

propose to repeal the SALT cap outright because they know it is bad policy and negates all of their talking points about tax fairness. They just want to bless a backdoor workaround.

I urge Members on both sides to use common sense and reject Democrats' resolution when we vote on it later today.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S.J. RES. 59

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a joint resolution at the desk that is due a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the joint resolution by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 59), expressing the sense of Congress on the precipitous withdrawal of United States Armed Forces from Syria and Afghanistan, and Turkey's unprovoked incursion into Syria.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the joint resolution on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the joint resolution will be placed on the calendar.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, RELATING TO "CON- TRIBUTIONS IN EXCHANGE FOR STATE OR LOCAL TAX CREDITS"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S.J. Res. 50, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 50) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, relating to "Contributions in Exchange for State or Local Tax Credits."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the joint resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The majority whip.

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today, Democrats are forcing a vote to repeal

the administration's sensible rule to disallow bogus charitable deductions that are designed to circumvent the SALT, or the State and local tax, deduction cap that was part of the 2017 tax reform bill.

Frankly, I welcome this vote and today's debate. It gives us an opportunity to review all the benefits of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

While drafting the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Congress made a conscious choice to cap the State and local tax deduction, or SALT, at \$10,000. Doing so allowed us to provide additional tax relief to the middle class, support families by doubling the child tax credit, and simplify the Tax Code for filers by nearly doubling the standard deduction.

These changes resulted in the average family of four in my home State of South Dakota receiving a tax cut of more than \$2,000.

In response to this cap, certain high-tax States adopted—what some would call "creative" but what I would call "bogus"—schemes to try to circumvent the cap. These so-called charities that these States have set up are designed solely as an alternative method of paying State and local taxes so millionaires can shirk their Federal tax obligations. So the IRS did what the tax law directed. It enacted sensible regulations to shut down these bogus tax avoidance schemes. But it did so in a thoughtful manner, carefully considering more than 7,700 comments and creating a safe harbor for certain donations to avoid unintentionally discouraging actual charitable giving.

It is ironic that Democrats, who uniformly opposed the middle-class tax cuts in the new tax law, are now calling for a tax cut for the most well off Americans. Based on nonpartisan data from the Joint Committee on Taxation, 94 percent of the benefit from passing this CRA would flow to taxpayers with incomes of over \$200,000. Fifty-two percent of the benefit would go to those with incomes of over \$1 million.

In fact, repealing the SALT cap would result in millionaires receiving an average tax cut of nearly \$60,000, while the average tax cut for taxpayers with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 would be less than \$10.

If you put that into perspective, the choice here is very clear. Today, we have an opportunity to vote no—to vote no—on the Democrats' proposed tax cut for millionaires.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Democratic Party has undergone quite an evolution over these past 3 years. Like all political parties, the Democratic Party has always had an extremist fringe, with the far-left wing of the Democratic Party rapidly becoming its mainstream. Democrats have been falling all over each other to see how far they can run to the left. Socialism, a concept that, in America at least, seemed to have been firmly consigned to the ash heap of history is

now being openly embraced by the Democratic Party. Leading Democrats have embraced putting the government in control of everything from American's energy usage to healthcare.

It is not socialism or government-run healthcare that I want to focus on today. I want to talk about another trend that has been gradually emerging in the Democratic Party but doesn't always get the coverage that proposals like Medicare for All receive. It is the growing Democratic hostility to religion, which culminated a couple of weeks ago in a Democratic Presidential candidate's proposal to selectively tax churches based on whether he agrees with their religious beliefs.

Let me repeat that. Think about that for a minute. A Democratic Presidential candidate proposed that the government should selectively tax churches and synagogues and mosques based on whether their religious beliefs pass muster with the President. That is, or should be, a shocking statement.

The idea of taxing churches based on whether their religious beliefs meet with a political party's approval is antithetical to the fundamental right to freely exercise one's religion. It is not just antithetical, but it is unconstitutional. Targeting churches for discriminatory treatment based on their theology is a violation of the First Amendment.

It is an understatement to say that it is deeply disturbing to see this proposal emerge from a mainstream candidate. But what might be even more disturbing is that members of the Democratic Party aren't lining up to reject this outlandish and unconstitutional proposal.

Maybe we shouldn't be surprised. This is not the first time a Democrat has shown signs of regarding religious people as second-class citizens. During some of the judicial confirmations of this administration, it became clear that Democrats believed religious people should be subjected to extra scrutiny.

There was the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett during the first year of this administration. She was an outstanding judicial candidate who received the American Bar Association's highest rating of "well qualified." The ABA's evaluation, as the Democratic leader once said, is "the gold standard by which judicial candidates are judged."

Yet during the confirmation process, it became clear that some Democrats thought she should be disqualified because she is a practicing Catholic. "The dogma lives loudly within you" is a quote from the Democratic ranking member on the Judiciary Committee, with the implication that anyone who takes his or her religious faith seriously can't be trusted to hold public office.

Last December, Democrats raised questions about another judicial nominee because he is a member of a Catholic charitable organization, the

Knights of Columbus, which participates in such disturbing activities as serving veterans, raising money for the needy, and providing young people with scholarships. The Constitution is very clear on whether being a person of faith can disqualify you from public office. From article VI, “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”

“No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.” That is a quote from article VI of the Constitution.

Religious liberty is a foundational part of our system of government. There is a reason it is the very first freedom mentioned in the Bill of Rights. More than one of the 13 original colonies were founded for the express purpose of securing religious freedom. By religious freedom, I don't mean the right to worship privately as long as you don't bring your faith into the public square. What people were looking for in America—what they still look for in America—is the freedom to live according to their religion and according to their conscience and beliefs, freely and publicly, without interference from the government. That is what the First Amendment was intended to protect.

I want to move away from the Constitution for a minute, though. There is no question that Democrats' increasingly hostile public attitude toward religion raises some serious questions about constitutionality. I think that is clear. That is not the only disturbing aspect of it.

I am also profoundly disturbed by the none-too-subtle implication that religious people are somehow second-class citizens, that we may have to tolerate them, but that we should seek to push them out of public life. That idea is also one that would be absolutely antithetical to the Founders.

The Founders didn't see religion as something to be tolerated. They saw it as an absolute good, and that isn't just because a number of the Founders were men and women of faith. They didn't think religion was just a private good—that it kept you in a good place with God. No, they thought religion was good for society. Think of the famous passage from Washington's Farewell Address, which we read in the Senate, literally, every single year in observance of Washington's birthday.

Let me quote:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity.

Again, this is from President Washington's Farewell Address. This is a sentiment that occurs over and over

again during the founding—that religion is a benefit not just to individuals privately but to the public, that it makes men and women into good citizens. It encourages them to uphold the law, to live virtuous lives, to take their oaths seriously, to respect the property of others, and to moderate problematic passions like vengeance and avarice.

That is not to say that you have to be religious to be a good citizen, but it does point to the truth that religion is something that adds value to society and that it builds men and women who are a blessing to their neighbors and to their country.

Americans are known for being a generous people. I don't think it is much of a coincidence that Americans are also known for being a religious people. Again, to be clear, that doesn't mean you have been to be religious to be generous, but religion encourages generosity. Think about how much of the charitable work in this country would go away overnight without religion. Churches and religious organizations support food banks and homeless shelters and crisis pregnancy centers. They run tutoring programs and scholarship programs and mentoring programs. They reach out to immigrants and refugees and to struggling parents and struggling families. They serve military members and first responders. They sign up people to vote. They help families looking to adopt. They implement recycling programs. They collect aid for individuals caught in the path of natural disasters. They build houses for those without a home, and I could go on and on and on.

I will provide just one South Dakota example. A few months ago, I visited LifeLight's new youth center in the Pettigrew Heights area of Sioux Falls. In addition to providing spiritual opportunities, the center is focused on providing a safe place where underprivileged children can come to hang out, play games, have a snack, and do their homework. It is just one of the many tremendous things being done by churches and religious organizations in Sioux Falls and around my State. I doubt there is any area where good work is being done in this country where you won't find religious people helping out.

I don't just want to see religious people tolerated. I want to see the Democratic Party rejecting the un-American idea that being religious somehow makes you less qualified to participate in the public square, and I want to see the Democratic Party standing up to condemn unconstitutional ideas like that proposed by one of their Presidential candidates.

Until then, I will keep fighting to ensure that every American's fundamental right to live in accordance with his or her religious beliefs is protected.

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.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, 3 weeks ago, a small number of U.S. Special Forces were working with our Syrian Kurdish partners to conduct operations against ISIS and hold more than 10,000 detainees, many of them hardened ISIS fighters. It was a product of a half decade of hard work by American and coalition forces and the Kurds to degrade ISIS, to put them on the run, and stabilize the postconflict region.

Today, only 3 weeks later, as American troops continue their withdrawal from their bases in northern Syria at the President's orders, President Putin and President Erdogan have announced a plan to establish Russian and Turkish control of a region that was once controlled by American and Kurdish forces. Our partners, the Syrian Kurds, have been killed and wounded in Erdogan's invasion and forced to leave their homes in droves. Most importantly, the upper hand we once held over ISIS has been eroded.

We don't know how many ISIS detainees have escaped from detention facilities or where they have gone. There seems to be no articulable plan on how to get them back. In the blink of an eye, President Trump has undone over 5 years of progress against the Islamic State.

Three weeks after first announcing the troop withdrawal, the President does not seem to have a clear strategy for securing the enduring defeat of ISIS and fixing the mess he has created in Syria. Secretary of State Pompeo does not have a clear strategy. Secretary of Defense Esper does not have a clear strategy. Every day it seems like we are going in a completely different direction. One day, reports indicate the administration was considering a residual force in eastern Syria; the next report says the administration planned to target ISIS from Iraq. The next minute, reports said Iraq will not allow our forces to do that.

What is the strategy here? America's security is at risk. ISIS is dangerous. ISIS is escaping. How will the administration continue to bring the fight to ISIS? What will the President do to prevent Russian and Turkish aggression and the potential slaughter of our allies and friends, the Kurds? When will the administration present its strategy to Congress?

We need answers to these questions right away, but, shockingly, the administration's top officials, Secretary of State Pompeo, Secretary of Defense Esper, have now canceled two scheduled briefings with the Senate, and there is no new time on the calendar.

Secretary of State Pompeo apparently had time to speak to the Heritage Foundation yesterday, which is four blocks away from the Capitol, but he doesn't have time to come to Congress, not even to brief us on Syria?

Secretary Pompeo is derelict in his duty. He has an obligation to come here. It is not a question of time if he spoke four blocks away at the Heritage Foundation. He is ducking. We need answers, and if they don't have answers, we need to have a Q and A, a dialogue, and maybe that will push them to some answers. It is too dangerous for America to sit and do nothing—to run and hide, as Secretary Pompeo is now doing.

Today Senate Democrats are holding a special caucus to hear from Brett McGurk, the former government envoy in charge of countering ISIS under both Presidents Obama and Trump. While I expect Mr. McGurk's presentation to be helpful to our caucus, it does not replace the need for the Trump administration and its officials to come to Congress and explain their strategy.

At the same time, we should send a message to the President that both parties oppose his policy in Syria. The House has passed such a resolution on an overwhelming bipartisan vote, including the Republican leaders like Leader MCCARTHY, Representative SCALISE, and Representative CHENEY.

I have asked the Senate twice now to take up the House resolution, only to be blocked by a single Republican Member. I continue to believe the quickest and most powerful way to convince the President that he is on the wrong track is for Congress to put a bipartisan, joint resolution on his desk saying so. That is what the House resolution does, and the Senate should take it up and pass it.

We all know it is hard to shake the President from his thoughts and ideas, even when they are creating such disaster. His ego is enormous, but the one thing we can do is our Republican colleagues joining us in a resolution that reaches his desk. When Republican colleagues criticized him about Doral, he backed off. It is the only thing that can get him to change, and America is at risk.

Why aren't our Republican colleagues stepping forward? Do they care more about protecting President Trump than protecting America? I hope not.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

USMCA AGREEMENT

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, it has been over 1 year since the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement was signed by President Trump and the leaders of Canada and Mexico. This landmark trade agreement is expected to create 176,000 new American jobs. It is expected to grow American businesses all over our country and help give a jump-start to our hard-working

farmers and ranchers. With 95 percent of the world's population outside of the United States, Montana producers need access to these global markets.

Agriculture drives our economy in Montana. In fact, it is the No. 1 economic driver in our State. Canada and Mexico both are in high demand for our products like wheat, barley, and beef. In fact, in 2018 alone, Montana had \$731 million in total exports to Canada and Mexico.

For our producers in Montana, the USMCA would be a positive step forward in providing certainty and alleviating the challenges and obstacles they faced virtually every single day this season.

When I travel across Montana, I have heard from folks in every corner of our State: 4-H members, FFA members, farmers and ranchers at local county fairs, and producers along the highway. They all want action on USMCA. They all need relief. They are looking for something certain coming out of Washington, DC, in these uncertain times.

I cannot stand by any longer as my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives fail to act. Listen, we have enough votes in the Senate to pass it. There are enough votes in the House to pass it. President Trump can't wait to sign it. Mexico is ready; Canada is ready; the United States is ready; and I can state that in my home State of Montana, we are very ready. I, along with the majority in the U.S. Senate, am ready to get this deal done and get it across the finish line for some of the hardest working folks in our Nation, our farmers and ranchers.

Hard-working small business owners and folks on farms and ranches all over Montana are sitting and waiting for Speaker PELOSI to stop slow-walking the USMCA. The House Democrats cannot continue to hold our farmers and ranchers hostage for any future political gain that we are seeing right now in the House. It has been a political game over there. This is negatively impacting the Montana way of life.

There are countless numbers of Montana families out there who are surviving paycheck to paycheck. They are living on a prayer. They are sick and tired of politics and the partisan games being played in Washington, DC, and, you know what, I am too.

We were elected to come here and get something done, not spin the wheels on cable TV at night just talking about other issues that aren't moving the ball forward on behalf of the American people. What Montanans care about is how they are going to put food on the table and how they are going to make ends meet this winter coming up. The USMCA is more than just a trade deal, it is an opportunity for more jobs and, importantly, higher wages.

That is why I am here today. I am here to encourage our Democratic colleagues in the House to stop playing politics with our communities, our jobs, and our very lives. I am calling on the U.S. House to act, bring this impor-

tant trade deal up for a vote. Let's have an up-or-down vote. Let the House Chamber speak. Let them vote.

The USMCA has the potential to boost our Nation's GDP by \$68 billion, plain and simple. That means more money in the pockets of Montanans. It is a better opportunity for our folks in agriculture. There is more revenue for Main Street businesses in Montana. The USMCA will deliver much needed trade certainty, secure intellectual property rights, and modernize digital trade.

I am not alone in wanting swift action. I am honored to have support from the Montana Chamber of Commerce, the Montana Farm Bureau Federation, from the Montana Grain Growers Association, from the Montana Stockgrowers Association, and from the Montana Pork Producers Association. They are all with us to get the USMCA done. The longer we stall this deal, the further we stall economic opportunity in Montana and across this Nation.

To Speaker PELOSI and to my colleagues in the House, the time to act is now. Our neighbors depend on it, my Montana farmers and ranchers depend on it, and the entire country depends on it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

COLORADO FARM TOUR

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Montana for his comments on the USMCA.

I come to the floor today to talk about a farm tour that I have done every year that I have been in the Senate. This is a tradition that started when I was in the House of Representatives with the wheat growers in Colorado, where we go around the Fourth Congressional District talking about those issues that matter to our farmers in the wheat business. Colorado's Fourth Congressional District raises the vast majority of wheat in the State of Colorado, and about 87 percent of that wheat gets exported.

Senator DAINES' comments on the USMCA and what that means for Eastern Colorado are incredibly important. I hope that is a bipartisan effort that we can all get behind in the House and the Senate, and, of course, it has to start in the House, and we need the House to act as quickly as possible because those wheat farmers in Eastern Colorado need the certainty of new markets. The cattlemen in Colorado need the certainty of new markets and existing markets. That is exactly what the USMCA will do. I commend my colleague for his words on the USMCA.

Over the last several months, I have been participating in this annual Colorado farm tour that I undertake every year with not only my staff but producers from across Colorado. It is in conjunction with a number of organizations in Colorado, like the Colorado Farm Bureau, Colorado wheat growers, corn growers, cattlemen, and others,

who all come together to show us every aspect of Colorado agriculture, from the production itself to the actual processing and finishing of agricultural products.

We drove hundreds of miles across the State of Colorado, starting in Greeley at a cheese-making plant. Almost all of the milk that is produced in Colorado—Colorado being one of the highest milk-producing States in the country—goes into cheese that every American gets to enjoy. Whether it is Domino's pizza or Papa John's pizza, that cheese most likely comes from Colorado. This is a great opportunity on this tour to connect all four corners of Colorado and the work that we do in agriculture and to hear their concerns.

We ended the farm tour at the State Fair in Pueblo.

What was particularly special about this year's farm tour, though, was, of course, being joined by the Colorado Farm Bureau, and the fact that it is the 100th year anniversary of the Colorado Farm Bureau. Congratulations to the Colorado Farm Bureau. We will be talking about that more over the next several months. Congratulations on this very historic anniversary, and thank you so much for joining this tour and making it happen once again.

As Members of Congress, all of us are used to discussing policy topics, but keeping farming and ranching at the forefront and keeping rural America at the forefront of those discussions is critically important because we need to focus specifically on those issues facing our farming and ranching communities.

In Colorado, the ag community accounts for more than 170,000 jobs. It is responsible for more than \$40 billion in economic activity. It is one of the largest economic drivers in our State—a State that has been transformed by energy jobs and high-tech aerospace jobs. Agriculture remains one of the highest job sectors in the State.

Even though it is so vital to our State, we know how much of a struggle it has been in agriculture over the last several years. According to the Department of Agriculture, 2019 farm income is projected to be down 49 percent from its peak in 2013. Over the last 6 years, we have seen a nearly 50-percent drop in farm income. Debt held by our farmers and ranchers is at \$409 billion this year. That is up from \$385 billion the year before. There is significant worry in the heartland about what is happening to our agricultural communities and the future of farming and ranching in this country.

One way to immediately help to provide solutions to solve this problem for farmers and ranchers is to make sure that we implement the 2018 farm bill programs as quickly and expeditiously as we can and that we resolve outstanding trade disputes, that we pass the USMCA, and that we resolve the trade dispute with China so that we can continue to open up new markets, develop new markets, and thrive with existing markets.

When an industry that accounts for nearly 11 percent of our Nation's employment is struggling like agriculture is, we simply can't wait any longer to provide help. We must act now to put the ag community back on the path to sustainability, so that not only current generations of farmers and ranchers can continue in operation but new generations of farmers and ranchers can come back to Colorado, North Dakota, and States across this country to make sure they have bright futures in agriculture.

Even in the face of difficult times, we saw on this tour how farmers and ranchers are innovating and looking to address new markets to increase their incomes. They are opening up new markets through the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act, whether that is a trade agreement with ASEAN or Taiwan.

Another example is clean energy opportunities that our farmers have embraced. On one of the stops during the tour, we visited a farm in Eastern Colorado near Limon, CO, to talk about what wind production means for that rancher. The farmer leased the land, the area, to Xcel Energy, which is Colorado's largest investor-owned utility, to install wind turbines, which provides them with an alternative source of income.

Another rancher in the county talked about how they may earn as much as \$5,000 per turbine for the wind operations on their ranch. If you think about it, this farmer had 20 turbines on his land—that is \$5,000 times 20. That is \$100,000 in income that this farmer would not have otherwise had. Farm income is down 50 percent, farm debt has increased, but this wind production, with a very small footprint, may be the difference between keeping in operation this year and next year. We have to welcome that kind of diversified agriculture opportunity.

Another example of diversified income for agricultural producers is in Springfield, CO, in the far southeastern area of the State, where we visited a hemp processing plant. This Chamber has done great work when it comes to hemp, a new value-added opportunity for farmers and ranchers in Colorado. When this hemp processing plant is fully up and running, they are hoping to employ around 50 people. We went to this facility, and there is millions of dollars of equipment being invested in a small town. Employees will have a shop, a gym, and recreational facilities. They are going to build a lake there and hire 50 employees in Springfield. I remember asking one of the other county commissioners who was on the tour with us in Baca County: Did you ever imagine a day when one business would bring 50 employees to Springfield?

The answer was very quick: No, never at all.

This is an incredible opportunity, not only for the farmers in the area but the community that will now benefit from 50 good-paying jobs with benefits.

That is just one other source of revenue that we can achieve.

We also had the opportunity to visit Agriculture Research Station in Akron, CO, where they are doing tremendous research on dryland oilseeds and new technologies. One of the things we talked about is how we can make it more effective to produce dryland crops and how we can make oilseed opportunities available for additional value-added opportunities in the area.

