

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, later today the Senate will be taking up the borrower defense CRA vote and likely voting on it tomorrow. Each and every Senator will have a choice. They can side with working students, or they can side with predatory, for-profit colleges. It should not be a hard choice, and that choice certainly should not be partisan.

Students who were cheated and defrauded by predatory, for-profit colleges are often left with crushing debt and no path forward. That is why President Obama issued the borrower defense rule—to help students move forward with their lives and education and to get the debt relief they so urgently need.

Since taking office, Secretary DeVos has put up roadblock after roadblock for students and borrowers. First, she refused to implement the borrower defense rule that was on the books, until a court forced her to. She stalled on debt relief for hundreds of thousands of borrowers who were left waiting for an answer, with tens of thousands of them falling into default and collections. Once again, the Federal courts were forced to step in.

Now Secretary DeVos is trying to deny full relief to students who were clearly cheated by predatory colleges. For so many people, getting relief on your student debt means the difference between making ends meet or not, the difference between paying your rent or not, and the difference between getting back on your feet or not.

Now, to make matters even worse, Secretary DeVos has gone further than just delaying and limiting the relief. She has issued a disastrous new borrower defense rule intentionally designed to make it harder for defrauded borrowers—defrauded borrowers—to get relief even when predatory colleges clearly violated the law. It will prevent students from getting their day in court and let predatory colleges off the hook financially. This rule says, in the fine print, that students will be stuck repaying 97 percent of their fraudulent debt. The Department even admitted that students will be cheated out of \$2.5 billion per year, and students will only get 3 cents back for every dollar of fraud they experience. That is cruel and wrong.

The Congressional Review Act, or CRA, would immediately halt Secretary DeVos's rule in its tracks and prevent it from going into effect.

It is time to put an end to the non-stop efforts by this administration to prioritize the interests of predatory, for-profit schools over the interests of our students. It is time for Senators to decide, once and for all, if they will support our student loan borrowers who have been cheated out of a quality education or help corrupt institutions with their bottom line.

I want to personally thank Senator DURBIN for his tireless efforts to push this important issue forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, if your car is a lemon, you don't sue the bank; you sue the dealer. A college can be a lemon, just like a car can be. A college could promise a potential student a job and then tell them that 50 percent of their students scored perfectly on their SAT tests. The potential student might use that information to take out student loans and enroll in a college. Then, if the information turns out to be false, the student may be stuck with student loans they can't afford to repay. Unlike a car, if your college is a lemon, you do sue the bank, and the bank is the taxpayer.

Today, Democrats are forcing the Senate to vote on a Congressional Review Act that, if passed, would overturn the Trump administration's borrower defense rule. This process allows a borrower of a Federal student loan to have their loan forgiven if their institution misled them and that misrepresentation led to financial harm.

First, if your college closes, it is important for you to know that your loans are forgiven. Let me say that again. If your college closes, it is important for you to know that your student loan is forgiven.

There are about 6,000 colleges and universities in our country, and 783 of them closed in 2018. For example, when Corinthian College closed, that made a lot of news. Many students, though, transferred to another college. But if they didn't transfer, they weren't stuck with their student loans; their loans were forgiven.

We are not talking about that today when we vote. If your college isn't closing but it does defraud or mislead you, then you can file a claim. You can file a claim to have your loan forgiven, and you file it with the U.S. Department of Education.

There are 42 million Americans with an outstanding Federal student loan. In 2018, about 106,000 of those 42 million Americans filed what we call borrower defense claims. They claimed they were misled by the college when they used their student loan to go to that college.

In November 2016, the Obama administration issued a rule that required a borrower to demonstrate only that they had been misled, not that they had been financially harmed. The Trump administration fixes that overly broad regulation, while still protecting borrowers and the taxpayer.

Here is the difference. Under the Obama administration, if one student had filed a claim and proved that he or she had been defrauded, all the other students in that program had to do was attest they had been misled in a similar way before having their loans forgiven as well. It was sort of a class action.

It was unnecessary for the first student or subsequent students to prove they had been financially harmed by

that misrepresentation. What this meant is, if you went to a school that had misled students, your loan could be forgiven even if you had a job making \$85,000 a year.

Under the Trump administration, each student needs to file a claim, prove that they were defrauded and that they were financially harmed, and then their loan would be forgiven by the taxpayer. Remember, the bank is the taxpayer.

Secretary DeVos's borrower defense rule restores the original intent of the law that a borrower must be misled and harmed.

The new rule establishes a fair and clear process as to what a borrower must demonstrate: No. 1, that the school misled them; No. 2, that the student relied on that information to enroll in the school; and No. 3, that the student was financially harmed. The new rule gives the borrower ample time to submit a claim and ensures that the Department is basing their judgment on all available information.

The DeVos rule also protects the taxpayers who spend roughly \$100 billion a year on Federal student loans. It continues to allow the Secretary to recoup funds from an institution that has defrauded or misled borrowers. It encourages borrowers and the institution to resolve issues directly rather than involving the Federal Government.

And the new rule allows the Department to evaluate the level of harm to each individual borrower filing the claim and forgives the appropriate amount. For example, if you were told by the school that you would make \$45,000 a year when you graduated, but you are only making \$40,000, the Department could decide to forgive a part of your loan.

The Obama administration's rules went too far and allowed borrowers to have their loans forgiven whether or not they had actually suffered financial harm. Secretary DeVos's new borrower defense rule restores the original intent of the law that the borrower must be misled and harmed.

I encourage Senators to vote against today's Congressional Review Act.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:10 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:31 p.m., recessed until 2:10 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

ADVANCED GEOTHERMAL INNOVATION LEADERSHIP ACT OF 2019—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 1

Mr. UDALL. Madam President, it has been 1 year since the House of Representatives passed the most comprehensive package of anti-corruption

reforms since Watergate—1 year. H.R. 1 shines a light on secret campaign contributions, makes it easier to vote, and cleans up corruption in Washington. It is the solution to the gridlock that the American people are tired of in our Nation's Capital. But for 1 year, H.R. 1 has gathered dust on Majority Leader MCCONNELL's desk.

Every single Senator in the Democratic Congress and in our caucus here in the Senate is cosponsoring the For the People Act, which is Senator MERKLEY's and my companion bill to H.R. 1, For the People Act, but it is buried deep in the leader's legislative graveyard.

Over the course of the last year, as the For the People Act has languished, tens of millions of dollars were spent—much of it in secret—to influence the policymaking process.

Almost half a dozen States passed new laws restricting voter rights. The U.S. Supreme Court gave the green light to political gerrymandering. And President Trump, visiting his own properties dozens of times, funneled millions of taxpayer dollars into his own pocket. Yet, the Republican Senate is silent—silent as our democracy faces a crisis like none we have ever seen in our lifetimes.

We can draw a straight line from the crisis in our democracy to more than 300 bipartisan bills buried in the majority leader's graveyard. The bills waiting for Senate action are broadly supported by the American people, but they are opposed by the ultrawealthy, the special interests, the powerful corporations in that they try to buy our elections. Like Senator MCCONNELL, these Big Money interests are proud of killing these bills.

Here is what happened over the year that the For the People Act has been in the majority leader's graveyard: The number of Americans without health insurance increased by hundreds of thousands. California wildfires, worsened by climate change, cost \$25 billion. Flooding in the Midwest, also a casualty of climate change, cost \$12.5 billion. And 22 people were gunned down at an El Paso Walmart by a White nationalist armed with an assault rifle. Sadly, that was just a fraction of the thousands of gun-related deaths in our country last year.

This is not the America that the American people want. The American people want us to act. The gap between what the American people are clamoring for and what the Republican majority in the Senate is giving them is as wide as the Grand Canyon and is growing by the day.

