families. It is also a bipartisan deal. It includes changes that the Democrats have themselves clamored for and for which the administration has bent over backward to accommodate their concerns.

Here we are, a year after all three countries announced the deal, and the Democrats' heel-dragging continues. Speaker PELOSI keeps saying she supports the agreement in the abstract, but the drip, drip, drip of small objections and stalling tactics keeps on coming. Even as Speaker PELOSI's moderate Members publicly beg her to pass this deal, it is almost as though she is looking for reasons to duck it.

Well, I certainly hope not, for 176,000 American jobs hang in the balance, tens of billions of dollars of new prosperity, and our relationships with two of our closest allies that have already taken difficult steps to get to yes on this agreement and whose support we need to preserve a system of free and fair trade from China's aggressive efforts to rewrite the rules on its own terms.

The United States of America needs this deal. American workers and small

businesses need this deal. The time for excuses is over. The USMCA needs to move this fall, and that can't happen until the House Democrats stop blocking an enormous win for our country.

TRIBUTE TO ILEANA GARCIA

Mr. President, on a totally different matter, as majority leader, I am especially grateful for opportunities to offer the Senate's thanks to the remarkable men and women who work tirelessly to preserve and protect this great institution.

On Monday, we will be saying a bittersweet goodbye to a particularly irreplaceable member of the Senate's family who has worked alongside us for 22 years.

Ileana Garcia was born in Cuba and raised in Puerto Rico. She started working for the Secretary of the Senate in September 1997 as a project accountant.

Since then she has built a remarkable success story here in this institution, rising through the ranks of financial management and becoming financial clerk of the Senate in 2014.

But with Ileana, it is not just about the impressive milestones. It is about the outsized impact she has had on this place and so many people—from the heavy lifting of getting a new financial system online in the late 1990s to helping offices navigate healthcare transitions and government shutdowns, to the everyday challenges that come with a big complicated payroll like the U.S. Senate's.

She did it all with professionalism and attention to detail. At times, my own staff observed that she was so attentive and so quick to respond to their questions that they wondered if she was detailed exclusively to handle our office. Of course she wasn't. That is just the job she does.

But professionalism and excellence aren't the only things Ileana brought into the office every day. Everyone observes that she also brought a very big heart. Patience, discretion, compassion, and an unflagging smile have been her calling cards. That was the case when she arrived 22 years ago, and it remains the case today as she prepares to depart as one of the Senate's senior-most administrative staffers.

So we are really sorry to lose somebody of Ileana's caliber, but we know she is excited to spend more time on Planet Garcia, which I understand is what she and her beloved husband Ariel of 30 years call their clan, including their three sons. And I understand there might be some more time for competitive domino tournaments—not that she apparently needs any more practice.

So I know that all of my colleagues will join me today in wishing Ileana Garcia the very best and thanking her for a job so well done.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, after Speaker PELOSI decided to open a formal impeachment inquiry on Tuesday evening, there have been several developments. Yesterday, the President released a memorandum of conversation of his July 25 call with President Zelensky of Ukraine. In plain text—plain text—no ands, ifs, or buts, the President pressured the leader of Ukraine to investigate one of his leading political rivals, confirming public reports.

Yesterday, as well, the House and Senate Intelligence Committees received the official whistleblower complaint that precipitated this series of events. I read the complaint yesterday afternoon and came away more concerned—even more concerned than when I had read the memorandum of the President's conversation.

This morning, the House Intelligence Committee made public the declassified portion of the complaint and the intelligence community's inspector general's cover letter. That was the correct decision. The American people have a right to read the whistleblower's complaint for themselves, and I hope that they will.

The whistleblower's complaint begins:

In the course of my official duties, I have received information from multiple U.S. Government officials that the President of the United States is using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election. This interference includes, among others things, pressuring a foreign country to investigate one of the President's main domestic political rivals.

Those are his words.

The complaint goes on to describe specific, deliberate maneuvers by White House lawyers and officials to lock down records of the Presidential communications in question, including and especially “the official word-for-word transcript of the President's phone call with President Zelensky.”

The whistleblower complaint contains allegations of underlying crimes, a campaign of soliciting the interference of a foreign government in an American election, and using the power of an official government position for personal and political gain, as well as many allegations of an attempted coverup.

If this was all so innocent, why did so many officials in the White House, in the Justice Department, and elsewhere make such large efforts to prevent it from being made public?

Both sets of allegations are said to have multiple witnesses and multiple co-collaborators. If confirmed, the allegations contained in the whistleblower

complaint are nothing short of explosive. The complaint unquestionably validated Speaker PELOSI's decision to open a formal impeachment inquiry into these matters.

We are living in an incredibly delicate time for our democracy. We have a responsibility now to corroborate the facts in the whistleblower's complaint, solicit testimony from those involved, and pursue the relevant avenues of inquiry that arise.

We have a responsibility to consider the facts that emerge squarely and with the best interests of our country, not our party, in our hearts. We have a responsibility not to rush to final judgment or overstate the case, not to let ourselves be ruled by passion but by reason. For if the House, at the end of its inquiry, sees fit to accuse the President of impeachable offenses, we in the Senate will act as jury. Our role as the solemn jurors of democracy demands that we place fidelity to country and fidelity to our Constitution above all else.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, on the Appropriations Committee, the business of the American people and the responsibilities of Congress do not pause while the House prepares to formally begin an impeachment inquiry. Today, for example, the Senate must pass a continuing resolution to keep the government open through the end of November and give appropriators time to complete the 12 appropriations bills.

I expect the continuing resolution will pass this morning and head to the President's desk. That is the easy part. The hard part is getting a bipartisan appropriations process back on track here in the Senate.

Senate Republicans unilaterally departed from our bipartisan negotiations earlier this month by proposing to divert as much as \$12 billion from military construction and health programs to the President's border wall. Obviously that was a nonstarter with Democrats, and the Republican leader and the leaders of the Appropriations Committee on the Republican side had to know that. As yesterday's vote for the national emergency declaration showed, it is a nonstarter with a double-digit number of Republicans as well.

Now that Republican leaders have shown the President they tried to get his wall again, now that the Senate has taken two proxy votes on the wall again this work period, neither of which came close to passing, it is time for Leader MCCONNELL, Chairman SHELBY, and our Republican colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to sit down with Democrats and get a bipartisan process moving again.

NOMINATION OF EUGENE SCALIA

Mr. President, finally, on the Scalia nomination, today the Senate will consider the nomination of Eugene Scalia to serve as Secretary of Labor. Typical of the Trump administration, Mr. Scalia's nomination is a slap to the

face of labor because Mr. Scalia's life work has been utterly opposed to the mission of the agency to which he is nominated. He has sided repeatedly with the large corporate interests against working people.

If any working person doubts that President Trump does not have their interests at heart, look at who he has nominated. This guy shouldn't even make it for Secretary of Commerce, let alone Secretary of Labor, which is supposed to defend and protect the working people of America.

