

agreement, that is exactly what they get. So if you are an Ohio farmer—and we are No. 2 in the country on eggs—you can now have access to these markets in Canada and Mexico, on eggs, that you never had before.

On dairy, Canada in particular has some very protectionist provisions in place with regard to dairy products—think milk and cheese.

If you are an Ohio dairy farmer, you can sell stuff into Canada you couldn't sell before—also pork, beef, wheat, and other products. This is good for our farmers. This is why over 1,000 farm groups around the country have supported this agreement. I mean, I don't know a farm group in Ohio that doesn't support it strongly. Again, part of it is that this is a great agreement for them, and part of it is that they are hurting, and this gives them some light at the end of the tunnel, an opportunity to see new markets and therefore see some prices increase in our ag community.

This is a good agreement that is good for jobs, good for small business, as we talked about, good for farmers, good for workers, and good for our economy. It is important that we get it done. I am glad the House is going to go ahead and vote on it in the next week. I wish we could vote here in the Senate right away, too, but under the process called trade promotion authority, we do have some processes we need to go through. It is probably best to have it happen after the holidays. Right after the holidays, my hope is that here on the floor of the Senate, Members will look at this for what it is. This is not a Democratic or a Republican victory; this is an American victory.

Again, I appreciate the efforts of President Donald Trump because he was persistent and tough on the negotiations, and then he was persistent and patient in working with the U.S. Congress. There were a lot of people saying: Go ahead and send the agreement up and try to jam the Democrats into doing the right thing. He didn't do that. He waited to figure out a way to come up with an agreement, particularly on the labor enforcement provisions we talked about, and as a result, we now have the ability on a bipartisan basis to get this done. I hope the vote in the House will reflect that; likewise, here in the Senate.

I know there are some of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who think this agreement is not perfect. No agreement is perfect; I will just say that. I am a former U.S. Trade Representative. I am a former trade lawyer. I am a former member of the Ways and Means Committee, which is the trade committee over there. I am now on the trade committee here, the Finance Committee. No agreement is ever perfect. It is not the agreement exactly that you would write or I would write, but, boy, this is a good agreement.

To make perfect the enemy of the good would hurt the farmers and the

workers and the small businesses that we represent that want this agreement badly because they know it is going to help them.

The other thing I would say is that it also helps our relationships with our two biggest trading partners in Ohio, Canada and Mexico, and also our neighbors.

For North America's future, this is a good idea—to have the certainty and predictability that comes with an agreement we have all been able to coalesce around and improve the status quo. NAFTA was negotiated 25 years ago. A lot has happened in the last 25 years. We talked about how the digital economy has transformed our economy, and we have a competitive and comparative advantage in that. That is one small example. So many things have changed.

We have better protections for intellectual property in this agreement, as an example. We have these new trade-opening opportunities in agriculture. We have these opportunities in manufacturing to do more here in North America and specifically in the United States.

A vote against this new agreement is a vote for NAFTA, which is this 25-year-old agreement that has these flaws because that is the status quo. My hope is that the next time I come to this floor to talk about this, it will be to ask my colleagues in short order to support a vote, that it will have come out of the Finance Committee with a strong bipartisan vote, that it will have come to the floor with a strong vote from the House, and that we can get this done. Then President Trump can sign it, and the people we represent will be better off, our community of nations here in North America will be better off, and the United States of America will have another victory.

I yield back.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I came to the floor this morning to address what has been an alarming and inaccurate information campaign that is being spread about the international family planning amendment included in this year's State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill.

I would note that while this amendment is referred to as the "Shaheen amendment" in alarmist and inaccurate blog posts, it is actually bipartisan language that was agreed to by both the subcommittee and full committee chairs of the Appropriations Committee and ultimately approved unanimously by Republicans and

Democrats in the committee. Yet articles and op-eds online have condemned the amendment as pro-abortion. I was surprised to hear this given that, despite my objections, the amendment does not address the Mexico City policy—or the global gag rule, as it is known—abortion services, or information. In fact, this is the first time in 18 years—I am going to say that again. It is the first time in 18 years that members of the Appropriations Committee were prevented from offering a bipartisan amendment that would strip the bill of the Mexico City provision.

