

I just want to say, as the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over many of the healthcare programs that are most important for kids and families on an economic tightrope, I and I know my colleagues on the Finance Committee—several of whom have spoken over the last few days on this subject—would be glad to work with any Republican in this Senate who wants to turn this around. If any Republican is listening to this and wants to come to the floor and say: I am interested. I am interested in turning around this ominous trend. I am interested in turning around this trend where healthcare coverage for kids is going down, and I want to work with Democrats to do it, I will commit, as the ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee, to say: Thank goodness. We have to get on this. This is too important to our country and to our future to just sit idly by and say we are going to reduce the number of kids who are getting healthcare coverage because we are not going to give parents the opportunity to find out how to get enrolled and stay enrolled and know what their rights are.

A country as strong and good and rich as ours ought to be looking for every possible opportunity to help kids get ahead in life. That, in my view, starts with access to healthcare. Right up at the top of the list, it starts, in my view, by saying that this trend line, which after years and years of showing more kids were getting covered, is now going the other way, and fewer kids are getting covered. We are going to say, as a body in the U.S. Senate: We are going to change that, and in a country that is as strong and good and rich as ours, those vulnerable families are going to be able to get healthcare again.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MCSALLY). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### LEGISLATIVE WORK

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, it has been so interesting today to hear my colleagues talk about the things we have done this year, the things we have to get done before the end of the year that haven't been addressed yet, and then things that need to be addressed this next year in 2020.

I will tell you, 2019, for me, I look at it as, I would say, successes and stalls and then some forward motion on some really important pieces of legislation. To get there, we really have had some fairly intense debates, which have prompted our constituents and those back in Tennessee to have their own discussions about what they think is or is not happening here in Washington, DC.

My hope is that their debates around the kitchen table are sometimes less heated than ours, and certainly I hope that their Thanksgiving table debates were less heated than some of these that you see taking place here.

Tennesseans, like a lot of Americans, when they end up talking about what we are or are not doing here in Congress, they revert back to first principles. I cannot tell you the number of times over this past holiday that I heard people say: Look, for me, it is all about freedom. It is all about defending the freedoms that we have—protecting that life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.

They are looking at that. It is fair to say they think in the long term. While many times I think the media here in DC just follows that shiny object story of the day, whatever is generating clicks and likes and headlines, that is where they are, but Tennesseans are not focused that way. What they would like to see is for our actions here in Washington to be taken in a way that are going to keep them and their neighborhoods and their friends safe and secure and healthy and free and keep them out of the reach of government overreach, if you will.

As someone said to me last weekend, “I just want the Federal Government off my back and out of my pocketbook. I want to be able to keep working and keep growing my business.” A lot of people are there.

Now, we have seen movement this week. A very good thing that has happened is the National Defense Authorization Act. I know that Madam President has worked tirelessly on this, as have I, for all of our military community members in Tennessee. We have been very pleased that we are going to see Fort Campbell and the divisions that call Fort Campbell home getting the funds and the equipment they need in order to protect themselves and to do their jobs—whether it is Chinooks or more training capacity or equipment and also an emphasis on making certain that we are keeping their homes safe so those families are safe in that military on-post housing, that privatized housing, while their loved ones are deployed.

While we are looking at other components of the NDAA, Tennesseans have been very concerned and are very pleased, I will say, about what has transpired with Oak Ridge National Labs and Y-12. Oak Ridge is a treasure for our Nation, and much of the research in supercomputing and hypersonics is being done there.

Also, in the Senate this year, we are paying attention to the implementation of legislation very important to our songwriters. I know you have heard me say, time and again, that Middle Tennessee, Nashville, is one of the most creative communities on the face of the Earth and home to more songwriters than anywhere else on the face of the Earth, and the Music Modernization Act is going to make certain that

Nashville artists and songwriters are being paid fairly for the work they are creating. We are pleased that these are all things we have worked hard on, and we see these as priorities.