Just look at the polls. Staggering numbers—closing in on 90 percent of Americans—support universal, affordable healthcare. With these numbers, you would think Republicans would be making sure that every American has healthcare, but, instead, Republicans have tried to dismantle the Affordable Care Act every chance they get. As we speak, President Trump and 18 Repub-

lican Governors and attorneys general are urging the Supreme Court to strike down the Affordable Care Act.

The American people want exorbitant prescription drug prices reeled in. Eighty percent of Americans think the cost of prescription drugs is far too high, and we all know that Big Pharma is the reason why. Yet legislation to reduce drug costs is also stuck—stuck among the hundreds of other bills on the majority leader's desk. Over the last two-plus decades, Big Pharma has spent \$3.7 billion—yes, that is billion—on lobbying. So today the same vial of insulin, which cost \$175 15 years ago, costs more than \$1,400 today. As a result, some diabetics ration their insulin, and some, as a result, have died.

It is not just our healthcare. The ability of our planet to support human life as we know it is at stake. Time and again, polling tells us the American people want us to tackle climate change. The American people accept the science. They understand the existential threat. Yet dozens of climate change bills lie dead in the Senate, including my Renewable Electricity Standard Act, to move us to 100 percent clean energy by midcentury.

Nearly 70 percent of Americans, including a majority of Republicans, believe we need to take aggressive action to fight climate change, and almost 80 percent believe the government should invest more in renewable energy resources. With these kinds of numbers, you would think Congress would be passing climate change legislation on a regular basis, except you would be wrong. Why?

Well, an expert analysis found that from 2000 to 2016, \$2 billion was spent on lobbying regarding climate policy, and the fossil fuel interests outspent environmental public interest groups by a factor of 10 to 1. This is not democracy at work. This is a complete perversion of our democratic ideals.

But the good news is we can change all of this. We can reinvigorate our democracy. We can end the reign of Big Money, empower small donors, make it easier to vote, stop political gerrymandering, and bring ethical conduct to Washington. The majority leader just needs to stop doing the bidding of the wealthy special interests and bring the For the People Act to the Senate floor.

I know my colleague Senator MERKLEY is here and Senator BENNET, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator CARDIN.

I yield to Senator CARDIN. Thank you all for being here today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I want to thank Senator UDALL for his leadership on the For the People Act, and I want to thank Senator MERKLEY for his leadership on this bill.

This bill contains many provisions that deal with the fundamental values of this country. I also am proud of my colleague in the House of Representa-

tives, Congressman SARBANES, who is the lead sponsor of H.R. 1, which is the For the People Act. It passed the House of Representatives over a year ago, and there has been no action on the floor of the Senate as a result of the majority leader's decision not to bring these bills to the floor.

As I said, it includes a lot of different bills that all deal with America's values. These are the values that are the strength of this Nation—free and fair elections. That is what we promote globally because we know that is key to a stable democratic society. Yet when you look at the way we conduct elections in this country, we are not setting a very high example. Look at how much money is involved in elections in this country. From the President of the United States to our local offices, too much money speaks to who is going to be able to get the attention of the voters. We need to change that.

We know that suppression of voters has been institutionalized as a strategy to win office. That should have no place in America. We should want the maximum amount of voters to participate in our political process, not try to prevent people from exercising their right to vote.

The For the People Act brings about meaningful change so that America, which is the shining example of democracy, can lead the world by the way we conduct our own elections. Let me mention two provisions that I am particularly pleased are included in the For the People Act. One is democracy restoration; that is, to allow those who have been convicted of crime, after they have served their penalty, to be able to participate in elections. We are one of only a few western democracies that permanently disenfranchise an individual who has been convicted of a felony. There are 6.1 million adults who currently are disenfranchised as a result of that provision, yet only 22 percent of those individuals are incarcerated. The other 78 percent have paid their penalty, have done their time, and are now reintegrated into society. It is in our interest to have them participate in our democratic system. It reduces recidivism. And, quite frankly, it is targeted at people of color. They are who have been most disenfranchised as a result of this provision. Thirty-four States still have restrictions, and 12 have lifetime restrictions on those convicted of a felony. The Democracy Restoration Act would remedy that situation.

The second bill I am going to refer to very briefly is the Deceptive Practices and Voter Prevention Act that targets primarily minority voters to suppress their vote. It is the modern Jim Crow laws in which we find we are using modern technology. We have campaign strategies aimed at minority communities to give them misinformation about how they can vote or whether they are eligible to vote or where they can vote. That is being used today. We have to make sure that doesn't happen in the American election system.

For the People provides meaningful changes so that we don't allow suppression of votes to be an institutionalized strategy to try to win an election, so that we have the maximum participation of voters in our process, and it deals with the ever-flowing increase in the amount of dollars that are put into American elections.

The U.S. Senate should not be a graveyard. Majority Leader McCONNELL has prevented hundreds of bills—bipartisan bills—from coming to the floor of the U.S. Senate. It has been a year since we have had the For the People Act passed by the House of Representatives. It is well past time for the Senate to take up this legislation so that we can show the American people we support the values that have made America the great democracy in our country.

Thank you very much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, Shakespeare's great play "Hamlet" began with the phrase: Something is rotten in Denmark.

Well, something is rotten in Congress, and what is rotten in Congress is dark money. Citizens United—perhaps one of the most foolish decisions ever rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court—opened unlimited spending into our politics, which benefits whom? It benefits those who have unlimited money to spend and a motive to spend it in politics. That is not a group of people whose voices were not being heard here already. That is the favored group. But Citizens United opened the door for them to spend unlimited money, and then the Supreme Court failed to police its own decision. Its own decision said this unlimited spending was going to be independent of candidates and transparent to the public. Well, they are 0 for 2. It has been a decade, and they have never even tried to enforce the basic predicates of their decision. It is a shameful, shameful effort by the Court. Now, as a result, we have throughout our politics this dark money tsunami of slime.

How bad is it? These groups have spent \$4.5 billion since Citizens United—\$4.5 billion trying to influence Congress. Do you think they were doing that in the public interest? Of course not. Do you wonder why bills die here in the legislative graveyard of the Senate? Take a guess.

Outside groups—these phony-baloney front groups for these big special interests—are now outspending candidates in races. In fact, in the decade after Citizens United, outside groups outspent candidates in 126 different congressional races. And it is a very small group of people behind it. The top 10 donor households gave a combined \$1.1 billion to these front groups. Do you think they were looking out for the public interests? Dream on.

Who are the big spenders of this dark money? National Rifle Association;

Americans for Prosperity, which is the Koch brothers front group; Crossroads GPS, which is Karl Rove's front group; and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the champions of climate denial and obstruction.

Do you want to know why we are not getting things done around here? It is because billions of dollars are being spent secretly by special interests to shut things down, and it is creeping now even into the courts. The Federalist Society, which is picking our judges, is at the center of a \$250 million dark money network. A group that ran the campaigns against Garland and for Gorsuch and then afterward for Kavanaugh got an individual \$17 million donation for each of those two campaigns. It is actually probably the same donor, which means somebody out there anonymously gave \$35 million to determine the makeup of the U.S. Supreme Court, and we don't know who that is. We don't know what business they have before the Court.

As I said, Hamlet begins with "something is rotten in . . . Denmark." Something is rotten in Congress, and the rot is creeping over to the Supreme Court, and it is dark money, and it is the patriotic and decent thing to do to extirpate this menace.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last year, I was proud to stand with my colleagues as we introduced the For the People Act in the Senate just weeks after it passed the House of Representatives. This measure has already passed the House of Representatives.

If you took civics 101, they explain that after the House took action on a measure, it came here. So the obvious question is, What happened to it? It has been a year. It must be here somewhere. Well, we know exactly where it is. It is in Senator McCONNELL's office. He is the Republican Leader of the U.S. Senate, and he has made a conscious decision that hundreds of bills just like this one will not even be considered on the floor of the Senate. It isn't that he doesn't have a majority; he does. But he doesn't want us to even debate or discuss these bills before the American people.

