

opposed ISIS's corrupt interpretation of Islam. Examples of these atrocities are the heartbreaking stories of so-called Yazidi brides who were forced into marriages with ISIS fighters. They were raped and brutalized repeatedly and were forced to decide whether to abandon their children or to make an escape. There are multiple stories of ISIS's terror that has been inflicted on those with disabilities, such as babies being suffocated simply for being born with Down syndrome.

The United States, together with a coalition of over 30 countries, engaged in a campaign to rid the world of ISIS and to restore peace and stability to that region. Yet it was not a nation-state that bore the brunt of the fighting against ISIS. The Kurds and the Arabs who made up the Syrian Democratic Forces took the fight to the heart of the caliphate. With the help of U.S. Special Operations Forces and airstrikes, the SDF liberated lands held by the terror group, imprisoned thousands of terrorist fighters, and restored hope to hundreds of thousands who suffered under ISIS rule.

In our fast-moving and quickly changing world, it is easy for some to forget the terrible threat ISIS once posed while they were at their most powerful, but it would be wrong to think we can now allow ourselves to take our foot off of our enemy's throat.

Even now, ISIS cells are seeking to take advantage of the chaos in northern Syria to reconstitute and once again pose a direct threat to Americans right here in our homeland.

You cannot watch what is unfolding in Syria without being fundamentally concerned about the security of our friends and our neighbors. A recapitalization of ISIS is a threat to us all.

It is for this reason that I have introduced a resolution which calls on the Department of Defense and the Department of State to provide a plan within 30 days which will outline a strategy to ensure ISIS will never again threaten Americans or our allies now or in the future.

This strategy will address the ongoing threat that ISIS poses regionally and globally and will outline the plan to prevent an ISIS resurgence, contain ISIS expansion, mitigate the threat ISIS poses to the United States and our allies, and describe how our gains against ISIS since 2014 will be further protected.

We cannot afford to take our eyes off of this vital task of ensuring the lasting and irreversible defeat of ISIS. We must consolidate our gains to rid the world of this terrible organization and insist on a sound strategy to ensure our success to that end.

Too many of our partner forces and indeed American brothers and sisters in arms have fought and died in this fight, and we must ensure that those sacrifices were not made in vain.

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

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

SAUDI FUGITIVE DECLASSIFICATION ACT OF 2019

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to fight for answers—answers that are long overdue.

In 2018, my hometown newspaper, The Oregonian, identified a handful of cases where Saudi nationals accused of serious crimes in the United States, like manslaughter and sexual assault, fled the country and escaped American justice.

Since then, The Oregonian has identified numerous similar cases—in fact, almost two dozen such cases across the United States. That includes 19 in just the last 7 years.

Today I want to tell the Senate about just one of those cases.

Three years ago, not far from my home in Southeast Portland, a young woman had her life taken from her. Fallon Smart was then a rising sophomore at Franklin High School, and she was aspiring to be a teacher. By all accounts, she would have been a terrific teacher.

She was 15, and according to everybody who knew her, Fallon was warm and smart and friendly. She had her whole life ahead of her.

According to police, she lost her life when she was crossing the street in front of stopped traffic, and a vehicle illegally swerved into the left-hand lane and hit her at 55 or 60 miles per hour. Her mom was in a car half a block away and ran to her daughter. Fallon died in her mother's arms, and the car that hit her just sped away.

A Saudi Arabian college student named Abdulrahman Sameer Noorah later returned to the scene and was arrested. He was eventually charged with manslaughter in Fallon's death and then released on \$1 million bail. The Saudi consulate posted his \$100,000 bond, according to The Oregonian newspaper.

In the United States, in our country, there was every expectation that Mr. Noorah would get a fair shake from the justice system. Our justice system was working the right way here until 2 weeks before Mr. Noorah was scheduled to go to trial. His tracking bracelet was somehow cut, and he disappeared. Mr. Noorah has never stood trial for Fallon Smart's death.

Eventually, this spring, the State Department confirmed in a letter to me that Mr. Noorah had returned to Saudi Arabia.

I felt then, and I do today, this raises an important and a serious question: How does a foreign national charged with manslaughter, whose passport was seized, disappear from the United States without a trace? How does this

person escape the country and make it thousands of miles back to Saudi Arabia with there being no record of his doing so?

