

consumers online to know, one, that their information is being filtered and that they are seeing content that is being curated for them by that particular social media platform, and, two, give them an option to see unfiltered and uncensored content that would just come to them in normal chronological order.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this legislation. I think it is an important first step in making sure that consumers know more about their information as it is being collected and how it is being used by internet companies. I will continue to work as we try to deal with this broader debate on data privacy, which is so important in the online world in which we live.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### LEGISLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I return to the floor again this week to discuss Congress's progress on important legislation—or, rather, the lack of it—since the obsession with impeaching the President began.

When the House decided to proceed full steam ahead on impeachment, they promised that it wouldn't interfere with our ability to get other important work done for our constituents. While it has been less than a week since the House formally authorized their impeachment inquiry, the crusade to impeach the President and remove him started nearly 3 years ago.

For example, on January 20, which was actually Inauguration Day, 2017, at 12:19 p.m. the Washington Post ran the story with the headline "The Campaign to Impeach President Trump Has Begun." That was on Inauguration Day in 2017. Nineteen minutes into his Presidency, the writing wasn't only on the wall. It was on the front page of the Washington Post.

Our Democratic friends are on a kamikaze mission to get President Trump out of office less than a year before the next election, and, in the process, they are preventing Congress from solving the big problems facing the American people.

The latest casualty of this impeachment-at-all-costs strategy is a bill I introduced with my Democratic colleague from Connecticut, RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, called the Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act. This legislation would lower the cost of Americans' prescription medication and save more than a half billion dollars in taxpayer money.

Here, in the Senate, it counts the Democratic whip, Senator DURBIN from Illinois, as well as the Assistant Demo-

cratic Leader, Senator MURRAY from Washington State, as cosponsors. With that kind of lineup, you would think this would be a no-brainer. Unfortunately, drug pricing legislation isn't the only consensus effort that has gotten caught up in impeachment mania.

For a quarter of a century, the Violence Against Women Act has provided resources to assist women who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Unsurprisingly, this program has consistently maintained broad bipartisan support. There is agreement that we must do more to provide services and protection for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, but it is safe to say that there are disagreements on how best to accomplish that goal.

Those differences in opinion came to a head in February of this year. We were fresh off the heels of the longest government shutdown in history and working to fund the government through the remainder of the year, but our Democratic colleagues threw a curve ball when they insisted that we should not include a temporary extension of the Violence Against Women Act, which had expired in September of 2018.

Even amid the political jockeying we have been seeing in this Congress, this was a shocking omission. Republicans were in favor of a short-term reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act to provide time and space for bipartisan negotiations for a long-term reauthorization. Surprisingly, our Democratic colleagues in the House blocked this reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. So it expired.

Fortunately, though, our friends on the Appropriations Committee have continued to fully fund these programs, but the authorizing statute has expired because of this gamesmanship. Despite continued bipartisan negotiations led by the Senator from Iowa, Ms. ERNST, over the last 8 months, we haven't been able to come up with a consensus agreement to reauthorize the program on a long-term basis.

This has been an 8-month negotiation. This isn't all that complicated. We should be able to do it in the space of an afternoon, but, clearly, there is no desire to get this resolved.

Reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act is a top priority for Members on both sides of the aisle, and I hope we will work harder to make it happen rather than to use this important law to play partisan political games. Sadly, the Violence Against Women Act is not the only program to get caught up in the political crosshairs.

The Debbie Smith Act, another traditionally bipartisan bill here in the Senate, expired at the end of September because of the refusal of the House to take up the Senate-passed version and to send it to the President.

The Debbie Smith Act, you will recall, provides funding to State and

local crime labs to test DNA evidence and reduce the rape kit backlog. The Senate unanimously passed the bill in May to reauthorize this program, but the House simply refused to act. At a roundtable I held in Houston, a few months ago, I heard from rape victims and their advocates about how troubling and, frankly, how insulting all of this was.

After months, the House has now finally relented and voted to reauthorize the Debbie Smith Act, after the pressure on them became unbearable. I am glad they changed their minds, and I am hopeful we can get this bill to the President's desk soon. Although I would have welcomed less drama this time around, the Debbie Smith Act reauthorization will hopefully be an example of what Congress can accomplish when you put partisan political fights aside and work for our constituents; in other words, do the job we were elected to do when our constituents sent us here.

It is really disappointing that some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle would rather relitigate the 2016 election—again, less than a year before the next election—rather than do the work of the American people. This obsession with impeachment mania has consumed our Democratic colleagues and is preventing us from getting work done on a nonpartisan basis. That is what our constituents want us to do.

Texans are worried about high prescription costs, worried about the state of our roads and bridges, and worried about our national security. In the case of the Democratic leader, I would be willing to wager that New Yorkers are worried about many of these issues too. So it is time to stop the partisan games. They don't result in pay raises for our troops, which have now been voted against two times by our Democratic colleagues. They don't advance victims' rights and give justice to survivors like the reauthorization of the Debbie Smith Act and the Violence Against Women Act would do. They don't increase the public's trust in our institutions of government and assure them that we really have their best interests at heart. Definitely, these games don't help make Americans' lives better.