This U.S. Senate once enjoyed its reputation as the world's most deliberative body, which means we came here, debated, argued, and voted on things like amendments and bills like this one. Last year in the U.S. Senate, the calendar year 2019, we considered exactly 22 amendments in the entire year—22 amendments in 1 year in this Senate. Six of them were offered by Senator PAUL, who, with a gun to our heads, said: If you don't give me a vote on my amendment, you can't go home. All six of his amendments were defeated, but that just gives you an example of why there is so little activity and why this floor is so empty so many times.

In fact, this floor has become a museum piece where bystanders, wit-

nesses, and spectators can come in, sit in the Galleries, and look down on the desks that used to be occupied by Senators who debated and voted. We don't do that anymore. Instead, we consider one after the other after the other of judicial nominations. I am not going to get into that issue because it has been touched on already.

My contribution to this For the People Act goes to the heart of political campaigns. If you don't think American political campaigns are long enough, if you would like us to be on television a few more months each year, hang on tight because it is coming. If you don't think enough money is being spent on American political campaigns, hang on tight because more is coming. If you want to reach the point where we have no idea where most of the money is coming from that funds these campaigns, hang on. The Citizens United decision by the Supreme Court across the street has set the stage for that, and that is where we are headed in America today.

My proposal for fair elections now moves in exactly the opposite directions—shorter campaigns, smaller contributions, more confrontation between candidates over issues than to have this battle of television ads that goes on now.

My act would create a voluntary, small-donor, public financing system for Senate candidates who agree to raise only small-dollar contributions. I know it is a dream, but think about what it would do to change American politics. Here is how it would work: Qualified Senate candidates would receive grants based on their State's population, 6-to-1 matching grants for contributions they get of \$200 or less—smaller contributors—and vouchers for purchasing television advertising other than social media. Once candidates reach the maximum amount of matching funds they receive, they continue to raise an unlimited amount of contributions of \$200 or less—a \$200 cap on contributions. They can also raise money from small-donor political action committees, known as People PACs, which allow citizens to make their voices heard by aggregating just small contributions—no big hitters.

The fair elections public financing system would elevate the views and interests of a diverse group of Americans, rather than the traditional wealthy class, and we would pay for it without spending a dime in taxpayer dollars. Our system would be financed with assessments on wealthy bad actors and industry law breakers. In the 2018 midterm elections, the price of victory for a successful House congressional candidate averaged about \$2 million, and 35 Senate candidates who won in 2018 spent an average of \$15.7 million apiece.

If we don't rein in the cost and length of campaigns, shame on us. We have to reclaim the reputation of this great Congress and the U.S. Senate, and it starts with the way we finance our campaigns.

In addition to the Fair Elections Now Act, this bill has measures to increase access to the ballot box, to strengthen election security, to improve oversight in our campaign finances, and to remove corruption from office.

I think it is outrageous that we live in an America in which people are dreaming up ways to restrict and restrain people's right to vote. If there is anything fundamental to a democracy, it is the vote of those who are legally entitled in America. I have been in this business for a while. I started off by losing a few elections. I didn't enjoy a moment of that, but there was a notion that at least the American people had spoken in those elections, and I accepted the verdicts of those people. They have come back and given me a few chances since to be in public service.

Let's make sure the American people have the voice—the most important voice in this process—through their right to vote. Keep foreigners out of the process, and put Americans into them. Don't make it hard to vote. Make it easy for those who are legally entitled to vote.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I come to the floor to mark the 1-year anniversary of the House passage of H.R. 1, the For the People Act. I am honored to be here with my colleagues, and I am here to urge the Republicans to bring this legislation to the floor for a vote.

This bill has been languishing in the legislative graveyard for a year. I know because I have 13 provisions in this bill. This bill—the combined work of so many people in this Chamber, including of my friends Senator UDALL, Senator MERKLEY, and many others—would fundamentally improve our democracy by protecting voting rights, securing our election systems, and getting dark money out of our campaign system.

Why is it so important for us to act on this bill? Every one of the things we want to get done—finally addressing the climate crisis, immigration reform, improving people's healthcare, making healthcare more affordable—depend on there being a democracy that works so people can make sure their votes count.

At a time when the right to vote is under attack, when foreign adversaries are trying to exploit our divisions and interfere in our elections—something we are going to be briefed about this afternoon from intelligence agencies—and when an unprecedented amount of money from special interests is drowning out the voices of the American people, we need to take bold action to restore Americans' confidence in our political system. That is exactly what the For the People Act does.

As the ranking member of the Committee on Rules and Administration, I know this bill is important. I am frustrated that we have not had more

Rules Committee hearings about things like the oversight of the FEC. I am frustrated that, just today, a Republican Commissioner was put forth for a hearing, recommended by the White House, when there is a highly qualified Democratic candidate who would be the first person of color in history to serve on the Federal Election Commission who has been vetted and has cleared the White House. Yet we only saw the Republican candidate. This is why this bill is so important.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. As we celebrate, we are reminded that, throughout our country's history, the right to vote has been hard fought and hard won. Just 2 weeks ago, I had the honor of joining Congressman JOHN LEWIS—a true hero for voting rights—on the 55th annual Selma bridge crossing to commemorate the sacrifices made on Bloody Sunday.

When we reflect on the sacrifices that have been made for the right to vote, one thing is truly clear—that the fight is not over. There are people today who are working to take the right to vote away. Their work comes in many forms: voter ID laws, gerrymandered districts, purging people from voting rolls, and one that we just saw just last week on Super Tuesday—polling place closures that result in voters having to wait hours in line just to cast their ballots. Just last week in the State of Texas, some African-American voters waited more than 5 hours in line. When a reporter asked one group of voters how the group got through it, a man said: We thought they were making us wait on purpose, so we motivated each other to stay.

The policies that led to those long lines didn't happen by accident. Discrimination in voting is happening, as the Fourth Circuit noted in a North Carolina decision on gerrymandering—and these are the words of the judges—with “surgical precision.” Discrimination in voting is happening with surgical precision against the African-American community.

Our democracy is stronger when more people participate, and our policies are better when more people participate, so we should be making it easier, not harder, to vote. Every eligible American should be automatically registered to vote when one turns 18. That is a bill that I lead. If Target, which is my hometown company, can track a pair of shoes in Hawaii with a SKU number, if everyone gets a Social Security number, we should be able to make sure that people who are eligible to vote are automatically registered when they turn 18.

So as to end the practice of gerrymandering, we also need to reform how we draw district maps by having an independent commission in each State. Certainly, we also need to ban the purging of voting rolls. As my friend Stacey Abrams has said, if you don't go to church or the synagogue or the

mosque for a year or so, you don't lose your right to worship. If you don't go to a PTA meeting or any other kind of Rotary Club or anything for a few years, you don't lose your right to assemble under the U.S. Constitution, and if you have not voted in a few elections and show up when you have been registered but, somehow, they never sent you the notice and, because there is no same-day registration, you find out you cannot vote, even though you had been duly registered to vote, you should not lose your right to vote under the U.S. Constitution. That is exactly what is going on right now with voting purges.

I am proud to lead provisions in the important For the People Act that would accomplish the goals to end these discriminatory practices. Of course, we also have to make voting more secure, which is my last topic.

It has been 1,218 days since Russia attacked us in 2016, and we have yet to pass comprehensive election security legislation. The next major elections are just 240 days away, and primaries, as we know, are underway. We must take action now to secure our elections from foreign threats. That is why I have championed legislation to beef up our election systems, which was included in H.R. 1, by providing States with the resources to modernize our voting equipment—some of this has been passed here in this Chamber—but also to set standards for Federal elections, which is the key part—requirements like paper ballots and post-election audits. We still have States—entire States—that have no backup paper ballots.

I am not going to spend time going through all of those States, but let me tell you that the Russians know exactly which States those are that have no backup paper ballots. We just had some caucuses in this country, and people resorted to looking at those paper ballots. Imagine if we were hacked in a certain county or in a certain State and there were no backup paper ballots. What would that do to a Federal election?