Instead of allowing the established committee process to amend the SFOPs bill with this provision, the entire bill was pulled from consideration. In response to that, in an effort to ensure the bill wasn't endangered, I worked with my colleagues Senator COLLINS of Maine and Senator MURKOWSKI of Alaska and with Republican leadership to limit the scope of the amendment so we could allow the appropriations bill to go forward.

It is false—absolutely, positively false—to say this amendment funds abortions abroad. In fact, it is wrong to say, and inaccurate to say, that any U.S. assistance goes to funding abortions at home or abroad. In compliance with U.S. law, family planning funding does not and never has gone to abortion services. I hope everyone is clear about that. Under our law, family planning funding does not go to support abortion services.

Now that I have outlined what this amendment does not do, let me discuss what it does do. It provides an increase of \$57.5 million for a total of \$632.5 million for existing international family planning accounts. This money funds programs and services that provide modern contraceptives, which 214 million women around the world who want to avoid pregnancy are not able to access.

Again, I don't know when the debate around abortion came to include contraceptives and family planning. It also would allow for the healthy timing and spacing of births, which is very important to the health of infants and it is important to the health of women to be able to space the births of their children to recover between births. It provides education information and counseling about family planning issues. It ensures access to antenatal and postnatal care for a healthy mother and baby. It provides for HPV vaccination and prevention, something very important to the health of children.

These are a few of the critical services the assistance provides. The impact of these services is very real.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, with each additional \$10 million the U.S. dedicates to family planning and reproductive health programs, 400,000 more women and couples receive contraceptives services and supplies. With the \$57.5 million increase provided for in this amendment, more than 2.2 million women and couples

will have that access. That will result in 654,500 fewer unintended pregnancies, 291,500 fewer unplanned births, 280,500 fewer induced abortions. If you care about abortion and you don't believe that is the right alternative, then you should support family planning because that gives families and couples an option to ensure they can have the children they want, and it would provide for 1,320 fewer deaths of women.

While these numbers are stark, the transformative effect of simply having access to family planning information and services on the lives of women and their families should not be underestimated.

The most vulnerable women who are reached by family planning programs report that learning about family planning options, receiving services to prevent unwanted pregnancies, and ensuring that wanted pregnancies are healthy and happy so the babies they want to have are healthy and happy gives them some control over their lives. Many women are making healthcare choices for themselves and their families for the very first time with help from these programs.

These critical programs change lives, and our partners who implement these programs are indispensable. In October, USAID Administrator Mark Green said he could not "imagine an effective development Agency that doesn't partner with the community of faith." Luckily, he doesn't have to. For those people who were worried that family planning programs are not going to be implemented by our faith community, that is just wrong.

The family planning account goes to a range of program implementers, including healthcare providers, international NGOs, and faith-based organizations alike. All of these organizations have the goal of saving women's lives and saving the lives of their children. They need more resources, not fewer, to do this work.

What else does the international family planning amendment do? It includes an additional \$33 million to USAID's family planning account for money that is rerouted away from the U.N. Population Fund.

Again, unlike what the blogs are mistakenly saying, this is not money that currently goes to UNFPA's lifesaving operations. Instead, it will be redirected back into the family planning account and contribute to the programs I just outlined.

Third, the amendment requires the Government Accountability Office to produce a report that evaluates the efficacy of family planning programs and their structure. Again, this was another bipartisan effort with my Republican colleagues to ensure that our U.S. dollars are most effective and they contribute to programs and services that are most effective. Again, if you have a concern about how family planning dollars are being spent, then you should support this amendment because it is going to give us data and in-

formation to show what is effective and what isn't.