We also had opportunities on the farm tour to talk about mental health needs and what is happening in our communities. On too many stops during the farm tour, I heard about the impact that our struggling ag economy is having on the mental health of farmers and ranchers. A 2016 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that agricultural workers have a higher suicide rate than any other occupation.

When we passed the farm bill in 2018, we also included language called the FARMERS FIRST Act, which will help to create mental health opportunities for those involved in agriculture and help to make sure that we have suicide assistance and prevention training for mental health assistance and suicide prevention efforts for farm advocates to help create support groups and reestablish the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network. That needs to be something that we all talk about back home with our agricultural community. Because they have provided food and fiber for this country and, certainly, the world, we need to make sure we are supporting them in every way.

We also talked about how we saw a nearly 40-percent increase in admissions for meth addiction in Colorado between 2011 and 2018. While we talk a lot about opiate addictions in this country, it is actually meth that our sheriffs are most concerned about in our rural areas. While we address the opiate epidemic, we also have to be giving and providing new tools and resources to deal with the addiction scourge of methamphetamine.

Alarming, a significant number of that meth is coming into Colorado from, basically, industrial-scale manufacturing facilities and sophisticated operations in Mexico and China. We need to make sure that we disrupt those operations. We need to advocate more for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program and the anti-methamphetamine task force to help law enforcement prevent cartels from getting these kinds of drugs into the country and continue to work on programs like the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to focus on recovery resources and prevention.

Everywhere we went on the farm tour, we heard about the labor shortage, whether it was the cheese-making facility or whether it was the ranch or the hospitals that we visited on the farm tour. They talked about the need

for labor. We need a guest worker program that meets the needs of labor in this country.

Housing issues seem to be something that we don't talk about when it comes to our rural areas. We talk a lot about it when it comes to the Denvers and the mountain communities and resort communities. Our rural areas are facing housing shortages and needs, as well. We introduced legislation and are working on legislation out of this farm tour to help focus our labor and housing shortage needs.

I have talked about trade and the opportunities we have with trade to open up new markets and to resolve current trade issues, and we need to continue to work on that.

While the agricultural community is currently facing very serious issues, I want to be clear that our farmers and ranchers are as strong as ever.

Growing up on the Eastern Plains of Colorado and still living in the heartland of Colorado agriculture, I have always observed the incredible positive impact that agriculture has on our communities—rural communities and urban centers as well. When the Federal Government gets out of the way of farmers and ranchers and growers and allows good things to happen, that is when our rural communities grow and thrive.

A couple of weeks ago, we had the opportunity to celebrate National Farmers Day. It was a day to celebrate the great community that has always been the backbone of this Nation, but we can never express all of our thanks to this industry simply on 1 day of the year.

To all of our farmers and ranchers, to those who make our breakfast, lunch, and dinners possible by providing abundant food and fiber for this country and this world, I am grateful for them and look forward to continuing to work on new solutions and better opportunities in the years to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

APPROPRIATIONS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am here this morning very pleased to be at this point where we are talking about consideration of an appropriations package that includes the fiscal year 2020 bills for the subcommittees on Interior and Environment; Commerce, Justice, and Science; Agriculture, Rural Development, and Food and Drug Administration; and Transportation and Housing and Urban Development; and the various related agencies.

It may be premature to call this a return to regular order, but I think that is kind of what it feels like. I would note that it is October 23, well past time that we should have finished our appropriations work, but we are advancing. We have bills that we have moved through the subcommittees and the full committee, and we are now moving packages of these to the floor.

I am pleased that we are here, where we have an opportunity to take up these substantive measures that the full committee has addressed with strong bipartisan support.

In the case of the Interior and Environment bill, there was unanimous support for our bill. Then, there is the opportunity to bring the bills to the floor for consideration, where other Members have an opportunity to debate these appropriations bills, offer amendments, and, then, advance them through the process.

I am pleased this morning—particularly pleased—to be able to speak on the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee bill and to be here with my ranking member, Senator UDALL. We have worked through this subcommittee account now for several years. It has been a good partnership, a strong partnership, with our teams working side by side. It is not the easiest of bills. We get our fair share of controversy.

In addition to taking care of all of our public lands, we also have oversight of our Native peoples. We also have oversight of the EPA. So we have a range of subject matters that sometimes can bring us together and sometimes can cause some bumps along the way. Yet what we have committed to doing, I think, in working collaboratively, in working together, has resulted in a good, strong measure that the Senate now sees before it.

Last year was the first time since fiscal year 2010—9 years now—that the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations was brought before the full Senate. We have been in a situation in which, for years, we have kind of been at the tail end of the line, the last of those spending bills to move. Now we are debating it in the first package, so we really feel like we have kind of arrived here. Again, you don't arrive here as part of the first package without having done a great deal of work. You don't do that and receive unanimous support coming out of the committee for the second year in a row now if you do not demonstrate this strong commitment that both sides have made to create an environment in which we can work through these issues in a bipartisan manner.

The Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies portion of this minibus includes funding for all of the major Federal land management agencies. This includes the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency. We also provide funding for essential Indian health, education, and resource management programs through the BIA and the Indian Health Service. Then we also provide funding and oversight for important cultural institutions, like the Smithsonian Institution, our National Gallery of Art, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. This

aspect of our oversight is often kind of forgotten because it doesn't necessarily fit in with the public lands, with the EPA, with the BIA, but it is an important and an integral part of our subcommittee's work.

Our subcommittee's allocation for fiscal year 2020 is \$35.8 billion. This is \$248 million more than last year, with an additional \$2.25 billion being made available by the wildfire cap adjustment, and I will speak to the wildfire cap issue a little bit later here. Similar to the approach that we took in fiscal year 2019, the bill rejects the proposed budget decreases. We make investments in our highest priorities, such as infrastructure investments for our land management agencies, Indian Country, and wastewater and drinking water improvements.

The Department of the Interior itself is funded at \$13.7 billion. These funds go to support energy development that is critical to our Nation's economy, to recreation activities that power our rural communities, and to conservation efforts to protect our public lands and the wildlife that relies on them. Funding is provided to support an all-of-the-above energy approach, both onshore and offshore, that will continue to help our country achieve energy independence.

On the conservation front, investments in grants programs for species protection, wetlands conservation, and to combat wildlife trafficking are included. We also took a keen look at some of the invasive species that are wreaking havoc in certain of our regions, like the Asian carp, so we provide a lot of good focus there.

Americans love to love our national parks, so this bill provides the funds that are necessary to meet our responsibility at the national park units. We also focus on the deferred maintenance, which is something we have talked a lot about in committee and on the floor. We invest \$127 million for deferred maintenance. We also increase funding for historic preservation, which is critical to preserving the sites and the stories of our Nation.

The USGS, the U.S. Geological Survey, receives funding for important programs that help our emergency responders during natural disasters like earthquakes or tsunamis. We work within this bill to provide assistance for responses to natural hazards and disasters as well as to inform the public. In my State of Alaska, the support for the Earthquake Hazards Program helps us. As a State that is very seismically prone, it helps us with warnings, and it helps to enhance the earthquake monitoring capability. The bill also maintains funding for mapping initiatives that will help to gather data to improve our maps, which enhances the safety of activities such as aviation. In certain parts of the country, believe it or not, we do not have current and accurate mapping. Certainly, in my home State—and I know in other parts of the country—the updates to the maps have simply not been made.

We also fully fund another lands matter, PILT, which is estimated at \$500 million, and it maintains our commitment to meeting the needs of local communities for county roads, public safety, and schools. I know many of us in this Chamber hear from our constituents about the significance of adequate PILT funding.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is something that is near and dear to many in this body. You will see in this bill an increase to the LWCF, which receives \$465 million. This is \$30 million above the enacted level. This also includes \$140 million for the NPS State side program as well as additional funding for recreational access. We focus on how we are able to access our treasured lands and ensure we have a level of conservation that is supported across the country.

In working with Senator UDALL over these years, I think it has been important—it has certainly been important for me—to have had a great partnership, a strong partnership when it has come to trying to meet the needs of those within Indian Country and having to fund the critical services. With this bill, I think we are making good measure to do that. The two primary agencies that deliver services to the Indian community are the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service. They receive a combined increase of \$288 million over the 2019 levels. We maintain all critical program funding with some important increases for Indian Country.

For the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the BIA, we maintain the substantial increases we have provided over the last 2 fiscal years. We are helping on matters such as the construction, operation, and maintenance of Indian schools. We know, unfortunately, that in so many of the reservations in the lower 48, our schools are simply inadequate. The education scores we are seeing from our schools are not where we need to be. Making sure we are doing right by our Native children around the country is so important when it comes to education.

We also include funding for irrigation systems. We also fully fund contract support costs. We increase funding for public safety and justice facilities construction and programs. Certainly, as I hear from folks in Alaska and those around Indian Country in the lower 48, public safety is something by which, again, we are not doing right by those whom we must serve in these areas. This is an effort that I intend to continue to push in my going forward.

I would specifically like to point out to my colleagues that for the very first time, we include a comprehensive look with new funding into those issues related to murdered and missing indigenous women. Many of us have been shocked at what we are coming to understand about the murdered and missing of our Native women around the country. The data we have we know is lacking. We don't know what we don't

know. Thus, oftentimes it is difficult to respond and to address resources. The fact is that many who live in Tribal communities are often located in rural areas that lack public safety, and even though you have high rates of violence, abuse, murder, trafficking, we simply don't have the resources there to help to respond to it.

I have been working with several of my colleagues to address these challenges—Senator UDALL, Senator HOEVEN, Senator DAINES, and so many—to shine a light in this area. We know it is going to take a lot of coordination and communication among law enforcement agencies to get this right. In this bill, we include \$6.5 million for cold case investigations, equipment, training, background checks, and the necessary report language to move us in the right direction.

Attorney General Barr came to the State of Alaska in May. In Anchorage, he had an opportunity to sit and listen to statewide leaders, Native leaders, and law enforcement. He then had an opportunity to get out of the rural areas and into the villages. After he left, he declared a public safety emergency in the State of Alaska because of where we sit. So we have been working with the Attorney General and greatly appreciate his efforts there, but we need to do more through these appropriations to look specifically at these issues as well.

For the Indian Health Service, there are also programs we have an obligation to fund that are vital to Indian Country. Many of these programs and the costs associated with them have grown since we enacted the 2019 bill. Among these are leasing and staffing costs that are associated with new healthcare facilities that are operated by the IHS or by Tribes under compact agreements. Our bill funds these new increases. We provide additional funding for recruitment and quality improvement as well as providing a \$24 million increase for facilities, including an increase for medical equipment.

The Forest Service receives investments in funding for the improved health and management of our Nation's forests, including for recreation assets, such as the cabins so many of us enjoy, the trails on which we hike, and recreation special use permitting to allow certain businesses to operate in our national forests in order to enhance the many recreational experiences and opportunities.

At the beginning of my comments, I mentioned the wildfire cap adjustment. It was back in the 2018 omnibus that we created the wildland fire cap adjustment, and fiscal year 2020 is the first year this is now available. The bill invests \$5.167 billion in wildland fire activity, including \$2.25 billion in fire cap adjustment funding.

In my State over this past summer, we certainly saw intense and extensive fires. It was a recordbreaking heat year this past summer, and we had some pretty devastating fires. We are still

talking about the fires just last year in California. We know the threat is real, and we know we have to respond. So making sure we have the capacity to fight fire is important. In this bill, we not only invest in fire suppression, but we also invest in State and volunteer fire assistance. We provide increases for hazardous fuels reductions.

As far as the EPA budget goes, we prioritize funding for the programs that result in concrete actions to improve the quality of the environment across our country. The bill provides significant increases in State and Tribal grant programs, which will lead to tangible, on-the-ground cleanup and environment benefits, which was another priority that was strongly supported by many in this Chamber.

The priority that was targeted by many in the waters phase was water infrastructure development. Many of the newly authorized programs in America's Water Infrastructure Act are funded for the first time in this measure. Funding is also provided for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and for the WIFIA Program to build and support critical water infrastructure in communities in every State. The bill also equips the EPA with a powerful set of tools to further the Agency's core missions of clean air, clean water, and clean land.

One of the issues I hear a lot about from the folks back home, as well as from my colleagues in the Senate, is the issue of PFAS and PFAS contamination. In this bill, we have provided \$25 million in increases to address PFAS, including new funding for State-led cleanup and remediation efforts. We also focus on the research of human health and environmental impacts and related priority regulatory actions. There is a \$20 million increase provided for EPA grant programs to support States in their cleanup and remediation efforts of PFAS-contaminated water sources as well as the water systems and the lands.

The remaining \$5 million in increases will support the EPA's priority actions on PFAS and supplement the research that other agencies are currently conducting on the chemicals.

So we heard the concerns of so many, and we really worked to respond in this measure.

Lastly, the bill includes important increases for our cultural institutions and our agencies. The Smithsonian Institution, the Gallery of Art, and the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities all receive increases in our measure.

I think it is so important to make sure that when we think about our treasures—clearly our land, the cleanliness of our water, but we also have national treasures, and we see so much of that reflected in the arts, whether it is the Smithsonian, the galleries, or what the Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities do.

Consistent with fiscal year 2019, we do not include new policy provisions

that were not in the enacted bill. So we worked with Chairman SHELBY, Vice Chairman LEAHY, and the ranking member, again, with Senator UDALL, to assemble a package that both sides supported in committee.

I want to reiterate the work Senator UDALL and I put in to produce a bipartisan product that invests in programs that we care about—programs that protect our land and our people and enable infrastructure projects to boost the economy and help communities provide vital basic services that many might take for granted. We also worked hard to shape this bill so that it reflects the priorities of Members on both sides of the aisle. I am proud—I am really very proud—of the good, bipartisan work to ensure that this Interior appropriations bill directs the Federal resources to where they are needed most, providing critical investments in communities across the Nation.

Of course, this Interior bill is just a part of this package. We also have Commerce-Justice-Science, Agriculture, and T-HUD. All of these have significant impacts across the country. Certainly in my home State, we are looking at the Commerce-Justice-Science bill to help keep our fisheries healthy and provide assistance for public safety programs.

In the Agriculture bill, there is funding for much needed water infrastructure in our villages, and it helps expand our ever-growing agricultural industries.

Of course T-HUD makes sure that rural communities in my State can still receive things like essential air service and helps with our ferry transportation system and to provide Tribal housing.

There is so much good in all of these measures. I would commend them to Members' consideration but would certainly urge passage of this very important Appropriations bill.

I am pleased to be here with my colleague, the good Senator from New Mexico.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, it is great to be here with Senator MURKOWSKI.

I rise to speak in support of the fiscal year 2020 Interior appropriations bill, which is now before the Senate. I want to begin by thanking my chairman and partner in this endeavor, Senator MURKOWSKI, for her working with me to produce a very fine bill that was crafted on a bipartisan basis. It is extraordinary that this bill is on the floor for the second consecutive year after many years when we were not able to move the bill by regular order. Much of the credit goes to her leadership and her commitment to working through tough issues in a fair and a pragmatic way.

One of the reasons I am particularly proud of moving a bipartisan bill is the importance this bill has for my home State of New Mexico.

This bill reflects the long tradition we have in my State of working across the aisle to support conservation priorities. It includes a number of important accomplishments for the State, including language to protect the sacred landscape of Chaco Canyon, along with funding to support the Valles Caldera National Preserve and the new resources to clean up the PFAS contamination in New Mexico and across the country.

This bill is also an important reflection of why the work that Chairman SHELBY and Vice Chairman LEAHY did earlier this year to secure a 2-year budget agreement is so important.

The Interior bill delivers roughly 2.5 percent more funding than last year once you factor in the increase we received under the budget agreement and the savings we picked up from using the first year of the wildfire cap adjustment.

The funds in this bill allow this body to make solid increases to support the Land and Water Conservation Fund and to protect and manage national parks, wildlife refuges, and other public lands. I know many hope we can do better on the Land and Water Conservation Fund funding, and so do I. While I am pleased about the increase in this bill above the enacted level, I will be working to improve the LWCF's funding when we conference with the House. But our efforts in the short term should not take away from the goal we have set on a bipartisan basis to provide permanent, mandatory, full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. That remains a top priority for me, and I think we can and should accomplish that in this Congress.

The bill also makes critical investments in Indian Country. Many of those were mentioned by Chairman MURKOWSKI, and we believe there are really solid things that have been done there—investments in Indian Country, providing a 4-percent increase for the Indian Health Service and a 2-percent increase for programs funded through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education.

We provide \$2.25 billion in new firefighting funds using the wildfire cap adjustment, which means that these funds are finally, for the first time, provided without requiring reductions to other important programs. It also means that the Forest Service will not be forced to raid nonfire programs to pay for firefighting needs without knowing whether those funds will be repaid.

The bill increases funding for the Environmental Protection Agency by 2 percent in order to support new bipartisan infrastructure priorities and to make important investments in regional cleanup programs. The EPA is still struggling after years of budget cuts, but I am proud that our bill includes the best EPA budget in a decade and completely rejects the billions in cuts proposed by the Trump administration.

It also provides vital resources to our counties by fully funding the payment in lieu of taxes program—a program that supports over \$40 million per year in local government services in New Mexico.

This bill boosts funding for cultural agencies, including the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, as well as the Kennedy Center, the National Gallery of Art, and the Smithsonian Institution. Specifically, I am very proud that we were able to increase the budgets of NEA and NEH by \$2 million each. These funds provide a critical boost to local arts and humanities programs in small towns across the United States—programs that create countless jobs and ensure economic vitality in communities like those in New Mexico.

I am also pleased that the bill contains no new funding requested by the administration for the Interior Department reorganization, including the efforts to dismantle the Bureau of Land Management. This bill sends a strong message that the administration needs to push "pause" and work with Members on both sides of the aisle. It is vitally important that we now have both Chambers on record on this important issue, and I hope the administration hears us loud and clear.

I appreciate that the bill contains no new poison pill riders for the second year in a row, which is all the more notable given the number of difficult issues that we confront through the EPA and the Federal land management agencies.

I want to thank Chairman SHELBY and Senator MURKOWSKI for their commitment to moving a clean Interior bill.

That said, I do want to note that the bill does continue several provisions that I oppose, including provisions dealing with the lead content of ammunition, biomass energy policy, Clean Water Act exemptions, and Clean Air Act exemptions.

I also oppose a troubling provision in the bill that weakens protections for the sage grouse. Given the bad-faith efforts by this administration to weaken efforts to protect the sage grouse, it is extremely shortsighted for Congress to continue to block protections under the Endangered Species Act for the species when the administration has failed to hold up its end of the bargain.

These provisions are contrary to the spirit of the no poison pill riders agreement. Thankfully, they are not in the underlying House bill, H.R. 3055, and I expect to have some frank conversations as part of the conference process about the need to remove them and the need to include a number of other important curbs on this administration included in that legislation. So I want to be on record that in the conference, I will be fighting to keep the House's positions on several of these very important items.

I look forward to debating this bill, considering amendments, and ultimately passing it with a bipartisan

vote so that we can proceed to a conference with the House.

I also want to express my personal thanks to the majority subcommittee staff—Emy Lesofski, Nona McCoy, and Lucas Agnew—for working with me and my staff. This is Emy's first bill serving as the clerk of the subcommittee, and I congratulate her on this milestone as the Senate takes up the bill. Their work is a great credit to Chairman MURKOWSKI and Chairman SHELBY.

I would also like to thank my staff—Rachael Taylor, Ryan Hunt, Melissa Zimmerman, and Faisal Amin—for all of their hard work to accommodate the priorities of Senators on both sides of the aisle.

I think one thing that Chairman MURKOWSKI and I worked on was trying to handle any request that came to us from wherever in the Senate and deal with it in a bipartisan way. So I very much appreciate working hard with Senator MURKOWSKI to get this bill done and to move it on to conference with the House and to get it into law.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

S.J. RES. 50

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise to address the Congressional Review Act measure we will be voting on later today.

Let's be very clear. This is a vote the purpose of which is to overturn a very, very important part of the tax reform that we passed in December of 2017 that made the Tax Code much more fair than it was before. Specifically, I am referring to the limitations that we put on the ability of people to deduct State and local taxes.