These are the basics of a secure election system, but in 2020, as I noted, voters in eight States will now cast their ballots on machines that produce no paper trails. There are 16 States that still have no statewide audit requirements to confirm the results of an election, and a majority of States relies on voting systems that are at least 10 years old. That is wrong.

That is why Senator LANKFORD and I, as well as Senator WARNER, Senator HARRIS, Senator BURR, and many others, have been pushing the Senate to act, but we have been gut-punched because calls were made from the White House and calls were made from Senator MCCONNELL a year ago to stop the votes to get that bill through the committee to the Senate floor.

Making voting easier and more secure is only part of the solution. We also have to get dark money out of our

politics and increase transparency. Americans know this. They know there is way too much dark money in our politics. In poll, after poll, after poll, they overwhelmingly want to have more transparency. Campaign finance reform is a central part of H.R. 1 for a reason. If we don't put a check on the corrupting influence of money in politics, American voices will continue to be drowned out by special interests.

Think about the three things I have just proposed: making voting easier, securing our election systems, and getting Big Money out of our campaigns. These are not radical proposals. These are proposals on which nearly everyone in our country agrees.

I conclude by noting, in addition to marking the 1-year anniversary of the passage of H.R. 1 in the House, today is Harriet Tubman Day. Most people remember Harriet Tubman for her incredible work on the Underground Railroad, where she repeatedly risked her life for the freedom of others. I recently watched the movie "Harriet" and highly recommend it to my colleagues. Yet Harriet Tubman didn't stop her fight for freedom and equality after the Civil War ended. She took up the cause of women's suffrage and worked tirelessly until she was 90 years old in helping women get the right to vote. We celebrate her life today because she spent a lifetime bending the arc of our moral universe toward justice.

The best way we can honor her and the countless others who have risked their lives for our country and our democracy is to continue the work of improving our democracy so that it works better for the next generation. That is what the For the People Act is all about.

I urge my Republican colleagues—I implore them—a group of people who I know believes in freedom—to allow us to have this bill come up for a vote to ensure that people have the cherished freedom to vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this bill.

I thank my colleague Senator UDALL, of New Mexico, and my colleague Senator MERKLEY, of Oregon, for their extraordinary work.

I don't know if they have ever had the experience that I have often had or the Presiding Officer has had, but there are times, in my having spent a week here after having done absolutely nothing, when I am walking through the Denver International Airport, and I want to put a paper bag over my head because I am so embarrassed about the failure of this institution to live up to even the barest responsibilities that we have.

I mean, we can't even pass a basic infrastructure bill around this place while China is building 3,500 miles of fiber-optic cable to connect Latin

America with Africa and back to China to export the surveillance state from China. That is what China is doing there while we are doing nothing here. We have become the land of flickering lights, whereby the standard of success is whether we have kept the lights on for another 2 hours or another 4 hours.

What the American people need to understand is that this is the ideological end state of what the Freedom Caucus came to Washington to do. It has become the ideological end state of what MITCH MCCONNELL can do because, in the rubble of our institutions, they can achieve the objectives they want to achieve. They can put right-wing judges on the courts without our institutions working. They can come out here and cut taxes for rich people and claim it is a middle-class tax cut without our institutions working. Yet what we are unable to do without those institutions working is invest in our infrastructure, make sure that we have an education system in this country that is actually liberating people from their economic circumstances instead of reinforcing their economic circumstances, ensure that we are doing something on the climate and doing something on guns.

It has been more than 20 years since Columbine happened in Colorado. My State—the Western State, a Second Amendment State—passed background checks after Columbine. My three daughters grew up knowing they lived in a State that was actually trying to respond to what was going on in their schools—not true of the U.S. Congress.

The reason for much of this inaction is the Supreme Court's decision with regard to Citizens United. I will not belabor the point, for I know my colleague from Hawaii was kind to let me go ahead of her, but let me just repeat this: After Citizens United, 10 donors over the past decade have contributed \$1.2 billion to our policy. That has created a corruption of inaction in the U.S. Senate. It is not corruption that you see because it is a corruption of inaction. It is the bill that is not introduced. It is the committee hearing that is not held. It is the vote that is never taken for fear that, if you do that, some billionaire is going to drop \$30 million on your race and run a primary against you in your next election.

Do you want to know why we can have a Senate in the United States that votes on only 22 amendments in a year? That is the reason. Do you want to know why we have a Senate wherein 75 percent of the votes are personnel votes and 25 percent are actually on amendments? That is the reason. We have to overcome it, not for Democrats or Republicans but for the American people because this is their exercise in self-government. This is the way they make decisions.

I know these reforms can work because they have worked in Colorado with a bipartisan commission to end gerrymandering, mail-in voting, and automatic and same-day voting reg-

istration. The result is that we have the second highest voter participation rate in America. How can that not be good for our democracy?

So my hope is that at some point, when he hears the voices of the American people, MITCH MCCONNELL will relent and allow these bills to come to the floor.

He described this bill last year as a power grab—a power grab—and I will accept that if it is understood that it is a power grab by the American people, which is what it is—an effort to get money out of our politics and to put people back into our politics so we can start doing the work that the American people sent us here to do.

With that, I thank my colleague from Hawaii again for her indulgence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I also want to thank Senators Udall and Merkley for their extraordinary work on the For the People Act.

We are confronting a crisis in our democracy. We have a President who repeatedly invites foreign intervention in our elections, engages in widespread corruption, attacks the news media as part of a broader assault on the truth, and uses false claims of voter fraud to legitimize voter suppression across the country.

These challenges to our democracy are not limited to the Trump administration, but this President has undoubtedly made things much, much worse. It is why I joined an overwhelming number of my Democratic colleagues of both Chambers of Congress in cosponsoring H.R. 1, the For the People Act.

This crucial piece of legislation is the most expansive and serious attempt to strengthen American democracy in decades. Among its many provisions, this bill would root out corruption by attacking the dark money in our politics. The door was opened in the Citizens United decision by the Supreme Court. This bill would also secure our elections from foreign interference and restore voter protections that Republicans have spent decades attacking for their own partisan political benefit.

Like many of my colleagues, I am particularly focused on combating the Republican Party's efforts to disenfranchise millions of minority voters. I could spend hours detailing the efforts throughout American history to make it as difficult as possible—or even impossible—for people of color to vote.

But today I want to focus on the impact of the Supreme Court's 2013 decision in Shelby County. In this 5-to-4 decision, Chief Justice Roberts and the Court's conservative Justices effectively gutted the core protections of the Voting Rights Act. They decided that States with long histories of discrimination no longer had to obtain Federal approval for voting changes under the Voting Rights Act.

As author Carol Anderson explained, Chief Justice Roberts has “[l]ong [been] an opponent of the Voting Rights Act,” and in Shelby County he used arguments that had been “carefully crafted” over “several decades” to eviscerate the Voting Rights Act.

Without the constraints of the Voting Rights Act, States with long histories of discrimination ramped up voter suppression, from racist voter ID laws to eliminating early voting, to purging voter rolls and closing polling places.

In the 6 years following the Shelby County decision, for example, States previously subjected to preclearance under the Voting Rights Act closed at least 1,688 polling sites. Texas alone closed 750 polling places.

The closures had their intended effect. A study at Harvard University found that minority voters are six times more likely than White voters to wait longer than an hour to vote. Longer waits impose greater costs for voting on minorities and deter them from voting in future elections. We saw the impact of these policies just last week on Super Tuesday, which saw inordinately long lines in minority precincts in Texas.

Mr. Hervis Rogers waited more than 6 hours to vote, but he was determined to make his voice heard. So when he got to his polling place at Texas Southern University, a historically Black college in Houston, he patiently waited in line until he could cast his vote at 1:30 in the morning.