News reports in 2018 suggest that the Saudi Arabian Government knew about Mr. Noorah and these other fugitives and potentially helped them flee justice.

I have five children. I cannot imagine the grief I would feel if one of them was taken from me, and the person responsible somehow managed to evade the justice system. It is almost impossible to comprehend the anger and the helplessness and the frustration any parent would feel in a situation like this.

I met with Fallon's mom Fawn, and while she and all of Fallon's loved ones have borne this miscarriage of justice with extraordinary grace, they are just heartbroken.

In addition to being heartbroken, they are angry. They are outraged by the notion that the person charged with killing their daughter may have just been able to escape scot-free and face no consequences for his action.

For some time, I have been demanding information from the Trump administration. In my view, the victims of these crimes, their families, and the American people are owed some essential answers. How did this happen? What is the U.S. Government doing about it?

I have written the Department of Justice. I have written the State Department. I have written the U.S. Marshals Service. I have written to the Department of Homeland Security. As far as I can tell, I would have gotten better answers from the Saudi royal family themselves.

In fact, when I asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo what he was doing to try to return the Saudi fugitives to the United States, basically what his Department did is that we just got a collective shrug of the shoulders. I sent the Secretary of State a letter last December. He didn't respond.

So I sent another letter in February. I said: The State Department needs to use all its resources and all the tools at its disposal to hold the Saudi Government accountable. I asked whether our Ambassador pressed the Saudi Government about this disturbing, shocking pattern of Saudi nationals skipping bail.

The State Department finally did respond to my second letter. What I got was a whole bunch of nothing. One of Mr. Pompeo's aides said that without an extradition treaty, there wasn't anything they could do about it. This is from a Secretary who tried to rebrand State as the "Department of Swagger." That swagger was nowhere to be found when it was time to protect innocent Americans.

Today, I am not writing any more letters. I am here on the Senate floor asking for action—action today. I am

seeking to pass the Saudi Fugitive Declassification Act of 2019. My bill requires the FBI Director, in coordination with the Director of National Intelligence, to quickly—quickly—declassify any and all information related to a key question: whether the Government of Saudi Arabia helped any Saudi nationals escape the country when those Saudi nationals were awaiting trial or sentencing for a criminal offense.

Let me just repeat that so there is no confusion. The bill requires that the FBI Director and what is called the DNI, or the Director of National Intelligence, would quickly—quickly—declassify any and all information on the issue of whether the Government of Saudi Arabia helped any Saudi nationals escape the country when those Saudi nationals were awaiting trial or sentencing for a criminal offense in the United States.

I believe what I am asking for today must happen in the name of justice immediately. The American people deserve answers. The people I represent at home in our neighborhoods in Southeast Portland want answers. These are not academic matters. This is not about a series of victimless crimes.

This is about manslaughter. It is about rape. It is about a whole array of ugly offenses. This is about real people, real families—families who have suffered immeasurable pain. They deserve to see justice served. When individuals who are charged with violent crimes—no victimless crimes here, violent crimes—manage to escape and when the United States fails to do much of anything about it, it undermines public safety and it harms the U.S. justice system.

If, as some of the press stories have suggested, the Saudi Government has helped these alleged criminals escape justice, the American people have the right to be doubly concerned. Is the public image of Saudi Arabia a higher priority than the safety of American citizens?

Any action by a foreign government to thwart our criminal justice system would be an attack on our national security and our sovereignty. If that is what has happened, then, all Americans deserve to know.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the U.S. Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2635, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2635) to require the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to declassify any and all information relating to whether the government of Saudi Arabia assisted a citizen or national of Saudi Arabia in departing the United States while the citizen or national was awaiting trial or sentencing for a criminal offense committed in the United States, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. WYDEN. I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read

a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (S. 2635) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2635

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Saudi Fugitive Declassification Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. DECLASSIFICATION OF ANY AND ALL INFORMATION RELATING TO ACTIONS BY GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA TO ASSIST PERSONS IN DEPARTING UNITED STATES WHO WERE AWAITING TRIAL OR SENTENCING IN UNITED STATES.

Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in coordination with the Director of National Intelligence, shall declassify any and all information related to whether the government of Saudi Arabia materially assisted or facilitated any citizen or national of Saudi Arabia in departing from the United States while the citizen or national was awaiting trial or sentencing for a criminal offense committed in the United States.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry.