Finally, the amendment includes language to reaffirm an existing non-discrimination policy within USAID. This is an existing nondiscrimination policy. This is not a new policy. That policy within USAID ensures the services funded by these accounts reach all segments of the population.

As I said, this is not a new policy. The anti-discrimination policy has existed for several years, and it is not targeted toward faith-based organizations, despite what some of the blogs mistakenly are putting out there. In fact, the complaints I have heard in my office about single women being rejected for services didn't touch on work that faith-based organizations are doing.

I hope all of our colleagues in the Senate will not allow misinformation about the family planning dollars that are in the State and Foreign Operations bill to dismantle what has been a very important bipartisan achievement. Its impact is too great and its programs are too important to let them be killed by a campaign to try and mislead people about what is in the amendment.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF AURELIA SKIPWITH

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I want to share with the Senate my reasons for opposing the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to serve as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Let me begin by saying that I am disappointed to find myself in this position. When I had the privilege of serving as Governor of Delaware, I was able to assemble my own leadership team, so I appreciate how important it is that people in executive positions, including Presidents, have that same ability.

However, in article II of the Constitution, our Founders set up a system in which the President would nominate individuals to the top posts in our government and Senators would provide "advice and consent" on those nominees.

In order for the Senate to fulfill that constitutional role, those nominated individuals must cooperate with the confirmation process. And, unfortunately, Ms. Skipwith has not provided information requested by the Democrats during the nomination process.

Despite my repeated requests for the nominee to be more forthcoming—requests made twice in writing and twice in person, during her nomination process—Ms. Skipwith has refused. Instead, she has given me the impression that she does not take this confirmation process seriously.

Her lack of candor has elevated questions that already existed about her qualifications, her commitment to environmental conservation and whether she can ethically lead the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Therefore, I cannot support this nomination.

Ms. Skipwith first joined the Trump administration in April 2017, when she was appointed as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks, a non-Senate-confirmed political appointment at the Department of the Interior.

During her tenure there, the Fish and Wildlife Service proposed and finalized controversial regulations that drastically altered implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

The Service has also issued a legal opinion that changes the way the Department of the Interior enforces the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Former senior Interior officials from every administration since the early 1970s, both Republican and Democrat, have strongly opposed this Migratory Bird Treaty Act legal opinion. At her confirmation hearing, Ms. Skipwith vehemently defended it.

Prior to her controversial tenure at the Interior Department, Ms. Skipwith had no previous work experience related to conservation or wildlife management—none.

By contrast, the 16 individuals who previously served as Fish and Wildlife Service Directors for both Republican and Democratic Presidents had an estimated average of 12 years of experience at the Fish and Wildlife Service before taking on the Director role. They also have an estimated average of more than 22 years of professional experience in fields related to wildlife or fisheries management.

Ms. Skipwith has also not seemed to make up for her lack of previous experience while on the job. At her confirmation hearing, when asked to name the conservation scientist who had most influenced her career and her approach to wildlife and fisheries management, Ms. Skipwith struggled to name any conservation scientist. Ultimately, she named a former Monsanto vice president with whom she used to work, but she misremembered his name.

This was not an insignificant misstep. To me, it was revealing. Ms. Skipwith's response to my simple question represented a clear lack of familiarity with the basics of wildlife management, a troubling quality for a Fish and Wildlife Director nominee.

By contrast, Ms. Skipwith does have significant experience in the agribusiness industry. Before joining the Trump administration, she worked for Monsanto, one of the world's largest agrochemical firms. Monsanto regularly has business interests before the Interior Department. She also worked for Alltech, a Kentucky-based agricultural products company.

She also co-founded AVC Global, an agribusiness-technology start up, and was employed by Gage International, a Washington, DC, based lobbying firm founded by her fiancé.

That is why even before her confirmation hearing, I asked Ms. Skipwith some basic questions about how these companies operate and