President Trump could have chosen a card-carrying union member for the job. He could have chosen someone who understands the needs of workers and unions, the history of the labor movement, and the established right of workers to collectively bargain for better wages and safer conditions. Instead, President Trump nominated Mr. Scalia, a corporate lawyer who has spent his entire career protecting the interests of CEOs, big corporations, and the wealthy elite—not workers, not labor. Worse, he has proactively fought to weaken worker protections. He has opposed minimum wage increases and even opposed protections in the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is a disgrace.

My guess is that if every working person knew Mr. Scalia's record and that President Trump nominated him, Mr. Trump would hardly get the vote of a worker. This shows who President Trump is. This shows who our Republican colleagues are. They talk about the rights of workers but vote for somebody—I hope they won't, but in all likelihood, they will vote for somebody who is anti-worker up and down in the very bones of his body.

Mr. Scalia is part of a larger pattern. President Trump has claimed to be a champion for working Americans, but he has filled our government with millionaires and CEOs and folks like Scalia who work for them with proven records of putting corporate interests before workers' interests. Anyone who thinks President Trump is a friend of the working person should look at Scalia's nomination.

The Republican majority, rather than use its advice and consent powers to check the President when he does the wrong thing, rolls over and approves these nominees.

Do all of these Republicans here oppose the Americans with Disabilities Act? Do all of these Republicans oppose increasing the minimum wage? Well, if you are against those kinds of things, vote for him. But we have gotten a lot of doubletalk, people who say they are for those things and then vote for nominees who oppose them and rip them apart.

We should not confirm Mr. Scalia as Secretary of Labor, and I urge my colleagues to oppose this nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we are a proud nation of immigrants and have benefited from the diversity of ideas and cultures that have come from around the world to experience the freedoms that we enjoy in the United States of America.

September 15 through October 15 is Hispanic Heritage Month and a time to especially celebrate the traditions and contributions of the tens of millions of Hispanic and Latino Americans across our country.

Texas is home to more than 11 million Hispanic Americans. Some have lived here for generations, and others have contributed to the recent rapid growth of the Lone Star State.

Throughout our State's history, we have benefited from the leadership of people like Dr. Hector Garcia, a surgeon, a decorated World War II veteran, and a civil rights advocate. He founded the American GI Forum to ensure that veterans receive equal benefits and care regardless of their race or ethnicity. He was an ardent advocate for equal educational opportunities, and his motto was "Education is our freedom, and freedom should be everybody's business."

Dr. Garcia became the first Mexican American to serve as the Ambassador to the United Nations, representing our country on the world stage. President Ronald Reagan later bestowed upon him the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His legacy is a reminder of what a single person can accomplish in the face of adversity, if only they have the courage to fight for what is right.

Today, Texas is proud to have incredible Hispanic-American leaders across our State, including Ruth Hughs, who last month was sworn in as our secretary of state, and people like Justice Eva Guzman, who is the first Hispanic woman to serve on the Texas Supreme Court.

There are incredible organizations, such as the Hispanic chambers of commerce, that advocate for Hispanic-owned small businesses that are vital to our economy. There is also the League of United Latin American Citizens—or, as we know it, LULAC—that fights to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans, particularly when it comes to education.

Hispanic leaders can be found in city halls, board rooms, and communities throughout our State and are improving our State in big ways and small ones as well.

I have the honor of representing 28 million Texans—and it is growing by about 1,000 people a day, but nearly 40 percent of them identify as Hispanic.

When Texans come to Washington, they have the opportunity to visit the museums that hold some of the most important stories and artifacts from our Nation's history. In recent years, we have made two very important additions to the Smithsonian Institution with the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and

Culture. But it is time for another addition.

Earlier this year, I introduced the National Museum of the American Latino Act, which would authorize the Smithsonian Institution to create a museum honoring America's Latinos. This has been a work in progress since 2003, when a bill was introduced to study the creation of a museum. The process took a step forward in 2008, when a Commission was established to study the viability of such a museum and, again, when that Commission released a report detailing the feasibility of the project.

This legislation will take the work that has been done up to this point and finally put into motion the process of establishing a Latino museum. As of this week, we have 200 cosponsors on the House companion legislation and nearly 20 bipartisan cosponsors here in the Senate. Bicameral, bipartisan support demonstrates that the time has come to turn the dream of this museum into a reality.

Hispanic Americans have made innumerable contributions to our country, and these stories deserve a brick and mortar home here in Washington, DC, in our Nation's Capital.

Our State and our Nation are stronger, smarter, and more inclusive because of the contributions of generations of Hispanic Americans. So I am glad to spend this month reflecting on the work they have done and celebrating the heritage that is uniquely woven into the fabric of the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the past 2 weeks have provided a kind of microcosm of the Democrat Party since the 2016 election—a combination of unhinged partisanship and a radical shift to the far left.

In the past 2 weeks, we have seen Democrats call for not one but two impeachments—Justice Kavanaugh's and the President's—and introduce another socialist-inspired, government-run approach to healthcare, this time on the issue of prescription drugs.

First, there were the calls to impeach Justice Kavanaugh based on yet another vague rumor. It quickly became glaringly obvious that there was no substance to the rumor. The alleged victim apparently has zero memory of the alleged behavior, but that didn't give Democrats any pause. It was right on to the next rushed impeachment proposal.

On Tuesday, the Speaker of the House announced that she was opening

an impeachment inquiry into the President. Never mind that the President had declared he would make public the transcript of the phone call in question. Apparently, she couldn't take the time to wait. After all, as the leader pointed out on the floor this week, Democrats have been looking to impeach the President since the moment he was elected.

For Democrats, impeachment is not something to be gravely considered as an answer to serious crimes; it is a political weapon they hope to use to fix the fact that they didn't get their way in the last Presidential election. Democrats' calls for impeachment have come so thick and fast over the past couple of years, it would be difficult to trust them to conduct an impeachment investigation if there ever were a serious reason to consider one. They have made it absolutely clear that they have no objectivity at all.

In addition to poisonous partisanship, the other thing that has characterized the Democratic Party since the 2016 election is a rapid swing to the extreme left. Last week, Speaker PELOSI introduced the latest addition to the socialist agenda Democrats have been laying out over the past year—a prescription drug bill that abandons the free market and competition that have enabled the United States to lead the way in drug innovation and lifesaving cures for Americans.

There is no question that many Americans face high prescription drug costs, and there is no question that we can and should implement measures to drive down these costs. For months, the Senate Finance Committee, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and the Senate Judiciary Committee have been working on this issue. The same is true in the House.

There are multiple bipartisan ideas both houses of Congress could act on, but Speaker PELOSI's bill is not the answer to the problem of high drug costs. The Speaker's bill would force drug companies to either accept government price controls or face up to a 95-percent tax on the sale of their drugs. That is right, 95 percent. This is not a good-faith effort to come to the table to talk about solutions for lowering drug prices and out-of-pocket costs for Americans.

Right now, America is a leader in prescription drug innovation and the development of new treatments. The Speaker's bill would threaten all of that. Under her bill, research into new treatments and cures would decrease.

Yes, we need to address high drug prices, but discouraging the innovation that has improved the lives of so many Americans is not the way to go about it. The Speaker's proposal for government-run prescription drug prices would do exactly what Democrats' larger socialist healthcare fantasy would do, and that is to hurt Americans' healthcare.