Mr. Rogers’s experience last week speaks to one part of a broader problem. The Republican Party is so invested in voter suppression because they view it as an effective tool to win elections, and these efforts had devastating consequences for our country in the 2016 Presidential election—the first Presidential election held in 50 years that did not have the protections of the Voting Rights Act.

We saw plummeting minority turnout across the country, including in the key swing States of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Carol Anderson observed that in 2016, 50,000 fewer people voted in 1—just 1—overwhelmingly African-American county in Wisconsin. Donald Trump, by comparison, won Wisconsin by only 27,000 votes.

Efforts to further suppress the minority vote in swing States continue to date. Last year, for example, a conservative interest group sued Wisconsin’s State Elections Commission to force a purge of 209,000 infrequent voters from the voter rolls. Although a lower State court granted the conservative group’s request, a Wisconsin appeals court put the voter purge on hold while the fight in court continues.

These ongoing voter suppression efforts serve as stark reminders of why we need to pass the For the People Act. This bill not only blocks common strategies Republicans have used to make it harder for minorities to vote,

but it also includes critical democracy reforms to make their votes count.

This legislation would also set strong national standards to protect voting access that reflect and improve upon steps that have already been taken by States like Hawaii. Last year, for example, Hawaii became the fourth State in the country to provide mail-in ballots to all voters. Our State also has same-day voter registration, preregistration for residents under the age of 18, and a 10-day early voting period.

While some States are stepping up to protect voting rights, Congress needs to take strong and decisive action to restore voting rights and end voter suppression across the country.

We also need to take an equally strong stand against Donald Trump’s efforts to pack our Federal courts with judges who have dedicated their careers to undermining the voting rights of minorities.

At the Supreme Court, where Donald Trump has appointed two Justices, there have been a number of cases attacking the voting rights of minority communities, and there are real concerns that the Roberts Court will continue to uphold these voter suppression efforts.

In the lower courts, Trump judges include Andrew Brasher, now an Eleventh Circuit judge, who argued in support of gutting the Voting Rights Act in the Shelby County case; and Kyle Duncan, now a Fifth Circuit judge, who defended North Carolina’s discriminatory voting law that the Fourth Circuit found—and I quote the Fourth Circuit—“target[ed] African Americans with almost surgical precision.” These are overt acts to suppress voting.

President Trump’s hostility to voting rights is so extreme. He is appointing anti-voting rights advocates even to courts that do not handle voting issues, such as Stephen Schwartz for the Court of Federal Claims and Stephen Vaden for the Court of International Trade. Both have no experience with these courts, but both have defended North Carolina’s discriminatory voting law.

The right to vote is one of our most sacred rights, and we must do all that we can to protect it for all Americans. That is why I will continue to fight back against Donald Trump’s court packing and fight for the passage of critical legislation like the For the People Act.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I am pleased to be here with my colleagues to fight to restore the American Constitution. I am pleased to be here with Senator TOM UDALL, who has led the For the People Act, and my colleagues MAZIE HIRONO, MICHAEL BENNET, AMY KLOBUCHAR, and DICK DURBIN—all speaking up to say that we must defend the American Constitution.

At the root of that is our system of electing those who represent us, and that election system, America, is now deeply corrupted by gerrymandering, by extensive, persistent voter suppression, and by dark money. It affects everything that we should achieve for the people of the United States.

If we believe we need to end the price gouging of Americans on pharmaceutical drugs, we need to end this corruption and pass the For the People Act. If we believe that every child deserves a quality K-12 education and that our children should be able to go to college without a mountain of debt, we need to end this corruption and pass the For the People Act. If we believe that Americans should be living in homes and apartments, not sleeping on the streets, we need to end this corruption and pass the For the People Act. If we believe that we have a responsibility to pass on a habitable and livable planet, free of pollution, to our children and grandchildren, we need to end this corruption and pass the For the People Act.

This corruption—gerrymandering, voter suppression, dark money—is all about eviscerating the very soul of our Constitution—the “we the people” vision of our Constitution, that we would not be like European nations that had government by and for the powerful, but that here in America representatives of the people would be able to have government by and for the people.

It is Jefferson who said: The real test of whether we succeed is whether the laws reflect the will of the people. But instead, we see the laws in this Chamber being constructed solely, uniquely, and, unfortunately for the most powerful and wealthy among us rather than the people.

Gerrymandering, where voters should choose their politicians but, instead, politicians choose their voters—that is a deep and powerful corruption that has extensive impact on the Chamber that is just down the hall.

We have seen what happened in North Carolina, where 47 percent of the State’s popular vote in House races won 23 percent of the seats and, similarly, in Pennsylvania, in the election before last, and the Supreme Court threw up its hands and said: We can’t do anything about this, even though the Pennsylvania Supreme Court understood it is so important to fairness and equal representation and took it on and solved it.

This bill sets up independent commissions across the country so that the districts for representation are drawn fairly.

Then there is voter suppression and intimidation. If you believe in our Constitution and if you honor it, you believe in voter empowerment, not voter suppression.

We have seen a flood of suppression and intimidation since the Supreme Court took a hatchet to the Voting Rights Act in the Shelby County case—voter ID laws, purges of voter rolls,

moving polling locations, cutting back on the hours, cutting back on the staffing. We have seen it in North Dakota. We have seen it in Georgia. We have seen it in Ohio, and we have seen it in North Carolina. We have seen it in Iowa. We have seen it in New Hampshire, and we saw it in Texas last week.

There are strategies to keep the poor from voting, strategies to keep those Americans of minority communities from voting, strategies to keep American Native Indians from voting, and strategies to keep college students from voting. Talk about the intense and deliberate corruption of America. Voter suppression and intimidation is it.

But this bill lays it out—automatic voter registration, national vote-by-mail, prohibiting the purging of voting rolls, online registration to enable people to have a smooth, solid road to be able to participate, rather than roadblocks and land mines to prevent them from participating.

Then we have the dark money. These are the most powerful and richest Americans trying to drown out the voices of millions of Americans through unlimited dark and dirty money in our campaigns. Americans know the system is now rigged. They know it is now corrupted by this money. We have seen an explosion of this money since 2010 when the Citizens United decision came down, a 5-to-4 decision from the Supreme Court. It bloated to more than \$4.4 billion.

This bill takes that on. It shines a light on all the money so we know where it is coming from and where it is going, so it can't be hidden in a shell game from one level, to the next, to the next. It requires honest ads. It allows small-donor matching grants. This bill, for the people, says no to corruption and yes to the "we the people" Constitution of the United States of America.

If we want to act on the fundamentals for families on healthcare, on housing, on education, on infrastructure, and on living-wage jobs; if we want to take on the Equality Act so doors are no longer slammed for the LGBTQ community; if we are going to take on the carbon pollution that is destroying so much in American agriculture and our forests and our fishing, doing so much damage with fiercer storms; if we are going to take this on, we must pass the For the People Act.

This act has passed the House down the hall. It has come down here, and it has been buried by the Republican leadership in this Chamber in, I must say, one of the most deliberate acts of sabotage of the Constitution we have ever seen on the floor of this Senate, and that sabotage must end.

Therefore, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 39, H.R. 1; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid

upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Is there objection?

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I must admit I was sitting here, and I thought I was coming over for H.R. 1 from the House, which was attempted to be put on the floor—a bill that was supposedly designed to create ballot security—and I got here and found out that this is the bill that will right all wrongs. I had no idea that in one piece of legislation, so many things could happen.

I understand also it is a bill that stops the subversion of the Constitution. I actually always thought a principal purpose of our Constitution was to divide between the State and the Federal Government those things that could be better done by local government and those things that could be better done by State government. That certainly is not what I heard today.

I also thought that the reason for this bill supposedly from the House was a bill that would create a level of election security that I never thought the bill would create, but I haven't heard that.