Let's remember what our Tax Code looked like before our tax reform. Wealthy individuals could deduct the full amount of any State and local tax deductions, however high they got. And we use the acronym "SALT" to refer to these State and local tax deductions. So why do I say that is unfair? Well, it is unfair because it subsidizes people who choose to live in high-tax jurisdictions. It does that because it lowers the tax bill of somebody who lives in a high-tax jurisdiction, like Manhattan or San Francisco, because they get to deduct the full amount of the outrageously high State and local taxes they choose to pay. The fact that they get to deduct that big number means the rest of us have to pay higher rates on our income than we otherwise would have to pay. Why should my constituents in Blair County or Cambria County or anywhere else in Pennsylvania—constituents with modest incomes who choose local governments that keep a modest level of service and therefore a modest level of taxes—why should those constituents have to pay higher tax rates to subsidize the folks who have multimillion-dollar condos on the Upper West Side of Manhattan? It is totally unfair. They certainly should not have to do that. And have

no doubt about it—the huge benefits of this unlimited State and local tax deduction that we used to have always flowed to a handful of States that have chosen to have very, very high taxes. California and New York are two good examples. Under the old regime, about one-third of all the benefits of the State and local tax deductions went to just those two States—just California and New York. They had one-third of all the benefits.

Take New Jersey, right next door to my State of Pennsylvania. New Jersey has 4 million fewer people than we have in Pennsylvania, almost one-third fewer people, but they got more of the benefit of the SALT deductions than my entire State. That is because New Jersey is a very high-tax State. Guess what. It is a high-tax State because the people who live there voted for politicians who raise their taxes. That is apparently what they want. They want to have all of the services that go with that. They are happy with very high State income tax and local property taxes. That is their decision. Look, if you want to vote for someone who is going to impose exorbitantly high taxes on you, you should be free to cast that vote. But don't expect my constituents to subsidize them.

So that was the regime we had in place. Tax reform came along, and we said: Do you know what we are going to do? We are going to put a limit on the amount of State and local taxes that a tax filer can deduct. The limit is \$10,000. It is not trivial. It is a lot of money. But that is the limit. If you pay more than that in State and local taxes, you do not get to deduct it.

In response to that, very interestingly, several of these high-tax States have designed a scam to get around the limitation we imposed. The scam is that they create this vehicle, and then they have their taxpayers pay their taxes into that vehicle and call it a charity, call it a charitable contribution. The money then goes out of that vehicle and goes to the government. It is not a charitable contribution at all. It is a transparent, obvious attempt to circumvent the law that we passed in 2017.

The IRS came along and said: Well, this is an obvious scam. They developed a rule that shuts down the scam. It says: If you create this scam, this make-believe charity, as a way to circumvent the cap on State and local deductions, we are going to disallow the deduction. So the IRS ruling shuts down the scam and maintains the deduction cap, and what my Democratic colleagues want to do right now is have a vote to invalidate the IRS ruling—in other words, have a vote to keep the scam. That is what the vote is today, to make sure we destroy the IRS ruling and keep this scam in place.

One of the ironies of this whole debate is that our Democratic colleagues voted against our tax reform because they said that it was too much of a tax cut for the rich, despite the fact that,

in fact, our tax reform shifted the tax burden from lower income taxpayers to higher income taxpayers while saving money for everybody.

The relative proportion of taxes paid increased for wealthy people, decreased for low-income people, while everyone had some savings. That was objectionable to my Democratic colleagues.

Now they come along, and they want to repeal the rule that shuts down the scam. They want to perpetuate the scam that is a massive giveaway to the wealthiest Americans. It is amazing.

According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, 94 percent of the benefit—if they had their way and prevailed on this vote, 94 percent of the benefit would go to people whose income is over \$200,000; 52 percent of the benefit would go to taxpayers with income over \$1 million.

Not only is it fundamentally unfair to ask people in some low-tax jurisdictions to subsidize the taxes chosen by people in high-tax jurisdictions, the subsidy all flows from low- and middle-income people to very, very wealthy people. That is the deal: Millionaires would receive an average tax cut of \$60,000; taxpayers with income between \$50,000 and \$100,000 would receive an average tax cut of less than \$10—not \$10,000—\$10.

What we did when we put a limit on the ability to deduct State and local taxes was a big step in making our Tax Code more fair. The States came along and developed a scam to circumvent it. The IRS, quite rightly, saw through the scam and said: We are not going to allow that scam to continue. Now my Democratic colleagues want to tear up the IRS rule to perpetuate the scam. That is a very bad idea, and I hope we will all vote against the Congressional Review Act effort that is scheduled for a vote later today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2242

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I am here today because, unfortunately, our elections still remain vulnerable to foreign election interference.

Earlier this month, the Senate Intelligence Committee, which I am proud to serve on, released its report on Russia's use of social media to undermine our democracy.

The committee's bipartisan conclusion was clear. Russia attacked our democracy in 2016; their efforts on social media are ongoing; and they will be back in 2020. Frankly, they never left.

This echoes all of the evidence we have seen from the intelligence community and from companies like Facebook, whose CEO, Mr. Zuckerberg, is testifying on the other side of the Capitol today on some of the ongoing efforts. We have seen this evidence, as well, from Special Counsel Mueller and many, many others.

The alarm bells are going off, and what are we doing? We are running out of time to do something about it.

Twice in recent weeks I have come to the floor to make a unanimous consent request on bipartisan legislation, which I have introduced, called the FIRE Act, and twice this bipartisan legislation has been blocked by my Republican colleagues. Actually, their actions earned applause from the President on Twitter.

Again, let me once again go forward with what this bill does. It is pretty simple and very straightforward. It would say to all Presidential campaigns going forward: If a foreign power reaches out to your campaign, offering assistance or offering dirt on a political opponent, the appropriate response is not to say thank you; the appropriate response is to call the FBI.

When I first introduced this legislation, we were concerned about the Mueller report's finding that the Trump campaign welcomed the assistance of the Russian Government during the 2016 election.

At the time, I was also deeply alarmed by the President's comments in the Oval Office during the summer that he would entertain offers of foreign assistance in future elections.

A lot has happened since then, which makes this legislation more necessary than ever. In the time since I last spoke on the FIRE Act, the President has used his office to seek dirt on a political opponent, Mr. Biden. It appears he pressured the Ukrainians. In the middle of ongoing trade negotiations, he went on national television to call on China to investigate Mr. Biden.

He also, during this period of time, has used the bully pulpit to intimidate and threaten an intelligence community whistleblower. I am glad to see that many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have stood up for the integrity of the whistleblower program and the notions that whistleblowers are a critical part of keeping our system on the up and up and that whistleblowers should not be threatened.

We have also heard in these past few weeks—I am not going to get into all of the details—a lot of contradictory and, frankly, almost Orwellian claims about whether the President's asking a favor of the Ukrainian President is evidence of a quid pro quo. Then, just in recent days, we have seen a series of career diplomats coming forward, basically trying to validate the whistleblower's complaints.

I know the House is working on some of this, and our Senate Intelligence Committee is also looking at some of the counterintelligence concerns about the President's deals—about the President's deals particularly with Mr. Giuliani and his associates.

I have particular interest, as well, in terms of what the Attorney General is doing when he is going out, asking our closest allies—our FVEY partners, in the case of Australia and the United Kingdom—to use their intelligence services to bring us dirt on the President's political opponents. That puts in

jeopardy the trust basis the Five Eyes plan operates under.

We need, more than ever, this basic FIRE Act bill to make it absolutely clear that if we see foreign governments interfering, the obligation ought to be on any Presidential campaign to tell the FBI.

I see my colleague on the other side of the aisle, and I know she will probably object again. I just hope my colleagues will think about and look back on how history is going to judge this body. Did we do what was necessary to protect the integrity of our democratic process? And how in the heck did we allow the protection of our democratic process to become a partisan issue? We would never make protection of the power grid a partisan issue. Yet, unfortunately, I think we are going to see folks on the other side of the aisle object to this commonsense basic reform.

If there are ways to improve on this legislation, I am wide open. I know my colleague raised concerns about the breadth. Let me be clear. Some of the claims that were made last time are not true, do not affect diplomatic efforts, do not affect folks who are visiting here in this country. We have been very, very clear. This is about a foreign government's offer or their spy service's offer of assistance during a Presidential campaign directly to that campaign.

But if there are ways to improve on the legislation, let's have it at it. Let's offer an amendment. Let's at least vote. The truth is, we know what we need to do to protect our elections.

Before I make my unanimous consent request, I want to recognize my friends and colleagues, Senator KLOBUCHAR and Senator WYDEN, who, after I make my request, will be speaking on a broader election security bill of which I am proud to be an original cosponsor as well. Let me simply say that I support their efforts to make sure we have paper ballot backups, to make sure we have postelection audits, to make sure if the Kremlin is paying for advertising on Facebook, they have the same kind of disclosure requirements as if they advertise on FOX—commonsense bipartisan proposals that, if they actually got to the floor of the Senate, I bet we would get 80 votes. My hope is that we will have that opportunity.

The truth is, the only person winning from our failure to act—and, unfortunately, this person seems to be winning, as well, in Syria and seems to be winning, as well, in terms of the split between America and Ukraine—is Vladimir Putin.

Again, I appeal to my colleagues: Let's move forward on the first step, protecting the integrity of our elections. Let's bring forward the FIRE Act. Let's make absolutely clear that if a foreign government tries to intervene in a Presidential election, the obligation is to report to the FBI and not say thank you.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be dis-

charged from further consideration of S. 2242, the FIRE Act; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be 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 objection?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I would allow my colleague to speak on this item. I say to my colleague from Tennessee, and others, that if there are ways to improve this legislation, let's have at it. But the notion that we are going into a Presidential election in which our intelligence community has said that Russia and others will be back, and we have taken no action to prevent that when there are commonsense items from social media constraints to making clear the foreign government shouldn't intervene, to having paper ballot backups, to making sure we have appropriate campaign disclosure, we are shirking our responsibility, and I hope in the future my colleagues will reconsider.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2669

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am proud to be here with Senator WARNER and Senator WYDEN, both leaders on this election security issue.

This is the second time I have come to the floor this week to urge the Senate to take action on election security legislation. It has been 1,006 days since Russia attacked us in 2016, something that has been confirmed by all of President Trump's top intelligence agents. In fact, former Director Coats actually said they are getting bolder.

The next major elections are just 377 days away. We must take action now to secure our elections.

I know Senator WYDEN will be addressing the actual hacking of our election equipment, which is so important, as well as other issues, but I am focused on this propaganda issue, this disinformation campaign that we have seen from the Russians.

The Honest Ads Act, which is part of the bill that I will be asking for unanimous consent on, the SHIELD Act, which is going to be passed by the House today, includes a number of measures that would close loopholes to stop foreign spending on issue ads in our elections. It would boost disclosure and transparency requirements, and it would help to stop bad actors from using deceptive practices to mislead voters.

All that may sound like a list of policy issues that seem very removed, but let me make it very specific. Here is one example of, literally, millions.

In the last election, an ad was discovered that was paid for in rubles. It had been paid for in rubles before the election. It happened, but we did not know

about it until long after the election. It was the face of an African-American woman, an innocent woman, in Chicago. She later called our office and said: I don't know where they got my face. They put her face on a Facebook ad that went to African-American Facebook pages in swing States. This is what the Russians did. Her picture was there, and it said: Don't wait in line to vote for Hillary Clinton. You can text your vote at—and it gave a five-digit number, like 86153.

That is a crime. That is a crime. They are suppressing the vote. They are telling a voter to vote illegally in a way that will not register their vote. That is what we are talking about here—propaganda. Yes, it hurt one side in this 2016 election, but the next time it could be someone else on the other side of the aisle.

Fundamental to our democracy and our Founding Fathers was the simple idea that we would determine our faith in America and that we would not let foreign powers influence our elections. That is what this is about. It is about protecting our election hardware and infrastructure, and it is also about protecting us from this disinformation campaign and all of this really bad stuff.

I don't think my colleagues are interested in protecting—I hope this isn't their goal—the big social media companies. I hope their goal is to protect Americans so they can determine their own faith in an election.

With that, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2669, the Stopping Harmful Interference in Elections for a Lasting Democracy Act, otherwise known as the SHIELD Act, which was introduced earlier today; further, 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 objection?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. That is very unfortunate, given how soon the elections are and what a difference we could make, especially with the disinformation campaigns. I hope my colleagues change their minds.

The Honest Ads Act is a bipartisan bill with Senator GRAHAM, the Republican chair of the Judiciary Committee. We must act.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2238

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I will be making a unanimous consent request to move the SAFE Act in just a couple of moments. This is legislation that Senator KLOBUCHAR and I have teamed up on for quite some time.

It basically incorporates the three priorities that all of the nonpartisan election cybersecurity experts recommend: paper ballots, routine post-election, risk-limiting audits, and Federal cyber security standards for election systems.

I am going to make some brief remarks and then pose a unanimous consent request.

I just find it stunning that the Republican Party continues its wall-to-wall campaign of obstruction against election security. Because of this legislative blockade, the Senate has been AWOL when it comes to stopping foreign cyber attacks on our elections.

For example, I think most Americans would be stunned to learn that there is not a single mandatory, nationwide election cyber security standard on the books. For example, there are no rules barring connecting voting machines to the internet. I say to the Presiding Officer and colleagues that doing so is equivalent to putting American ballot boxes in the Kremlin. That is what happens when you don't have cyber security standards.

Let's remember what happened in the election cyber security debacle of 2016. Russian hackers probed all 50 State election systems. Russians successfully hacked at least one election technology vendor, according to the Mueller report. Russians penetrated two Florida county election systems, according to Florida's Governor. That is just what we know about.

People are always saying: Well, no votes were changed. Nobody knows that because you wouldn't know it unless you had a real forensic analysis conducted by cybersecurity experts who broke the systems down, and that hasn't been done.

Despite all of the ways foreign hackers have already made it into our election infrastructure, Congress has refused to arm State and county election officials with the knowledge and funding they need to secure their systems.

I will just make one additional point, and I thank my colleague for her courtesy because I know everyone is on a tight schedule. This summer, I saw for myself how vulnerable election systems are. I went to DEF CON, which is really the major "white hat" hacker convention in Las Vegas. I went because I wanted to see how easy it was to hack e-pollbooks, voting machines, and other key parts of election infrastructure. I sure wish some of my colleagues on the other side, including the distinguished majority leader, could have seen all of these young people in the Voting Village going through a who's who of hackable voting machines and see how easy it was to compromise voting machines to alter votes, disrupt ballot printers, and meddle with registration systems.

Teenagers in the DEF CON Voting Village showed me an e-pollbook hacked so completely that young people were playing video games like "Doom" on it. I sure wish my colleagues could have been there.

I sit on the Intelligence Committee. I am not going to get into anything classified, but I am going to close simply by saying that, as of today, the threats that we face in 2020 from hostile foreign powers, in my view, are going to make 2016 look like small potatoes.

For that reason, I now ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 2238, the Securing America's Federal Elections Act, otherwise known as the SAFE Act; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; 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 objection?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, my mom would always say: You know, it is not a good sign if you are doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

My colleagues have sought several times, under the guise of election security, to circumvent going to the Rules Committee and trying to bring these bills to the floor.

It is important to note that the legislation they are bringing would do something that most people, especially people in Tennessee, tell me they do not want to see happen. What it would do is take away authority from your local election commission, your State election commission, and then vest that authority with the Federal Government.

Federalizing our elections, in my opinion, would actually make them less secure. Is there anybody who thinks the Federal Government is going to do a better job of administering an election in Williamson County, TN, where I live and where I have served on the election commission? The answer would be "of course, not." They know that their friends and neighbors who served on those entities would do a better job.

I must also remind my colleagues that every single Member—Democrat, Republican, and Independent; every Member of the Senate—agrees that foreign meddling in our Nation's business is a problem. For decades, foreign nations have sought to meddle in our affairs in the physical space. Ought we to have expected them to try this in the virtual space? It ought not have come as a surprise to us.

We also know that Members are working on this issue, and that there has been progress that has been made by the Intel community, by State-level authorities, and by those who are making certain these election systems are secure. And guess what. They are doing this without a Federal power grab taking place.

I fear that my friends on the other side of the aisle still have not gotten

over that they lost in 2016. Further, they have yet to accept that their colleagues in the House of Representatives have turned their best hopes for correcting this electoral disappointment into a farce.

We know that in 2016 the Russians seized upon partisan hysteria and used it to pit the American people against one another. They did not affect voting in election systems.

It is not too much to ask that my friends in the minority cease using the business of the Senate to continue these requests.

I do object to the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am going to be brief because I just think it is so critical to respond to the comments my colleague has made.

The first argument was that, on this side of the aisle, people really aren't interested in election security. The fact is, what Senator KLOBUCHAR and I and those on our side of the aisle have been interested in are the three priorities that independent cyber security experts agree are essential to protecting our elections: paper ballots, audits, and cyber security standards. So that ought to dispose of this issue that somehow on this side of the aisle, people really aren't interested in election security.

Second, I want it understood that over here, we have been interested in working in a bipartisan way. But our ranking member, Senator KLOBUCHAR, on the Rules Committee said that at one point there was a markup scheduled on these issues, and, essentially, the leadership on the other side of the aisle intervened, and it was canceled.

The fact is that here we are, with just a few months until people start voting. They are going to vote in primaries early next year. They are going to go to the polls from sea to shining sea in the fall of 2020. I will just say to my colleagues that we have something like 25 States in America that are nakedly vulnerable. These are the States that are still using hackable, paperless voting machines and States that do not have routine, post-election audits.

As Senator WARNER, Senator KLOBUCHAR, and I have said, and the distinguished minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, all we are interested in is working to deal with this issue in an objective way, based on the facts outlined by the experts who aren't at all political.

I think it is very unfortunate that there has been an objection to the proposal from the distinguished Senator from Virginia, Mr. WARNER, and the proposal from the ranking member on the Rules Committee, who has worked with me on the SAFE Act, and the SAFE Act itself because, as a result of this action, the Senate is missing yet another opportunity to provide an additional measure of security for the 2020 election.

I will close with one last response in light of a comment my colleague, our

new Senator from Tennessee, has made. She and I have talked about these issues, and I have appreciated it. She said that no votes were changed—no votes were changed in the election. Nobody knows that. Unless you do a forensic analysis and break down the machines, you won't know that.

I sure hope that soon we will be back on this floor moving the proposal advanced by the Senator from Virginia and the proposal advanced by the Senator from Minnesota and me because these are measures proposed by independent experts who don't care about Ds and Rs; they care about what is right for America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

HONG KONG

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, as we gather today here in peace and safety in this quiet Chamber, we must remember that there is a city half a world away that is struggling to survive—a city that is fighting for human rights and human liberty and a city that is a solitary pinpoint of light on a continent of authoritarianism, a city called Hong Kong.

The need there is urgent, and the hour there is late, and it is time for America to act. I know this because I have been there. I have been there myself. I have seen it. I have been to Hong Kong. I have been to the streets of Hong Kong. I have seen the protesters marching in support of and in defense of their basic human rights. I have seen them demonstrating for their basic human liberties. I have seen them confronting the police with their tactics of brutality and oppression.

It makes me think that sometimes, in the course of history, the fate of one city defines the challenge of an entire generation. Fifty years ago, that city was Berlin. Today, that city is Hong Kong. The situation there is critical. Hong Kong is sliding toward becoming a police state. Have no doubt and make no mistake that Beijing wants to impose its will on Hong Kong. It wants to silence dissent in Hong Kong. It wants to steamroll Hong Kong, just as it wants to steamroll all of its neighbors in the region, just as it wants to control the region, and just as it wants ultimately to control the entire international system.

We know what is at stake in this country because we have gotten all too familiar with Beijing's tactics. We have seen what Beijing has tried to do to this country for decades now. They have stolen our jobs. They have stolen our technologies. They have tried to build and are building their military on the backs of our middle class. Their aims are expansionist, and their aims are domination, and their aims are not compatible with the security or the prosperity of this country. That is why what is happening in Hong Kong today is so important and the fight there is so significant.

Will a totalitarian China and totalitarian Beijing be allowed to dominate

the city of Hong Kong, to silence it, and then to turn to the region as a whole?

You know, let's review what is actually happening there in the streets of Hong Kong. This didn't start with the people of Hong Kong; this started with Beijing. This started with Beijing and its puppet government and its puppet chief executive in Hong Kong attempting to revoke the rights of Hongkongers—the rights, by the way, that Beijing promised to the people of that city in 1984 and again in 1997. They are trying to revoke those rights by bringing in a bill for extradition of Hong Kong citizens and Hong Kong residents to mainland China to be tried in China's courts, where there is no due process, where there are no basic guaranteed liberties, and where there is no recourse. That was Beijing's plan, and that would have affected not just the citizens of Hong Kong but the residents there, including over 80,000 Americans who are currently residents in the city. And the people of Hong Kong said no.

On the 12th of July, just a few days after Beijing put forward this extradition bill, 2 million Hong Kong residents—2 million took to the streets in peaceful protest. This is a city of 7½ million. There were 2 million on the streets on the 12th of July. When the Hong Kong Government—the Beijing-controlled government refused to back down, the people of Hong Kong refused to be silenced. For months now, months on end, 20 weeks and more, the people of Hong Kong have been taking to the streets protesting, seeking to vindicate their rights, and they have been doing it in the face of escalating opposition.