It would add limited healthcare innovation to the many negatives Ameri-

cans would experience under so-called Medicare for All—negatives such as reduced access to care, limited treatment options, long wait times, and big tax bills for ordinary Americans.

Of course, Democrats like to talk about forcing the wealthy to pay for Medicare for All and their other pie-in-the-sky proposals. The junior Senator from Vermont recently introduced a wealth tax he wants to use to pay for some of his special socialist programs. His proposal would ostensibly raise \$4.35 trillion over 10 years. Here is the problem. Let's suppose he put all that money toward paying for his government-run takeover of healthcare, Medicare for All. At a conservative estimate, Medicare for All would cost \$32 trillion over 10 years—\$32 trillion. The Senator from Vermont's wealth tax wouldn't even cover 15 percent of that cost. Who is going to pay the other 85 percent? And that is supposing his wealth tax actually raises the money he says it will.

European countries have repealed their wealth taxes right and left because they were ineffective. While I am sure the Senator from Vermont would be happy to levy additional taxes on the wealthy, the truth is, there simply aren't enough wealthy people in the United States to pay for all of the Democrats' socialist proposals. Ultimately, the burden for paying for these proposals would fall heavily on the middle class.

There is no question that divided government can make things challenging, but it can also be the occasion for real, bipartisan action. Senate Republicans would love to work with Democrats on solutions to problems like the cost of healthcare. Unfortunately, Democrats have chosen to spend most of their time on partisan messaging and on proposing socialist fantasies that would hurt the very people they are supposed to help. I don't have a lot of confidence they will change anytime soon, but I hope they will. There is a lot we could still get done if Democrats are willing to come to the table and work with Republicans on solutions that will meet the challenges faced by the American people.

Mr. President, 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.

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

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

SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF SHOOTING AT ROUTE 91 MUSIC FESTIVAL

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate a terrible tragedy. Today is a solemn day and a chance to reflect. Two years ago, in my hometown of Las Vegas, thousands of people gathered on a warm evening at the Route 91 music festival. They were there with friends, partners, family.

They came to listen to country music, relax, and just celebrate.

Two years ago on that evening, they heard the pop of what sounded like fireworks. After seconds for some, minutes for others, they understood what was happening: an attack that would become the worst mass shooting in modern American history.

In the space of 11 minutes, Las Vegas was transformed. In that narrow window of time, 58 people were mortally wounded and hundreds of others were injured, many of them grievously.

I still think about the stories of those who ran into the crowd to help others, those people who made a commitment that night to our community to protect others from harm. Police, firefighters, and other first responders who ran toward the festival grounds to rescue others made that commitment that October evening. The people who piled the wounded into their cars, vans, and pickups also offered a hand to help strangers. So did the doctors and nurses who rushed to the hospitals and the hundreds of Las Vegas and Reno residents who stood in line to donate blood. They all felt viscerally the desire to help those who were suffering in whatever way they could.

We made a commitment to all those caught up in the devastating attack at the Route 91 festival, a promise that I honor today. I vowed to do all I could to help my community heal, to remember those who died, and to support those who bear scars of the body or of the spirit.

During that dark time 2 years ago, my city came together to help and sustain the wounded and their families—people from all over the world, neighbors and strangers alike. I have never been prouder of Las Vegas.

So many different groups worked in tandem that evening. There were the brave actions of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, the Clark County School District Police Department, the Las Vegas Fire Department, and the Clark County Fire Department, who unhesitatingly risked their lives to stop the attack and rescue survivors.

Health institutions across the State joined the effort, like American Medical Response, Medic West Ambulance, Community Ambulance, the University Medical Center, Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center, the Valley Health System, and Dignity Health. So many doctors and nurses, including Nellis Air Force Base medical professionals, worked then and in the weeks and months that followed to restore people to health. The Red Cross and the Department of Veterans Affairs supported the hospitals with their mobile units. There was the staff at United Blood Services, who worked doggedly to process donations from thousands of people in Las Vegas, Reno, and elsewhere in Nevada.

There were many people and organizations in Nevada and nationwide that provided food, blankets, reduced airline

tickets, and other ways to support the victims and their families. The FBI and the Nevada Victims of Crime Program helped families struggling with funeral and travel expenses. Airlines like Allegiant and Southwest also helped to cover costs. Donations poured in from Las Vegas and around the world. The donations are still coming in to support the Children of the 58 Fund, which Neysa Tonks' family set up in remembrance of her to provide scholarships to children of victims. Donations are coming in to the Kern Community Foundation Day of Remembrance Fund, which also provides scholarships to victims and survivors.

All of these people put aside their own needs—sometimes for moments and sometimes for months—to help others. They made a commitment to the victims. Part of that commitment simply has to be working to prevent other families in America from going through what families went through on that October 1 night as they waited in the Family Reunification Center, crying out for information about their loved ones but terrified at what they would hear.

Here is the frightening part, the part that keeps me and so many of us across this Nation up at night: The shootings haven't stopped since October 1, 2017. Unimaginably, people who survived the Route 91 shooting have found themselves terrorized by gun violence again since that tragic night. Some of them were at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks, CA, just over a year after October 1 when a gunman opened fire and killed or wounded two dozen people. Others were in Gilroy, CA, just this July, where a man killed or wounded over a dozen people at an annual festival. Can you imagine going to enjoy yourself one afternoon or evening and having that place of community and celebration turn into a war zone? And then having that happen not once, in some horrible nightmare come to life, but multiple times. We cannot let this waking nightmare continue in America.

We have to make a commitment to each other, a promise that we will not leave each other and those we love to be victims of this senseless violence, not when we can do something to stop it.

Americans know this. They know that we are needlessly endangering our children and each other. They know that commonsense gun reform could both respect responsible gun ownership and fight the public health crisis that mass shootings and senseless gun violence represent.

That is why people in both parties support gun violence reform by huge margins. They know that we simply cannot sidestep our responsibility to each other. We have to reduce these senseless mass shootings and save lives, and we can do that while also respecting the rights of responsible gun owners. We owe that to our communities.

The families of those wounded on 1 October haven't given up on their responsibilities. They are still there for their loved ones day after day, as the visible and invisible wounds have continued to heal and as people have learned to walk, talk, and work again.

The doctors and nurses who have cared for the injured have not given up. They don't say: Well, it has been 2 years; so we will not care for patients anymore.

We haven't taken down the many moving memorials to 1 October, like the mural at the corner of Westcliff and Antelope Way, the 58 wooden crosses near the Las Vegas welcome sign on the Strip, or the Community Healing Garden on Casino Center Boulevard.

Just the opposite, Clark County Museum has been carefully photographing and cataloging over 17,000 items, from Las Vegas Strong T-shirts and bumper stickers to stuffed animals, from artificial flowers to rosaries that people left at memorials to the Route 91 victims and survivors. That care and that attention—that is what a commitment is. When you make one, you have to be there for the long haul, to see the thing you promised to the end.

