

thought this approach was good enough for President Clinton, it ought to be good enough for President Trump.

I hope House Democrats see reason to pull back from the precipice, but if they proceed, I hope the Democratic leader and I can sit down soon and honor the template that was unanimously agreed to the last time.

Mr. President, on another matter, in the meantime, the Senate is busy completing the legislation our country actually needs. Yesterday the Senate passed the NDAA conference report and put it on President Trump's desk. Thanks to the diligence of Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED, this critical legislation to support our armed services will become law for a 59th consecutive year.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, tomorrow we will vote on government funding bills the House passed yesterday. A lot of hard work brought this appropriations process back from the brink. Here are some of the important things that will happen as a result: stable, full-year funding for our Armed Forces, including research and modernization; the largest pay raise for our troops in a decade; and more support for key alliances like NATO, close partners like Israel, and high-priority areas like Hong Kong.

The bills also deliver on vital domestic priorities as well. It funds infrastructure and transportation projects. It repeals even more of Obamacare by cutting out more harmful taxes.

Every single State wins in this bill. By way of example, here are a few ways my State will benefit. This bill keeps the decade-old promise of a new, modern VA medical center with a special emphasis on care for women veterans. There is support for fighting invasive Asian Carp in West Kentucky, for Central Kentucky's role in high-tech agricultural research. Of course, Kentucky has a huge stake in our Nation's battle against opioid and substance abuse. I am proud these bills fund housing and treatment programs established by my CAREER Act to help those in long-term recovery reenter the workforce.

Speaking of addiction, I am especially proud that this legislation includes my T-21 legislation to raise the nationwide age for purchasing tobacco and vaping products to 21 years old and help roll back the explosion in tobacco and nicotine use among our Nation's youth.

I am proud to have worked with Senator Kaine and others on both sides to ensure that the legislation we drafted became law this year. Senator TODD YOUNG of Indiana was also deeply involved in this as well. I am proud that these bills include direct bipartisan action that I urged to shore up the looming pension and healthcare crisis faced by coal communities in Kentucky and across the Nation.

These are some examples from Kentucky. This legislation touches, in fact, all 50 States. This is why full-year funding bills are better than chronic

CRs. This is why the Senate should pass these bills this way and send them to the President's desk.

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

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

The Senator from South Dakota.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we are wrapping up the year in the Senate, and I am looking forward to getting home to South Dakota for Christmas. Before we leave, we will wrap up this year's spending bills, including the Defense funding bill.

Yesterday we passed the National Defense Authorization Act, which is yearly legislation to authorize funding for our military and our national defense. I am pleased to report that this year's bill authorizes the full annual funding request for development of the B-21 bomber, which will be coming to Ellsworth in the not-too-distant future.

The news that Ellsworth Air Force Base had been selected as the first home of the future B-21 Raider was exciting news this year. Ellsworth Air Force Base has been a priority of mine since I first came to the Senate and worked with a lot of dedicated people to prevent Ellsworth from being closed by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in 2005.

Since then, I have worked with the other Members of the South Dakota delegation and the Air Force and community leaders to make sure the base never again finds itself in the same position. Among other things, our efforts resulted in the expansion of the Powder River Training Complex into the largest training airspace in the continental United States.

It is undoubtedly partly thanks to this airspace that Ellsworth was chosen as the first home for the B-21. Ellsworth is going from strength to strength. I am honored to advocate for our national security and the airmen at Ellsworth in the U.S. Senate.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. President, agriculture is the lifeblood of our economy in South Dakota, and our farmers and ranchers are always at the top of my priority list in the Senate. Thanks to national disasters, protracted trade disputes, and several years of low commodity prices, farmers and ranchers have had a tough few years.

This spring, farmers throughout the Midwest were hit with heavy rainfall and flooding. By the time the soil finally dried out enough for planting, it was too late for many farmers to plant their normal crops, and many had to turn quick-growing cover crops that could be used for feed and grazing and to protect the soil.

The farmers in South Dakota and other Northern States faced a problem. The Department of Agriculture had set November 1 as the first date on which farmers could harvest these cover crops for feed or use them for pasture without having their crop insurance indemnity reduced.

Farmers who hayed or grazed before this date faced a reduction in their prevent plant indemnity payments, which are crop insurance payments to help them cover their income loss when the fields can't be planted due to flooding or other issues.

While November 1 is a reasonable date for farmers in Southern States, for farmers in Northern States like South Dakota, November 1 is too late for harvesting thanks to killing frost and the risk of late fall and early winter storms. It is too late to maximize the use of cover crops for pasture, since a killing frost is liable to flatten cover crops before they are grazed.

So, beginning in early May, I started pressing the Department of Agriculture to change the November 1 date. In June, the Department of Agriculture announced that it would move up the November 1 date for 2019 by 2 months, to September 1—a significant amount of time that allowed South Dakota farmers to plant cover crops without worrying about whether they would be able to successfully harvest or graze them.

A year ago this week, the President signed into law the 2018 farm bill, which contained nearly 20 provisions that I authored based on input from South Dakota farmers and ranchers. This year, I have closely monitored the Department of Agriculture's implementation of the bill. In particular, I have pressed the Department of Agriculture to implement the bill's improvements to the Conservation Reserve Program and hold CRP signups, and I am pleased the administration opened a CRP signup earlier this month.

When I talk to farmers and ranchers at home in South Dakota, they emphasize that the most important thing Washington can do to boost our agriculture economy is to take action on trade agreements.

Farmers and ranchers need access to new and expanded markets for their products. Just as importantly, they need certainty about what international markets are going to look like going forward.

I have spent a lot of time this year pushing for Congress to approve the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement. After months and months of unnecessary delay, I am pleased this agreement is now moving forward. I am hopeful the Senate will pass it in January so the farmers and ranchers can start experiencing the benefits.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Mr. President, one piece of good news for corn farmers came this year with the administration's announcement that it would permit the year-round

sale of E15, which is 15 percent ethanol-blended fuel. I spent over a decade advocating the year-round sale of E15, and I was very pleased by the administration's announcement.

However, for corn farmers to see the full benefit of year-round E15 sales, the Environmental Protection Agency needs to start accounting for its unprecedented use of small refinery exemptions. These so-called hardship waivers should be limited only to instances where small refiners would no longer be profitable or competitive by complying with their blending obligation under the renewable fuel standard.

On Friday, the EPA is poised to finalize a supplemental rule that it assures us will deliver on the President's commitments to account for waivers and to truly blend 15 billion gallons of ethanol each year.

However, based on this EPA's track record, it is difficult to trust it will retreat from its aggressive issuance of small refinery exemptions. I hope the EPA proves me wrong, but I think I speak for most of farm country when I say I will believe it when I see it.

On the topic of renewable fuels, I am happy to be able to say that the biodiesel tax credit will be extended for 5 years, through 2022, as part of this year's tax extenders deal. Biodiesel is a good deal for farmers, as it adds value to each bushel of soybeans by making use of the oil from bean processing, and it is a good deal for our environment because the use of this fuel lowers emissions.

MOBILE NOW ACT

Mr. President, as a former chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee and current chair of the Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet, I have spent a lot of time over the last few years focused on Internet, communications, and data privacy issues.

One big priority of mine has been paving the way for 5G—the next generation of wireless technology—ensuring that rural areas and not just big cities get this technology.

Last year, the President signed the law, my bipartisan MOBILE NOW Act, which was legislation I introduced to help secure adequate spectrum for 5G technology.

STREAMLINE SMALL CELL DEPLOYMENT ACT

Mr. President, earlier this year, Senator SCHATZ and I introduced the STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act to address the other part of the 5G equation. That is infrastructure.

I was thrilled to be home in Sioux Falls to mark a huge milestone for the city and for South Dakota—the unveiling of Sioux Falls' first 5G small cells, which are small antennas that will join traditional cell towers to support 5G technology.

5G has tremendous promise for rural areas, but it will deliver on that promise only if we ensure that 5G cells are actually deployed in these areas. I am proud we have made a good start in

South Dakota. The Sioux Falls mayor, Paul TenHaken, has worked aggressively to remove barriers to telecommunications investment in Sioux Falls.

Advancing 5G will continue to be a priority of mine here in the Senate. We want the United States, not China or South Korea, to win the race to 5G and to seize the economic benefits that 5G will bring.

Another thing I have spent a lot of time working on in the Commerce Committee this year is data privacy. In October, I introduced the Filter Bubble Transparency Act, which is designed to address one aspect of the data privacy problem—the issues that arise from internet companies' use of consumers' personal data to shape what consumers see on their platforms.

I also introduced legislation this year with Senator ED MARKEY to address the problem of annoying, illegal robocalls. I am hopeful that our legislation, the Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence Act—or the TRACED Act—will pass the Senate soon and be on the President's desk before Christmas.

I have worked on a lot of other bills this year to make life better for South Dakotans and American families. I have introduced tax reform bills to help small businesses, update the tax code for the 21st century economy, encourage charitable giving, and permanently protect family farms from the death tax. I have introduced legislation to protect access to healthcare in rural areas, helped Americans repay their student loans, and much more. I will continue to work on these issues in the new year.

As always, my priority will be ensuring that Congress is addressing the challenges facing South Dakota families.

The holidays are a time to reflect on the blessings we have received, and I feel truly blessed to call the great State of South Dakota home. It is an honor and a privilege to represent the people of South Dakota in the U.S. Senate.

To all South Dakotans, I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and a joyous holiday season. I look forward to continuing to represent your priorities here in Washington and in the coming new year.

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.

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

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

CHANGE OF VOTE

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, on roll-call vote No. 380, I was recorded as yea. It was my intention to be recorded as

nay. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome.

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

Ms. HASSAN. Thank you.

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. 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.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in response to the limited set of relevant witnesses I proposed for a potential Senate trial earlier this week, the Republican leader gave a lengthy speech on the floor yesterday and another speech today. In neither of those speeches could the Republican leader offer one salient argument as to why the witnesses I proposed—all senior Trump administration officials—shouldn't be allowed to testify. Instead, he made what are, in my view, irrelevant and incomplete comparisons to the 1999 Clinton trial.

When faced with the fact that it is only fair to have these witnesses, who were eyewitnesses to the major, major allegations against the President and who had not testified before, the leader can't talk about 2019. He has to go back to 1999 because he has no good argument as to why they shouldn't testify.

We are not asking to be dilatory. We are not asking for a list of 4,000 witnesses. We are simply asking that those who know the truth best come and talk to us here in the Senate and to the American people.

There is one fact that is impossible for the Senate to ignore. In the two Presidential impeachment trials in the history of this body, the Senate heard from witnesses, but Leader MCCONNELL continues to push for no witnesses in the Senate trial. I have yet to hear an explanation as to why less evidence is better than more evidence, particularly when it comes to something as somber, as serious, and as important as impeachment of the President of the United States of America.

Leader MCCONNELL keeps talking about 1999 because he doesn't want to talk about 2019. The two situations are not analogous. Rather than focus on the past, the Republican leader should focus on the present and offer one good reason why relevant witnesses shouldn't testify in an impeachment trial of President Trump, particularly in light of the fact that we have not