With that action, has this bill now been passed?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It has.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, it is interesting. When we come here, we seem to think that everybody in America is reading the blogs and all the major newspapers every morning. A lot of people do, but some people have lives. They get up early. They go to work. They listen to the news from time to time, but they don't follow it closely. That is what they hire us to do and they hire us to deal with as policy-makers.

On this issue of Syria, it strikes me, and it really did earlier this week when I visited this gas station close to my home that I frequent. It also has a little convenience store with a coffee stand inside. A gentleman comes up to me and basically says: Why do we care about all the stuff that is happening there? You know, it is thousands of miles away. These people have been fighting forever. Let them figure it out. Why do we have to be involved in all of this?

I will tell you that there is appeal to that argument. There really is. I understand why Americans feel that way.

Since September of 2001, we have lost countless young men and women abroad in combat. We have seen families who have been ripped apart. We have seen the injuries that people come home with, not to mention the amount of money that has been spent on all of this as well. At a time when we face so many challenges, a lot of people are saying to themselves: Well, why do we have to be everywhere? Why do we have to care? These people have been fighting for a billion years. It is not our problem. We need to focus on issues here at home.

I do understand the appeal of that argument. I want to tell you that despite how much I focus on these issues and spend time on them, from time to time, those arguments appeal to me. But then you have to analyze why we are there to begin with and what it would mean in the short to long term to our country to just walk away from these obligations. That is what I hope to do here today in a way that answers the question the gentleman asked me last Monday. I didn't have time to get into all of this because I had an airplane to catch, and these airlines don't wait for anybody.

So here is the way I would explain it. The first is that you have to tell people why we are there to begin with. Let me tell you what this is not. This is not about an endless war or being somewhere for the rest of our lives. Frankly, it is not even about committing thousands of troops. The U.S. force presence in Syria was quite small. It actually achieved an extraordinary amount with such a few number of people.

There were 2,000 special operators imbedded alongside thousands of Kurds and our international partners. Basically, it is an area that ISIS once dominated. They literally controlled the cities. The capital of the caliphate was once there at one point. They were driven out. There was tremendous success, a real example of the sort of counterterror that these missions have successfully pursued.

The stated goal was, first and foremost, to stamp out and eliminate ISIS. The second was that our presence would provide leverage when the time came for a Syrian peace settlement—a settlement that would reflect our national interests, which are primarily three things.

The first is limiting Assad's power. The guy is a stone-cold criminal. This guy has gassed and murdered his own people. There has to be some limits and constraints to his power.

The second is to safeguard the Kurds. As you have heard others come to the floor and talk about, these people fought with us. We told them: If you will do the ground-fighting and we help you from the air and with logistics, we are going to be here with you. They did, and they lost over 10,000 people in that fight. They have been great partners in that endeavor. We had a moral obligation, not to mention a promise that we made.

The third is to limit Iran's influence. Iran would love nothing more than to completely dominate Syria because it links them directly into Lebanon to supply and support Hezbollah. It allows them to pivot over into Iraq to become the dominant power there.

Just imagine a Middle East in which Iran is the dominant power in Lebanon, in Syria, and, of course, in Iran, and, eventually, in Iraq, and, God forbid, in Bahrain, and with a growing influence in Yemen through the Houthis. They not only encircle Israel. They encircle Saudi Arabia. It would be a nightmare.

We are engaged in a campaign of maximum pressure against Iran, and the last thing you want to do in a maximum-pressure campaign is to alleviate pressure, and having a greater influence in Syria would alleviate a lot of pressure for Iran. That is the purpose of our presence there.

The administration's and the President's decision has undermined every single one of them. That is the only way to talk about it. I think it has done so in ways we are going to regret for a long time.

The first is the ISIS mission. There are 10,000 ISIS killers being held in jails and camps in northern Syria. The guards at those camps are not Americans. They are Kurdish guards. What happens when someone invades the cities that your family lives in? You send people to go meet that enemy. That means that they have been removing guards from the prisons to the frontlines.

There are less and less guards in these camps. Estimates are already that a large number of ISIS killers have already gotten out, and they anticipate more to get out soon. Just imagine 10,000 killers running loose, not to mention efforts by ISIS to break them out with less security.