I will always remember the 1 October victims and their loved ones and always commemorate their loss. I know it is a loss that can never be fully repaired but only eased by time. I will always honor the bravery of those who sacrificed their own safety to help others, and I will never stop fighting to make America safer, to save families across the country from what I watched families in Las Vegas go through that night and from what my own family went through as we waited to hear back about whether my niece was safe or not as she attended that concert that night.

This is our commitment. We have to continue to remember, but we have to do something about it. Our time is now.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, on October 1, 2017, the city of Las Vegas experienced a tragedy on an unprecedented scale—a tragedy that has left our community deeply scarred and our city forever changed.

It was a warm October night. Tens of thousands of people were gathering in town for a music festival. They were there to have fun, to dance, and to be joyous, but that joy was cut short by violence and terror when a lone gunman began to open fire.

In the 10 minutes that the shooting lasted, over 1,100 rounds were fired. I repeat: 1,100 rounds. There were 58 innocent people murdered and 422 injured.

Next week marks the second anniversary of that horrific evening—the deadliest mass shooting in American history. Sons, daughters, parents, friends,

and neighborhoods—each one of them were loved, and they were all taken from us far too soon.

Countless others were injured in the chaotic frenzy that followed the gunfire. Many will never live the same life they once knew.

Several victims from that night never received the care they needed, including members of the Nevada's immigrant community, who were too scared—too scared—to seek care for risk of deportation.

The 1 October shooting forever altered the lives of countless families in Las Vegas and countless families across this country. Many are still grieving and will suffer through pain that no family, no friend, no spouse, or no child should ever have to face, and that empty seat at every Thanksgiving and every holiday table will never be filled.

Numerous survivors are still working through the effects of this incredible trauma. Put simply, this massacre shook our community to its very core.

Let me be clear when I tell you today that we were not and we will not be shattered. The bright lights of Las Vegas will continue to shine through the darkness of that day. We are resilient, and we will always be Vegas Strong.

I stand here today to honor the memory of 58 victims who lost their lives and the hundreds more who were injured and are still fighting to recover. I am here to say that they will never be forgotten. We will be there to stand side by side with them as they continue to overcome the challenges and trauma brought on by the shooting.

We must also remember that in the face of terror, there were people who made the selfless choice to run toward the gunfire and to help. They were our brave first responders who risked their lives to offer aid. They were everyday citizens who allowed others to escape in their cars. They were law enforcement officers, firefighters, physicians, and cabdrivers. Every member of our community that could come out to help. All of them are heroes, and all of them must be remembered.

Heroes continue to come forward in the days, weeks, months, and even years now following the shooting, lining up to donate blood, giving financial aid to help support those who were injured and the families of those who were murdered, helping to reunite friends and families in the aftermath, and, to this day, providing counseling and the much-needed support to those who are still suffering from the trauma of that horrific night.

Our city provided legal, financial, and mental health services to those who were affected by the violence that night, including the formation of the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center.

In the days immediately following the shooting, community members and local businesses formed what is now known as the Las Vegas Community Healing Garden, a memorial to those

whose lives were lost. Visitors planted 58 trees—one for each victim—and painted rocks and ornaments with words of encouragement and words of strength. Family members decorated trees of their loved ones.

Following the shooting, Nevada also took action, passing a series of gun safety measures to prevent this kind of tragedy from occurring again.

Two years have passed. I wish I could say that Congress has followed Nevada's lead, that we have come together as a nation in healing, put partisanship aside, and passed commonsense gun safety legislation to protect the lives of Americans. But, sadly, this is not the case.

Each day and each year that Congress fails to pass commonsense gun violence prevention measures is another day and another year that we fail to honor the 58 who lost their lives on 1 October and the countless lives that have been lost to gun violence.

This type of tragedy happens all too often in our country. This past year, there were 337 mass shootings. That is nearly one a day for an entire year. So far in 2019, we have already experienced over 300 mass shootings. This is unacceptable. We must work to prevent these weapons from ending up in the wrong hands, and we owe it to the countless Americans who have lost their lives, who were injured and forever scarred, to find a solution, not just for those who lost their lives in Las Vegas but for those in countless other American cities.

In the days following the terrible tragedies in Gilroy, El Paso, and Dayton, I visited the heroes of the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center. They have been working nonstop for 2 years helping our community to heal. As I learned of their efforts not only to help victims and survivors but also to extend a hand to help communities like ours in their greatest time of need, I was reminded by them of just how resilient we are as a people, as a community, and as a country.

We owe it to these heroes to no longer accept inaction. We must all continue to stand up, to speak out, and to refuse to allow these kinds of tragedies because they should never define us.

No American—no American—should ever have to think twice about going to church, the movies, or a concert on a warm October night, and no parent—no mother—should have a bulletproof backpack on their back-to-school shopping list.

As Members of Congress, we were elected to solve problems and to keep our country safe. When it comes to gun violence, we are failing. We are failing spectacularly on both counts, but we don't have to. We can take action. We can take reasonable steps to reduce gun violence. We can put a stop to the carnage that is happening across our country, and we can do this while still respecting the Second Amendment.

What is happening is not normal, but it is also not inevitable. Sharing our

thoughts and prayers shouldn't be the only action we ever take. Let's put our differences aside and make mass shootings a thing of the past, not a daily expectation for our future.

It has been over 200 days since H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, passed the House of Representatives. I am a proud cosponsor of the Senate's companion legislation, S. 42. The legislation is ready to go. The legislation will close loopholes and require background checks for all commercial gun sales, including those made at gun shows and on the internet.

In memory of the 58 Americans who lost their lives on 1 October and those who have lost their lives before and after, I call on my colleagues to act and to take up this legislation for an immediate vote.

It is past time. It is past time that we come together and find solutions. It is past time because if we don't act, then, the inevitable will continue to be our daily reality.

We can prevent mass shootings in this country, but "can" is not possible without the word "courage."

I implore this body to have the courage so that no other family has to endure this kind of tragedy, this kind of trauma, and this kind of sorrow.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 2486

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, I am here once again to urge the Senate to take up the FUTURE Act, to extend funding for our historically Black colleges and universities.

I see my great friend, the Senator from Tennessee, across the way, and I know the Senator, as a music fan and a musician himself, understands the term "broken record." A broken record is that record that is an old album and the vinyl has a little bit of a flaw, and it just gets stuck on the same lyric, the same refrain, and keeps going back to it. That is what I feel like today.

I also know that with just a little pressure on those old vinyl records, just a little bit of pressure, you can go right through that and get to melody. That is what I was hoping to do today, that we could put just enough pressure on the Senate and others to go right through and fund HBCUs. The deadline for that funding ends September 30.

People will say it is not going to turn the lights out in our historically Black colleges and universities, and it is not. I get that. We also know we have to plan. We have to look months in advance. We have to look a year in advance to make sure that funding is there.

This bill—a similar bill has passed the House of Representatives unanimously. In this partisan world we are living in, it passed the House unanimously the other day. It has overwhelming bipartisan support in this body.