The Hong Kong Government—on orders, no doubt, from Beijing—has sought to deny the protesters permits to gather peacefully. They have sought to deny them the right to cover their faces because, let's not forget, China is a surveillance state, and the persecution and retribution against protesters is real, and it is constant.

Now they are talking about a potential curfew. They are shutting down subway stations early so protesters can't get from one place to another. They have used violent tactics to put down the protests—tear gas and beatings and dye blasted at protesters.

China continues to escalate—Beijing continues to escalate the situation, turning the screws on Hong Kong and taking away the rights and liberties of the people there.

Hong Kong's demands are not outlandish; they are asking for what they were promised. They were promised in 1984, by the Government of Beijing—in a duly ratified international treaty, they were promised the right to assemble and the right to peacefully gather and protest. They were promised the right to vote and to be able to choose their own government. They were promised the right to speak openly. They were promised the right to worship. Those are the rights the people of

Hong Kong seek to vindicate today, and those are the rights Beijing is attempting to strip from this city as we stand here today in this Chamber.

The people of Hong Kong—they have an expression. The protesters say they are going to be like water. They say “Be water.” Some have actually referred to this as a water movement. They mean “Be fluid. Be reactive. Adjust to the situation.”

I just have to say, having been there myself, having been to the streets, having seen the protesters, having met with them and talked with them, their courage and their bravery under pressure is really something to behold. It is an inspiration to me, and I think it should be an inspiration to all of us. Their love of liberty—you never love something more than when it is threatened—their love of liberty is really extraordinary.

I want to say something the Reverend Chu Yiu-ming said about liberty and democracy. He said it so beautifully. These are his words:

We strive for democracy, because democracy strives for freedom, equality and universal love. Political freedom is more than loyalty to a state. [Political freedom] professes human dignity. Every single person living in a community possesses unique potentials and unique powers, capable of making a [unique] contribution to society.

That is extraordinary, and he is exactly right. Hongkongers know it, and that is what they are standing for, and that is what they are fighting for.

The people of Hong Kong need our support, they deserve our support, and they are depending on our support. That is why it is time for this body to act. It is time to take up and pass the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. The time for debate is over. The time for delay has passed. It is now time to stand with the people of Hong Kong and to send a signal to the world that the United States will stand with freedom-loving people, that the United States will stand up to Beijing, and that the United States will not permit China to dominate its neighbors and its region and the world.

It is time for this body to act and to act now, and it is time to do more. That is why I will soon be introducing further measures to help support the people of Hong Kong. I will be calling for the imposition of Global Magnitsky sanctions on individuals and business entities that abet Beijing in its suppression of the freedoms of speech and assembly that rightfully belong to the people of Hong Kong.

I would just say to those corporations doing business in China and to those multinational corporate entities and organizations like the NBA that it is time for you to take a stand as well. It is time for you to show a little backbone. It is time for you to show some independence. You may be multinational corporations that do business everywhere in the world, but remember that you are based here in this country. Remember—the NBA should—that

you are an American organization. These companies need to remember that they are American entities, and it is time to show a little American independence.

When Beijing tries to use threats of coercion and threats of market access to get the NBA to censure and to get corporations like Apple to censure, it is time for these corporations to stand up and say: We are not going to participate, and we are not going to become part of the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda arm. It is time for these companies to remember where their loyalties actually lie.

I have to say, for too long now and for too many years now, we have seen too many of these companies and these same corporate executives—who make money hand over fist in China—we have seen them happily send our jobs to China. We have seen them happily outsource our work to China. Now they want to import censorship into this country from China. Well, no thank you. It is time that they are open about what it is they are doing, and it is time they stand up to Beijing and say: No further.

I want to say again that the situation in Hong Kong is urgent, and the people of Hong Kong are looking to the United States and to other freedom-loving peoples around the world for support and for strength. It is time that we send them the message—and call on our allies to do the same—that we must stand with Hong Kong because our own security and our own prosperity and our own ideals are at stake there.

I think, finally, of the words of John Quincy Adams, whom I will paraphrase. He said: Wherever the standard of freedom is unfurled, there will be America's prayers, there will be America's benedictions, there will be America's heart, and today, there needs to be America's voice.

I yield the floor.

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business, please.

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

REMEMBERING TED STEVENS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, the Senate this week is honoring our former colleague, Senator Ted Stevens, with the unveiling of his official portrait. I come to the floor to say some words about a friend and former chairman.

Ted Stevens' life in public service started early when he joined the Army Corps in 1943. So great was his desire to serve our country that he joined after attending just one semester of college. During the war, he flew dangerous, unescorted missions in China and India, earning two Distinguished Flying Crosses for flights behind enemy lines. After the war, he returned to his studies and graduated from UCLA and

Harvard Law School. Not long after that, he moved to Alaska to practice law, and there he began a life of service to the State he called home for the rest of his life.

Ted served as a district attorney and became known for accompanying U.S. Marshals on raids, and that was really an early hint of his temperament and intensity on the job. Of course, all Senators devote their careers to their States, but few have the distinction of working to achieve statehood. Senator Stevens was one of them. Working in the Department of Interior in the 1950s, he became known as “Mr. Alaska” for his focus on achieving statehood. He worked tirelessly to assuage the concerns of then-President Eisenhower to get statehood passed through both the House and the Senate.

When the Alaska Statehood Act finally passed, Ted returned to Alaska and served as a representative in the State House, becoming majority leader after just one term. Then, in 1968, he came to the Senate, where he would go on to serve for 40 years.

Once here, he distinguished himself as a fierce advocate for Alaska. He fought relentlessly for funding to build rural hospitals, highways, courts, and military bases across the State he helped create. His efforts only increased when he ascended to the powerful chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee. He often quipped that being such a young State, Alaska needed extra help to catch up to its elder siblings; and help is exactly what he secured. One estimate says he steered more than \$3.4 billion in Federal funding to Alaskan projects in just the last 14 years of his tenure.

Those of us who served with him on the Appropriations Committee got to know Ted's Incredible Hulk tie, which he would wear on days with especially difficult debates. He was a fighter and a fierce advocate for his State and his party. When a reporter once asked about his reputation for losing his temper, Senator Stevens replied:

I didn't lose my temper. I know right where it is.

But he would also cross party lines and work side by side with his appropriations colleagues, especially Bob Byrd and Daniel Inouye. They would trade the gavel between them, serving as chair and ranking member of subcommittees and the full committee.

Beyond Federal funding, Stevens settled many longstanding issues that faced his young State. Chief among them was the settling of Tribal land claims. The Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act would become the largest land settlement claim in U.S. history. It was hailed as groundbreaking for its involvement of Alaskan Native communities from the outset.

Always with an eye to the future, Ted Stevens not only supported Native leaders in asserting land claims, but he also supported economic development measures in the final bill.

Personally, I remain thankful for Ted's support with the Ten-in-Ten Fuel

Economy Act, a bill I authored in 2007 with Senators Olympia Snowe, MARIA CANTWELL, TOM CARPER, and others. The bill was drafted to increase fuel economy by 10 miles per gallon within 10 years, but it was responsible for much more. The Obama administration went on to use the Ten-in-Ten Act to set rules that will increase fuel efficiency to more than 50 miles per gallon by 2025 and save consumers more than \$460 billion at the pump.

Here is how it got done. I couldn't get it done. It was controversial at the time and, believe it or not, Ted Stevens played a big role in getting this bill passed. As ranking member of the Commerce Committee, he and Senator Inouye included the language as part of a broader energy bill that President Bush signed into law in 2007.

So this was a big deal, and it was controversial. Senator Stevens knew that, but he understood the importance of the issue, and he included the language in one of his bills, and it could not have passed any other way. It was a very big event for me, and it really sealed my respect for this Senator from a different party, a different State; but he cared, you could go to him, and he helped.

I remember back then. Now our mileage is going up, and I think of Ted, when I talked to him, saying: OK. We will get it done—and he and Dan Inouye did do that. He said: "My motto has always been 'To hell with politics, just do what's right for Alaska.'"

I don't think anyone who had the pleasure of knowing Ted Stevens would know him as anything other than a great legislator for the State of Alaska and a great legislator for the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the appropriations bill that is now before the Senate. I would like, however, to defer to the ranking minority member on the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee for his comments, and then I would reserve the rest of my time.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, thank you and a huge thanks to my colleague for not just deferring to me to make comments, which I am going to make very brief, but also for the leadership of the subcommittee and the bipartisan work. It is the way the Senate should work. Let's just expand that spirit to the entire Chamber, and we will make a lot of progress.

This bill maintains funding for important rural development programs, including housing and rural broadband, which is essential all across America. It provides assistance with farm ownership and farm operating loans because access to credit to farmers is critical to stay in business, and it helps new farmers come into the farming and ranching

community, including minorities, women, and veterans.

It provides critical funding for SNAP. In our country, no one should go hungry. It assists with school meal equipment grants, the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program, and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, all relevant to making sure our children and our families have basic nutrition. It assists on the international front with Food for Peace, the McGovern-Dole program that feeds millions of children around the world.

I was down in Central America and found that the average child in Guatemala at 9 years old is 6 inches shorter than the average Guatemalan child raised in the United States—stunning. It is a huge factor and affects the entire course of the mind. America is doing incredible work around the world in poverty-stricken countries. This food program also increases school attendance, particularly among girls.

Critical funding for the Food and Drug Administration is part of this bill for a whole host of reasons.

There is only one thing in this bill that I have disagreement with, and that is funding for the relocation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Economic Research Service. I think those organizations do a far better job when they are here networking with the other key critical policy groups and when folks coming from Oregon and places remotely around the country visit NIFA and ERS at the same time as visiting other programs.

TRIBUTE TO BOB ROSS

Mr. President, for 11 years, Bob Ross has been a detailee from the Department of Agriculture to our subcommittee. That is because he is fabulous, and we just couldn't let him go here in the U.S. Senate. Most people in rural America haven't heard of Bob Ross, but millions and millions have benefited from his work, particularly his superb work on rural housing. He has been invaluable to us. Few people get a chance to leave such a mark to make the world a better place as much as he has.

He is on to the next chapter of his life, retirement, and perhaps many adventures in retirement. Bob is sitting behind me. We thank him for his years of service and wish him all the best of luck in the chapters to come.

I thank the chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture. It is a pleasure to work with him.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oregon for his work and also express appreciation for the bipartisan approach to the appropriations bill. This is regular order. This is how we are supposed to do things.

It is not just the Ag appropriations bill, it is the other bills we have included in this package that includes Commerce-Justice-Science, T-HUD, as well as our Ag appropriations bill and Interior.

This is the work of the Senate. This is regular order. This is how it should

be done. So I am appreciative of the bipartisan approach taken not only on our bill but on these other bills and the fact that we now have them on the floor. I hope it continues in terms of regular order and bipartisanship that enables us to advance these bills in regular order.

Then we have the other appropriations bills as well. We moved all 12 of these bills through our full Appropriations Committee in a bipartisan way. Now we need to do the same thing on the floor and then go to conference with the House to get this done. We have a continuing resolution in place until November 21, so it is imperative that we continue this work and that we do it in this way.

I am pleased to introduce the 2020 appropriations bill for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. This legislation passed out of our Appropriations Committee, as I said, in the case of this appropriations bill, with unanimous support out of the full Appropriations Committee.

I am pleased to bring it to the floor. The other bills we have included now in this package had broad-based bipartisan support as well, as the Presiding Officer knows being a member of the full committee.

I am pleased to join my colleagues on the Subcommittees on Interior; Transportation, Housing and Urban Development; Commerce, Justice and Science. For now, my comments will be focused on our bill specifically, the Ag appropriations bill.

Right now, farmers across this country are really up against it, no question about it. Whether you are from North Dakota, Oklahoma, points in between—east or west or north or south—our farmers are really up against it. In North Dakota, we have had unbelievable flooding. From snowstorms to rainstorms—but pretty much nonstop rain and other challenges that have left our fields swamped.

We have a great diversity of crops, most of which have not been harvested because we can't get farm equipment out in the field in order to conduct that harvest.

Earlier this year in May, we worked to advance supplementals to address the hurricanes—the other wildfires we had out in California, the hurricanes that hit the Southeast, and other weather disasters. So in that supplemental package we passed back in May, we included assistance that we call WHIP+ for the Midwest farm country, anticipating not only that we needed to address the flooding and problems that occurred this spring but if there were additional flooding coming. Of course, that is exactly what happened. So we worked to ensure that there is disaster assistance legislation passed that will help.

Now we need to advance this appropriations bill to make sure we continue to support our folks not only due to the challenges they face because of weather issues but also low commodity

prices and the real challenges we face due to trade right now. We need to keep advancing on all these fronts. Of course, this legislation is an important part of that.

It includes support for our producers, funding for ag research, housing and business loan programs for rural America, domestic and international nutrition programs, and food safety and drug safety because we also fund the FDA, the Food and Drug Administration, as part of this bill.

Again, these are very important priorities for this body that we need to take up and pass. The subcommittee has made difficult decisions in drafting the bill, and I am proud of the work that has been done to this point.

It is written to our allocation of \$23.1 billion, which is \$58 million above the current enacted level. We worked hard to invest taxpayer dollars responsibly, funding programs to provide assistance to our farmers in rural communities and supporting programs that provide vital direct health and safety benefits and safeguards for all Americans not only through the USDA but, as I said, the Food and Drug Administration.

Agriculture supports more than 16 million jobs nationwide and forms the backbone of our rural communities. Our farmers are the best in the world, and what they do benefits every single American every single day. We have the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the history of the world, produced by our farmers and ranchers. It benefits every single American every single day. So we are talking about good farm policy and good ag policy. We are talking about something that benefits every single American every single day.

Again, I thank Senator MERKLEY for the bipartisan working relationship we have had on our committee. I think this bill reflects a well-balanced compromise on a lot of the issues we had, not only among the members but on both sides of the aisle, and I hope my colleagues will join me in passing this important legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

(The remarks of Mr. CORNYN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2690 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

TAX CUTS AND JOBS ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, briefly on another matter, we are just a couple of months away from the 2-year anniversary of the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Because of this legislation, families across the country are benefiting from lower income tax rates and are able to keep more of what they earn. We have also helped families by doubling the standard deduction for children, expanding the child tax credit, and simplifying the Tax Code, which is something I think we can all agree needs to be done. For the millions of Texans who were filled with dread sim-

ply about filing their taxes, it was a welcomed relief.

The journey to pass the legislation wasn't easy, of course, and there was no shortage—there never are—of naysayers. Many of our Senate Democratic colleagues claimed this legislation only benefited the rich, the evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. We know that is false because of what the facts tell us.

Let me go back for a second and explain why this congressional resolution of disapproval we will be voting on at about 3 o'clock is so ironic and so mistaken.

Prior to tax reform, without limit, taxpayers could itemize their deductions for State and local taxes. They got to deduct that from their Federal income taxes, which meant, in essence, in those high-tax jurisdictions—the cities and the States that had high local and State taxes—taxpayers from around the country were subsidizing those taxpayers in those high-tax jurisdictions.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act attempted to deal with this unfairness by capping this deduction, better known now as the SALT deduction—the State and local tax deduction—at \$10,000 for everybody across the country. Everybody was treated the same. Everybody was put on a level playing field. In other words, tax reform stopped the endless subsidy that taxpayers who were living in my State gave to fiscal decisions that were made by other States and local governments. There is no reason we should ask a taxpayer who is living in Austin to subsidize the financial decisions, the fiscal decisions, made in Albany, in Sacramento, or in any other State capitol.

Before the cap, the wealthiest Americans were disproportionately reaping the benefit of this no-limit deduction. That is why the cap was included in tax reform—in order to support the middle class, not the top 1 percent. In the process, we prevented the richest people in the country from gaming the Tax Code.

This chart, which was produced by the Senate Committee on Finance, courtesy of Chairman GRASSLEY, talks about who benefits from the SALT cap repeal. This is what we will be voting on indirectly this afternoon.

Here, 52 percent of the benefit goes to taxpayers with incomes of over \$1 million. Our Democratic friends like to say they are the party of the working man and woman, but clearly they are working on behalf of the 52 percent of taxpayers who have incomes of over \$1 million in their seeking to repeal this regulation that basically prevents a tax dodge. There are 24 percent of taxpayers with incomes between \$200,000 and \$1 million who will be affected and 6 percent of taxpayers who will be affected who earn under \$200,000. You can see that the majority of the benefit that our Democratic colleagues seek to confer is on the wealthiest people in the country.

I don't have any ax to grind with people who have been successful and who have made a lot of money. They pay their taxes, contribute their philanthropy, and help in innumerable ways. This is simply a way to try to make sure our taxpayers in Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming don't subsidize the high tax rates in New York, Los Angeles, or other places that have high State and local taxes. In good conscience, we cannot let that happen.

The fact is, since tax reform passed, a number of States have crafted a workaround—I call it a tax dodge—to circumvent this \$10,000 limit. In June, the Treasury issued a regulation to stop them—this is the tax dodge—and required States to adhere to the limit that Congress passed into law and that the President signed.

The financial consequences of what the Democratic Members of the Senate are trying to do here are enormous. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that doing away with the subsidy cap would cost about \$700 billion over the next 7 years, or \$100 billion a year, and almost 95 percent of the benefit would go to the people who make more than \$200,000. Even according to the liberal Tax Policy Center, one-third of the uncapped SALT deduction went to the top 1 percent.

If I have heard BERNIE SANDERS or ELIZABETH WARREN or any of the Democrats who are running for President rail on and on about the top 1 percent and income inequality once, I have heard it a thousand times. Yet here they seek to undo a cap that treats every taxpayer the same and essentially require taxpayers who are in low-tax States to subsidize those who are in high-tax States and localities. And 52 percent of them make over \$1 million a year. A millionaire would receive a tax cut of nearly \$60,000—higher than the household incomes of many people who live in my State.

That is what we will be voting on. That is what the Democratic leader from New York—a high-tax State and city—seeks to do for his constituents, but it is to the detriment of hard-working families in my State and in many States around the country.

After continually hammering the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, it is actually duplicitous to argue that it somehow benefits the wealthy when there was just the most modest of cuts in the highest marginal rate. The benefit flowed to everybody in every tax bracket, but most of it went to the middle class. Yet, after hammering this side of the aisle for its somehow benefiting the wealthy to the detriment of the middle class, the Democrats are now working to help their richest constituents get back to the days of unlimited deductions.

This is unfair. It is regressive. It benefits the people who need the help the least, and it hurts the people who need our attention and help the most. Asking Texans and all Americans to somehow foot the bill for \$700 billion so that

the folks who live in these high-tax cities and States can get a \$60,000 tax cut is something I am simply unwilling to participate in. I urge all of my colleagues to vote against this resolution of disapproval.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I echo what my colleague said about S.J. Res. 50, a congressional resolution of disapproval we are being asked to vote on this afternoon. I agree with the Senator from Texas. It is a mistake. It is wrong. I think he used the words “ironic,” “mistaken,” and “duplicitous.” I would call this Democratic proposal the height of hypocrisy. That is what we are looking at right here, and I am planning to oppose it.

Two years ago, the Republicans passed major tax reform for this country. What we wanted to do was to make the Tax Code simpler, make it fairer, and have people pay less, and that is what we have seen. To do it, we have also eliminated some tax deductions for the wealthy. One was the State and local tax deduction that was specifically aimed at the wealthy. We eliminated it. That is what our goal was—to eliminate those sorts of deductions so that people all across the country could see the benefits of tax reform.

Let's be clear about who will be benefiting by the Congressional Review Act that is being proposed to be voted on today. There will be 94 percent of the benefits going to those with incomes over \$200,000. Those aren't the people who need tax relief in this country.

We made choices when passing tax reform. We wanted to provide tax relief for the middle class, and we wanted to double the child tax credit. It worked. We wanted to double the standard deduction, and that worked. We wanted to lower the tax rates as well. The results are that a great majority of American households are actually paying less in taxes today than they were before.

We have also had this great boost to the economy. We have more people working and one of the lowest unemployment rates we have seen. We have seen wages and incomes grow. We have seen the unemployment rate drop to a 50-year low. We have also seen economic growth beat all previous predictions. That is what we have gotten with the tax reform—the tax relief—that the Republicans have passed and that President Trump has signed into law. The Republicans are going to continue to focus on keeping taxes low for all Americans.

The best description I have heard of this proposal is that it seems to be an effort to give tax breaks to rich people in blue States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I guess if you live long enough and are around here long enough, you get to hear it all.