By the way, this is a problem not just in Syria. It is a real problem in Iraq. About 200,000 refugees have already amassed at the border. There is no way Iraq can go through every single one of them and determine who is an ISIS killer and who is a refugee who is coming back. So you can suddenly see this resurgence of ISIS spread and destabilize Iraq. So, suddenly, this evil movement that we had on the ropes and had become an insurgency—and, frankly, was already reemerging as an insurgency—has just been given fuel to operate in one, and now in two, countries.

How about the goal of providing leverage for a future settlement to reflect our interests? First of all, in restraints on Assad's power, think about it this way. Literally, overnight, when the Turks came in and the Kurds didn't have us anymore, they were forced to cut a deal with Assad. So, suddenly, the Kurds are basically telling Assad's troops: Come up to the cities that we once had, and you now be the troops here to back us up. You take control of them. That is what they had to do to avoid being slaughtered.

In practical terms, what it means is that Assad, literally, overnight, has captured a third of the land of Syria at no price and no concession. He had to make no concessions, pay no price, do nothing other than just send people up to take it.

To me, this doesn't sound like we have imposed restraints on Assad. It sounds like he has just literally been gifted control over a third of the national territory at no concession and no price. He had to do nothing.

How about safeguarding the Kurdish interests? I think that is self-explanatory. The Kurds have now been forced to align themselves with Assad, who, in the short term, may be fine, but once this is all over, I doubt very seriously whether the Kurds will be treated well, not to mention the Yazidi and the Christian communities that the Kurds were protecting, who now are also under Assad's rule. Suffice it to say that nothing here has safeguarded their interests.

There is news today that the Vice President and the Secretary of State were able to go to Turkey and work out what is being called a ceasefire. I think they deserve praise, along with the President, for pursuing that mission because anytime that human lives are spared from death in a war, that is cause for celebration.

With all due respect, it does not appear to me, however, that this is really a ceasefire. It is more an ultimatum because what Erdogan is basically saying is this: Here is land that I intend to take. I intend to drive every Kurd out of this area, and I intend for Turkey to control this area in northern Syria as a security zone, as he calls it. The only thing he has agreed to as an ultimatum is that the Kurds can leave this area voluntarily in the next 5 days, or he will move in and take it and kill them. You can call it a ceasefire, but, frankly, it doesn't appear to have changed the strategic objective that Erdogan has for that region.

I certainly think that while it is good news that it made some lemonade out of this lemon, nonetheless, these are cities in which not just Kurdish troops but people and families are going to have to leave now, and we are going to have to be involved in helping to coordinate and guarantee that, which runs its own risks.

Ultimately, it is an ultimatum by him saying: You have 5 days to leave before I move in and kill you.

How about limiting Iran's influence? First of all, clearly, Iran will now have more operating space in Syria. The lack of a U.S. presence there means that Iran and its affiliated groups, particularly these Hezbollah units that are now in Syria, will have much more operating space. The stronger Assad is, the stronger Iran will be. Assad is a very close ally of the Iranians, and the more space he controls, the more space they have to operate.

Embedded in this, as you have noticed, is that Iran has developed this

ability to conduct attacks against the United States, sometimes using third groups that they control, to either blame the attacks on, to claim credit for the attacks, or, in some cases, to conduct them, because what this does is it gives Iran the capability of attacking the United States without facing international condemnation for the attack—enough deniability—especially from countries that are looking to not blame Iran anyway because it would force them to get out of the Iran deal. And they have gotten away with it.

But one of the things that Iran has calculated in these attacks—one of the things they have taken into the calculation—is this: We believe the United States is trying to get out of the region; meaning, if we attack them, we can hit them much harder than we ever had before because they don't want another war. They are not going to hit us back as hard. We can get away with more.

I submit to you that I am pretty confident that this decision has strengthened that perception, not weakened it. I fear what that can mean next.

This also increases Iran's influence in Iraq. If you are an Iraqi politician right now, whether you are a Shia or a Sunni, and you have just seen this decision, you are thinking to yourself: We are next. And when the Americans leave here at some point—at some point we will have to—the Iranians are going to become the most important group on the ground.