This is something our historically Black colleges and universities need today. They don't need to wait. We don't need to put them in the lurch and uncertainty because in today's world in Washington, DC, there is no certainty. We don't know what will happen tomorrow. We don't know what is going to happen next week with the legislation that will come before this body. Nothing is predictable. We don't see the kind of legislation we should be seeing. We don't deliberate and have the kind of deliberations we have seen this body have in the past.

So to say we can put this together as part of a bigger bill and hopefully get this done this year is possible, but it is also just as possible, in today's world, that doesn't get done, that it ends up somewhere buried beneath a whole bunch of other qualified and just as meritorious bills that never see the action of the U.S. Senate or the Congress of the United States.

I would urge—urge that we do the right thing by our historically Black colleges and universities. Let's get this bill passed unanimously and sent to the President of the United States for his signature so all of our historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions can breathe a sigh of relief.

I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 212, H.R. 2486; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Mr. ALEXANDER. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. An objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Alabama mentioned music, and I guess a lot of us have been watching Ken Burns' "Country Music" film the last several days, which is terrific and includes lots from Alabama and even more from Tennessee.

My experience with music and Nashville songwriters is, to get a melody, you need some cooperation. You need cooperation. Usually, they have three songwriters who will write a song. I am interested in harmony, but I think we need some cooperation across the aisle as on our committee—thanks to the distinguished Senator from Washington State, Mrs. MURRAY, and Senator JONES—we often have. We had it on fixing No Child Left Behind; we had it on the 21st Century Cures; we had it on the Opioid Crisis Response Act; we

had it on the Lowering Healthcare Costs Act, which came out of our committee 20 to 3 just recently; and we need to have it on higher education.

So I have a suggestion today. I want to speak about it for about 10 minutes. It would, I believe, give an opportunity to deal with the historically Black colleges legislation and indeed an opportunity to do more than that.

In the first place, the bill passed by the House is a short-term bill, which is funded by a budget gimmick, which has no chance of passing the Senate. I propose that we do permanent funding of historically Black colleges. That is the way to provide certainty. I propose that we include within it a package of seven or eight other pieces of legislation on which there is bipartisan support—as many as half the Members of the Senate, about half Republican and half Democratic. All of these provisions—simplifying FAFSA, short-term Pell grants, Pell grants for prisoners, increasing the amount of Pell—help low-income Americans go to college and simplify the process for doing that.

So if it is urgently important, as I believe it is, to properly fund historically Black colleges, I am ready to do that, but I am also ready to continue to work to pass a small package of bills that will help many of the same people the historically Black colleges legislation would help and then continue to work with Senator MURRAY and with other members of the committee on a larger package of bills that would include issues that could be part of a more comprehensive Higher Education Reauthorization Act—issues such as accountability, Federal-State partnership, campus safety, and the like.

For the last 5 years, Senator MURRAY and I have been working on a bipartisan reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. We have had about 30 hearings on all manner of issues, from accountability, to campus safety, to simplifying the student aid process. We have yet to reach agreement on some of those issues, but on several important issues, as I mentioned, we have bipartisan proposals by members of our committee and Senators who are not on the committee that will make college more affordable for low-income students and make college worth students' time and money.

I am committed to working with the Senator from Washington State to develop a larger, more comprehensive bill, but right now, why should we pass up an opportunity to enact a package that includes several of the bipartisan proposals that are the result of our 5 years of work, including permanent funding for historically Black colleges and universities?

At the end of the month, as the Senator from Alabama said, the law providing for funding for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions expires. Everyone wants to see that continue.

The House of Representatives passed legislation, but instead of the short-

term patch that the House passed, we should pass a long-term solution that gives certainty to college presidents and their students. Congress has time to do this. It is true that the law expires at the end of this month, but the money doesn't. The U.S. Department of Education has sent a letter assuring Congress that there is enough funding in the program to continue through the next fiscal year. So there is a year for us to work on permanent funding and this small package of other bills on which we have already spent 5 years. That ought to be enough time even for U.S. Senators.

We should reach a long-term solution. That is why today I am introducing a long-term solution to permanently provide funding for minority-serving institutions, including the six historically Black colleges and universities in Tennessee. The solution would be part of a package of 8 bipartisan higher education bills drafted by 35 Senators—20 Democrats, 15 Republicans—that will help many of the same students who are helped by the historically Black colleges act.

The package of bills will make it easier for millions of students to receive a college education by simplifying the Federal application for student aid, providing Pell grants to parole-eligible prisoners, allowing Pell grants to be used for short-term programs, and increasing the maximum Pell grant award.

Here are the eight provisions that I believe should be included in the package.

First, permanent mandatory funding of \$255 million each year for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

Second, FAFSA simplification reduces the number of questions on the student application for Federal aid from 108 to between 17 and 30 questions that Senator JONES and I have proposed. This means that a quarter of a million students will now be eligible for Pell grants. In addition, 1.3 million students will be eligible for the maximum Pell grant award.

There is no excuse for not passing the FAFSA Simplification Act. Senator BENNET and I, as well as Senators MURRAY, JONES, and others, have been working on this for years. Twenty million American families have to fill out these 108 questions every year that are unnecessary for them to fill out, and delay is unnecessary for us.

No. 3, Pell grants for prisoners allows incarcerated individuals who are eligible for parole to use a Pell grant for prison education programs. This is something a number of Senators want to do, including Senators SCHATZ, LEE, and DURBIN.

No. 4, the short-term Pell is a proposal that a large group of Senators, including Senators PORTMAN, Kaine, CARDIN, GILLIBRAND, HASSAN, KLOBUCHAR, STABENOW, BALDWIN, BROWN, CAPITO, COONS, ERNST, JONES, MORAN,

SHAHEEN, SINEMA, SMITH, WICKER, and BRAUN, support. This legislation has been introduced to use Pell grants for high-quality, short-term skills and job training programs that lead to credentialing and employment in high-demand fields like healthcare and cyber security.

No. 5, a proposal to simplify aid letters. Sometimes students get a letter that says they have received money, but some students don't understand that some of it is a loan that has to be paid back and some of it is a grant. Senators GRASSLEY, SMITH, CASSIDY, ERNST, HASSAN, JONES, KLOBUCHAR, MANCHIN, and RUBIO have legislation that would simplify and make that clear.

No. 6 in the package increases the maximum Pell grant award.

No. 7 is a bipartisan proposal that both President Obama and President Trump have supported, which is to ensure that students who opt to pay back their loans under the income-driven repayment plan pay the full 10 percent of their discretionary income as the law intended.

Finally, No. 8 is a proposal by Senator MURRAY and me, along with Senators COLLINS, CORNYN, GARDNER, HASSAN, KING, STABENOW, TILLIS, and WHITEHOUSE, to allow students to answer up to 22 questions on the current FAFSA with one click by using the data the government already has from the IRS.

I can't tell you how many times Tennessee parents have said to me: Why do I have to give the government the same information twice in order for my student to be able to go to college?

This would also reduce the burdensome verification process.

The Senate has already passed this legislation once. That provision is within the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee and will be included once the package is ready for consideration on the floor.

In addition, there are at least three other bipartisan provisions that, with a little more discussion and work, I believe should be included in this package. They have the support of 30 Senators from both sides of the aisle.

