would attract several award-winning journalists, including my friend Mary D. Ferguson, who held a high standard on its pages.

Adapting to changing markets, the New Era expanded its operations. To serve the nearby U.S. Army installation, the paper's media group began publishing the Fort Campbell Courier. Other respected local papers, including the Princeton Times Leader, the Providence Journal Enterprise, and Dawson Springs Progress, joined the New Era's organization to further stretch the reach of its community journalism. In whatever form subscribers want to receive their news—in print, online, or even listening to a podcast—the New Era is committed to reporting on the stories that must be told.

Just last year, the paper joined another well-respected Kentucky news institution, the Paxton Media Group. With this partnership, the Kentucky New Era has the ability to continue thriving into the future. Through the years, I have enjoyed reading the paper and speaking with its top-tier professionals, and I look forward to many more accomplishments to come.

It is a privilege to congratulate the Kentucky New Era on its celebration of 150 years of journalistic success, and I hope my Senate colleagues will join me in saluting this community institution on its anniversary. I would like to extend my best wishes to the reporters, editors, and staff who have made the New Era a vital resource in west Kentucky.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN CULLERTON

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this January, it will be 12 years since Illinois banned smoking in businesses. In 2008, the Smoke-Free Illinois Act went into effect and changed the lives of people throughout the State. There has been a 20-percent decrease in hospitalizations for conditions aggravated by secondhand smoke, like asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and heart attacks. High school smoking rates have fallen more than 53 percent since then. This is real change. My friend, Illinois Senate President John Cullerton, led that fight to save lives. His storied career is one of working for good government and the safety of people. In January, he will be retiring, and I want to take this time to honor him.

John grew up in the village of Winfield in DuPage County. His family has deep roots in Illinois as one of the original settlers in Chicago in 1835. If you are wandering Chicago, you might come across Cullerton Street, which used to be 20th Street. It was named after John's great-grandfather's brother, Edward ''Foxy'' Cullerton. Edward, originally elected to Chicago city council in 1871, served one of the longest tenures as a Chicago alderman in the city's history. The Cullertons have been a staple of Illinois politics ever since.

Though it may seem like the Cullerton family is just filled with politicians, John's father and paternal grandfather were electricians. In fact, most of his immediate family was not political. John's role model was his maternal grandfather, Tom Tyrell, a real-estate lawyer in Chicago. At 12 years old, John wanted to be a lawyer because of him. His grandfather would give legal lessons at the dinner table. He would cut cherry pie and explain how corporations have shares.

John went to Loyola University Chicago and earned a bachelor's degree in political science. He stayed at Loyola to study law. John also served in the Illinois National Guard from 1970 to 1976. In law school, John experienced firsthand how litigation can bring change. As president of the Loyola University Chicago Student Bar Association, he saw his fellow students draft a complaint against the school for not providing adequate facilities for the law school. The students hired a lawyer and actually negotiated a deal without filing a lawsuit. A few years after John and his classmates graduated, a brand-new law school was built at the corner of Pearson and State in Chicago, which still stands today.

John's first job was working as a Chicago assistant public defender. For 5 years, he was on the frontlines of law defending people. In 1976, John earned his first political experience by being elected to be a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Though John's immediate family was not very political, his cousin Parky Cullerton was Cook County tax assessor at the time. Parky's influence convinced him that he could run for the Illinois House of Representatives, and he won in 1978.

In 1988, John joined Fagel Haber, which later became Thompson Coburn Fagel Haber, where he still is a partner today. In 1990, John was appointed to fill then-State Senator Dawn Clark Netsch's seat. John won the seat on his own right in 1992, representing the Chicago Cubs' neighborhood of Wrigleyville, but he remained a loyal White Sox fan.

John thrived in the Senate. Between 2003 and 2006, he sponsored more bills and had more bills signed by the Governor than any other legislator. John dedicated himself to things like traffic safety, gun control, reforming the criminal justice system, and tobacco regulation. John would work with anyone for a greater good. He always made it a point of going out to dinner not just with Democratic State senators but with Republican ones too.