Hypocrisy is when the party of the rich—now the party that gave \$1 trillion in the Trump tax bill to the largest corporations, with most of it going to the wealthiest one-tenth of 1 percent—now says it is for the working guy. Amazing. Hypocrisy is when donor States, like my State of New Jersey, give moocher States—those that actually receive far more than they give to the Federal Treasury—say that somehow we should continue to pay more. Yet that is overwhelmingly the reality that is going on. In fact, I find the comments of some of my colleagues here to be pretty ironic.

I urge the Senate to reject these new IRS rules that are designed to block efforts by homeowners across America to avoid the Trump tax law's harmful caps on their State and local tax deductions.

I thank Leader SCHUMER and Ranking Member WYDEN for the opportunity to exercise our authority under the Congressional Review Act to stop these IRS rules from taking effect.

It was 2 years ago when President Trump and his allies rammed their corporate tax bill through Congress. They promised middle-class families thousands of dollars in tax relief and \$4,000 raises in their salaries. Instead, all they got was \$1.5 trillion more in debt and an economy that was even more rigged in favor of big corporations and wealthy CEOs.

Of course, as bad as the tax bill is for the whole country, it is even worse for States like New Jersey. That is because, even after borrowing over \$1.5 trillion from China, the President still can't pay for his deficit-exploding corporate tax cuts. Where are all of my colleagues—all of those deficit hawks—who talked about exploding deficits and debt? They are silent.

Even though he couldn't have enough of this \$1.5 trillion of borrowing, what did President Trump do? He dipped into the wallets of New Jersey's and other States' middle classes by gutting the State and local tax deductions they used to write off, their property taxes. In 2016, \$1.8 million, or around 40 percent of New Jersey's taxpayers, deducted their property and State income taxes from their Federal returns. That average was about \$18,000 per deduction. More than 80 percent of those who deducted earned less than \$200,000. So to say that the Trump tax law was a giant hit job on New Jersey's middle class is no exaggeration, for already New Jersey families are paying the price.

Earlier this month, new data from ProPublica revealed that because of the new \$10,000 cap on property tax deductions, home values in New Jersey have taken a huge hit. In fact, home values in Essex County, NJ, declined more than those of any other county in America.

And according to nj.com, of over 30 counties across the Nation suffering the largest dip in home values, 16 of them are in the Garden State. That is

why Governor Murphy and New Jersey's legislative leaders took action to protect homeowners from getting hammered. They adopted a program, as did over 30 other States. And, by the way, these States, or all these red States, are not the “blue States” or wealthy States. These are States that adopted similar provisions before the Trump tax bill that were getting the benefit of a local tax credit for charitable contributions to nonprofits set up by local governments. They adopted a program that 30-some other States have in the books in some form.

In return, taxpayers could receive a property credit worth up to 90 percent of their contribution. Other States have long used similar charitable contribution programs. For example, in Alabama, there is a 100-percent tax credit available for contributions to private school scholarship funds. In Missouri, one program incentivizes donations to shelters for survivors of domestic abuse. In Florida, there are programs that actually go to an education fund and to a conservation fund. I could go through the list of these 32 States that had charity tax-credit programs across the country, which now the IRS rules are nullifying, and which all of those States—and many of my Republican colleagues who represent them—are now facing. What was completely acceptable and the IRS had no problem with now is not acceptable whatsoever.

The IRS long respected these programs. So I was hopeful that New Jersey's charitable contribution credits would provide relief to homeowners suffering under the Trump tax scam and would be treated the same as all of these 32 other States.

Unfortunately, as soon as New Jersey and other States took action, the IRS reversed course and issued new regulations, hamstringing this long-accepted type of charitable contribution program.

These are harmful regulations for all of the 32 States that are represented through some of these programs, and the Senate has an opportunity to protect all of those 32 States' charitable contribution programs.

Look, in an ideal world, New Jersey's charitable contribution credit wouldn't be necessary because Congress would uphold the full state and local tax deduction as a bedrock principle of our Tax Code. As a matter of fact, it is the oldest deduction in the history of the code, and it is a principle that I would especially expect my Republican colleagues to stand up for.

Since the Federal income tax creation in 1913, the State and local tax deduction has encouraged States to stand on their own feet. It encourages States to make smart investments that, at the end of the day, make them less reliant on Federal handouts.

In New Jersey, we know that when we invest in public schools, we prepare our students to succeed in high-paying fields. In New Jersey, we know that

when we invest in mass transit, we connect workers to new jobs and opportunities. In New Jersey, we know that when we invest in public health and law enforcement, we all do better because our streets are safer and our families are healthier.

It is no coincidence that New Jersey is one of the most economically productive States in the Nation, to the betterment of all Americans, especially those in less productive States—donor State versus moocher States.

Isn't that a good thing? Isn't a State's right to set its own tax policies a right worth defending?

For as long I can remember, I have heard my Republican colleagues talk about self-reliance, about personal responsibility, about protecting not punishing success, and about States' rights. Well, the Trump tax law was nothing short of a massive tax on the success of States like New Jersey and the State rights of States like New Jersey.

Likewise, I have heard Republicans talk about States' rights and the virtues of federalism. Well, guess what. The State and local tax deduction is a bedrock of federalism.

Today's CRA vote is an opportunity for my colleagues across the aisle to actually stand up for those principles of self-reliance, of States' rights, and federalism; to walk the walk, instead of just talking the talk, and to preserve the programs of these 32 States with charity tax credit programs that are now all threatened of being extinguished by the IRS's determination.

I want to close by sharing a constituent letter I received earlier this year about what the property tax deduction meant to one New Jersey family.

This past April, Leigh, from Budd Lake, wrote:

My husband and I just did our taxes today—and for the first time ever—we owe money. And not just a little, hundreds.

We own a home and for the first time we were not able to itemize our deductions; our deductions in fact were cut in half.

There is no incentive to us owning our home anymore. We are an average middle class family paying a mortgage and trying to raise three kids. I'm tired of our family being collateral damage in yet another political fight.

Leigh is absolutely right. New Jersey families shouldn't have to foot the bill for massive handouts for big corporations.

To add insult to injury, while the new IRS rules crack down on New Jersey's efforts to save families like Leigh's money, last fall the Treasury Department made clear that corporations—listen to this—could continue to benefit from the same exact kind of workaround. Corporations can continue to benefit from the same kind of workaround.

How is that for protecting the little guy? How is that for hypocrisy?

It is not fair. It is not right. Our constituents deserve better. So we will continue to push for a long-term solu-

tion to this problem. I have introduced the Stop Attacking Local Taxpayers Act, or SALT Act, to restore the full deductibility of State and local taxes.

Under my bill, the more you pay in property and State taxes, the more relief you get. It is the exact opposite of what the Trump tax bill says, which is that the higher the cost of living is in your State and the more you pay in State and local taxes, the more you owe the Federal Government come tax time. It is double taxation. It makes no sense.

The SALT Act deserves the full consideration of the Senate, but in the meantime, we should use the opportunity before us today to help hard-working homeowners suffering from the Trump tax law. We should help these 32 States—overwhelmingly, most of them, Republican—that have a tax credit program be able to sustain that program for the benefits of the decisions they made in their States and for the purposes they made, whether it be education, conservation, or whatever else, that now are nullified by the IRS rule.

Join us, and let's exercise our power with the Congressional Review Act to do what is right—to protect middle-class families throughout the Nation from higher property tax burdens, to protect States and their right to determine how their taxpayers will ultimately receive the benefits for making investments in education, for making investments in conservation, and for making investments in a whole host of issues, that these States, in their rightful judgment, decided were perfectly fine and that were always upheld by the IRS and are now nullified by the Internal Revenue Service's decision.

That is what we have an opportunity to turn around, and I hope we will.

I yield the floor.

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

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, before I address the issues before the Senate right now, I would like to express some concern I have about whether the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement will be able to get done this year.

I come to the floor today to express growing worry. The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives looks increasingly less likely to act this year on the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. That threatens passage of the trilateral trade deal this Congress, as next year is a Presidential election year.

It has been about a year since the updated trade agreement with Canada and Mexico was signed by the leaders of the three nations. It is a whole year, and Democrats have still failed to act.

Every day that passes, Americans are losing out on economic benefits of the USMCA. House Democrats seem to have no sense of urgency. For months now, House Democrats have said they are working on it, that they are mak-

ing progress and that they are optimistic that they can get to yes.

But conspicuously absent from their pronouncements are any mention of a date or timeline. With every passing month, these seem less like good-faith assurances and more like stalling tactics.

The new Congress has been seated for more than 10 months now. How long is it going to take before this can come up?

Ambassador Lighthizer, more than any other Trade Representative I can recall, has gone above and beyond to accommodate the other party's policy demands. For nearly a year now, Lighthizer has worked with House Democrats to find solutions on issues of concern to them, like labor, environment, intellectual property, and enforcement.

I am beginning to wonder if Democrats are interested in reaching a compromise at all. It is looking more like they would prefer to deprive the administration of a victory, even if it comes at the expense of the American people. That should not stand.

Earlier this month, I wrote a column with Congressman KEVIN BRADY, the ranking Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee. We wrote that time would tell if Democrats cared more about undermining President Trump than helping the American economy and job creation as a result of it. Today, it is looking more like the former than the latter.

If the USMCA is not brought up for a vote in the House very soon, Democrats will have a price to pay next year when the American people have a chance to weigh in. There is little Americans dislike more in politics than zero-sum, oppose-the-other-party politics, no matter the cost.

The USMCA would create hundreds of thousands of jobs, protect American industries, and provide confidence to U.S. businesses and innovators to invest right here in America.

That is what Democrats seem willing to sacrifice by inaction on the USMCA. But Democrats are making the wrong political calculus. This underestimates the intelligence of the American voter and their ability to sniff out a phony.

President Trump has done his job. He has renegotiated a trade deal that nearly everyone besides a few congressional Democrats can agree is better than its predecessor we know as NAFTA.

It is now up to the House of Representatives to do their job and bring this deal to a vote. If they don't act soon, the American people will hold them accountable a year from now.

S.J. RES. 50

Now to the issue before the U.S. Senate—the State and local tax deduction. This week, Democrats are using the Congressional Review Act to force a vote on a resolution that would effectively repeal an IRS regulation aimed at preventing millionaires and billionaires from exploiting a tax loophole.

This loophole would allow top income earners to save billions of dollars in Federal taxes annually.

New York City hedge fund and private equity managers would most assuredly be some of the biggest beneficiaries under this loophole. At the same time, the taxpayers with incomes under \$50,000 would see virtually no benefit.

In this case one might think my Democratic colleagues would be cheering on the Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service for taking decisive actions and shutting down this loophole for the wealthy. But this doesn't seem to be the case. Democrats—and only Democrats—including the Democratic minority leader, are arguing in favor of allowing wealthy taxpayers to exploit this loophole. Moreover, predominantly Democratic States have been promoting and bemoaning the loss of this loophole.

The loophole I am talking about is a concerted effort by predominantly only Democrat States to help their wealthiest residents get around the \$10,000 cap on the deduction of State and local taxes, which has come to be known by the acronym SALT.

These efforts to get around the cap have been called blue State SALT workarounds. These workarounds are essentially State-sanctioned tax shelters where wealthy residents make payments to a State or local government-controlled fund in exchange for tax credits they can use to wipe out most or all of their State taxes.

These States then want the Federal Government to ignore this sleight of hand and recognize these payments as fully deductible charitable contributions when they are nothing more than State tax payments. Well, that is really too cute by half. It is cheating, and these States are encouraging it, forcing the rest of the country to subsidize these tax shelters for the wealthy.

The Treasury Department and the IRS have correctly determined that these workarounds are contrary to the Federal tax law and have issued sensible regulations to clarify this tax treatment. In doing so, they applied longstanding tax principles that deny a charity deduction to the extent the taxpayer receives something of value in return for their charitable donation. It is simply common sense.

Charity is by definition something done out of the goodness of your heart without expecting or getting something in return. That is certainly not the case with these workarounds. There is no charity involved. In fact, once taking into account both the State tax credit and the charitable deduction at the Federal level, a taxpayer could actually receive a tax benefit that exceeds the dollar value of their so-called donation. That is not charity; that is a tax scam.

Some have attempted to justify this tax scam by pointing to State tax credit programs that existed prior to the existence of the SALT cap, but unlike

the recently enacted programs, these older programs were not specifically designed to circumvent Federal tax law when they were enacted. These pre-existing tax credit programs were targeted at giving taxpayers the option of funding certain nontraditional governmental activities, such as providing underprivileged children scholarships or to set aside land for conservation.

My Democratic colleagues have painstakingly tried to defend these scams by claiming they are efforts to alleviate State tax burdens on the middle class; however, this argument doesn't even pass the laugh test. It is undeniable that these workarounds will overwhelmingly benefit the super-wealthy, while the middle class will receive little or no benefit.

I was pleased to see that at least one Senate Democrat was willing to be honest about this last night here on the Senate floor. Senator BENNET of Colorado put it this way:

The vast majority of the benefits of repealing the SALT cap would go to high-income Americans. Repeal would be extremely costly, and for that same cost, we could advance much more worthy efforts to help working and middle-class families all over the country.

To illustrate this point, I have here a chart based on a nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation distribution analysis. They have made very clear through their chart showing who would benefit from repealing the cap on deductions for State and local taxes.

While eliminating these Treasury regulations wouldn't repeal the SALT cap entirely, it would effectively make the cap toothless, as more and more States would create workarounds. And let's not forget—the repeal of the cap is their ultimate goal.

As we can see here on the chart, the majority of the benefits from repealing the SALT cap—52 percent—would flow to taxpayers with incomes exceeding \$1 million. Let's think about that just for a minute. Less than half of 1 percent of all tax returns report income exceeding \$1 million. Yet, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation, these taxpayers would receive 52 percent of the tax benefit if this resolution of disapproval went through. Another 42 percent of the tax benefit would go to taxpayers with incomes between \$200,000 and \$1 million. When combined with those earning over \$1 million, you can see that fully 94 percent of the tax benefit would go to taxpayers with incomes over \$200,000. To put this into perspective, only 7 percent of tax returns report income exceeding this level.

Now compare this to taxpayers with incomes under \$200,000, which is about 93 percent of all taxpayers. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, this group would receive a measly 6 percent of the benefit from repealing the cap on State tax deductions, as the Democrats are proposing. Only a handful of taxpayers with incomes under \$200,000—or about 3 percent—would ac-

tually see any benefit. Ninety-seven percent of these taxpayers wouldn't see even one penny of benefit from taking away the SALT cap.

So, very simply, there you have it. The same Democrats who have criticized the 2017 tax bill as supposedly benefiting only the wealthy—can you believe it?—are now actively pushing an agenda that would overwhelmingly benefit the wealthy. This goes to show how off-base Democratic criticism of tax reform really is, as we have heard it over the last 2 years.

Far from being a giveaway to the wealthy, the tax reform passed in 2017 was a concerted effort to provide tax relief for everybody. Republicans accomplished this tax cut for everybody primarily by lowering tax rates across the board, but we also did it by repealing or limiting certain regressive tax benefits, such as the deduction for State and local taxes, the SALT provisions we are talking about. We then used that revenue to increase benefits that better target low- to middle-income taxpayers. For example, we doubled the child tax credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and increased the refundability of that tax credit. We also nearly doubled the standard deduction, to the benefit of many lower and middle-income taxpayers. We likely couldn't have made those changes if we hadn't limited the deduction for State taxes that mostly benefited the wealthy.

Democrats who wrongly associate this SALT cap with a tax increase on middle-income folks simply aren't looking at the facts or at tax reform as a whole. Two years ago, Republicans created a tax cut for an overwhelming majority of Americans. This is true even for taxpayers affected by the deduction for State taxes.

Before tax reform, many upper-middle-income taxpayers—particularly those in the high-tax blue States—had to pay the alternative minimum tax. We refer to that as the AMT. For anyone who used to pay the AMT, after you struggled through the incredible complexity of the AMT rules, you realized an unfortunate fact: The AMT clawed back the deduction for your State tax payments. Therefore, many of these taxpayers saw little or no benefit from this deduction before tax reform.

Democrats don't like to admit this inconvenient truth, but it is true. They don't seem to let facts interfere with their political rhetoric. So, yes, these same taxpayers are likely now affected by the SALT cap, but because Republicans largely did away with the AMT—at the same time, lowering everybody's tax rates—they still received a tax cut. Let's not forget that these taxpayers no longer have to deal with the mind-numbing complexity of the AMT. Now a question: Do Democrats really want middle-income families to have to go back to the nonsense of figuring out the alternative minimum tax every year?

I have heard Democrats try to justify their efforts to undermine the SALT

cap by claiming it was part of some nefarious plot against blue States. That is simply not true. Yes, more taxpayers in blue States are affected by the cap given the high State taxes those States impose on their residents, but the fact is, on average, every income group in every State saw a tax cut under the 2017 tax cut bill. This isn't just coming from this Senator, CHUCK GRASSLEY, but an analysis by the liberal Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. In addition, recent filing season data released by H&R Block shows that, on average, residents of even high-tax States received a tax cut.

We have also heard fears that the cap will negatively affect blue State revenues, as higher income taxpayers flee to lower tax jurisdictions. But concerns about such an exodus aren't new and didn't start because of the cap; they started because of sky-high taxes in those very same States.

In November of 2017, prior to the enactment of this tax cut and reform bill, the Wall Street Journal wrote about "The Great Progressive Tax Escape." This article focused on IRS tax return data between 2012 and 2015 that showed billions of dollars in taxable income leaving high-tax States for low-tax States due to taxpayer migration. Last time I checked, there was no SALT cap between 2012 and 2015. While there is some anecdotal evidence that taxpayer migration might be starting to increase due to the cap, it is not entirely clear at this point.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a Bloomberg article from May of this year titled "Blue States Warned of a SALT Apocalypse. It Hasn't Happened" be printed in the RECORD.

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

[May 21, 2019]

BLUE STATES WARNED OF A SALT APOCALYPSE. IT HASN'T HAPPENED

(By Martin Z Braun)

To listen to New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, the 2017 Republican tax overhaul that limited state and local deductions to \$10,000 was a devastating blow. The rich would flee, the middle class would suffer and blue state budgets would bleed.

Perhaps this will come to pass over time, but so far, there are almost no signs of it.

New York, in fact, saw revenue rise \$3.7 billion in April from a year earlier, thanks to a shift in timing of taxpayer payments, a stock market that rallied through much of 2018 and a decade-long economic expansion that's pushed national unemployment to a 50-year low. Similar windfalls arrived in New Jersey, California and Illinois—states that, like New York, had warned of dire consequences from the law.

And it turns out that tax refunds across the U.S. in 2019—those once-a-year checks from Uncle Sam that people use to pay credit card debt from Christmas or buy a washing machine—were roughly the same size as a year earlier. In all, about 64% of American households paid less in individual income tax for 2018 than they would have had the Tax Cut and Jobs Act not become law, according to the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center.

"Any comment that says this is an economic civil war that would gut the middle

class is overblown," said Kim Rueben, the director of the State and Local Finance Initiative at the Tax Policy Center. "If there's going to be any effect of the SALT limit on the ability of some states to have progressive taxes it's too early to know that yet."

TAXABLE INCOME

In some ways, the \$10,000 limit on state and local tax deductions—SALT—is saving states money by lowering their borrowing costs. That's because investors seeking to reduce their tax bill are plowing a record-setting amount of cash into municipal bonds, driving interest rates lower. The extra yield that investors demand to compensate for the risk of holding Illinois general-obligation bonds, for instance, has fallen to the lowest since May 2015, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

States are also benefiting from a broader tax base because the law eliminated some exemptions and limited deductions, like mortgage interest. Since states that levy income taxes use federal adjusted gross income or taxable income as the base, they have more income to tax.

Still, the nerves of Democratic governors and their budget officers frayed in December when income tax collections plunged by more than 30 percent from the prior December. Cuomo was quick to call the tax law "politically diabolical" and an act of "economic civil war" against the middle class.

Then April came.

New York collected \$3.4 billion more in personal income tax revenue last month than a year earlier, a 57% increase, according to Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli. California took in \$19.2 billion in April, exceeding Governor Gavin Newsom's estimate by \$4 billion.

New Jersey had a record April with tax collections up 57%, allowing it to boost forecasts for the year by \$377 million and triggering a political battle over how to spend the windfall. Illinois individual and corporate tax revenue was \$1.5 billion more than projected, allowing Governor J.B. Pritzker to scrap a plan to put off pension payments.

TIMING CHANGE

April personal income tax collections in 28 states and Washington increased by \$16.3 billion, or 36.2% year-over-year to \$61.4 billion, Bank of America Corp. said.

"SALT caps do not appear to be a broad system risk to state credit quality at this point," S&P Global Ratings said recently.