The College Transparency Act is the first. It creates a student unit record system to help students and families compare how students perform in specific colleges and universities. Senators WARREN, CASSIDY, BALDWIN, BROWN, CASEY, CORNYN, DUCKWORTH, ERNST, GARDNER, GRAHAM, GRASSLEY, HASSAN, HYDE-SMITH, JONES, KAINE, KLOBUCHAR, MURPHY, PERDUE, ROBERTS, ROMNEY, SCOTT, SINEMA, SMITH, SULLIVAN, TILLIS, TOOMEY, WHITEHOUSE, and ALEXANDER all support this provision. There is substantial bipartisan support in both the Senate and House for it. We will work to include it as we move forward.

The Education of the Deaf Act simply reauthorizes Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, and has a long history of bipartisan support.

The Educational Opportunity and Success Act reauthorizes the TRIO Program, which helps low-income, first-generation, and other disadvantaged students enroll and succeed in a college or university program and has the support of Senators COLLINS, BALDWIN, CAPITO, and TESTER.

To continue funding for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions, the House of Representatives took a shortcut. They rushed a bill to the floor that has serious problems.

First, it is not a bill that can pass the Senate. My objection is not the only objection. Second, it only funds HBCUs and minority-serving institutions for 2 years, setting up yet another artificial cliff. Finally, it uses a budget gimmick to pay for it, which is one reason it won't pass the Senate.

This presents Congress with an opportunity to do it right and to pass other important legislation that we have already agreed to—at least half of us. It presents Congress with an opportunity to give certainty to HBCUs and minority-serving institutions and make it easier for millions to receive a college education.

The package of eight bills I am proposing—the eight bills I am introducing today and the three bills I hope to include later—has been drafted by 48 Senators—25 Democrats and 23 Republicans. Working together on a bipartisan bill that can pass the Senate now is the best strategy to give permanent funding to HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions, to simplify the Federal application for student aid, to provide Pell grants to parole-eligible prisoners, to allow Pell grants to be used for short-term programs, and to increase the maximum Pell grant award.

Senator MURRAY and I have discussed as recently as yesterday her desire and my agreement to try to work toward a comprehensive higher education piece of legislation. We have been working on that for 5 years. We can continue to work on the issues that still divide us. In the meantime, I agree, it is urgent to deal with historically Black colleges. It is also urgent to deal with 20 million families who fill out FAFSA every year and to work on the other issues I mentioned. We have agreed on those. Let's put it in a package, turn it into law, and keep working on the other issues.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let's stop playing games with critical funding for minority serving institutions or MSIs.

Mandatory funding expires on September 30, just days from now.

If that funding isn't reauthorized, MSIs will collectively face a \$255 million annual shortfall.

That will impact these institutions' academic programs, ability to provide housing to students, renovate facilities, and provide critical counseling and other student supports.

In 2018, Illinois received \$5.3 million of this funding, which supported city

colleges in Chicago, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago State, the University of Illinois, and other institutions around our State.

Recently, the House of Representatives passed the FUTURE Act to reauthorize this funding.

Unfortunately, the passage of this bipartisan bill has been blocked in the Senate.

This is a great example of what frustrates the American people so much about Congress.

We have a bipartisan bill that passed the House by voice vote and that maintains funding for institutions of higher education that enroll 6 million students, of which two of three are students of color.

But it is being held up, and we are unnecessarily creating a crisis.

Let's stop the games.

Let's show America that we can come together.

Let's pass the FUTURE Act now.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I am here today to advocate on behalf of Maryland's four Historically Black Colleges and Universities that face a funding cliff next week. Without the immediate passage of the FUTURE Act, Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Morgan State University, and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore face a collective \$4.2 million funding shortfall when the Higher Education Act's authorization for mandatory funding for these institutions lapses.

This clean, bipartisan, 2-year reauthorization gives us breathing room to continue to negotiate the full reauthorization of the Higher Education Act without holding these historically underfunded institutions hostage. Our HBCUs and minority serving institutions know that they can count on this mandatory funding each year to strengthen their course offerings in in-demand STEM programs, make infrastructure improvements, and provide academic counseling and student support services to first generation and historically underrepresented students.

This potential lapse in the authorization for mandatory funding is exacerbated by the inability of Congress to provide a fiscal year 2020 budget on time, leaving institutions in even more of a financial planning crunch. Throwing the budgets of these institutions into chaos directly harms their ability to serve their students and communities. If this mandatory authorization were to lapse, schools could not count on mandatory funds to backfill spending at a later date. Institutions would have to make decisions about reducing levels of academic services, delaying needed infrastructure investments, or make staffing decisions.

This is an unnecessary obstacle that our HBCUs and MSIs do not need to face. I urge this body to join with the House of Representatives and pass the FUTURE Act to ensure this mandatory funding remains in place.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Alabama for his tremendous leadership on this very critical effort because right now we are days away from a very damaging lapse in funding for our HBCUs, our Tribal colleges, and other minority-serving institutions that creates unnecessary and needless uncertainty for students in schools across this country.

Both of my colleagues spoke of music and the need for harmony. Well, it appears to me that the bill the Senator from Alabama is asking us to approve today for the funding for HBCUs is a heck of a lot of harmony. The House has already acted to fix this. They sent this bill to the Senate on a bipartisan basis. All Members of the House support it, and it is paid for in a way even the White House supports. In this day and age, I would take that harmony.

So I am very frustrated about today's opposition to this simple step to protect colleges and universities with such important missions. I can't see a good reason why we haven't sent the President this bill.

I listened to the Senator from Tennessee, and it sounds to me like he wants to write a whole new song. He is interested in a small package of higher education proposals, and he said he wants to see the FUTURE Act as a part of that. But it is pretty clear to me that when you have a good song and you have everybody together moving that, and maybe there is a discordant note somewhere, you just keep moving forward with that song—if we want to stay with the country music theme here.

I believe we should not delay it. Let's move this forward. Let's not threaten the funding for some of our most valued institutions. We should take this up and pass the FUTURE Act right away and then continue our committee discussions about how to reauthorize the Higher Education Act.

Since the start of those discussions, I have been very clear that we need to do this reauthorization in a comprehensive way that really helps students with the many challenges they face. We have so many students today who are struggling with the burdensome costs of getting a degree, who find themselves cheated by bad actors that, by the way, Secretary DeVos is not holding accountable, and they are stuck with mounting debt. They face bullying, harassment, and assault when they should be focused on learning in their classes, or they are faced without pathways to help them get into higher education in the first place.

Today the House is rightly looking at a comprehensive higher education reauthorization to address all these issues of affordability, accountability, campus safety, and acceptability, and that is what the Senate should do as well. Surely the Senate can reach an agreement on those issues but only if

we stay at the table and keep working together rather than veering off the course we set. That is what I am very concerned a smaller package would mean.

I believe that we have a real opportunity to reach a comprehensive agreement that helps students in need, and we ought to take it. In the meantime, there is no excuse for playing politics, holding up the FUTURE Act, and exposing students and schools nationwide to uncertainty and to dysfunction.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues, Senator MURRAY and Senator JONES, to call upon the Senate to pass the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education Act—the FUTURE Act—today because that future is today.