I almost went down to ask as my friend was finishing up, am I really here for H.R. 1, or is this some other bill that does so much more than I ever could have imagined that H.R. 1 could do?

In March of 2019, the House did pass this bill. It gave unprecedented control to the Federal Government over the elections of the country. You take away—you moved as far as you possibly could, with this bill, the responsibility for running an election at a precinct in a jurisdiction.

At that time, the Senate requested that the bill be taken up, and it was objected to—by me, actually. In the intervening year, the bill hasn't changed. It appears to have gotten a lot better at what it might possibly be designed to do, which appears to be everything that anybody would ever want to deal with, but what it really does is it still represents a one-size-fits-all Federal power grab to take control of election administration away from the States and in most cases away from the community and in many cases away from a locally elected official whose—the very essence of the job they have been elected to do is to be sure that not only can people vote but that people have confidence in what happens on election day. That, in my view, would change dramatically if you move that responsibility from the people who have it now to some group here in Washington, DC, who would try to administer elections nationally.

I am confident that wouldn't happen. In fact, the security of our elections—since the impetus of this was supposed to be more secure elections when the House first said they were going to

pass a big election bill that ensures elections will be more secure, I think the thing that secures our elections the most is the diversity of the system. This bill would undermine the decentralization of the system. It would undermine the ability of local officials to be responsible.

I spent 20 years as either the election official in the biggest county in our State where one person had that responsibility or as the secretary of state, the chief election official. I have been advised by and I have given advice to and I have worked with local election officials who are incredibly motivated to see that what happens on election day is what voters want to have happen—the ability to cast their ballots with minimum obstacles and with maximum confidence that what happened on election day was what voters intended to do. I think I understand how hard those election officials work and everything they do to ensure that voters will be heard.

It is not just my opinion. President Obama in 2016 said that "there is no serious person out there who would suggest somehow that you could even rig America's elections, in part because they are so decentralized and the number of votes involved." I actually agree with that. I think that was right then, and I think that is right now.

But this bill tells States how they could run every aspect of their election. It takes away the authority of States to determine their own process in voter registration. It requires States—many States do this. If States do this and they think it works in their State, fine with me. But this would require online registration. It would require automatic voter registration. It would require same-day registration. If we were concerned about access to the voter rolls, none of those things would be things that from Washington, DC, we would believe we could require. It requires the criteria of how you process how a voter can be removed from the voter rolls. It tells States what kind of election equipment they must use. It tells States how their ballots have to be counted. It tells States how their ballots have to be audited. It even goes so far as to tell States what kind of paper their ballots have to be printed on.

That is exactly what happens when you decide you are going to make something better by making one big one-size-fits-all system. Nothing is too small for that system to decide they can do better than anybody locally could decide, even what paper the ballot is printed on.

This doesn't stop at that, though. It changes Federal campaign finance law. It includes politicizing the Federal Elections Commission by changing it from an evenly divided number to a partisan, five-member Commission where three members would always be of the opposite party from the other two. It creates a program for public financing of Federal elections, which

was just described as “grants to politicians”—the most ingenious description I have heard of giving tax money to politicians to run elections. It would be a grant to politicians.

This bill hasn't changed since last March, but a lot has changed since last March. The Intelligence Committee that I am a member of has released three volumes of its report on Russian interference in the 2016 election. Those three volumes include numerous recommendations to combat foreign election interference in our elections. The vast majority of those recommendations are not in this law. Many of those recommendations have been passed by the Senate and not passed by the House.

We are going to have a briefing in just about 50 minutes from the FBI, the Homeland Security people, and the people who are actually working to secure our elections so that every Senator can hear what is happening there. None of that is in this bill.

State and local officials have moved dramatically since 2016 to upgrade their systems. All but two States, I believe, now have largely moved to where they have an auditable paper trail, which I was always insisting upon as a State election official. States are moving in that direction. They are changing their own laws. Federal officials are giving them advice when they need it but not trying to take over.

This bill not only doesn't acknowledge what State and local officials have been doing, but it actually undermines what they have been doing by setting standards that the brandnew equipment might not fit—equipment that has a paper trail, equipment that States had just bought, equipment they bought that they think would do a better job but might not be in full compliance with this new law.

There certainly are things that the Federal Government can do to assist, particularly in securing local elections and giving advice to local election officials. H.R. 1 does not do most of those things. It doesn't meet the standard that it sets for itself. It doesn't address the actual challenges in elections. So, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, my colleague has just demonstrated why this bill should be on the floor. He has given extensive conversation on a series of points that should be deliberated upon.

I say to my colleague from Missouri, isn't this what we should be doing as a body, putting issues on the floor of the Senate and debating them for the future of this country so that we can get, if you will, right to the facts rather than to have things obscured by the fact that the issue is not on the floor.

So I would encourage my colleague from Missouri to go back to his caucus and say: You know, I just gave a vigorous opposition to this bill, but I believe in the role of the Senate in delib-

erating the issues. So I think this bill should be put on the floor, and I think it should be open to amendments.

I can hear from what my colleague has stated that he probably thinks the bill should be shrunk and probably thinks it could also be expanded. Good. That is the point of having debate and amendments on the floor of the Senate.

So I would hope, in the spirit of your comments, you would be willing to actually stand up and debate this bill and advocate for your colleagues to debate this bill on the floor of the Senate, because once upon a time, this floor would have been full of Members arguing over key issues, enlightening each other, pointing out the flaws in their thinking, but now substantive policy bills don't arrive here on the floor because of an unconstitutional position—one that is not delineated in the Constitution—the majority leader has decided that nothing should be debated on this floor that he alone doesn't want considered.

Let's think about some of the points that were just raised. One point was that the Federal Government should have no role in elections; it should all be left to local officials. Didn't we have that debate in 1965 in the Voting Rights Act? Why did the Federal Government say that we should, in fact, have laws for the integrity of our elections? It was because there were all kinds of forms of voter intimidation and voter suppression, keeping the people of the United States, the citizens of the United States, from fully participating in their democratic Republic. It is the Constitution that laid out this role for the Federal Government, saying Congress may at any time by law make or alter such regulations regarding elections. So it is the Constitution that envisioned that if States failed to protect the integrity of our elections, then we should act right here, right now.

My colleague said he didn't like the idea that the bill says what type of paper to use. Well, that's certainly something that can be worked out. But shouldn't we have paper ballots everywhere?

My colleague said local officials are doing a great job. Then why were people in minority districts waiting 7 hours to vote, when people in many other districts—more affluent districts—were waiting 7 minutes to vote? That is discrimination, straight and simple. Shouldn't we debate eliminating that discrimination here on the floor of the Senate?

This is about the integrity of our elections. This is about the vision of our Constitution. This is about not letting the wealthy and powerful control what happens in our United States of America.

If we do not address this corruption of this Senate and of the voting institutions, then we, in fact, will fail to fulfill our responsibility under the Constitution of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

AUSTRALIAN WILDFIRES

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to honor the alliance we have between America and Australia. Specifically, I want to pay tribute to the partnership we have with regard to firefighting. America's century-old friendship with Australia has safeguarded two great nations.

July of 2018 marked the 100th anniversary of our historic victory in the pivotal Battle of Hamel during World War I. The Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty came together to cement this military alliance. Since that treaty was signed in 1951, we have always supported each other in times of crisis. It is this enduring spirit of mutual concern and cooperation and commitment that we celebrate today.

Senator BEN CARDIN of Maryland and I have put together a bipartisan resolution paying tribute to our firefighting alliance.

In recent years, the United States and Australia have suffered some of the hottest, driest weather on record. As a result, we have seen longer, fiercer wildfire seasons. For over 15 years, the two nations have come together to battle some of the most damaging and deadly fires. In 2018, more than 100 Australians helped the United States combat wildfires ravaging the West Coast.

For our part, U.S. agencies have been sending American firefighters to help the people of Australia. These agencies include the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Most recently, 362 firefighters helped battle this season's brutal Australian brush fires. These brush fires burned over 30 million acres before the last fires were put out just this month.