In fact, there were reports yesterday that there were these protests on the street and there were Iranian-linked militias with snipers on the rooftops operating in Iraq. These were not elements of the army or the police force. These were Iranian elements operating in Iraq. This has increased their influence in Iraq and their ability to determine the future of Iraq in a way that is terrible for us, terrible for our allies, like Israel, and a great benefit to the Iranians, not to mention that Syria creates an extraordinary land bridge that the Iranians can now use to increasingly continue to supply Hezbollah in Lebanon and to increasingly supply their own militias just across the Golan Heights.

The irony in all of this, ironically, is that I fear this decision actually makes it likely that there is going to be a war. I will tell you why. As I pointed out first, there is the Iranian attack calculation. This further strengthens their belief that they can get away with even more brazen attacks because the threshold for a U.S. military response is higher than it has ever been because we are looking to get out, and this proves it.

What that can mean is they can miscalculate it, and we are going to have to respond. Then, all of a sudden, you are in a real shooting war—not a “2,000 person on the ground, working with the Kurds” war, a real regional conflict.

The other point is that all of our alliances around the world are built on security guarantees. In Eastern Europe,

the NATO security guarantee in many of these countries is a 300-, 400-, 500-man force—a tripwire. It is not enough to stop a Russian incursion, but they are there because if they were confronted by Russians, that would trigger a broader conflict.

You could say the same about South Korea, our presence in Japan, the commitments we have made to Israel, and the troop presence we have now in Saudi Arabia. It goes on and on and on.

Ask yourself: After this, would any ally relying on the U.S. security assurances be more or less confident of our assurances? I will tell you this. Less than 48 hours before this withdrawal decision was made, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave unequivocal assurances that we were not going anywhere. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a general, General Milley, said: We are there. We are not going anywhere. These are all rumors. Forty-eight hours later, this withdrawal announcement was made.

With all due respect, this is not his fault. I don't blame him, if he believes that. What is his credibility now when he says anything like that to anybody else or when he warns someone not to do something against us because we will act in return? Maybe his credibility isn't shot—and I would warn our enemies not to view it that way—but I can tell you it certainly hasn't been strengthened by this. One last point on this. You know, Russia and China are going all over the world trying to come up with an ad hoc, anti-U.S. coalition—a coalition of countries that are sanctioned—to try to get around the dollarization of the global economy, a coalition to fight against the impediments against Chinese spyware and technology, and a coalition to limit our presence in one part of the world or another. The argument they make to these countries is, Why are you aligned with America? They are unreliable. They are unreliable partners. They will cut on you as soon as it makes sense domestically for them to do so or somebody else gets elected and has a different opinion.

Well, ask yourselves, has that argument been strengthened or weakened? Have we made it easier or harder for Russia and China to make that argument, including the countries that we have basing agreements with now and including the countries that we are meeting with every single day and asking them: Don't buy Russian weapons. Don't install Chinese technology and spyware in your Safer City Initiatives so they can spy on you and ultimately on us. Don't allow them to take over your port facilities or operate rotationally based military forces in your national territory. We will help you with those things instead.

Well, I can tell you that when China and Russia go to them the next time and say that America is unreliable, they will have one more exhibit to show them as evidence to prove it. That is why I say this decision has an impact that goes well beyond Syria.

I will tell you that, again, I think what the Vice President and the Secretary of State did today is noble. There are lives that are going to be saved because now they have 5 days to leave those areas. But that doesn't address any of these other repercussions. In a blink of an eye, we completely undermined and unraveled the very justification for this operation and all of the stated reasons we said we were there. We had these 2,000 troops working with the Kurds to keep ISIS from reemerging and to provide leverage in the future Syrian settlement, to restrain Assad's power, to safeguard Kurdish interests, our partner's interest, and to limit Iranian influence. Every single one of those stated interests—that was our policy less than 2 weeks ago—has been wiped out.

One of my favorite questions in the hallway from the reporters is, What should Congress do now? What can we do? Well, I think we are all searching to see what we can do to mitigate some of this damage. But I want to be honest with you—there are some mistakes and some decisions that cannot be reversed. There is some damage that cannot be mitigated, and I fear that some of these things are a part of it. We will spend time thinking about it. I think there might be some opportunities for the administration in the weeks and months to come to do something about it, but right now, I think we need to prepare ourselves for the consequences, for what this is going to mean in the long term.