A big reason for the sharp bounce-back after December's deep revenue declines in New York and other high-tax states: The SALT limits caused some people to change when they paid their taxes. Wealthy taxpayers in December 2017 accelerated big tax payments to take advantage of the unlimited state and local tax deduction before it expired. Then, with the SALT deduction capped, that incentive evaporated and taxpayers waited until this April to pay their 2018 taxes.

Also, some individuals failed to adjust their W-4s after the passage of the tax law. So people who underwithheld received more in their paychecks since then but had to pay more tax in April or received lower refunds.

TRENDING INLINE

Still, there are some indications that residents in high-tax states are fretting about the law. Thirteen percent of house-hunters in both New York and California said they have started looking for homes in states with lower taxes, according to a recent survey by brokerage Redfin Corp.

In Westchester County, where a typical property tax bill for a single family home is more than \$17,000, the average sales price declined 7.6% between the first quarter of 2018

and the same quarter this year. Sales prices for luxury homes (average price \$2 million) plummeted 22% during the same period, according to appraiser Miller Samuel Inc. and brokerage Douglas Elliman Real Estate.

Almost half of income taxes paid to California, New York and New Jersey are from the wealthiest 1% of earners. If they were to move in large enough numbers, those states could be in trouble. New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Maryland sued the Trump administration last year to invalidate the \$10,000 cap, saying that it unfairly targets them. States have sought to pass loopholes around the limit and there's a push in Congress to reverse it.

But migration rates in high tax states most affected by SALT are below pre-recession levels, and generally in-line with U.S. trends, Moody's Investors Service said in April. Jobs, housing and the weather influence migration more than taxes, according to Moody's analyst Marcia Van Wagner.

"Armageddon hasn't resulted from the changes to SALT, but it still may be too early to measure its impact," said Matt Dalton, chief executive officer of Rye Brook, New York-based Belle Haven Investments, which manages \$9 billion of municipal bonds. "You see more mansions listed in New York. Manhattan real estate sales just had their worst quarter in a decade."

Mr. GRASSLEY. As this article highlights, revenue for blue States this tax season were up, not down.

The ratings agency Moody's released a report in April saying that there were no discernible signs that individuals were fleeing high-tax States as a result of the SALT cap. However, even if taxpayer migration were to occur as a result of the cap, the answer to the problem isn't repealing the SALT cap; it is for States to look in their own backyard at their own tax-and-spend policy.

The truth is, these State politicians aren't concerned about their own taxpayers. What they are really worried about is their continued ability to gouge those taxpayers with ever-increasing State and local taxes, which used to be subsidized by taxpayers from other States through the Federal Tax Code because there was no SALT cap.

In closing, I want to turn back to this very chart, the same one I discussed earlier. For Democrats still on the fence as to whether to vote to repeal the IRS regulations on the SALT work-arounds, you ought to study this chart very closely.

I ask a question to the other side: Could you, with a straight face, argue that a vote to protect these work-arounds is not a vote to provide a massive tax cut for the wealthy? This chart shows it is helping the wealthy.

For Democrats who intend to vote for this tax scam anyway, I don't want to hear any more long-winded speeches about how the tax bill of 2017 benefited the wealthy. The fact is, after tax reform, the wealthy now shoulder a larger share of Federal tax burden than they did under the prior law.

This was made possible by reforms to regressive tax expenditures, such as our capping the SALT deduction. What is more, these reforms allow us to target more tax relief to lower and middle-income taxpayers.

State work-arounds through the SALT cap are nothing more than State-sanctioned tax shelters. By voting to undermine that cap, Democrats are voting to enrich the wealthy taxpayers whom they persistently have vilified as not paying enough. Moreover, they put the tax relief provided to the middle class in jeopardy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I want to make sure the Senate and the country understand what this debate is all about.

Senate Republicans have been writing letters to the Department of Treasury saying that the Treasury SALT rule hurts their State charities. Yet they have been unwilling—at least based on what I am told—to be part of an effort to fix this and to support those charities. That is what we would be doing in our effort today to overturn the Treasury Department's flawed—deeply flawed—SALT regulations.

My view is that these regulations illustrate essentially what was wrong with the Republicans' 2017 tax law. This was a law that was half-baked and rushed to shovel hundreds of billions of dollars to those at the top of the economic pyramid in our country. Then \$1.5 trillion was borrowed so that Donald Trump and his Republican allies could find a way to cover this tax cut for cronies and donors.

Then, because they still needed revenue, Republicans deliberately targeted middle-class homeowners in States like New Jersey, New York, Maryland, and Oregon for tax increases.

For some communities in Oregon, it is not uncommon for property tax bills alone for middle-class folks to exceed \$10,000. But when our Republican colleagues took this flawed approach on the SALT issue, they didn't want to listen to experts. So the Trump Treasury Department stepped in, and without any clear authority to do so, the Treasury Department reversed a long-standing IRS provision that had allowed taxpayers a full deduction for charitable contributions to State tax credit programs.

In essence, the Treasury Department created a new rule that extended the \$10,000 cap on State and local tax deductions to also include charitable contributions to State tax credit programs.

To make matters worse, because Republican Senators began to see what an absurd approach this was, Secretary Mnuchin put together another carve-out for Republican interests, trying to figure out how to manage this flawed regulation. In effect, businesses using these same workarounds to fund private school voucher programs would be exempt from the regulation. Middle-class families pay more; businesses pay less. That is the Republican way.

My view is that the Treasury Department shouldn't be putting its thumb on

the scale on behalf of Republicans, and it certainly shouldn't be using what amounts to a phony regulatory justification to fix this extraordinarily poorly drafted law.

While Donald Trump certainly intended for these regulations to hurt middle-class families in some parts of the country in Democratic States and protect Republican interests, the bad news for my Republican colleagues—and this is why so many Republican Senators are writing the Treasury Department, talking about why their State charities are getting hammered. The regulations produced by the Treasury Department are overly broad, and they hurt the majority of States by effectively eliminating the benefit of those State charitable tax credit programs. These include credits that support priorities like conservation, child care, charitable giving, and access to higher education.

This is particularly striking, given that the Trump tax law was already estimated to slash overall charitable giving by as much as \$20 million a year.

Now on top of that, the regulations that I oppose and feel so strongly about coming from the Treasury Department threaten more than 100 charitable State tax credit programs in 33 States.

My Republican colleagues' constituents will be hurt by these regulations, just like my constituents at home. We are talking about childcare centers in Colorado and Missouri; foster care organizations in Arizona; historic preservation groups in Kansas; charities in Iowa, Kentucky, and Mississippi; conservation groups in Arkansas, Iowa, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee; rural hospitals in Georgia, the home State of the Presiding Officer; universities in Indiana, Idaho, Montana, and North Dakota; and volunteer responders in Nebraska.

As today's debate proceeds, you are going to hear about these comments against these regulations that were submitted to the Trump administration. There is a rural hospital in Georgia that was able to upgrade its heart monitors, a childcare center in Colorado that helps parents remain in the workforce, and a conservation group that has preserved more than 10,000 acres of land in Florida's gulf coast.

In wrapping up, I just hope my Republican colleagues will put their constituents first by shielding them from these unintended consequences of losing their charitable tax credits and supporting this resolution offered by the leader, Senator SCHUMER, myself, and other colleagues.

Senate Republicans have a choice. They can keep writing letters to the Treasury Department, complaining about the regulations that hammer their State charities, or they can join us in voting to reverse this policy. I just hope that Senators move to this vote, and they take the option that I think is the only one you can explain to the folks at home in a townhall meeting. I have had more than 950 of

them. I am going to have some more very shortly. There, folks have a chance to really see what your priorities are.

The question here is, Are your priorities with folks at home, with these State charities that I have emphasized—everything from conservation to healthcare, to children? Are you going to support the State charities doing that important work or are you going to continue to support the Department of the Treasury with their incredibly flawed regulations to hammer these State charities?

I hope Senators from all sides—from those 33 States that I have just ticked off—will vote to protect those charities and join me, Senator SCHUMER, and a host of other colleagues in voting to get rid of the Treasury Department's rule and stand with us on the CRA.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I come to the floor frustrated—frustrated by the fact that it has been 327 days since President Trump signed the USMCA, and the House has done nothing to take it up.

It is not because the House hasn't had time. They have found time to do a lot of things, like continue on their partisan expedition toward impeaching the President. They passed a bill without a pay raise for our troops, spent a lot of "energy" on the Green New Deal, and one Member of the House took the time to show the world she was frightened by her garbage disposal.

The question is, What is preventing Congress from getting the USMCA done?

From Humboldt County all the way to Hamburg, IA, at my townhall meetings or during a visit to a small business or manufacturing plants and everywhere in between, I have been hearing one thing consistently and across the board: Iowans want the USMCA now.

These hard-working folks know the impact the USMCA will have on Iowa's economy and the U.S. economy as a whole. There is no reason Iowans should be waiting in limbo for this agreement to be ratified.

This trade agreement is a win for the American people, plain and simple. Mexico has already ratified the deal, and Canada is well on their way. Our trade partners are ready. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement is about modernizing a trade deal with two of our closest allies that would grow more than 175,000 jobs across this country.

NAFTA was ratified in 1994. That was 3 years before Wi-Fi became available to the public, 5 years before USB drives were invented, 12 years before the launch of Facebook and Twitter, and 16 years before computer tablets were on sale. None of us are living with 1994 technology, so why should we be living with a 1994 trade policy?

President Trump understands the need to modernize trade with two of our closest allies, and that is why he negotiated a great trade deal with Mexico and Canada—the USMCA. Passing the USMCA will allow us to compete in today's 21st century economy. It will provide folks back home in Iowa with some certainty—certainty in a time where prices have been low and markets have been eroded from other trade wars.

Iowans want and need USMCA. Canada and Mexico are our States' top two trading partners. In 2018 alone, we exported \$6.6 billion worth of products to our neighbors to the north and to the south. Trade with Canada and Mexico directly increases the value of Iowan exports like beef, adding \$70 in value to each head that comes from the State.

In case you didn't know it, Mexico is the No. 1 consumer of Iowa corn. I was up in Northwest Iowa a couple of weeks ago visiting with one Iowa corn farmer, and he said that if we were able to get the USMCA deal done, it would have a direct impact—positive—on his farm.

It is not just our farmers who will benefit from the USMCA; it is also our businesses and our manufacturers. I was visiting with some business leaders at a roundtable in Des Moines, and time and again they told me how important it is that we get this trade deal done and in place.

All of this leaves me scratching my head, wondering when the House is going to do what Americans are demanding. When will they stop obstructing the good work done by our President to get a deal in place?

House Democrats need to do their job so Iowa farmers, manufacturers, and business owners can do theirs. Now is the time to pass the USMCA.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak in support of the USMCA, and I appreciate all of my other colleagues who are speaking out as well.

Almost a year has passed since President Trump signed the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement and notified Congress of the administration's intention to enter into the deal. Legislation to implement the agreement must originate and be approved first in the U.S. House of Representatives and then the U.S. Senate, where it will pass with a strong bipartisan vote, including mine.

This modernization of NAFTA matters for Arizona businesses, hard-working citizens, and families. Mexico has already ratified USMCA, and Canada is in the process of doing so. Congress needs to pass USMCA without any further delay.

Simply put, USMCA is a win for Arizona. Trade with Mexico and Canada is key to Arizona jobs and opportunities. Almost 50 percent of all Arizona exports go to Mexico and Canada, and more than 228,000 Arizona jobs rely on this trade. In 2018, Arizona and Mexico

engaged in \$16.6 billion worth of cross-border commerce.

Exports to Canada and Mexico support Arizona jobs across a broad variety of industries. In 2018, Arizona companies exported \$2.3 billion worth of computer and electrical products, \$1.4 billion in appliances, \$928 million in transportation equipment, and \$796 million in machinery to Canada and Mexico. Arizona miners exported \$1 billion in minerals and ores, and Arizona farmers exported almost \$600 million in agricultural goods. One out of five Arizona manufacturers export to Canada and Mexico, and most of those are small and medium-sized businesses. It is not too hard to see how much Arizona communities, farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and business owners stand to gain from Congress finalizing the USMCA.

A few weeks ago, I was honored to host Vice President PENCE in the Grand Canyon State. One of our stops took us to Caterpillar's proving grounds in Green Valley, AZ, where the company tests their impressive machinery and trains operators on new equipment.

With roughly 660 full-time employees in our State, Caterpillar knows what a critical role cross-border commerce—and the passage of USMCA—is for Arizona. Caterpillar recycles 150 million tons of scraps a year to create new products. This kind of innovation should be promoted, not penalized. USMCA encourages this kind of innovation by specifically prohibiting restrictions on remanufactured goods. In turn, companies like Caterpillar are not penalized but encouraged to be thoughtful in their environmental footprint.

I made many other visits to local businesses this year and heard straight from Arizonans about why we need to get this deal passed and now. The USMCA opens doors for Arizona to continue leading in the aerospace, financial services, film and digital media, and bioscience sectors. It enhances intellectual property protections and will benefit Arizona's emerging automotive sector by requiring at least 75 percent of a car to be built with North American parts in order for it to be sold duty-free. Arizona's farmers and ranchers will have new opportunities to export dairy, eggs, wheat, chicken, and turkey products to Canada.

Earlier this month, Speaker PELOSI said about USMCA that her Democratic caucus in the House was "on a path to yes." Well, with less than two dozen legislative days remaining in 2019, I sure hope that is true, and I would encourage them to get to yes now.

The USMCA is good for our country, and too much time has passed without any House action. During these divided times, this is a proposal that should bring both sides of the aisle together. It is good for America, and it is good for Arizona.

USMCA is a clear win for my constituents in Arizona. Arizonans in

every corner of our great State need to contact their Representative in the House and tell them to encourage Speaker PELOSI to bring this bill to the floor immediately. Let's pass USMCA now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, as our colleagues can hear, we are on the floor talking about the USMCA and the need to get this agreement passed. It really is frustrating. I feel as if we have come to the floor, time and again, to encourage our friends in the House, and I guess we are all but begging them to take a pause from their political agenda and take one vote—just one vote that is going to make a tremendous amount of difference in the lives of businesses, of our auto manufacturers, our farmers, our chemical producers, and workers.

Our friends across the aisle like to say they are all for the workers. Well, if you are all for the workers, let me tell you something, there are 12 million—get that—12 million workers who are directly impacted by the benefits that would come from the USMCA, and this is across every single industrial sector.

As I have been about Tennessee, what I have heard from so many is a simple question: When are you going to pass this? How long is it going to take? We have heard that you have people in logistics, people who are in farming, and people who are in every single part of the economy who are saying: Why can't you get this done?

We all know there is support that we hear about—bipartisan support—wide bipartisan support in the other Chamber and, indeed, wide bipartisan support here in the Senate, but for some reason, they just can't seem to find the time to schedule the bill and call the vote.

America is waiting on them to take this vote. There are 120,000 small and midsize American businesses that will be able to continue exporting their goods to customers in Canada and Mexico. Do you know what is significant? These businesses, small and midsize businesses, are located in every single one of our States.

The updated customs and trade rules are certainly going to make sure that even startups are able to participate in this cross-border economy. I have talked to so many new-start businesses that are coming through our universities and our entrepreneur centers, and they say: We want to make certain that we have access to markets around the globe.

Isn't this great? They are not just thinking locally or regionally. Some of these talented young Americans, what are they doing? They are thinking globally. They are planning ahead for decades of productivity. This is going to ease regulations for our dairy and beef and pork farmers who are in Tennessee.

Indeed, I was out in the past couple of weeks and talked with a farmer who is a cattle farmer. He came to one of our meetings, and I got around to questions and answers. The very first question was, When is this going to be done? When is it going to be done? Why is it taking so long? There was agreement between Mexico, Canada, and the United States months ago. Why can't this get a vote?

These are real problems for real people who are working real jobs and are very dedicated and are working diligently. The intellectual property provisions that are in this bill are so significant for our singers, our songwriters, and our musicians who call Nashville home, and they want to see this take place.

I have to tell you, I know that all of these issues I have discussed might not matter to those who are always interested in the 24-hour news cycle and winning the shiny object debate of the day, but I will tell you this: This matters to Tennesseans because Tennesseans exported \$13.7 billion worth of transportation equipment, electronics, machinery, chemicals, fabricated metal, appliances, paper, plastics, rubber, and other goods to Canada and Mexico in 2017—a \$13.7 billion export community to our neighbors to the north and south.

Tennessee businesses and workers have waited long enough, and they want to see the House take action and the vote be completed and the USMCA become a reality.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Tennessee about the importance of this agreement in her State, and I can tell you it is also important to a State a little further north called Ohio. Our No. 1 trading partner, by far, is Canada and No. 2 is Mexico, and we want this agreement.

I hear about it all the time I am out talking to our farmers. They are concerned about the weather. They are concerned about what is going on with the China market. They are concerned about low prices. They see this as an opportunity. They see this as kind of the light at the end of the tunnel.

If we can get the USMCA done, that expands markets for us and, therefore, increases our prices and gives us a chance. It is the same situation with a lot of manufacturers. It is amazing how many of them depend on Mexico and Canada to be able to sell their products. This is a big deal in Ohio and a big deal for our country. So I am here today to try to urge the House of Representatives to go ahead and move on this and then to urge the Senate to take it up right away. The Trump administration negotiated a good agreement. It deserves a vote.

I am a former trade lawyer—a recovering one—and I am also a former member of the Ways and Means Com-

mittee and a former U.S. Trade Representative, and now I am on the Finance Committee, where we deal with trade. The bottom line is that, in all of those years working with trade, it is a complicated area. It is a politically difficult area. But the bottom line is that we are about 5 percent of the world's population in America, and yet we have 25 percent of the economy. The way we do well is to sell more of our stuff to the 95 percent of the people who are outside of our borders.

It should be fair. We should have a level playing field. That is the kind of context in which I look at the USMCA. Does it meet these criteria, where we can sell more of our stuff and we have a more level playing field? Yes, it does. That is exactly what this agreement does. It is a good agreement, and it deserves to have a vote. If it has a vote, it will pass because logic, I think, will prevail.

As crazy as this town is these days and as partisan as things are, the logic of this is inescapable, which is that you have the USMCA, a good agreement, and then you have the status quo, which is NAFTA, which is not as good in any respect. If you vote no on USMCA, you are effectively voting yes for the status quo. I don't think that will happen. I think it will pass if we can get it to the floor for a vote.

Taken together, our neighbors, Canada and Mexico, make up the most important foreign markets for U.S. products, and not just for Ohio. In fact, according to the recent data we have, one-third of all American exports in 2019 this year have already gone to Mexico or Canada, well ahead of any other foreign markets. So trade with Mexico and Canada is now responsible for 12 million jobs nationally. Every single State represented here has jobs related to this.

In Ohio, again, our No. 1 and No. 2 trade partners are Canada and Mexico, with 39 percent of our exports going to Canada alone. That is twice the national average, by the way. So we are particularly focused on Canada and Mexico, which represent \$28 billion in trade total.

What I am hearing from farmers, manufacturers, and service providers is that this is really important for us. So we have to be sure that, because this relationship is so important, it is built on a solid foundation. The NAFTA agreement which it is built on is now 25 years old. It is outdated. It has not kept up with the times, and it has to be improved upon. That is what USMCA does. It basically says that we are in the 21st century, and we have to make changes to this agreement.

NAFTA doesn't have things in it that one would expect in a 21st century agreement.

Start with the digital economy. So much of our economy now operates over the internet. Yet there is nothing in the current agreement, NAFTA, that protects this trade like our modern agreements do.

Another aspect is labor and environmental standards, which are weak and not enforceable in the NAFTA agreement but are in the USMCA. That is a big change in and of itself.

This is not just a name change. This is a fundamental change in the way in which we relate to our neighbors to the south and north.

This handy-dandy chart I put together shows us some of the differences between the two agreements. The first one has to do with economic impact. The independent International Trade Commission has done a study on this. They are required by law to do it. They say that the new USMCA is going to create 176,000 new jobs. That is the green check under USMCA. That is a big difference right there. If we want to create more jobs, by the way, here are 176,000 new jobs, and 20,000 of those jobs are in the auto industry. That is very important to our country and particularly important to States like mine.

Second, businesses in Ohio and around the country rely on internet sales that we talked about earlier. Internet sales and rules for the internet are unchanged in NAFTA. Frankly, there is no chapter in NAFTA that deals with commerce over the internet. It is unbelievable. It turns out that the USMCA does, and that is important because small businesses that rely on access to Canada and Mexico through internet sales are going to have an easing of their customs burdens for small-value products. They will have data localization protections. They will have a prohibition on Mexico and Canada requiring that there be localization of the data in those countries. Finally, this prohibits tariffs on data, which we don't have now. These are all important key elements in the agreement to keep our internet economy moving. So under the rules for the internet economy, there is a green check for the USMCA, and NAFTA doesn't have it.