We have heard our Democratic colleagues say ad nauseam that impeachment will not interfere with their ability to legislate, but the evidence suggests otherwise. What Americans want is action. What Americans want is for us to do our job. We can give them what they want by allowing legislation we know has a chance of becoming law, such as my drug pricing bill, the Debbie Smith Act, and the Violence Against Women Act, to come to the floor, get passed, and sent to the President. That would be doing our jobs, and I believe that is what our constituents want from each of us—not this single-minded obsession with impeachment that started the day the President was

sworn into office, less than 1 year before the next election.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, before I begin my remarks today, I do want to thank the senior Senator from Texas for his remarks on the Violence Against Women Act and the Debbie Smith Act. I think it is vitally important that both of these acts are reauthorized this year and the sooner the better so our advocates can get their work done. Thank you very much for those remarks.

#### DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Madam President, last week we saw our Democratic colleagues once again playing politics ahead of the defense of our great Nation. They are putting their actions ahead of the support that we need to give to those who defend our Nation. For the second time this year, as has already been stated today, Senate Democrats have blocked funding for our servicemembers. The kicker, folks, is that the vote they blocked was one that would have simply allowed us to debate the issue. It sounds unbelievable even while saying it now, folks, but it is the sad reality of where we are today.

What message does it send to our men and women in uniform when every single Senator of the Democratic Party votes against providing the funding our troops need for training, for new defense programs critical to our national defense strategy, for the largest military pay raise in 10 years—which our troops more than deserve after nearly two decades of fighting for their country.

When I was deployed to Kuwait and Iraq in the early days of the war on terror, the most important thing was not only to ensure my soldiers and I had the right training and equipment to carry out our missions but knowing, without a doubt, that the American people and the policymakers of government who sent us to war stood behind us and supported us every step of the way. It was placing faith in our country's leadership to make the sound decisions to effectively employ military force and to have the will, the resolve, and the tenacity to make tough decisions without regard to politics.

The decision of the Democrats last week to not even open debate on what our troops need to fight and win is so sorely disappointing. What will it take in order to get our servicemembers at home and abroad the resources they need? Will we really deprive our troops of critical training opportunities to hone their readiness in the most dangerous strategic environment since the end of the Cold War?

Will we actively aid our enemies by failing to fund those things which we have identified as critical to maintaining an edge against our adversaries? It is absolutely unacceptable that Democrats would even entertain these possibilities.

If they want to have a debate, then let's have a debate, but to say they support the troops and then obstruct the ability to discuss in this Chamber what our servicemembers need doesn't even add up.

That is why I am on the floor today to call upon all of my colleagues who sank the prospects of defense funding to come down and do the job that all of us were sworn to do when we took our oath of office. It is time to give our troops what they need to do their jobs, and it is time to stop running this government through wasteful continuing resolutions in an increasingly dangerous world.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 2486

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, we need to pass the FUTURE Act to help students in historically Black colleges and universities, minority-serving institutions, and we need to do that now.

I am here to advocate on behalf of Maryland's four HBCUs that face a funding cliff due to congressional inaction. Without the immediate passage of the FUTURE Act, Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Morgan State University, and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore face a collective \$4.2 million funding shortfall now that the Higher Education Act's authorization for mandatory funding for these institutions lapsed October 1 of this year.

This clean, bipartisan, and paid-for 2-year authorization gives breathing room to continue to negotiate the full reauthorization of the Higher Education Act without holding these historically underfunded institutions hostage.

Our HBCUs and MSIs know they can count on this mandatory funding each year to strengthen their course offerings and in-demand STEM programs, make infrastructure improvements, and provide academic counseling and student support services to first-generation and historically underrepresented students.

Throwing the budgets of these institutions into chaos directly harms their ability to serve their students and communities. Institutions would have to make decisions about potentially reducing levels of academic services, delaying needed infrastructure investments, and make longstanding staffing decisions. These decisions are being made all across the country at schools of each of our States. Collectively, the MSIs risk losing out on \$255 million in mandatory funding. This is an unnecessary obstacle our HBCUs and MSIs do

not need to face. We have a paid-for available for us today to address this issue.

We can get this done now. The House is prepared to accept this 2-year extension, which gives us a chance to negotiate a complete reauthorization of the Higher Education Act but does not hold these institutions hostage with the mandatory funding that is provided by law.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 212, H.R. 2486; that the Murray amendment at the desk be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

I thank the distinguished Senator from Maryland for giving me this opportunity to present the right way to help historically Black colleges and universities, and I intend to do that when he is finished speaking about this and explain what we can do together.

Unfortunately, the bill he proposes is a shortcut the House took, which has no way to pass the Senate. It is based upon a budget gimmick and uses a method of funding that many Senators object to. It creates a new funding cliff within 23 months, and it is unnecessary because the Secretary of Education has written all of the heads of historically Black colleges and universities to say that there are sufficient funds until next September so there is no funding problem.

This gives me an opportunity—which I will do in a just a moment—to suggest the right way to do it. The right way to do it is to do permanent funding of historically Black colleges and universities in a package of bills I have introduced. That package includes other legislation—which I will discuss when my time comes—which include simplifying the FAFSA.

It is a bill Senator JONES and I have introduced which will help 20 million families, including almost every student at a historically Black college or minority-serving institution. The bill package also includes grants for prisoners and short-term Pell grants, and it simplifies the student aid letters.

This package is ready. It includes short-term Pell grants, as I mentioned. This package has been put together by a number of Democratic and Republican Senators. It is ready to pass the Senate and ready for the President to sign it. It permanently funds Black colleges and universities instead of this shortcut.

In a moment, I will talk more about that, but in the meantime, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Maryland.