So it was kind of a long answer to give someone at a gas station when I had a flight to catch in 45 minutes and they were in a hurry as well, but I hope that for the people back home and potentially around the country who have an interest in this topic, I was at least able to shine some light on why some of us do not support this decision.

It isn't because we favor endless wars or want invasions. It is because while this may be popular when first presented to people, when you view it in its totality and entirety, sometimes what is popular in the short term is not good for America's national security in the long term, and it is my fear that this is one such example.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the purpose of my speaking today is to remind my colleagues about some history as it relates to the adoption of

Part D of Medicare back in 2003 and the importance of considering that history in regard to the importance of passing legislation this year in regard to high drug costs. The reminder goes to my colleagues who are up for election, based on the fact that the history of the elections of 2000 and 2002 had consequences for people who weren't aware of the grassroots support for doing something for prescription drugs and Medicare, as Part D turned out to be.

In this environment today, I don't think there is proper concern that people—the grassroots of America—are expressing the need to do something about prescription drug prices, so I am going to spend my time doing what I just summarized for you going through the history of 20 years ago versus now.

I want to lower the cost of prescription drugs for American seniors. I have spoken on this topic many times before, and in my previous speeches years and years ago, I said that we were delivering on the promises of the last three elections in a bipartisan manner to help seniors who had waited far too long for relief, and that relief came out as Medicare Part D.

That speech was more than 15 years ago. We have been here before. In 2003, I was leading the last piece of bipartisan entitlement reform, the creation of the Medicare Part D Program that was entitled the "Medicare Modernization Act of 2003."

Now here we are again on the cusp of meaningful, bipartisan action in regard to prescription drugs. This action would fulfill the promises that I and many of my colleagues and the administration, meaning the Trump administration, made to the American people that we are going to do something about prescription drug pricing. We should be reminded that promises made ought to be promises kept.

I want to remind my colleagues that history does not have to repeat itself. Hopefully, this will help rid the gridlock that delayed us from delivering Medicare Part D nearly two decades ago.

As we all know, the Medicare Modernization Act was signed into law in November of 2003, but the process of creating Part D began long before the President actually signed the bill. We could go back more than a decade—but that is not the most important part of it—but Congress was voting on what would become prescription drug coverage as early as 1988. Obviously, it didn't become law.

Suggestions for how to help seniors with prescription drugs came from every corner throughout the next decade after those 1988 votes. Yet the proposals weren't enacted, so we failed to bring any kind of comprehensive change to Medicare.

Under President Clinton, prescription drug pricing reform gained national attention, just like it has national attention today because President Trump has made it one of his premier goals of reducing drug prices.

So going back to the Clinton administration as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Congress created a forum to bring more attention to the prescription drug program under Medicare. That was called the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare.

After a year's worth of work and research, the Commission voted on three recommendations in 1999, including a prescription drug benefit. However, the recommendations failed to receive the mandated supermajority of members' votes, so no formal recommendations were ever submitted to Congress because that was the rule of the Commission at the time. It had to be a supermajority of the members of the Commission.

Facing mounting pressure from the public in anticipation of the 2000 election, all of the major Presidential candidates presented plans. President Bush had suggested a new Federal subsidy to help low-income beneficiaries purchase drug coverage through private insurers.

Vice President Al Gore, the Democratic candidate, proposed a new voluntary benefit within Medicare to protect chronically ill and low-income beneficiaries against catastrophic expenses. Yet the Congress still couldn't reach a compromise, even though it was very much discussed during that Presidential election, and it was in a lot of discussions in Senate races as well.

At that time, the country was united behind Medicare reform, but Congress was divided on how or even if it should act, and it did not act.

In the Finance Committee, the person that preceded me when I took over the chairmanship of the Finance Committee, a person by the name of Bill Roth of Delaware, proposed two plans to committee members in hopes that a consensus could be reached. The first plan worked to fundamentally change the Medicare Program. The proposal included a universal drug benefit for the Medicare Program with several major contracting reforms. The reforms would have permitted pharmacy benefit managers, insurers, and other qualified firms to compete to manage the government drug benefit in a cost-effective way.

Then-Chairman Roth also proposed a scaled-back plan which would extend prescription drug coverage to low-income seniors and on the State level to those seniors facing catastrophic levels of spending. This second piece of the Roth proposal was meant to be a backstop—just a short-term, bipartisan bandaid on a gaping wound while negotiations continued to find a longer term solution.