Let's talk about the next subject, which is enforceable labor and environmental standards. In the agreement we have now, the NAFTA agreement, there are no labor or environmental standards that are enforceable—none. Whereas, in the new USMCA, standards are actually enforceable. There are consequences if they don't abide by them. This is part of the leveling of the playing field. Think about it. In Mexico, one of their great advantages has been lower labor costs and labor conditions—the inability to organize and so on. This changes that now that we have labor standards. By the way, Mexico has already made changes to their labor laws because of the agreement we have with them under the USMCA, which, by the way, was negotiated with these two countries and submitted back on September 30 of last year. It has been over a year. So it is about time to move it. Again, the USMCA has enforceable environmental and labor standards, and NAFTA does not.

There are some other provisions that are interesting that lead to why this is

good for the economy. The International Trade Commission, or the ITC, also says that this agreement will increase the GDP of our country, which is the economic growth of our country, and, significantly, in fact, more than the Trans-Pacific Partnership did. Remember that the TPP is an agreement that a lot of Democrats have spoken very favorably of because of its impact on the economy. The USMCA actually increases our economy more than the Trans-Pacific Partnership would have.

Another issue that is unusual but is in this agreement and is helpful to our manufacturing in Ohio and around the country is that 70 percent of the steel used in manufacturing vehicles has to be made in the United States, Canada, or Mexico. So this is a new standard that does not exist in NAFTA at all. This means more steel jobs in America and more heavy manufacturing jobs in this country. So we have a check on USMCA, yes, with 70 percent of the steel. In NAFTA, there is nothing with regard to how much steel has to be coming from North America.

It also states that, with regard to the wages in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, there would be a minimum wage of \$16 per hour for about 40 to 45 percent of this manufacturing we are talking about. So any vehicle made in Mexico or anywhere else in America has to be produced by workers making 16 bucks an hour or more. This is again about leveling the playing field, and, frankly, this is the kind of provision that we would see in a provision negotiated by a Democratic administration, not a Republican administration. My Democrat friends have been calling for this for years. It is in the USMCA agreement, and it is good for us because it will result in more jobs coming to the United States of America, where we have not just higher labor standards but higher wages. So 40 to 45 percent of the vehicles must be made by workers earning \$16 an hour. Check the box for yes in USMCA and no in NAFTA.

It is another example of how this agreement is one that addresses a lot of the concerns the Democrats have raised over the years. When I was U.S. Trade Representative, we talked a lot about these issues. We talked a lot about them in the Finance Committee. They are in this agreement.

My hope would be that Speaker PELOSI and the Democrats in the House would take this into account and at least allow this agreement to be voted on by the full House. If that happens, I can't believe that logic wouldn't prevail, that NAFTA versus USMCA wouldn't result in our passing USMCA. All of these things are going to help.

The one element that I think has gotten the most attention in farm country is the fact that the dairy protections in Canada have been changed so we have a chance to send our dairy products to Canada from Ohio and other dairy States. It is more than that. It also affects commodities—wheat, soybeans, and corn—and our

proteins: beef, poultry, and pork. This is really going to help our farmers. That is why 1,000 farm groups around the country have supported this agreement.

Again, with what is going on with China, with the smaller markets, with the difficult weather we have had, and the fact of low prices for commodity crops—all are real problems—this is a godsend. It is really needed for our farmers.

A lot of Democrats are telling me: ROB, this is just like the NAFTA agreement in so many respects.

It is really not. It is a different agreement. The truth of the matter is that this agreement is going to catch us up to the 21st century with regard to our important trade relationship with our two neighbors to the north and south. It is about improved market access for manufacturing and a level playing field for workers and farmers. It is about being sure that we have the ability in the modern digital economy to get a fair shake. Put these two agreements side-by-side, and this is a much-needed upgrade. It has to get a vote, and, if it does, I think it will pass.

With all the improvements we talked about today, this is not just an exercise in rebranding NAFTA. This is about a new agreement that is really a big difference, and it is a binary choice. Are you for this new agreement, which is better in every respect, or are you for the status quo, which is NAFTA?

My hope is that the House will take this to the floor, and, if they do, I think it will pass. It will then come to the Senate, and I am confident that in the Senate we will have the support to pass this on a bipartisan basis.

What I am most confident in is the fact that American workers, farmers, and service providers are going to have the chance to improve their economic opportunities because this agreement is going to be good for all of them.

There is a lot of politics going on right now, and I get that. But, folks, this is not even an election year. Let's finish it up this year before we get into the 2020 election year. Let's be sure that before Thanksgiving, we have the agreement passed in the House and sent to the Senate to take a look at it.

It is too important. We need to keep the American people first and put politics second and get this done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, we have been talking about the USMCA and the Senator from Ohio crammed into just a few moments quite a bit of facts. We are late in time, so I am going to try to abbreviate my remarks.

The Senator from Ohio taught me something a few years ago that is an undisputed fact: We sell twice as many goods to countries where we have trade agreements than we do with countries where we don't. This is an opportunity to expand on an already great success story in terms of our trade with Canada.

What do we see now in trade with Canada and Mexico? We see 12 million American jobs, more than \$500 billion worth of exports, and the USMCA would enhance and improve that. It is good for large manufacturing. It is good for small manufacturing. It is good for small business. The tech industry benefits from the USMCA. As the Senator of Tennessee pointed out, the creative industry—those people in Nashville and in Hollywood—will benefit also, in terms of our ability to protect our intellectual property. Farmers, ranchers, and agribusiness will all benefit.

We strengthen our position with regard to China. This is not an agreement with China, but we will be in a stronger position to compete with China because of this.

I urge the Speaker of the House of Representatives to bring this to a vote in the other body. There is one person on the face of the Earth who can bring this bill, and that is the Speaker of the House of Representatives. She needs to do it, and if she does, we will see a rare opportunity for bipartisanship in the U.S. Congress. The House, controlled by Democrats, will pass the USMCA because they know it is good for jobs and they know it is good for families and working people. The Senate will pass it on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis, and that ought to be refreshing.

I want to do something that I seldom do. I am going to quote the Washington Post. I don't get a chance to do that very often. The Washington Post has strongly endorsed USMCA. The editorial board wrote recently: "USMCA would be a real improvement over the status quo," and it went on to urge Democrats, including many who have already said they support the agreement, to bring the USMCA up without delay.

This is an opportunity for us to move this economy forward. This is an opportunity for us to join with Canada and Mexico, which have already indicated their support for this treaty, and an opportunity for bipartisanship, which needs to break out more in this building.

So I join my colleagues. I am glad to rise with them in support of urging the Speaker to bring this bill to the floor, and I urge quick adoption in the House and Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, the American people elected President Trump based in part on his promise to negotiate better trade deals with foreign nations—first among them, our largest trading partners, Canada and Mexico.

The President and his administration wasted no time in working with these two neighbors to rewrite the North American Free Trade Agreement to reflect today's economic reality. Those talks produced the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA,

which the President unveiled more than 1 year ago.

When NAFTA was written more than a quarter of a century ago, the internet was in its infancy and few could have foreseen the increasingly globalized and digital economy we have today. USMCA takes us into the 21st century, updating antiquated rules to prohibit the theft of trade secrets, reward American innovators, and improve cross-border e-commerce, while also providing increased market access for American businesses and benefits for American workers in more traditional sectors like agriculture and manufacturing.

Market access is very important to agriculture and to our Nation's economy in general. Ninety-five percent of the world's population lives outside of these United States. Without good trade agreements that give us free access to the world's marketplace, we cannot prosper in agriculture or any other business that depends on exports. The USMCA will result in a fairer deal for U.S. businesses and consumers.

Today the American people should ask why it has taken more than a year for the House and Senate to take up, debate, and pass an agreement that will boost the American economy and job creation.

Manufacturers, farmers, and other businesses in my State of Mississippi certainly want to know why we have not done that. The truth is, House Democrats have delayed taking action because they want first to deny President Trump a win for as long as possible and, secondly, to secure last-minute favors for Big Labor.

It is ironic that these same Democrats and big labor groups now oppose USMCA because of environmental protections or labor rights. The truth is, they are largely responsible for the original NAFTA, which they now claim incentivized a mass exodus of U.S. companies to Mexico and decimated our manufacturing sector.

Unfortunately, Democrats' inexcusable foot-dragging is just hurting American consumers and businesses. For years, Mississippi has worked aggressively to increase the market penetration of its manufactured goods and agricultural products in foreign markets. My State exported \$11.8 billion in goods in 2018—a 61-percent increase over the past decade. Foreign trade accounts for almost 10 percent of Mississippi's GDP. More than 50,000 workers and large manufacturers, medium and small businesses, and farms played a role in producing these goods for use around the world but primarily to Canada and Mexico, my State's largest trade partners.

The bottom line is, the USMCA represents an important new tool for Mississippi to expand its ability to sell more of what we produce to consumers abroad. There is no good reason for the House to have held up this 21st century trade agreement, and it is time to finally take a vote, send it to the Senate, and get it done.

We all are benefiting from the strongest U.S. economy and lowest jobless rate in decades. Congress needs to do its job to help maintain and strengthen this economic growth. USMCA will create more certainty for businesses and increase business confidence, which improves the state of the world's economy.

Let's pass the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement and spend more time on accomplishing as much as we can on issues that will actually make a difference in the lives of the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise to support the USMCA—the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement—along with my colleagues. You heard a number of them already. You will hear more. It is compelling.

It is time to act. We are ready to go. This legislation has to start in the House under fast track. We need the House to move forward. There is no question that the bipartisan support is there. Bipartisan support is here in the Senate, and bipartisan support is there in the House as well. It is just a matter of bringing the legislation to the floor and getting it passed.

The benefits of this agreement are very clear. It will increase exports, expand consumer choice, raise wages, and boost innovation throughout North America and especially here in the United States. An analysis by the U.S. National Trade Commission found that USMCA will raise GDP by nearly \$63 billion and create 176,000 jobs in the United States. It is clear that we need to move forward.

The agreement will secure and expand market access for our ag products for an ag State like mine. It will grow our manufacturing base for manufacturing States like Ohio, whose good Senator is here to my right. It will provide important modernizations for our technology sector for States like the Presiding Officer's State. It is certainly a high-tech State.

It will solidify the United States as the global energy leader. We are now, as you know, exporting energy in a bigger way than we ever have before. This just builds on that momentum. These are all significant wins for our States individually and for this country as a whole.

As I said, ag is certainly a big issue for us in North Dakota. The USMCA really makes an important difference and a helpful difference for us in agriculture. For the last 50 years, our country has had a trade surplus. Our farmers and ranchers can outcompete anyone in the world. They produce the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world, and we have a positive balance of trade in agriculture. We need these types of trade agreements in place to continue that positive balance in our agriculture trade. In my State, for example, we shipped \$4.5 billion of

agriculture products around the globe in 2017, making us the ninth largest exporter of agriculture goods among the 50 States. Our farmers and ranchers depend on being able to do that. What we are seeing right now are low commodity prices in our country, which is making it very difficult for our farmers and ranchers. The best way to work out of that is with trade agreements that allow us to sell more globally.

According to the ITC, when fully implemented, USMCA will increase food and exports to Canada and Mexico by \$2.2 billion. This agreement secures existing market access, makes ag trade fair, increases access to the Canadian market, supports innovation in agriculture and more, which is why it is so critical that we pass this legislation as soon as we can.

By maintaining all zero-tariff provisions on ag products, USMCA will secure crucial market access in Canada and Mexico for our farmers and ranchers. Canada and Mexico are critical markets for U.S. ag products. To give you some examples, Mexico is the No. 1 buyer of U.S. corn and DDGS, distillers dried grains with solubles; and Canada is the No. 2 buyer of U.S. ethanol. Additionally, Mexico is the No. 2 buyer of U.S. soybean meal, oil, and whole beans. Canada is the No. 4 buyer of soybean meal and the No. 7 buyer of soybean oil.

Again, you are talking about two very large markets for ag products, for manufacturing products, and for technology—two incredibly important partners. I can go on.

Again, I want to be respectful of my colleagues on the floor. This is one of those cases where it is clear. This is absolutely beneficial to our country. The point is, it is a bipartisan issue. I think, whether you talk to Members of the Senate or to Members of the House, they will tell you this is a bipartisan issue. This is a trade agreement that is good for our country and good for two very strong allies and neighbors. Obviously, Canada and Mexico are two very large trading partners.

We have been on the floor before asking for the House to advance this legislation. If we could start the legislation here, we would. We would pass it right now, and we would pass it with a bipartisan vote, but it requires the House to get started. I hope that all of our colleagues will visit with their counterparts from their respective States in the House and urge that this bill be brought to the floor, passed in the House, and delivered to the Senate so we can pass it for the President to sign and put it into effect for Americans across this great country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, this is a classic example of everything has been said but not everybody has said it yet. One of the great traditions of the Senate is to be sure everybody says it. We are going to say it now, and we will

continue to say it until the House finally has that vote.

It has been pointed out that this agreement was signed well over a year ago. It has been pointed out that our two biggest trading partners are Mexico and Canada, in that order. It has been pointed out that there is lots of focus on agriculture. Every State is an agriculture State. Every State has that as a significant part of their economy. Nobody in the world does that part of the economy more efficiently or more effectively than we do. So that is important. It is important to realize that lots of other things are in trade, as well, but agriculture has to be mentioned a lot until we get this done.

Whether I was at the Missouri State Fair in August or the roundtable meetings I was at in our State in October, cost comes up—\$88 billion is the agricultural economy in Missouri. We are about the same amount. I think Senator HOEVEN said his State is in the top 10. Ours is too. We export about \$4 billion worth of ag products. We also export pickup trucks and airplanes and lots of technology from our State. We export our fair share of beer cans and other things that go all over the world. We are going to continue to make that happen.

Opening markets make a big difference. It also makes a big difference in how you look at the world. If you have strong trading relationships, you are pretty careful with how you deal with all those other relationships. We need to do that. We need to have this vote. The votes are in the House. The votes are in the Senate. It is up to the Speaker to bring this up.

I think the U.S. Trade Representative is working as hard with Democrats in the House as he could possibly be expected to do to maybe look at those last few things that might make this a better deal.

Senator PORTMAN did a great job talking about why the choice here is if you want to continue to have NAFTA—which has been great for all three partners, Canada, Mexico, and us—or do you want to have USMCA, which in area after area has the 20-year update it needs.

We need to get on with this. We need to get on with the activities of the day.

REMEMBERING TED STEVENS

Mr. President, I am going to start off by saying one of the things we are going to do today is accept the official portrait of Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate—the highest office that the Senate can possibly give to anybody. It is the highest office in the Senate.

He was the chairman one time of the Commerce Committee, chairman of the appropriating committee, and a guy who flew those tough planes in the toughest areas in World War II.

He was a person who always did his best to try to figure out the Senate and then be sure that the Senate worked for America and the Senate worked for Alaska. When it came to both of those

things, it was hard to beat Ted Stevens' best. He knew how to make this place work.

He would be disappointed in the dysfunction we see right now, but he would be optimistic that in the greatest country in the world, we will figure this out. All of us who had a chance to serve with him—I had a great relationship with him when I was a House Member. I learned a lot. I think of him often. I miss the way he represented his State and our country so uniquely and so dynamically and so effectively.

I look forward to not only the recognition here on the floor that he will receive today but the permanent recognition he will receive as we today hang his portrait in the U.S. Capitol.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, as the Senator from Missouri has stated, this is a significant day. This is a very special day in the Congress, as later this afternoon we are going to gather to pay tribute to a truly great Senator, the late Senator Ted Stevens from Alaska. His official portrait will be unveiled shortly by the U.S. Senate Commission on Art. It will be part of the U.S. Senate Leadership Portrait Collection, which honors past Presidents pro tempore and past leaders. Like all of the family, the friends, the colleagues, and the former staff who have gathered for this occasion, I am so very pleased that he will be memorialized forever here in the U.S. Capitol and will be watching over all of us.

There are only 38 Members who are currently in the Senate who served with Ted, but I think it is important that all of us—and really every American—know who he was and why he so clearly deserves this honor.

Ted was a public servant. He was the ultimate public servant. He dedicated his life to public service. He spent more than six decades fighting for our State and the country he loved. His service began during World War II, when he flew as a pilot in the Army Air Corps. He flew missions behind enemy lines in China in support of the Flying Tigers. The stories we have heard over the years are truly legendary of his efforts in the war.

After the military, Ted helped Alaska to achieve its dream of statehood. He was basically Secretary Seaton's point man at the Department of the Interior during the Eisenhower administration. Think about what that means to have the opportunity to shape statehood for your State and then to go on and serve your State at this level as he did for some 40 years.

He went on to become one of the longest serving Republican Senators of all time. In this Chamber, he represented Alaska with great dignity, with great distinction over the course of 40 exceptional years. He was truly a public servant.

Really, from the very beginning, Ted was one of those special kinds of guys.

After being appointed to the Senate in 1968, he established himself as a leader among leaders. Over the course of his time in the Senate, he chaired the Select Committee on Ethics; Rules and Administration; Governmental Affairs; Commerce, Science, and Transportation, as well as the Committee on Appropriations. From 1977 to 1985, his colleagues chose him to be the Assistant Republican Leader. He led the Senate's Arms Control Observer Group for 15 years, and he served as the President pro tempore, the senior member of the Senate's majority party, from 2003 to 2007—so leadership across all levels.

As one might expect, Ted was a force to be reckoned with. He made sure Alaska's voice was heard and was heard in every debate. As such, he secured an incredible number of legislative victories that shaped both the State of Alaska and our Nation.

He helped to settle most of Alaska's Native land claims, returning 44 million acres of land to First Alaskans and establishing a new model that empowered our Native peoples to create new economic opportunities. Ted was instrumental in securing the passage of a bill that enabled the construction of our 800-mile-long Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which, to this day, remains the backbone of our State's economy and is a critical part of our Nation's energy security supply.

Ted was a guy who worked very, very hard but who also loved to fish. He loved to be outside. His focusing on fishing led him to be very concerned about what he saw as being the overfishing by foreign fleets, which was taking place just miles off of Alaska's shores. So he worked across the aisle with Senator Warren Magnuson to protect and sustain our fisheries into the future. The Magnuson-Stevens law has been repeatedly reauthorized and, to this day, still bears their names.

It really is impossible to overstate the beneficial impact that Ted had on Alaska. Now, keep in mind he came to the Senate in 1968—less than a decade after Alaska had become a State. So he knew as well as anyone how tough those early years of statehood were. He knew probably as well as anyone how difficult life was for so many Alaskans, particularly in the rural parts of our State and, more than anyone else, he helped to change that.

Ted was an appropriator for a long time. He was legendary in that role. He once convinced the entire Committee on Appropriations to go to Alaska for 2 weeks to see Alaska's needs firsthand. The Federal funding he secured year after year allowed many Alaskans to gain access to very basic infrastructure. We are talking water and sewer—things that most Americans would take for granted. He also worked to help develop Alaska so we would have a telemedicine network that would work. He helped to facilitate bypass mail and Essential Air Service for our rural communities—programs and benefits that continue to this day.

There is absolutely no doubt that the people of Alaska are better off because of Ted Stevens. Many around the State still lovingly refer to Ted as "Uncle Ted." We are happier, and we are clearly healthier. We are a safer and more prosperous State because of his contributions. Yet the same is true for every American because Ted's accomplishments did not end with the State of Alaska. He was a patriot. He was firmly committed to our national defense and the security of our country. He had great admiration for those who answered the call to serve in uniform, as he had. He traveled the world to visit with our troops and hear directly from them.

He was a longtime leader on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Department of Defense. He and Dan Inouye would kind of share the chairmanship, one between the other practically. Throughout his Senate tenure, he fought tirelessly to make sure our military had the best equipment, better pay, and the needed care it sought. He was a defender of those who defended us.

Ted was an avid surfer when he was young, and he recognized the importance of sports in our daily lives. I can remember a story that has gone around for so many years; that of having to put his eldest daughter, Sue, on a boy's softball team because we didn't have a girls' league in Alaska at the time. So he championed title IX of the Education Amendments Act, which provides equal opportunity for women to participate in sports. He also authored the Amateur Sports Act, which created the U.S. Olympic Committee, and worked to ensure funding for physical education programs—programs, again, that had that fingerprint of Ted Stevens from so many years prior.

I can go on and on about Ted's accomplishments. His legislative accomplishments are considerable and far too many to speak to here today, things like his work to ban damaging high seas drift nets to the funding he secured to advance AIDS and breast cancer research. He was involved in so much.

In recognizing that other colleagues wish to speak of Senator Stevens as well, I, instead, will speak very briefly about what I feel made him so effective and really so beloved—because he was beloved, maybe feared a little bit but beloved.