Tragically, three former American servicemembers died in a plane crash fighting the wildfires in Australia. One of these heroes, Ian McBeth of Montana, was actually a member of the Wyoming National Guard. Also killed were firefighters Paul Hudson of Arizona and Rick DeMorgan of Florida.

This resolution honors their ultimate sacrifice. It also recognizes the sacrifices of all of the courageous American and Australian firefighters.

I especially want to thank the 15 firefighters from my home State of Wyoming who assisted Australia: Travis Braten, Anna Cressler, Peter Freire, Kyle Miller, Chris Rankin, Eldred Slagowski, Traci Weaver, Timothy Haas, Richard Howe, Frank Keeler, Robert McConchie, Shane McCormick, Heath Morgan, Rance Neighbors, and Jonathan Ziegler.

I ask unanimous consent that the complete list of all of the names of those U.S.-Australia brush fire firefighters be printed in the RECORD.

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

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

US AUSTRALIA BUSH FIRES

Charles Russell, Peter Butteri, Bradford James Reed, Dylan Howard Brooks, Kyle Cowan, Raymond Anthony Crowe, John Craig Fremont, Evan Elliot Karp, Adam Kohley, Theodore Plumlee, Karen Irene Scholl, Brian A Lopez, Sean W Snyder, Lori E. Hisek, Anthony Edward Acheson, Jonathan F Catron, Sean C Cox, Nathaniel Curtis Dierking, Melanie N Dolan, Jared B Gilmore.

Bill Kuche, Bethany Dawn Kurtz, Clyde England, Benjamin Stuart Evans, John M Garrett, Cody Goff, Ryan Hagenah, Koreena L Haynes, Jake T Roocke, Jamie Rogers, Brady Schultz, Greg Smith, Eugene H Thul, RobRoy Williams, Corey Wood, Mark Empey, Leander Real Bird, Angel Acosta, Kristen M Allison, Victor Almanza.

Matthew A Aoki, Pablo Arriaga, Shane W Bender, Salvador W Cody Blanco, Fred Brewster, Danielle T Cardenas, John Casey, Ernest Ceccon, Armando Ceja, Hector Cerna, Brad W Corbin, William Richard Crews, Daniel R Diaz, Leonard Dimaculangan, Timothy Dunfee, Catherine B Eurbin, Isaac Flattley, Jason French, Santos Gonzalez, Brian P Good.

Justine Gude, Keegan Guillory, Joshua H Haddock, Charles Hixon, Patrick Howard, Janes, Brian Janes, Sean D Johnny, Paul Johnson, Joseph P Jones, Kyle Jones, Kenneth C Kempter, Ken H Kumpe, Alex E Malson, Tony Martinez, Josh Mathiesen, Jack Lincoln Matteson, Alex McBeth, Jonathan Merager, Vicente Moreno.

Richard Noggles, Jackie Ortega, Adam D Park, Jorge L Perez, Adam Ramirez, Richard Reposo III, Gabriel J Romero, Mark S Smith, David Ernest Soldavini, Sean Stalie, Teresa M Stelman, Greg Stenmo, Johnny Summers, Matthew R Tarango, Joshua Thomas, Kevin Tkoch, Sergio Jose Toscano, Harold D Updike, Eduardo Valle, Eric Verdries.

Jason Withrow, John Worsley, Kurt M Yearout, Grant J Gifford, Tim Klukas, Jason W Loomis, Robin Wills, Rick L Young, Kyle Landon Bonham, David Carrera, Jeremy Scott McMahon, Elizabeth A Schenk, Jeremy Stocks, Jeremy Strait, Nate Gogna, Jeffrey Michael Bade, Thomas Barter, Michael Bryson, Andre Camacho, Dennis Fogel, Tyler Hoest.

Jay L Karle, William F King, Scott McCreary, Tracy Milakovic, Joshua Alan Morris, Jonathon Michael Richert, Kelly Rudger, Isaac Shinkle, David Smallman, Michelle S Smith, Kelly J Stover, Eric Zantotto, Richard Barrett, Shawn M Phillips, Todd D Ruzicka, John Weil, Richard I Sterry, Patrick B Blair, Geoffrey C Harrison, Owen Johnson, Matthew M Ringer.

Russell Stark, Tyler S Webb, Robert Dodgen, Jason Pertruska, Jason Steinmetz, Steve G Parrish, John G Ramsay, Greg Titus, Michael W Dueitt, John Allen Mason, Greg Funderburk, Benjamin Hobbs, Carroll Stewart, Cole Moore, Benjamin Covault, Tony L DeMasters, Mary F Fields, Robert Harper, Sean D Johnson, Albert L Linch.

James Greg Loper, Douglas Marolf, Monica Christine Morrison, Gary Brian Munson, Ricky Jackson, Robert MacDonald, Stuart Rodeffer, Destry Wayne Scheel, Kyle Lee Smith, Roger L Staats, Brian J Watts, Joel A Welch, Nicholas D Yturri, Alex Abols, Elden Alexander, Daniel A Betts, Ray M Bilbao, Lester Brown, Kristian Lee Bruington, Chris Belliston, Todd Jinkins.

Michael Evan Johnson, Mark L Kelley, Kenneth Bochniak, Farron Leslie Kunkel, Jennifer Dawn Myslivy, Page Nolin, John C Noneman, Stephen F Price, Ivan Kendrick Smith, Clay Stephens, Thaddeus Labrum,

Kafka, Joseph P Kafka, Joel Kerley, Michelle Moore, Charles Jason Barnes, Kimberley S Owczarzak, Brian Stearns, Michael Richard Crook, Ann M Niesen, Martin Cassellius.

Reggie E Bray, Allen C Briggs, Robbie Gerald Hollsingworth, Jared Bohrman, Michael D Burow, Jeannette M Dreadfulwater, James C Flint, Michael D Goicoechea, Gump, Robert Gump, Jermyn, Robin Jermyn, Justin Kaber, James L King, Morganne M Lehr, Chris J Loraas, Dennis Arthur Moroto, Nate Ochs, Brent H Olson, Brett Pargman, William Phillips, Kathy A Pipkin, Cameron L Rasor, Scott Schrenk, Julie N Shea, Charles Showers, Trent Daniel Sohr, Mike N Granger, Christopher M Barth, Leroy Steven Evans, Richard Hayner, Richard C Lang JR, David C Lee, Julie Polutnik, Mike J Williams, Bonnie Strawser, Scott Beacham, Cody Wienk, Rick Beal, Gilbert Calkins, Marcus Cornwell, Jonathan Henry Crane, Terrance Gallegos.

Barry Edward Lee, Jennifer Martynuik, Chris Niccoli, Ezra C Engleson, Matthew James Peterson, Justin Cutler, Brian C Holmes, Ian McQueary, Jacob Keogh, Juan Islas, Kevin Kelly, Joseph L Miller, Dylan Rader, Timothy P Roide, Eric T Tilden, Tyson A Albrecht, Jason Amis, Lorri Ann Benefield, Josh Diacetis, Clayton A Farnsworth, Nathan D Goodrich, Jason Matthew Green.

Edward Hiatt, Mark Hocken, Michael C Ingman, Brett Edward Johnson, Ruth M Johnson, Bart Cory Kicklighter, Laura B Livingstotn, Eric A Miller, James Norman Osborne, Todd M Pederson, Alexander R Plascencia, Alex Robertson, Norman Arno Sealing III, Sandra M Sperry, Cameron M Stinchfield, Samuel D Tacchini, Kip Forrest Turner, Michael S Graham, Jeremiah Maghan.