Despite the support from then-President Bill Clinton and the Republican majority leader, Trent Lott, compromise was elusive, and the Finance Committee did not act before the November election. So then we had the 2000 election. Prescription drug cov-

erage was a big issue, and it was a big issue probably more for Republicans because we controlled the U.S. Senate. We lost five incumbent Republican Senators because people didn't pay attention to this being a major issue. Hence, to remind you what I opened with, I don't want Senators making that same mistake this year.

The American people were obviously disappointed in the lack of action back in 2000, and it showed, but as we have to do when there is grassroots support like there was then, we marched on to find a path forward, but building consensus was not easy.

I was chairman during part of that time between the years 2000 and 2003. I wasn't chairman all that time because the Senate flipped to a Democratic majority when Senator Jeffords of Vermont changed from Republican to Democrat. Between the years 2000 and 2003, we held countless meetings and hearings on the status of Medicare and how we could come to an agreement to add Part D and bring Medicare into the 21st century. The gridlock seemed inescapable.

In 2002, the budget allowed for \$350 billion to reform the Medicare Program, most of that going toward the prescription drug reform that we were proposing. Partisan discord led to three separate proposals being sent to the Senate from House Republicans that were subsequently voted down.

As a result of the 2002 elections, Republicans were back in the majority, and I retook the gavel as chair of the Finance Committee. I promised at that time legislation that would address seniors' concerns and be bipartisan so it would pass an almost evenly split Senate. That was my goal. In the Finance Committee, we went through the important and wide-ranging process of creating what eventually became the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003.

I worked across the aisle, across the Capitol, and down Pennsylvania Avenue to make sure the prescription drugs and Medicare improvement bill struck the right balance, spending the money allocated to us by President Bush to be done in a fair and equitable way. A lot had changed in the practice of medicine since Medicare had been signed into law 40 years before, in 1965, and we needed to recognize that the practice of medicine had changed. My friend Senator Baucus, who was at that time the Democratic ranking member of my committee, and I were able to thoughtfully pull together a Medicare package by closing a big coverage gap and doing that in the right way. The Part D marketplace offered consumers better choice, better coverage, and better value. Of course, it was about time that Congress had taken this action demanded by the grassroots of America in a serious way. I said in 2003, "We all know seniors don't want politics, they want prescription drugs," and that holds true today as we consider this issue.

It is important to note that just like in the 2000 election, the country took

notice, but this time it was for our accomplishments, and Republicans gained four Senate seats in that 2004 election.

I am now standing here again, more than 15 years later, to make the very same point. It seems like *deja vu*. American seniors don't care about party politics any more now than they did in 2003. When it comes to almost any issue, but particularly healthcare issues, what they care about is having access to affordable medication.

Once again, I am leading a bipartisan effort to enact much needed entitlement reform, and once again some of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are resisting compromise. Once again, medicine has changed since the last entitlement reform I led. Let me remind you, prescription medication was not much of a part of the cost of medicine in 1965 when Medicare was passed. By 2003, it had become a significant portion of the cost of medicine. That is why people needed Medicare Part D. Pharmaceuticals are even more a part of the practice of medicine today. Scientific advances have led to many new and more effective treatments. However, they are often accompanied by very high costs. That means prescription drug prices have skyrocketed, and Americans want Congress to act now so they can afford their lifesaving medications.

Our seniors deserve better than the over 5-year delay in action we put them through last time—in other words, 5 years before we finally passed something in 2003 called Part D of Medicare. They shouldn't have to wait 5 years this time. Congress has been here before. We want to make sure history doesn't repeat itself. I want to make sure it doesn't repeat itself. I personally have been here before. I have watched the opportunity to help patients slip away. Now, just like in 2003, Americans want action on entitlement reforms. Now, just like in 2003, the President supports action. Now, just like back then in 2003, numerous proposals were floated and ultimately fell short of the finish line.

We have another opportunity to deliver meaningful reforms to help the Part D program adapt to new innovations in the healthcare world. The bill that came out of my committee 19 to 9, titled the "Prescription Drug Cost Reduction Act of 2019," builds on the successful programs we created in 2003. It will lower beneficiary premiums by \$6 billion and lower out-of-pocket costs by \$25 billion. The bill will implement an out-of-pocket cap, eliminate excess payments, cap taxpayer subsidies, and permanently repeal the doughnut hole in Medicare Part D. It uses market forces. Those market forces will incentivize manufacturers to lower list prices and report more accurate calculations of their rebate obligations.