When it comes to a legislative agenda that has taken much of my time, I started this term in the Senate working on some things that protect the unborn, much as I had done in my service in the House. The first bill I introduced over here was the Title X Abortion Provider Prohibition Act, and this is something Tennesseans wanted to see done to make certain that tax dollars would not be used to fund or support abortion providers, and it would not go to those clinics.

What Tennesseans wanted to see was those tax dollars being put to work in rural healthcare and enable access to healthcare for women and for individuals who did not have access to basic healthcare needs. Our State has been hit hard by rural hospital closures, and thousands of Tennesseans are now forced to drive miles out of their way to seek basic care. I will tell you, this is concerning, especially for the people living in the most remote areas of the State for whom there is no such thing as a quick ride or a quick ambulance trip to the hospital. It is miles of travel sometimes, when those minutes are very precious and they feel that time is passing quickly and it is critical to get to that care.

As part of my work this year, I have worked on and developed a rural health agenda, which has earned bipartisan support here. I thank Senator DURBIN for his work with me on this. I will tell you, this is legislation that, yes, it has bipartisan support here, but it has a lot of support scattered around the country.

What this will do is support the establishment and expansion of medical facilities in rural areas. It will help doctors and other medical practitioners set up shop outside of the more convenient and lucrative urban bubbles. It also will enable telemedicine so that you are taking healthcare out to these areas that have a difficult time getting in.

Speaking of the urban bubble, a lack of access to healthcare isn't the only thing that is causing headaches right now in rural America. Here, in Washington, we don't have to worry about having a reliable phone signal or an internet connection. We are really fortunate in that regard. We know when we click on, it is just going to work, but outside of America's metropolitan areas, communities that lack these resources are falling behind. My Internet Exchange Act will ensure that rural areas are able to build and maintain the infrastructure needed to support high-speed internet connections, which will in turn support business growth and e-commerce and encourage investment from outside corporations looking to expand.

You cannot have 21st century education, economic development,

healthcare, or law enforcement without access to high-speed internet. Continuing to close that digital divide is a priority, and I thank my colleagues for the good progress we have made this year.

Of course, that connectivity comes with a price. Opening ourselves up to the online world means opening ourselves up to the possibilities of cyber attacks. This is a problem we have to approach as a matter of national security, as well as on the corporate side and in our homes.

In addition to funding for military pay raises and upgraded equipment, this year's NDAA, or the National Defense Authorization Act, includes support for the assessment and expansion of our cyber warfighting capabilities. As I said, that is only one very important part of the equation. While I was serving in the House and before I came to the Senate, I worked on legislation that will get consumers all the information they need in order to make a decision about how they want to share their private information and to whom they want to give access to that information.

Once passed, my bipartisan BROWSE Act will give consumers more control over how big tech uses their personal data. You, the consumer, should be able to own your virtual you. You should be able to protect your presence online, just as you are able to protect your being yourself in the physical space.

In return, tech companies will be free to innovate and use that data to build their platforms, and that is what helps make them profitable—new innovations. They can do that as long as they respect your wishes on how you want them to use your data.

As head of the Judiciary Committee's tech task force—and I do thank Senator FEINSTEIN for her leadership in leading this group at the Judiciary Committee—I have had the privilege of bringing both sides together on this debate and to the table to have productive discussions on how to responsibly regulate big tech. I look forward to continuing that in the New Year.

As we draw to a close, I remind my colleagues that in Tennessee people remind me regularly that we are a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. As we talk about things that have been done this year and things that we need to do before the end of the year—things like getting VAWA passed—we need to remember that for all of the shiny-object stories that circulate around here every single day, the people back home are saying: Your responsibility is to care for the issues that are important to me. That is where they would like to see us spending our time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I have one very short remark that I want to make and then longer remarks to my colleagues.