In 2008, the senate Democratic caucus chose John to be senate president. Immediately, John prioritized an infrastructure bill that had not passed in 10 years at the time. John has steered the senate through many tough times. He can proudly say that, during his time, Illinois passed two capital funding bills, marriage equality, an abolishment of the death penalty, school funding reform, and immigration reform. John has encouraged bipartisanship and cooperation through all of it.

For 41 years, John has served with a sense of justice, friendship, and even comedy. He regularly performed at an annual event at the legendary Second City Chicago Theater. His impersonation of then-Mayor Richard J. Daley earned him the crown of Mr. Wonderful from the Conference of Women Legislators in 1979.

John retiring from the senate will allow him to spend more time with his wife Pam and his kids Maggie, Garritt, Carroll, John III, and Josephine, and his three grandchildren. I am privileged to call him a friend and look forward to all the new things he will take on in the future.

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

● Ms. HARRIS. Madam President, I was absent but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 383 the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 479, Richard Ernest Myers II, of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

Madam President, I was absent but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 384, the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 489, Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

Madam President, I was absent but had I been present I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 386, the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 533, Patrick J. Bumatay, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

THE OVER-THE-COUNTER MONOGRAPH SAFETY, INNOVATION, AND REFORM ACT

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, today, the Senate passed S. 2740, the Over-the-Counter Monograph Safety, Innovation, and Reform Act of 2019, which will completely overhaul and improve how the Food and Drug Administration—FDA—regulates over-the-counter—OTC—or nonprescription, drugs. These medicines are used by Americans every day, but our regulatory system has been stuck in the 1970s and has not kept pace with innovation or the need to ensure appropriate consumer protections. Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON and I have been working on this legislation since 2016.

This legislation creates a modern regulatory system for OTC drugs, providing the FDA with new resources to be able to review changes to existing OTC drugs and allow the marketing of new OTC drugs. FDA will have the authority to take swift action to protect the American public if a serious problem arises and to make changes to how OTC drugs are allowed to be sold if the science indicates that the steps are necessary to ensure that these products are used safely.

The Over-the-Counter Monograph Safety, Innovation, and Reform Act of 2019 establishes a streamlined administrative process which allows the FDA to modify a drug's safety labeling to address new health risks. The act is intended to modernize and accelerate regulatory procedures applicable to OTC drugs and will also allow for increased innovation. However, patient safety and manufacturer accountability are of equal importance. As such, nothing in this act is intended to change, diminish, or prohibit a manufacturer from performing any duty or complying with any requirement to warn consumers that exists under State or Federal law or to prevent any labeling changes pursuant to any other applicable provision of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act or FDA regulation. It is imperative that consumers have accurate information regarding the safety of over-the-counter drugs, and this bill is intended to improve that process while maintaining the existing rights of consumers to access the courts and hold manufacturers accountable when harmed.

This legislation has bipartisan support and also broad support from key stakeholders in public health, healthcare, and industry. I am deeply grateful for the work of my colleagues, notably Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON—the bill's sponsor; and the chairman and ranking Member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER and Senator PATTY MURRAY, and their staffs for their continued support for this important effort. As a result of our work, American consumers will be able to have greater confidence in their over-the-counter drugs and will benefit from new innovation in the years to come.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank Senator CASEY for his leadership on this important issue and agree wholeheartedly with his statement on S. 2740, the Over-the-Counter Monograph Safety, Innovation, and Reform Act of 2019.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I want to take a few moments to explain why I am opposed to the OTC reform legislation offered by Senator ISAKSON. Senator ISAKSON and I worked together on many pieces of FDA legislation, and I have no doubt that he worked tirelessly to draft this bill in the best interest of patients. I will miss working closely with my colleague from Georgia to improve the lives of the millions of Americans touched by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's work each day.

I want to be clear that I agree reforms are needed within the over-the-counter drug division at the FDA. I simply disagree on the way in which this legislation provides the resources to achieve these reforms because I do not believe it will result in my colleague's desired outcome. Here is why.

I reformed the FDA in 1997 with the passage of the FDA Modernization Act, which I like to call FDAMA. One of the foundational principles of that legislation was to bring more certainty, predictability, and accountability to an agency that had lost its way, failing to bring new drugs and medical devices to market in the United States in a timely manner. Twenty-two years later, I am starting to see the implementation of major provisions of this law. Two decades after its passage, the FDA is finally putting key policies into practice that Congress demanded. Two decades is an unacceptable amount of time for Americans to wait.