In short, this is the right bill at the right time. We should seize this opportunity to support actions that Americans need now, not 5 or 10 years from now.

I want to give credit to Senator WYDEN of Oregon, the ranking Democrat on my committee and my partner on this issue.

Thank you for working with us in the tradition of the Finance Committee in the same way that Senator Baucus and I worked together 15 years ago on Part D legislation.

I ask all of my colleagues to join Senator WYDEN and me in our bipartisan effort to lower the cost of prescription drugs.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

S.J. RES. 53

• Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss S.J. Res. 53, the resolution of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act on the Environmental Protection Agency's Affordable Clean Energy, ACE rule. I fully support passage of the resolution.

Every week seems to bring fresh evidence of the damage climate change is causing to our environment and economy. Increasing floods, heatwaves, droughts, hurricanes, and snowstorms have wreaked havoc on communities across the country. We cannot continue to ignore that climate change is already happening all around us. We must take immediate action.

The Obama administration's Clean Power Plan established Federal standards for emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuel-fired power plants. The plan set achievable carbon emissions reduction targets of 32 percent from 2005 levels by 2030 to be reached by reducing emissions from coal-fired power plants, shifting energy generation from fossil fuels to renewable sources, and promoting energy conservation. The Clean Power Plan not only helped drive the transition of our energy generation to cleaner sources, it also served as the centerpiece of U.S. efforts to lead the world in addressing climate change through the Paris Climate Agreement.

The administration's rule would take us backward by repealing the emissions reduction targets in the Clean Power Plan and replacing them with less ambitious targets based on narrow energy efficiency improvements that also wholly exempt natural gas-fired power plants. It is clear that the new rules will likely result in more carbon pollution, halt the accelerated trends toward low- and zero-carbon energy, and

have dire implications for our air quality and public health.

For these reasons, I oppose the administration's rule and support passage of Senator CARDIN's resolution—S.J. Res. 53—to disapprove of it.

Thank you.●

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, I was absent for vote No. 324 on S.J. Res. 53, providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "Repeal of the Clean Power Plan; Emission Guidelines for Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Existing Utility Generating Units; Revisions to Emissions Guidelines Implementing Regulations."

Had I been present, I would have voted yea on the resolution.●

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Arlington, VA.

Hon. JAMES E. RISCH,
*Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 19-51 concerning the Air Force's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Republic of Korea for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$253 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

CHARLES W. HOOPER,
*Lieutenant General, USA, Director,
Enclosures.*

TRANSMITTAL NO. 19-51

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Republic of Korea.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:
Major Defense Equipment* \$250 million.
Other \$3 million.
Total \$253 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE): One hundred twenty (120) AIM-120C-7/C-8 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM).

Non-MDE: Also included are containers; weapon support and support equipment; spare and repair parts; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistical and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Air Force (KS-D-YDB).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Annex Attached.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: October 17, 2019.

*As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Republic of Korea—AIM-120C Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM)

The Republic of Korea (ROK) has requested to buy one hundred twenty (120) AIM-120C-7/C-8 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM). Also included are containers; weapon support and support equipment; spare and repair parts; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistical and program support. The total estimated program cost is \$253 million.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by meeting the legitimate security and defense needs of one of the closest allies in the INDOPACOM Theater. The Republic of Korea is one of the major political and economic powers in East Asia and the Western Pacific and a key partner of the United States in ensuring peace and stability in that region. It is vital to U.S. national interests to assist the Republic of Korea in developing and maintaining a strong and ready self-defense capability.

This proposed sale will improve the ROK capability to meet current and future threats by increasing its stocks of medium range missiles for its F-15K, KF-16, and F-35 fleets for its national defense. The potential sale will further strengthen the interoperability between the United States and the ROK. The ROK will have no difficulty absorbing these additional missiles into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor will be Raytheon of Waltham, MA. There are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale. Any offset agreement will be defined in negotiations between the Purchaser and the prime contractor.

Implementation of the proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to the ROK.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 19-51

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology: