

give to people she saw experiencing homelessness and often asking why they could not do more to help them. When the opportunity to participate in New Hampshire's Kid Governor Program arose, Evelyn created a platform based on addressing poverty and worked with her school to start a clothing drive. Every Monday in December, she reminded her classmates during their school assembly to bring items to donate, which resulted in her collecting hundreds of items in just under a month.

Evelyn donated the items to the largest family shelter in her community and wants to continue working to help address poverty. She will be volunteering with the same organization this summer and hopes to expand her clothing drive beyond just her school. For her efforts to support her community and help those in need, I am proud to recognize Evelyn as the January 2019 Granite Stater of the Month.●

VERMONT STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY WINNERS

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, since 2010 I have sponsored a State of the Union essay contest for Vermont high school students. This contest gives students in my State the opportunity to articulate what issues they would prioritize if they were President of the United States.

This is the contest's 9th year and I would like to congratulate the almost 600 students who participated. It is truly heartening to see so many young people engaged in finding solutions for the problems that face our country. To my mind, this is what democracy is all about.

A volunteer panel of Vermont teachers reviewed the essays and chose Firdaus Muhammad as this year's winner. Firdaus, a freshman at Essex High School, focused on the rise of Islamophobia across the Nation. Jackson Maiocco, a senior at Bellows Falls Union High School, was the second place winner. Jackson wrote about military spending and the impact our defense budget has on our Nation. Joseph Brody, a senior at St. Johnsbury Academy, was the third place winner, having written about voter suppression.

I am very proud to enter into the Congressional Record the essays submitted by Firdaus, Jackson, and Joseph.

The material follows:

FIRDAUS MUHAMMAD, ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL,
FRESHMAN, WINNER

September 11, 2001—a day that all Americans remember. A day that changed so many lives. A day when I wasn't even alive yet. Yet 9/11 was a day that changed my life. Fast forward eleven years to 2012. I was in third grade and had just made the decision to start wearing the hijab in public. I had awoken that winter morning with the intention to wear my hijab to school, but I was naive. I didn't know that by wearing the hijab, I became a symbol of Islam. I didn't realize that by wearing a piece of cloth on my head, I was

suddenly a nine year old representing all 1.7 billion Muslims across the globe.

It's 2019. Eighteen years have passed since 9/11. It's been seven years since I started wearing the hijab publicly. The racism against Muslims has only gotten worse. The hatred and Islamophobia has spread like wildfire, affecting every Muslim in its path. Women's hijabs are being ripped off, racist slurs are being spit at Muslims, and the angry stares have only increased. The rise of Islamophobia during these past years has been exacerbated by President Trump's Travel Ban. On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed the Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States Order. This became known as the Travel Ban or essentially, the Muslim Ban. Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, North Korea, and Venezuela were all affected by this ban. It's not a coincidence that five of these countries have a majority Muslim population.

I clearly remember watching the news with my dad and hearing all the racist names being thrown at Muslims. Being an eleven year old Muslim girl, I couldn't comprehend how people could be so rude and racist to one another. I didn't understand why Muslim families were suddenly being torn apart because they were deemed "unsafe". Why were people suddenly so scared of Muslims? Didn't they know that Islam was a religion founded on peace and justice? A religion of equality and kindness? How can we live in "The Land of the Free" when Muslims are afraid of being targeted based solely on their religion? I am lucky enough to live in Vermont where most people are quite respectful and accepting of each other. But I also know that there are other Muslims who are not so lucky. Those Muslims who feel isolated in their offices, schools, and other public places.

I believe that in order to solve this huge racial problem, we must learn to accept each other's differences. We should not discriminate against others based on their religion. We need to make sure that we represent people as they are, not based on stereotypes. We cannot let the actions of a few people reflect the beliefs of a whole religion. The United States is a country of diversity, a country built by immigrants. Any person who comes from any religion, deserves to feel respected and welcomed in this country.

JACKSON MAIOCCO, BELLOWS FALLS UNION
HIGH SCHOOL, SENIOR, SECOND PLACE

For decades, an excess of military spending has plagued our nation while there are many vital areas that would prosper with the reallocation of some military spending. The majority of our nation's federal budget is dedicated to the military; in 2018, the US spent a grand total of \$623 billion on national defense. This huge sum of money dwarfs the amount that President Trump allocated to the Department of Education: a mere \$68 billion. I know that sounds like a considerable amount of money, so I'll put it in perspective. For every dollar spent on education, nearly \$11 went to the military. This simply can't stand.

In fiscal year 2018, the US Federal Budget was roughly a trillion dollars. President Trump made good on his promise to slash federal budgets, but increased the defense budget by almost 10%. Considering the size of the defense budget, a 10% increase is huge: \$52 billion, to be exact. Areas that were negatively affected by Trump's budget cuts were the Department of Education, which had a 14% budget slash, and the Department of Health and Human Services, which lost 18% of its federal funding. Every country's main goal should be the scientific and social advancement of their citizens and society as a whole, so the damage done by Trump's budg-

et cuts is incredibly detrimental to our nation. Meanwhile, we're pouring unprecedented amounts of money into building tanks that will never see action; according to Eric Husher, former Senior Balkan Intelligence Analyst (1992-1996), there are over 4,000 M1 Abrams tanks sitting in the Nevada desert collecting dust. Keep in mind that it costs upwards of \$4.3 million to assemble an M1 Abrams. So collectively, there's roughly \$17 billion worth of American taxpayers money sitting in a parking lot in Nevada. But wait, it gets worse. These tanks aren't being built for use; they're simply being built to keep a factory running. This needless military spending is incredibly detrimental to our country. Excessive military expenditures results in slower economic growth, and, as outlined above, is simply a waste of money.

The only feasible solution is to gradually decrease military spending, and invest those funds into more worthwhile areas such as education, science, and healthcare. Far right hawks and conservatives might argue that a drastic decrease in military expenditures would leave us exposed and weak, but the evidence states otherwise. In fact, even if we cut our military budget by 80%, we would still have military superiority in the world.

In the words of legendary journalist Hunter S. Thompson, "Every Republican administration since 1952 has let the military-industrial complex loot the treasury and plunge the nation into debt on the excuse of a wartime economic emergency." With no such emergency anywhere in sight, our tax dollars should be spent on more worthwhile investments.

JOSEPH BRODY, ST. JOHNSBURY ACADEMY,
SENIOR, THIRD PLACE

Democracy was founded on the fundamental principle that the power of government is derived from the consent of the governed. Throughout the course of our nation's history, this foundation has been fractured by the disenfranchisement of low-income and minority groups. The Jim Crow laws, for example, prevented African Americans from voting through poll taxes and literacy tests. While the means of voter suppression have become less glaring, the United States continues to systematically suppress underrepresented populations from exercising their Fifteenth Amendment right. In order to ensure that our democracy is accessible and fruitful for all, the United States must abolish Voter ID laws and reform Election Day.

First of all, minorities are silenced by the Voter ID laws. As Attorney General Eric Holder simply stated, "We call those poll taxes." Voter ID laws inhibit minority voters because they present additional barriers to an already problematic voting process. Even though obtaining identification is often touted as "free," Harvard Law School asserts that the cost of supporting documents can exceed \$175. Given that minorities are often in the lowest income brackets, this price can be insurmountable and disproportionately prevents African Americans from receiving identification. The Brennan Center for Justice revealed that nearly 25% of African Americans lack necessary identification in comparison to just 8% of their white counterparts. According to The University of San Diego, the beneficiaries of Voter ID laws are largely "whites and those on the political right." Clearly, this not only alienates minorities, but produces politicians who are not concerned with their interests. The solution is simple: eradicate Voter ID laws. Though many express concern about voter fraud, this fear is baseless. Professor Justin Levitt confirms that there have only been 31 cases of credible voter impersonation since 2000. In short, Voter ID laws are a refurbished Poll Tax; under the mask of "fraud

prevention,” only the disenfranchised stand to be silenced.

Election Day is a hindrance because it occurs on a Tuesday. The working class cannot afford lost wages or lost energy from standing in hours-long lines. The result of this awkward timing: low-income Americans cannot afford to vote. According to the Pew Research Center, 63% of the most financially secure Americans voted in the 2014 election, while only 20% of the least financially secure were able to make it to the poll. In effect, the population that bears the greatest burdens possesses the least political power. In actuality, Election Day was established on a Tuesday so that farmers wouldn’t miss church or market day. The government needs to act with a similar intent and align Election Day with the schedule of the working class. It should be a federally mandated holiday and stretch across Saturday and Sunday. For those unable to vote, absentee ballots should be guaranteed and expedited.

Ultimately, eliminating Voter ID laws and reforming Election Day will make voting accessible to all Americans. Voting is at the heart of democracy, and once this is realized, the quality of life for all Americans will be heightened.●

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF ALABAMA AND TUSCALOOSA

• Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, today I wish to call attention to the special significance of the year 2019 in our great State of Alabama. This year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of our State and my hometown, the city of Tuscaloosa.

Tuscaloosa was incorporated on December 13, 1819, which was one day before the State of Alabama was admitted to the Union. Beginning in 1826 and extending for more than two decades, Tuscaloosa was the State capital of Alabama. This period marked the historic opening of the University of Alabama, the construction of a stately capitol building, and the city’s transformation as a center for education, healthcare, and industry. Strategically situated on the banks of the Black Warrior River, Tuscaloosa became a thriving hub for foundries, cotton mills, forestry, and marine commerce.

Founded in Tuscaloosa in 1831, the University of Alabama, which is the beloved alma mater of my family along with countless others, has become one of America’s premier public research universities. The Capstone of education, the University serves the citizens of Alabama as well as students, faculty, and staff who come from throughout the United States and around the globe to pursue a world-class education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The university proudly partners with Stillman College and Shelton State Community College, as well as an abundant community of K-12 schools, to hold stature as a major center for educational excellence.

Today Tuscaloosa is recognized as one of the region’s most economically prosperous cities. International corporations join homegrown industries and businesses to provide a robust climate for job creation, industrial expansion, and a quality of life that is envied and admired by one and all. Recreational amenities, cultural gems, and championship athletic teams are legendary.

On December 13, 2018, the Tuscaloosa Bicentennial Commission dedicated Bicentennial Square in Government Plaza, located in the heart of the city’s burgeoning downtown district. Over the next 12 months, citizens will join together in a diverse calendar of events and programs that will educate, celebrate, and feature 2019 as a year to remember.

I share in the RECORD a schedule of events for “Tuscaloosa 200,” together with the names of the bicentennial commission members who, along with dozens of other volunteers, have devoted countless hours to planning and organizing the bicentennial commemoration, as well as the companies whose generosity made possible the extensive, yearlong celebration: dedication of Bicentennial Square at Government Plaza, December 13, 2018; ringing in Tuscaloosa 200 bicentennial fireworks, December 31, 2018, at the Tuscaloosa Amphitheatre; Tuscaloosa 200 bicentennial launch ceremony, January 31, 2019, at the Tuscaloosa RiverMarket; the Bicentennial Bash Family Activities and Music Saturday, March 30, 2019, at the Tuscaloosa Amphitheatre; “Tuscaloosa Through Time” history expo, April 24-27, 2019, at the Bryant Conference Center; “Welcome Back to T-Town Celebration” in conjunction with the Druid City Music Festival, Friday and Saturday, August 23-24, 2019; community book experience, “the History of Tuscaloosa,” by Dr. Guy Hubbs, September 22, 2019, Federal courthouse; and Tuscaloosa 200 birthday party and holiday parade, Friday, December 13, 2019, preceded by “200 Voices for Tuscaloosa,” December 12, 2019, Moody Concert Hall.

Members of the Tuscaloosa Bicentennial Commission: Lyda Black, Robert Ennis, Kari Frederickson, Sarah Elizabeth Heggem, Shelley Jones, Elizabeth McGiffert, Pam Parker, Tim Parker, Cathy Randall, Kellee Reinhart, Don Staley, and Harrison Taylor.

Bicentennial Sponsors and Donors: Presenting Sponsors—Mercedes-Benz USI, Coca Cola, DCH Health System; Capital Donor—city of Tuscaloosa, the University of Alabama; Chief Tuscaloosa Donor—Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports; Druid Oaks Donor—Harrison Family Foundation, Hunt Refining Company, Nucor Steel, Parker Towing Company, PECO Foods, Inc., Reese Phifer Memorial Foundation, Randall-Reilly, TotalCom; Black Warrior Donor—Bryant Bank, College Station Properties, Harrison Construction Company, Industrial Warehouse Services, Inc., McAbee Family Foundation, McGiffert and Associates, LLC/Price McGiffert Construction Co. Inc., Regions, Synovus, Westervelt; City Champion Donor—Cadence Bank, Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, BF Goodrich, Jamison Money Farmer, PC, Jun-

ior League of Tuscaloosa, R.L. Zeigler Company, Inc., Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation, Tuscaloosa Rotary Memorial Foundation.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:02 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 56. An act to establish an Independent Financial Technology Task Force to Combat Terrorism and Illicit Financing, to provide rewards for information leading to convictions related to terrorist use of digital currencies, to establish a Fintech Leadership in Innovation and Financial Intelligence Program to encourage the development of tools and programs to combat terrorist and illicit use of digital currencies, and for other purposes.

H.R. 502. An act to require the Comptroller General of the United States to carry out a study on how virtual currencies and online marketplaces are used to buy, sell, or facilitate the financing of goods or services associated with sex trafficking or drug trafficking, and for other purposes.

H.R. 624. An act to require the Securities and Exchange Commission to carry out a study of Rule 10b5-1 trading plans, and for other purposes.

At 5 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 9. Concurrent resolution providing for a joint session of Congress to receive a message from the President.

At 5:24 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 424. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to improve the management and administration of the security clearance process throughout the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes.

H.R. 428. An act to direct the Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Intelligence and Analysis to develop and disseminate a threat assessment regarding terrorist use of virtual currency.

H.R. 449. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002, to direct the Assistant Secretary of State and Local Law Enforcement to produce and disseminate an annual catalog on Department of Homeland Security training, publications, programs, and services for State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies.

H.R. 495. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require an annual report on the Office for State and Local Law Enforcement.

H.R. 504. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Department of Homeland Security to develop an engagement strategy with fusion centers, and for other purposes.

H.R. 769. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish in the Department of Homeland Security a board to coordinate and integrate departmental intelligence, activities, and policy related to counterterrorism, and for other purposes.