One of the components of FDAMA was the reauthorization of certain user fee programs. Over these past two decades, we have seen FDA's user fee agreements increase with each 5-year cycle, bringing more resources into the agency to review drug, biologic and device applications.

When the drug industry first agreed to user fees in 1993, the fee to file a new drug application with the FDA was $100,000. Today, that fee is $2.1 million. To that end, FDA has struggled to uphold its end of the deal, falling behind in its commitment to hire the number of individuals the agency needs to actually review the applications that cost millions of dollars to file. The FDA continues to increase the amount of user fee dollars it requires to review applications, eroding the balance of congressional oversight provided by the appropriation of taxpayer dollars to the agency.

I would caution my colleagues that we are currently experiencing the effects of a center at the FDA that receives 100 percent of its funds from user fees, the Center for Tobacco Products. The CTP has had 10 years and received over $5 billion in user fee resources. It has yet to finalize a single governing regulation for the products Congress tasked the CTP with regulating. Meanwhile, youth rates of vapor product use continue to increase and 2,000 Americans have fallen ill from the use of unregulated products. I have spoken many times on my concerns with the growth and development of FDA user fee programs because they have not resulted in the development of an FDA that keeps its promises. I promise my colleagues that the user fee program included in this bill will not be any different.

While the Senate has wrestled with solutions to high drug costs for the last 18 months, we are voting to approve a bill that increases the development costs for one of Americans' cheapest options for care. The over-the-counter user fee bill provides millions of dollars in new industry funds to reform the OTC system at FDA, and the agency is asking for tens of millions of dollars to deal with a backlog of OTC monographs or recipes to create over the counter medications.

User fee dollars are intended to go toward the review of applications, but I can assure my colleagues this is not the full story at the Agency today. Last year alone, $133 million in drug user fees went toward administrative expenses at the FDA, funds that may otherwise help to invest in new treatments or cures for Americans. This is very simple math, the more user fee programs we provide to the FDA, the less the FDA is accountable and responsive to Congress.

Through FDAMA and more recently in the 21st Century Cures Act and the 2017 FDA user fee bill, I worked to rebalance the focus of the FDA, to reaffirm its authorities to regulate the cutting edge science facing the agency, and to better leverage and strategically invest its existing resources. So I cannot support legislation that degrades the progress we have made at the FDA.

REMEMBERING RACHELLE BERGERON HAMMERLING

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, today, I honor the life and work of Rachelle Bergeron Hammerling, a human rights lawyer who served as the acting Attorney General of Yap in Micronesia when she was murdered just a couple of months ago. Rachelle was killed in front of her home on October 14, 2019, as a direct result of her courageous fight against human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. She was just 33 years old, but her legacy will live on through her family and the communities she made the ultimate sacrifice to serve.

Rachelle was born in Waukesha, WI, to parents Thomas and Tammy Bergeron in 1986. After growing up in Wisconsin, Rachelle went on to obtain a juris doctorate from the University of Florida College of Law in 2010, an experience her family says she loved.

When Rachelle graduated from law school, her passion to help others led her to volunteer with the International Justice Mission in India, where she represented women and children who had been trafficked. Rachelle spent her career prosecuting criminals involved with sex trafficking and worked tirelessly to protect the poor against violence. Rachelle's work took her around the United States, including New York and Washington, DC. She was a member of the New York State Bar and created the ''Not-So-Super'' campaign video as an effort to raise awareness regarding human trafficking during the 2014 Super Bowl. Her work took her to Beijing, South Africa, India, and finally the Pacific island of Yap.

Rachelle fought to give a voice to the voiceless and dedicated her life to empowering and uplifting others. About 4 years ago, Rachelle moved to Yap after accepting a job as that community's assistant attorney general. Since January 2019, she had been serving as the island's only prosecutor and as the acting attorney general, where her duties included being a part of a human trafficking task force. Rachelle was very active in the community she served and spent a lot of time in local schools