Should the Senate fail to act on this legislation, hundreds of minority-serving institutions and historically Black colleges and universities across America are going to face some drastic funding cuts that could jeopardize the education of millions of students of color nationwide. Collectively, these institutions serve nearly 6 million undergraduate students throughout the United States, two-thirds of whom come from communities of color.

Without these Federal dollars for MSIs, we will be facing the potential for job losses, the possible closure of important academic programs, and most importantly, the doors of educational opportunity slamming shut for young men and women of color across this country. Minority-serving institutions have long enjoyed bipartisan support in this body. It is perplexing and concerning to think that the Senate would depart for recess without passing this critical legislation.

In the coming years, these institutions of higher learning will play an increasingly vital role in our increasingly diverse Nation. Consider that, already, Hispanic children make up one out of every four children in America's public schools and counting. Of these students, approximately one out of five will go to college. And when they do, two-thirds of them will wind up studying at a Hispanic-serving institution. Can we, as a nation, really afford to shortchange their education?

In representing a community that is already such a large part of the American population—one out of four is going to be one out of three in just a couple of years—can we afford to shortchange their education and, as such, the success of this country, which demands that we do not?

Just last Thursday, this body joined me to unanimously pass my bipartisan resolution honoring Hispanic-serving institutions week. But it is hard to take seriously our words of support for minority-serving institutions if we fail to back up those words with real ac-

tion. Unfortunately, that is where we stand today—on the cusp of skipping town without voting to properly fund these institutions.

Across America, 523 Hispanic-serving institutions in 25 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico serve more than 2 million hard-working Latino and Latina students who dream of a college education. I know this dream well. Indeed, my own story began at a Hispanic-serving institution, even though that designation did not yet exist at the time. I was the first in my family to attend college, and I did so at St. Peter's College in Jersey City, NJ. It is because of the professors and educators at St. Peter's, who recognized that not all children arrive at college with the same advantages or opportunities for upward mobility, that I am here today—one of four Hispanic-American Senators.

It is a story that is repeated not only in Hispanic-serving institutions but at HBCUs and other MSIs across the country that help students from underserved communities overcome the odds and reach their true potential.

This isn't a Democratic or Republican issue. The House passed this bill by voice vote. It was such an easy vote that they didn't even require a rollcall. I understand that there are many other issues facing our higher education system, and I appreciate that. I am committed to working with my colleagues—particularly Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY, the chairman and ranking member of the HELP Committee—to help create a system in this country that helps serve all of our students and prepares America's workforce to compete all around the world. Yet the fact is that these minority-serving institutions face a funding cliff if we fail to act.

Let's not make our students of color pay the price while we continue to debate the broader issues facing our higher education system. Let's pass the FUTURE Act today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I appreciate the comments by the Senator from New Jersey.

To be clear, the House bill for historically Black minority-serving institutions creates a new funding cliff. It is a short-term patch for 2 years that creates a cliff after 2 years. It is supported by a budget gimmick that can't possibly pass the Senate.

What I have proposed is a permanent solution to get rid of the cliff—a permanent solution that those institutions and those students can depend on. The proposal is \$255 million a year, fully paid for. Second, the U.S. Department of Education has written a letter to Congress and said that no one is going to lose their money at the end of the month. The law expires, but the money doesn't. There is enough money to continue the program for another year. It shouldn't take us another year

to work this out. Third, it is urgent to deal with historically Black colleges.

Let's look at the students, not the colleges. Who goes to historically Black colleges? Low-income students often go there. And every year, 20 million low-income Americans fill out this ridiculously complicated FAFSA application for student aid that has 108 questions. We agree on both sides of the aisle—and have for several years—that it could be limited to 17 to 30 questions. The president of the Southwest Tennessee Community College in Memphis, TN, which is almost all African American in terms of its students, tells me he loses 1,500 students a year, almost all African American, who are intimidated by this complicated FAFSA.

Let's do both of these things. Let's have a permanent solution for historically Black colleges, and let's help the 20 million families who fill out this ridiculously complicated form every year because we agree on that. There is no need to wait on that. We have Republicans and Democrats who agree on it. We could finish this in a matter of a few weeks. No one is going to lose any money. There is enough money for historically Black colleges for a year, and there is no excuse for creating a new cliff to replace the one that will occur in a year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

AMENDMENT NO. 942

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, I call up my amendment No. 942 and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the Paul amendment by number.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. PAUL] proposes an amendment numbered 942.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To reduce the amount appropriated by 2 percent)

At the appropriate place in division A, add the following:

SEC. ____ . REDUCTION IN RATE FOR OPERATIONS.

The rate for operations provided by section 101 is hereby reduced by 2 percent.

Mr. PAUL. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to complete my remarks before we begin the next vote.

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

Mr. PAUL. My amendment to this spending bill will be to cut 2 percent across the board, so we can actually be responsible and try to balance our budget.

Most people I talk to at home or people who come up here, who are seeking assistance from the Federal Government, say: That doesn't sound too bad—1 or 2 percent. We could deal with that.

People come to me and say: Well, my group is doing this great research for this disease that affects all of these people.

I say: How much are you getting?

They say: \$100 million.

I say: We have a trillion-dollar debt, and everybody ought to try to spend what comes in rather than spending money we don't have. Does it make sense even for a good cause to borrow money from China to spend money we don't have?

Most of them—even groups that live at the Federal trough, groups that need and want and all they come here for is Federal money—say: Well, that is not too unreasonable. We got \$100 million last year.

Could you take \$98 million for the good of the country? Instead of getting \$100 million, could you take \$98 million—2 percent less—in order to balance the budget and not destroy the country with all of this debt?

Interestingly, whether these groups are from the left, right, center, Republican, Democrat, or Independent, most of them look at me and nod their heads. I think the groups that receive Federal money realize this massive debt we have is destroying the country. Even the groups receiving it are willing to cut 1 percent or 2 percent. But do you know who is not? The Senate—the Congress. They will not cut anything.

My amendment today to add a 2-percent cut to this spending will get 15 or 20 votes. Not one Democrat will vote for this bill. Do you know what the Democrats will say? They will say: The debt is because you cut taxes. This is something that is factually incorrect. We did cut taxes, but revenue is up. This is a fact. We cut the tax rates, but the economy is growing gangbusters, and revenue is up.

Why do we have a massive debt? Why are we breaking records? Why, in February, did we have more debt added than at any other time in our history? Why are we about to bust a trillion dollars in debts this year? It is spending; it isn't revenue. Revenue is up.

We did cut tax rates, and companies are growing like they haven't grown in decades. If you talk to businesses, the biggest problem in our country right now is they can't find enough people to work for them. There is a labor shortage in our country. It is a great time to be a worker in our country.

But this will not pass. My amendment will not pass because people are afraid that the public will not like them if they don't give them more money. I am afraid we will destroy the country if we keep running more debts.