Jada Altman, Scott Barnes, Kenneth R Boles, Tavis N Fenske, Justin Fenton, Josh Fulton, Brenda Hallmark, Natalie L Simrell, Chanel Sitz, Benjamin Thayer, John Toelle, John Szulc, Tomas K Liogys, Paul E Church-ill, Joshua J Ball, Kurt Bassestt, Kevin Lloyd Merrill, Eric K Allen, Lee Justin Dueker, Janan Hay Sharp, Tommy M Barnes, Michael Allan Davis, Jason M McDaniel.

Reynaldo Navarro, Jr, Brian Burbridge, James Holbrook Chadwick, Linda Milbury Chappe, Chris Marson, Clint C Coates, Dustin Blair, Renee F Flanagan, Audrey Huse, Kim J Martin, Jonathan Peel, Robert Lopez, Megan Saylors, Matthew W Way, Tracy Swenson, Michael J Doherty, Jason Kirks, Jeffrey Wilson.

Dameon Julander, Pila Malolo, Matthew Pippin, Jason Porter, Jeremy Seng, Tommy Braun, J Bradley Washa, Tyler Van Ormer, Robert F Allen, Steven John Brady JR, Kyle Cannon, Britt J Davis, Mike Daivs, Marge Hutchinson, Lindsey Kupfer, Patrick McGabe, Daniel E Pickard, John E Wirth, Scott Ebel, Jeff Dean Dimke.

Steven Rudolph Miller, Brendan P Neylon, Travis Braten, Anna Cressler, Peter L Freire, Kyle Miller, Chris Andrew Rankin, Eldred Jay Slagowski, Traci E Weaver, Timothy J Haas, Richard Howe, Frank Keeler, Robert McConchie, Shane McCormick, Heath Morgan, Rance Neighbors, Jonathan E Ziegler.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, the fact is that America's firefighters put their lives on the line every day to keep people safe. They do it here at home, and they do it when they go abroad.

This resolution applauds the brave men and women who responded to the Australian people in their hour of need.

It also promotes the sharing of critical resources, research, and best practices. This will help us prevent and suppress future fires.

Be assured that the American-Australian firefighting alliance will continue to protect us in the time of crisis. Our bipartisan resolution celebrates this enduring partnership.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

HONORING IAN MCBETH

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Wyoming for his comments. I come here today to express some very similar ones.

I come here today at a sad time—a sad time for Americans and especially a sad time for Montanans. You see, at the end of January, we lost three great Americans who paid the ultimate price for risking their lives for our allies down under. Those three great Americans are Flight Engineer Rick DeMorgan, First Officer Paul Clyde Hudson, and Captain Ian McBeth, who is a Montanan. They all lost their lives when their plane went down fighting a devastating bush fire in Australia.

Captain McBeth lived in Great Falls, MT. He was a dedicated pilot and servicemember. He was a member of both the Montana and the Wyoming Air National Guards and he completed several combat deployments, including tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Captain McBeth was one of the best pilots Montana had to offer. It was as if he was born to fly C-130s. But even more, he was born to be a caring father, husband, brother, and son to the incredible family he has left behind. At 44 years of age, he was taken from them far too young.

Captain McBeth was devoted to his family, leaving behind his wife, Bowdie; his kids, Abigail, Calvin, and Ella; and his parents and siblings, whose hearts have to be aching right now.

My wife Sharla and I are keeping them in our prayers and in our hearts through this trying time.

Captain McBeth heard the call to serve this country and did so honorably, taking that call to duty even further to help the folks in need on the other side of the world to fight wildfires.

Now, Montanans are no stranger to the risks that come from fighting wildfires, but that doesn't make it any easier when we lose one of our own. Captain McBeth and so many other Montanans who bravely run into danger when others run out—these are our heroes, plain and simple. We owe a debt of gratitude to Captain McBeth that can never be repaid. Montana has lost one of its finest, and he will be missed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HONORING PAUL HUDSON

Ms. MCSALLY. Madam President, last week, I cosponsored a bipartisan resolution honoring the three American firefighters who lost their lives fighting Australia's bush fires this year, including First Officer Paul Hudson, from Buckeye, AZ. Each of these men gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to others.

Paul dedicated his life to protecting others, first as a marine and then as a firefighter. He served in the Marine Corps for 20 years, including as a C-130 pilot, before retiring as a lieutenant colonel. Paul graduated from the Naval Academy in 1999 and later went on to earn a master's degree in business administration and information technology management from the Naval Postgraduate School.

When aid was needed in Australia to combat the devastating wildfires, Paul jumped into action and put his life on the line to help others. He was only 42 years old when he was killed in a plane crash while fighting to extinguish these awful fires. My heart and my prayers, and Arizona's heart and Arizona's prayers, go out to his wife, Noreen, and her loss. Arizona will not forget Paul's immense selflessness and his sacrifice.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 587.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of James P. Danly, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2023.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of James P. Danly, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2023.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Tim Scott, Chuck Grassley, David Perdue, Lamar Alexander, John Barrasso, Tom Cotton, Thom Tillis, James M. Inhofe, Shelley Moore Capito, Ron Johnson, Mike Rounds, Richard Burr, James Lankford, Jerry Moran, John Thune.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

RECESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate stand in recess until 5 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 4:02 p.m., recessed until 5 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CASSIDY).

LEGISLATIVE SESSION—Continued

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELATING TO "BORROWER DEFENSE INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY"—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in just a few moments, we are going to be considering the motion to proceed to the borrower CRA, and I would like to say a few words, understanding that the Senators are expecting this motion to come up in about 5 minutes.

This is a joint resolution that was passed on a bipartisan basis in the House of Representatives to overturn the borrower defense rule that has been promulgated by Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. I am pleased to be the Senate's sponsor.

Here is what it comes down to—hundreds of thousands of Federal student loan borrowers having been defrauded by their schools. They went to some of these for-profit schools that have gone out of business, but many schools defrauded these students over the years.

We in Congress established what was known as the borrower defense. We said, if you borrow money from the Federal Government and go to colleges that we acknowledge as being accred-

ited and they defraud you, lie to you, misrepresent to you what your education is going to cost or what it is going to give you, then, you don't have to be saddled with the student debt for the rest of your life because of their lies, because of their fraud. You have a chance to go to the Department of Education and plead your case that you were defrauded, and you should at least be relieved of some, if not all, of your student loan debt. That is what it is all about.

There are 230,000 student borrowers who are waiting for the Department of Education, under Betsy DeVos, to do something. The Department has not done anything except to come up with a new rule that says, at this point, it is going to be harder for these students to prove fraud. It isn't enough that the States and other units of government have found fraud by these schools. These students are supposed to be their own lawyers and their own investigators and prove the fraud and how it affected them personally.

Is it reasonable for a young student who has been defrauded and is carrying student debt to have that responsibility? Secretary DeVos thinks yes. I think no. That is what this vote is all about.

Who agrees with my position on this issue? Most of the advocates for students do. In addition, the veterans organizations across America, led by the American Legion, are supporting our effort now under this Congressional Review Act to do away with the new rule by the Secretary of the Department of Education. They say it is unfair to veterans—it is—and unfair to student borrowers to hold them to this standard.

The American Legion's national commander, Bill Oxford, called the rule, which we are going to get a chance to vote on after the debate, "fundamentally rigged against defrauded borrowers." He is speaking on behalf of veterans. He could be speaking on behalf of young men and women across America who have been misled by these schools over and over again. The Bipartisan Policy Center Action, the NAACP, Third Way, 20 State attorneys general, and a host of others have joined me in urging the Senate to overturn this unfair rule.

The Senate has a chance today to show the country that we can come together and do the right thing for students and veterans. How many times have we given speeches about how much we care about veterans? Here is a chance to vote with the veterans, especially those who have been defrauded out of their GI bill of rights and have ended up with additional debt.

Secondly, how many times have people told us these student debts are too much, are ruining kids' lives, and to give them a chance? I am not for forgiving all loans to all students, but these students have been defrauded. They should have an opportunity to start life again and not be burdened with the debt that is going to make life impossible in their futures.