#### IMPEACHMENT

Madam President, House Democrats announced that they are moving to impeach President Trump for—in their words—abuse of power. When all of this started, Democrats said the President committed a quid pro quo, but that didn't poll very well among the American people. At that point, the House Democrats switched to an accusation of bribery against the President. Maybe that didn't poll well either or maybe they discovered that history doesn't support their definition. Finally, they settled on abuse of power.

It is kind of like a Goldilocks impeachment. The "quid pro quo" bowl was too cold, and the bribery bowl was too hot. But, apparently, abuse of power tastes just right, while the American people are increasingly getting a bad taste in their mouth about the Democrats' partisan impeachment story.

#### RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Madam President, I want to comment on the Horowitz report, out yesterday. On Monday of this week, the Justice Department inspector general released his report on the Justice Department and the FBI investigation into the debunked theory that the Trump campaign colluded with the Russian Government. I have pushed to shine a light on the origins of the FBI Russia investigation for more than 2½ years. You can see that it has been a long road.

When information is embarrassing, the FBI has a way of fighting tooth and nail to keep it all secret, to keep it heavily classified. The FBI is hiding behind vague procedural excuses about protecting the integrity of ongoing investigations and all kinds of excuses not to come forth and not to let public information come forward that might embarrass them.

In this case, they put up a wall. You have to keep swinging in order to crack that wall. I started looking into the origins of the FBI's corrupt Russia investigation way back in March of 2017. At that time, it became clear that the FBI had used Christopher Steele's work to investigate then-Candidate Donald Trump. This was all done even though the FBI knew that Steele was working for an organization called Fusion GPS. Fusion GPS is an opposition research firm paid for by the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign. The FBI knew that.

When the FBI didn't answer my questions, I used my authority as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold up the nomination of Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein. That got the Judiciary Committee a briefing from the FBI. It consisted of a lot of veiled half answers and assertions that somehow Christopher Steele was reliable. We all know that he wasn't reliable. I will give details on that shortly.

In June of 2017, I asked the FBI to produce all the FISA applications related to its Russia investigation. After 6 months of wrangling, in December

2017, Senator GRAHAM, Senator FEINSTEIN, and I were permitted to review the four FISA applications in which the FBI sought authority to surveil former Trump campaign staffer Carter Page, as well as a number of classified documents relating to Mr. Steele.

I also directed my staff to look in public places that others were ignoring. That led us to Mr. Steele's court filings in London. What my staff found was that Mr. Steele had admitted to passing some of the contents of his dossier far and wide to media organizations. That raised a very important question about whether information Steele gathered was open to manipulation or just part of one big feedback loop.

We also learned that, according to the FBI, Steele had told the FBI he had not spoken to the media about his findings, and that was in direct contradiction to what he said in court in London.

After reviewing all of this information, Senator GRAHAM and I wrote a letter referring Mr. Steele to the FBI for potential violation of 18 USC 1001. That section of the code makes charges of lying to the FBI. At the heart of our referral was an 8-page memorandum that laid out much of what we had learned from my investigative efforts at that point.

We now know from the IG report that the FBI top brass was aware of Mr. Steele's statements to the British court in spring 2017, but the FBI never accessed those filings and never considered telling the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court that its assurances about Steele's third party contacts were in fact wrong.

As soon as the referral went out, I began pushing the FBI to declassify as much of those referrals as possible. The FBI resisted my efforts every step of the way because this is probably going to be very embarrassing to them.

My fight to make information in the referral memo public was helped along very directly by President Trump, who declassified a memo prepared by the House Intelligence Committee that touched a number of the same topics.

In February 2018, Senator GRAHAM and I also wrote Inspector General Horowitz to call his attention to everything we had learned and request that he conduct a comprehensive review of improper political influence, misconduct, and mismanagement of the FBI's Russia investigation.

My efforts have been based on my investigative activity and also the overriding need for more transparency from the American Government because transparency brings accountability.

After the release of the Russia report, there had better be accountability. The inspector general's findings ought to concern every single Member of this Chamber because it concerns the American people. We the people have a profound, deep, and abiding respect for fundamental constitutional rights. These fundamental rights