The debt is growing at 8 percent a year. Spending is growing only at 4.5 percent, 5 percent a year. The debt is growing more rapidly because we have accumulated so much. We have over a \$22 trillion debt. The interest this year is over \$300 billion. As it grows faster and faster, the interest will exceed what we are spending on the military within about 5 years. Nobody is doing anything about it.

We passed spending caps 5 years ago. It was called the sequester. It went on for a while and actually was reducing the debt. Then you ask whose fault is

it that we have this massive debt, this massive spending; is it Republicans or Democrats? The answer is yes. Both parties are fiscally irresponsible, but it has nothing to do with taxes or revenue. Revenue is going up dramatically. It has to do with spending. Both parties are guilty of this.

The Republicans want unlimited military spending, and the Democrats want unlimited welfare spending. People say that there is not enough compromise in Washington. That is absolutely untrue. It is absolutely misreported by the media. There is too much compromise here. The compromise is always to spend more money and to spend money we don't have. The military gets their unlimited money, and the welfare state gets unlimited spending. Republicans and Democrats both join hands together, and what happens around here on a day-to-day basis is compromise to spend money we don't have, to borrow it from China and, sometimes, to send it back to China.

Do you realize we send economic development aid to China? That is ridiculous. We send money all around the world. Many of these countries that get money don't like us. They hate us. They burn our flag in the street, yet we send them money. We are not even sending our own money. We borrow from China to send it out.

I think this is a very reasonable proposal. Some will say it is draconian. If they passed my amendment today and cut spending by 2 percent, we would still be spending more money than 2 years ago. We would be spending \$19 billion more than 2 years ago. If we pass my 2 percent cut—the 2-penny cut that I am proposing—we would still be spending more money than the caps that the vast Senate majority voted on 5 years ago.

Why is the debt burgeoning? Whose fault is it? Is it Republicans; is it Democrats? The answer is yes. Both parties are acting fiscally irresponsibly. It has nothing to do with tax revenue and has everything to do with spending. People say that the people want it. Do the people want a bankrupt country? Do they want a country that is being eaten from the inside out? Do they want this reckless spending that someday will lead to a day of reckoning? No.

I think we have to get our house in order and get our budget in order. I think we need to balance our budget. If my amendment for a 2-percent cut were to pass—how many families have had to deal with 2 percent less? How many businesses in bad times have to cut their budget by 2 percent? If the government were today to pass my amendment—a 2-percent cut—that means you get 98 percent of everything they are spending. We would balance the budget within 5 years. That is ostensibly what many Republicans say they are for.

When we have a vote for a balanced budget, everybody lines up, and all of

the Republicans vote for a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution that says the budget will balance within 5 years. Then, when given the opportunity to vote for spending cuts, we lose half of the Republicans. The Democrats don't care, as they will not vote for spending cuts, but the Republicans at least profess to be for spending cuts. Yet, when we offer a modest proposal like this, we lose half of the Republicans.

There is a problem with debts, and both parties share some guilt. What I have put forward today, though, is an opportunity for the Senators who truly believe the debt is a problem to try to restrain spending with a 2-percent cut across the board. I hope Senators will consider voting for this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 942

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to Paul amendment No. 942.

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 24, nays 73, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 310 Leg.]

YEAS—24

Barrasso	Ernst	Risch
Blackburn	Fischer	Rubio
Braun	Grassley	Sasse
Cornyn	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cruz	Lankford	Tillis
Daines	Lee	Toomey
Enzi	Paul	Young

NAYS—73

Alexander	Harris	Peters
Baldwin	Hassan	Portman
Bennet	Hawley	Reed
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Roberts
Blunt	Hirono	Romney
Boozman	Hoeben	Rosen
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Burr	Inhofe	Schatz
Cantwell	Isakson	Schumer
Capito	Jones	Scott (FL)
Cardin	Kaine	Shaheen
Carper	King	Shelby
Casey	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cassidy	Leahy	Smith
Collins	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	McConnell	Thune
Cotton	McSally	Udall
Cramer	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Moran	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wicker
Gardner	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	
Graham	Perdue	

NOT VOTING—3

Booker	Sanders	Warren
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The amendment (No. 942) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the third time.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Mr. CRAMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 81, nays 16, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 311 Leg.]

YEAS—81

Alexander	Gardner	Murphy
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murray
Barrasso	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Grassley	Portman
Blumenthal	Harris	Reed
Blunt	Hassan	Roberts
Boozman	Heinrich	Romney
Brown	Hirono	Rosen
Burr	Hoeben	Rubio
Cantwell	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Capito	Isakson	Schumer
Cardin	Johnson	Shaheen
Carper	Jones	Shelby
Casey	Kaine	Sinema
Cassidy	Kennedy	Smith
Collins	King	Stabenow
Coons	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lankford	Tester
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Thune
Cotton	Manchin	Tillis
Cramer	Markey	Udall
Crapo	McConnell	Van Hollen
Duckworth	McSally	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Enzi	Merkley	Wicker
Feinstein	Moran	Wyden
Fischer	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—16

Blackburn	Inhofe	Sasse
Braun	Lee	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Paul	Scott (SC)
Daines	Perdue	Toomey
Ernst	Risch	
Hawley	Rounds	

NOT VOTING—3

Booker	Sanders	Warren
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 81, the nays are 16.

The 60-vote threshold having been achieved, the bill is passed.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, on rollcall vote No. 311, I voted yea. It was my intention to vote nay. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome.

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

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read nomination of General John E. Hyten for appointment as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility in accordance with title 10, U.S.C., sections 154 and 601: to be General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 1:30 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Texas.

TRIBUTE TO SHEA WOODARD HALL

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to give tribute to a great American, a great Texan, a dear friend, and a 26-year veteran of this institution who has dedicated her career to serving the needs of her fellow citizens. Her name is Shea Woodard Hall. Shea has worked as the West Texas regional director on my team for 7 years. She is now retiring. Shea started working in the Senate in 1993, when she was hired by my predecessor, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson.

As West Texas regional director, Shea started with 89 counties in her region. By land area, that is bigger than some States. She could leave her office in Abilene, drive 7 hours north, and still be in her region. That is how much territory she was responsible for.

Shea has always been willing to go the extra mile, literally. In her first 3 years working in the Senate, Shea put 75,000 miles on her car. In fact, she has put so many miles on her vehicles throughout the last 26 years that it is probably for the best that she married a local car dealer in Abilene.

After 26 years serving 89 counties in West Texas, everyone knows Shea, and Shea knows everyone. From every mayor, to every county judge and sheriff, to every State elected official, Shea made it a point to know them all. In fact, when I traveled with Shea in West Texas, we would arrive at an event, and there was no doubt who folks were happy to see—me or Shea, and it sure wasn't me.

Shea is also known in West Texas for her rural tours. They are legendary. You see, Shea's region is diverse. It spans from Amarillo, to Lubbock, to Abilene, to San Angelo, to Big Spring, to Midland-Odessa.

On the last tour she planned, an ag tour, we started in Lubbock, with stops in Muleshoe, Fredonia, Dalhart, and Amarillo. If you know Texas, that is one heck of a big loop. On one of the stops, I asked Shea what we would be seeing that day, and she answered: "Strippers." I was fairly puzzled with