The first thing to understand is that Ted had a pretty simple motto. It was not very complicated.

He said:

To hell with politics. Just do what is right for Alaska.

He lived by that every day that he served here. He would work with anyone who was willing to do right by the State of Alaska no matter who one was, where one came from, or which side of the aisle one was on. I mentioned Senator Inouye and the relationship that Ted had with him on the Subcommittee on Department of De-

fense and on the Committee on Appropriations. They formed a very close relationship. They had a lot in common. Obviously, they were both veterans, and they were both from young, off-shore States. Yet they looked out for one another. They had one another's backs. On committees, as I mentioned, they would be chairman and vice chairman and would trade off but would work with one another. In later years, it was not uncommon to find them both smoking cigars out on the tempore's balcony in the early evenings, talking about what had happened that day or what was going to happen the next day.

Another thing that folks should know about Ted is that he was definitely a fighter. I am told that Newsweek described him as a "scrapper" when he first arrived in the Senate, and it certainly proved to be an apt description throughout his tenure. Yet Ted was, again, pretty clear: If Alaska's interests were at stake, he was out there to defend them.

There were times he would put on his Incredible Hulk tie and channel the big guy's persona. When that happened, everyone knew to look out because Ted was going to the mat for Alaska on that day. Look out. Some suggested that Ted had a bit of a temper.

A Senator is chuckling back there. I hear that.

I think Ted knew that a little bit of a temper could actually serve him pretty well, and he would usually have a cute, little gleam in his eye when he would say, "I never lose my temper. I know exactly where I left it."

Ted was one of those guys who was great to his people, but when something needed to be said—when it needed to be direct and to the point—he was not going to shy away from it. That was another part of what really made him a legend around here.

I think those who are listening and those who know me know I have an immense, great affection for Ted and that this day and the recognition he is receiving has great personal meaning. I had the extraordinary fortune to know Ted Stevens for almost my entire life. At one point, he was my boss. I was a high school intern. My first opportunity to really be out of Alaska on my own was when I was an intern here for Senator Ted. Later, of course, he was my colleague in the Senate, where he mentored me and partnered with me to help serve Alaska. Above all that, he was a true friend—truly a friend—and I miss him dearly.

I am reminded of him all the time. I have his old office in the Hart Building. I have pictures and mementos that remind me of Ted. Every time I go back home to the State, I think of him. It is not just because, when I land, it reads "Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport." It is also when I go out to the communities and see a road or a bridge or a community that is no longer utilizing a honey bucket system because of the work that Ted did. When you go

home, when you visit in Alaska, you see firsthand the impact he had. You see it everywhere. I often say that Ted built Alaska and that Ted was Alaska. So you can see why we named him the "Alaskan of the 20th Century" and why we remain so grateful for all that he has done for us.

I am happy there is now going to be a place in the Capitol where I can visit Ted, talk to him, and think about what he might have said and about the counsel he might have provided for our State and our Nation. I do hope his portrait will be a reminder to those of us who serve here that we can work together even on the hardest of days and that, if we do, we can achieve great things for the American people, which sometimes might just require us to say: To hell with politics. Just do what is right.

I am honored and privileged to be here with so many Alaskans, including Catherine, Ted's wife, as well as many of his children and grandchildren. I know they are overwhelmed by the number of friends and colleagues and staff who are here to celebrate Ted's life and legacy.

In channeling here, I think Ted is looking down on all of this and is thinking: Enough already. This is too much. You all have to get back to work because, after all, we have appropriations bills on the floor.

With that, I yield to the fine Senator from Mississippi.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

MR. WICKER. Mr. President, I will speak for only a few moments, and then the distinguished junior Senator from Alaska will close this part of the debate.

The senior Senator from Alaska mentioned that only 38 of us have actually served with Senator Ted Stevens. Of that group, I am the junior-most in rank, and I know that because I was the junior-most Member of this body more than a decade ago when I rose on this floor to pay tribute to this great Senator from Alaska, Ted Stevens, on his last day in office.

I did not speak from my desk, as you can imagine. I didn't have a very prominent desk at the time. I chose instead to stand as close as I could directly behind Senator Stevens. I suppose I wanted to have his back, at least figuratively, for one last time. And I wanted to make sure I could see his wife Catherine in the gallery, as I may have done just a few moments ago, because she meant so much and still means so much to all of us and to my wife Gayle and me.

What we learned from Ted Stevens guides our work today. I was honored to serve alongside him for just a few years. I was anguished when he had to leave us in 2008, and together with all of us, I mourned his death in 2010.

Seniority is earned when the people of our States see fit to return us time and again to Washington to do their business. Respect is earned when we

engage in the long fight to fulfill our oaths and to support and defend the Constitution.

Ted Stevens earned both seniority and respect for 40 years. When he was elected as the third Senator ever from the Land of the Midnight Sun, he had already served his country brilliantly, as has been mentioned, as a brave pilot in World War II for the Flying Tigers and as a key leader in putting that 49th star on the American flag.

The portrait being unveiled in the Old Senate Chamber today, where so many great debates took place, is a fitting homage to Ted Stevens. As the senior Senator has mentioned, the seemingly gruff exterior depicted was a facade over one of the most genuine and patriotic people ever to walk these halls.

He went to work every day to defend Americans and to make good on the promise of the country he so deeply loved. He belongs in the place of honor where his portrait will be displayed. Members who served with Ted Stevens will look on that portrait and remember that.

I hope our more recent colleagues who have joined since Ted Stevens left will come to know what a giant he was. As chairman of the Commerce Committee, a committee Ted Stevens once led, I went to Alaska with the junior Senator from Alaska this summer to learn, among other things, from coastguardsmen keeping our Nation safe in the Far North. But I saw a lot of that State, and there is a lot to see.

Despite its geographic size, Alaska is in many respects a small town. Like my home State of Mississippi, everyone knows just about everyone else, and virtually every Alaskan knew Ted Stevens. They knew what he did for them. They knew what he did for this country.

I could see his legacy this summer. The evidence of his leadership is everywhere in so many ways. He helped turn America's last frontier into a thriving community for Alaskans and Americans and a place of wonder and adventure for any of us who will visit there.

While he was at it, he performed small acts of kindness that I will never forget and heroic acts of statesmanship almost every day in his chosen homes—this closed Chamber and that wide open State.

I can't wait to see the portrait. I can't wait to tell him hello and, once again, to look him right in the eye.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, we are taking about somebody today who was actually a mentor for me right here in the U.S. Senate—Ted Stevens.

I believe it was 33 years ago when I first met him—33 years ago—and I was in the House, and I was coming to the Senate. He was a power in the Senate then. He was a worker. He was involved. He was involved not only in what happened in Alaska, where he was

a champion of his own State—and should have been—but also in the world. He wanted to make sure that America had a defense second to nobody; that we were powerful, but we were peaceful.

I had the occasion to serve for years and years on the Appropriations Committee and on the Subcommittee on Defense with him. I hadn't been on the committee long, and Senator Byrd was chairman of the committee, and Senator Hatfield from Oregon had been, and he tasked me with a lot of things that probably as a freshman—you know, second-year, third-year guy here—I probably was appalled but pleased—maybe not appalled, but pleased—what he would do. He told me one day: Senator SHELBY, you are going to be chairman of this committee. I looked around, and I said: Oh, it will be years. I will never be that.

But Ted Stevens was a Senator's Senator. He was involved, as I said, in just about everything in the Senate—the Rules Committee, the Commerce Committee, Appropriations, and Defense.

I will never forget his experience, his wise suggestions to me that probably helped me on my way. I traveled with him around the world because we had serious meetings on the Defense appropriations bill.

All I can say is that we are going to unveil a portrait of Ted Stevens here in the Senate later today, and it is a fitting tribute to a great Senator representing the State of Alaska but a U.S. Senator representing us all, Ted Stevens.

Ted, I will never forget you. We miss you. You left an indelible imprint on the U.S. Senate. I am glad I got to meet you and work with you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to add my voice in recognizing what an important day it is here.

I want to thank the Senators from Alabama and Mississippi and, of course, my good friend Senator MURKOWSKI. Many other Senators—the Senators from California, Iowa—all came to the floor already today to talk about this great American, this great Alaskan.

I try to come to the floor about once a week, and I do a speech that I call the "Alaskan of the Week" to talk about an Alaskan who has done great stuff for our State, their community, the country.

But as Senator MURKOWSKI just mentioned in her remarks, I am literally able now to talk about the Alaskan of the Century. That is right. The State of Alaska legislature voted that Ted Stevens was the Alaskan of the Century for reasons we are all talking about today. So I just want to add a few more words about this legendary U.S. Senator, whose portrait we are unveiling today.

Let me say it is more than fitting that we have a portrait of Senator Stevens in the Halls of Congress. It is a

small tribute compared to the magnitude of his contributions to our country and to our State. Yet, in so many ways, it is proper and fitting because his spirit certainly remains in this body. It is an example of leadership and public service that you hear and I hear and I know Senator MURKOWSKI hears all the time—how so many of my colleagues still talk about Senator Stevens and what he meant, just like my good friend the Senator from Alabama and so many others.

So I will just give a little more color to this great man's life. He was born in Indiana in 1923. When he was a young boy, the Great Depression hit. Senator Stevens supported his family by selling newspapers on the street, and after the untimely death of his father, he moved to California to live with an aunt and uncle, where he learned to kind of relax and to surf. The surf board that he learned to surf on stayed with him in his office until the end.

As was already mentioned, he was, of course, a part of America's "greatest generation"—a pilot, 14th Army Air Corps, flying supplies to General Chennault's Fighting Tigers over "the Hump"—India, China, Burma—very dangerous missions. In 1953, armed with a law degree from Harvard, he made his way to then the Territory of Alaska, where he found, in his words, "the passion of my career, the Alaskan dream."

So what was this dream of Ted Stevens? A dream of an Alaska with promises of the 21st century "springing up from the Arctic," he said—an Alaska where our Federal Government works with us, not against us, to achieve our destiny to develop our resources and our economy for the benefit of all Alaskans but also for the benefit of all Americans; an Alaska that lives up to the potential the Congress of the United States saw when it voted to allow Alaska to become the 49th State.

Senator Stevens worked tirelessly for these dreams, and in the last speech he gave on this floor of the U.S. Senate, he recounted some of his successes.

He said: "Where there was nothing but tundra and forest, today there are now airports, roads, ports, water and sewer systems, hospitals, clinics, communications networks, research labs, and much, much more."

He went on to say: "Alaska was not Seward's folly and is no longer an impoverished territory. Alaska is a great State and an essential contributor to our Nation's energy security and national defense."

In that speech, he said that he was proud to have had a role—a role—in that transformation of Alaska.

Now, I think we are all realizing that in that speech Senator Stevens was being very humble. He didn't have just a role; he played the lead role. Indeed, everywhere any Alaskan goes across the State—as Senator MURKOWSKI has already stated—you see signs of his hard work, his dedication to the Alaskan dream and the critical role he played in transforming our great State.

But I think many of us—and we have already heard it being talked about today—also see his hard work in the friendships and example he set here in the U.S. Senate, friendships not based on party labels but on a commitment to service.

As I mentioned, Members of this body, like Senator SHELBY, still approach me on a regular basis, saying what an impact Senator Stevens had.

His friendships were of course legendary: Scoop Jackson; Henry Magnuson; PAT ROBERTS; John Warner; Senator SHELBY; Senator LEAHY; Senator Biden, who, as Vice President, traveled to Anchorage to speak at Ted Stevens' funeral; and, of course, as Senator MURKOWSKI mentioned, his famous, enduring friendship with Hawaii's Daniel Inouye.

Senator MURKOWSKI also mentioned his famous motto: "To hell with politics, just do what's right for Alaska." As a matter of fact, I happen to be wearing a very special pair of cufflinks that once belonged to Ted Stevens. That very motto is on these cufflinks. When we are doing important stuff, I will wear these on the floor to remind me—and I think all of us—of what is important not just for our States but for our country.

As was already noted, it wasn't just Alaska that he focused on and achieved so many great results for; it was our Nation. Whether national security, strengthening our military, taking care of our veterans through improved pay and benefits, as Senator MURKOWSKI mentioned, modernizing our fishing industry, our telecommunications industry, being known as the title IX—the "Father" of that important legislation, making sure young girls have the opportunity to play sports—if you are an American and you have daughters—I have three—and they are playing sports right now, guess who had so much to do with that. The late great Senator Stevens. He was also in many ways the Senator who cared more about the Olympics and focused on them more than any other Senator.

One other thing about Senator Stevens. No matter how far he rose—and we are hearing about the high levels he attained in the Senate—he never forgot what was most important: serving the people of Alaska. When our constituents traveled thousands of miles to come to DC, he always made time for them. Thousands of Alaskans have notes from him—congratulatory letters, condolence letters, and letters of appreciation.

At his standing-room-only funeral in Anchorage, where I had the honor of serving as an honorary pallbearer, someone asked for a show of hands from the audience—hundreds and hundreds of people—how many had received a letter from Senator Ted Stevens. Nearly every person at that service raised their hand.

Of course, he treated his staff like family. If you worked for Senator Ste-

vens—as my wife, Julie, did—you were always part of that family and you could always expect loyalty from him the rest of your life.

These principles—relentless focus on Alaska, fighting the Feds if you must, working across the aisle for the betterment of Alaska and America, maintaining a strong military and national defense, and deep reverence for our veterans and fellow Alaskans—are a key part of the Stevens legacy.

I am deeply honored to serve in the Senate seat Senator Stevens held for over 40 years and to literally sit at the same desk—right here, this desk—he used in the Senate. More important, I try to live by and serve my constituents according to these principles and the example he set for Alaska and America. But here is something else that is really so remarkable about Ted Stevens. I said I try to serve in that example, but, as you are hearing on the Senate floor, so many other Senators have said that and believe that too. That is really remarkable and shows how much influence he still has in this body to this day.

Like most Senators, I try to get home every weekend. Senator MURKOWSKI and I just have a little farther to go than most—well, actually, a lot farther than most. Our State recently dedicated a wonderful statue of Ted Stevens in the Ted Stevens International Airport. It is life-size. He is sitting on a bench with an inviting smile, cowboy boots on, and his briefcase nearby. It is right in the middle of the airport in Anchorage. I often walk by it, touch it, and quietly say: How are we doing? It gives me inspiration and strength and peace to do that.

With the unveiling of the official portrait of Ted Stevens today and its placement permanently in the halls of the U.S. Senate, I will have another image of this great Alaskan and this great American from which to draw inspiration, but I think so many other Senators will as well.

So congratulations, especially to the family of Ted Stevens: Catherine, his wonderful wife; his children: Ben, Walter, Ted Junior, Susan, Lily, and Beth, who is with us in spirit, as are so many other Alaskans and others who had such deep respect for Senator Stevens; and to his wonderful grandchildren, many of whom Julie and I have known and watched grow up with pride since they were born.

S.J. RES. 50

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I support the resolution that the Senate is voting on today to disapprove of new rules from the Trump administration to diminish the value of tax credits offered by State and local governments.

From the very beginning, I have been against the 2017 tax bill that became law. At a time of skyrocketing economic inequality, this tax law has given the largest tax cuts to the wealthiest people and biggest corporations. But in Maryland, 376,000 families are paying higher taxes according to

our Bureau of Revenue Estimates, due in large part to the tax law's \$10,000 limit on the state and local tax deduction. According to the IRS, 46 percent of households in Maryland claimed the State and local tax deduction prior to the new tax law, which is the largest share of any state in the country. The average State and local tax deduction in Maryland was roughly \$13,000—well over the \$10,000 limit. Everything in the Maryland State budget, such as education, transportation, and state Medicaid funding, is now more burdensome for Maryland taxpayers to finance.

To make matters worse for working Marylanders, on June 13, 2019, the Treasury Department issued a regulation against tax credits offered by State and local governments for charitable giving. This misguided regulation reduces a taxpayer's Federal deduction for charitable donations by the amount of any tax credit the taxpayer receives for their donation from State or local governments. The effects of this regulation go well beyond programs recently established by some States attempting to mitigate the damage of the new tax law. These rules will be deeply detrimental to longstanding tax credit programs throughout the Nation. In Maryland, this will affect tax credit programs for affordable housing, conservation, and community endowment funds.

Ultimately, allowing this regulation to take effect will make it even more difficult for State and local communities to fund our schools, emergency responders, health care, roads, and other critical services. That is unacceptable, which is why I support the Congressional Review Act resolution to overturn the Treasury Department's June 2019 regulation.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I yield the floor.

VOTE ON S.J. RES. 50

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 43, nays 52, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 331 Leg.]

YEAS—43

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

NAYS—52

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

NOT VOTING—5

Harris	Sanders	Whitehouse
Isakson	Warren	

The joint resolution was rejected.

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2020—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3055, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3055) making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Shelby amendment No. 948, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Shelby) amendment No. 950, to make a technical correction.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1834

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I think everyone in this Chamber would agree that free and fair elections are the bedrock of our democracy. We know it has been under attack. We know, from the Mueller report, that Russia, in 2016, used a systematic and comprehensive attack on our free election system to try to undermine our democracy.

That attack occurred in the State of Maryland. Let me just quote, if I

might, from the Washington Post article that said:

Maryland was never in play in 2016. The Russians targeted it anyway.

The article states:

Russia's Twitter campaign to influence the 2016 presidential election in Maryland began in June 2015, 17 months before Election Day, when the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency opened an account it called @BaltimoreOnline and began tweeting about local news events.

Yet, the IRA, the Russian troll factory that U.S. prosecutors blame for the massive disinformation efforts during the 2016 campaign, devoted enormous attention and preparation to its Maryland operation, all in a likely effort, experts say, to widen racial divisions and demoralize African American voters.

That is what happened in 2016. Our intelligence community tells us that Russia is active today trying to influence our 2020 elections, and they are using technology to try to undermine our free election system. We must do more to protect our system.

It was for that reason and many others that I introduced S. 1834, the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2019. It is cosponsored by Senator KLOBUCHAR, Senator LEAHY, Senator FEINSTEIN, and others. This bill is an effort to try to protect us from this type of international interference in our elections, as well as local efforts that are aimed at trying to intimidate voters targeted at minority voters. That should have no place in American politics.

This bill did pass the House of Representatives in March of this year in H.R. 1.

Very quickly, let me tell you what this bill does. It prohibits individuals from knowingly deceiving others about the time, place, eligibility, or procedures for participating in a Federal election; addresses new digital challenges that pose a threat to citizens exercising their right to vote, particularly the use of digital platforms to disseminate false information regarding Federal elections; and combating voter intimidation, especially efforts aimed at suppressing voter rights.

I would hope every Member of this Chamber would support these efforts. Unfortunately, the majority leader has failed to bring any of these issues to the floor or give us any time to take up legislation in order to protect our free election system. Time is running out. The election primaries will start early next year. We need to take action now.

That is why I am going to make this unanimous consent request. I hope we can agree to it.

I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1834, the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2019; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I don't disagree with everything that is in the Senator's bill—far from it. I agree with much of it, but it does have several critical flaws, and it is not ready for prime time.

In most, if not all, States, it is already illegal to prevent or try to prevent lawful voters from trying to register to vote. We all agree that every qualified voter should have an opportunity to register for an election. But this proposal is written so broadly that it would prevent election officials from rejecting the registration of an illegal immigrant. It could prevent poll workers from stopping a 16-year-old from voting in an election. In other words, this would seemingly make it illegal for voting registration officials to actually do their job.

I assume it is not intentional, but it is obviously a big problem. Other sections of the bill create significant First Amendment concerns. It would create criminal penalties for political speech that misstates endorsements a candidate has received. Nobody approves of lying, but there are enormous problems when the Federal Government starts sending people to jail for what they say. Even the ACLU opposes my colleague's bill because this bill is so anti-First Amendment.

Just a few days ago, Secretary Hillary Clinton claimed that a former third-party candidate was a Russian asset and that a Democratic Presidential candidate she doesn't like is Russia's preferred candidate in the upcoming election. Should Mrs. Clinton have violated Federal law because she perhaps misstated a political endorsement as a way of making a political point? We don't want to start down the road where the Federal Government referees free speech.

I believe there is an appetite on both sides of the aisle for making good policy that honors the principle behind my colleague's bill, but this version has enormous problems, is nowhere near ready to pass by unanimous consent, and I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I regret that my colleague has raised the objection. Let me point out that this bill has been pending in previous Congresses. We have gone through all of the challenges my friend has already talked about. There are real problems that are occurring in our States.

We had billboards in minority communities highlighting voter fraud in an effort to intimidate African-American voters. We have seen information sent out with wrong dates of elections. We have seen robocalls pretending to be from a particular campaign when they are from the opposite campaign in an effort to intimidate voters from participating.