

## RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

## CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## TAXPAYER FIRST ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 1957, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 75, H.R. 1957, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modernize and improve the Internal Revenue Service, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

## POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as I begin this morning, I would like to just briefly comment on the outlandish idea of dismantling police departments that has seen substantial coverage in recent days. While there are exceptions, the vast majority of our Nation's police officers are men and women of character who care deeply about protecting everyone in their communities, and they provide an essential service—a service that we cannot do without.

The idea that any city can exist without a police force is so absurd that it is difficult to believe anyone is seriously discussing it. We absolutely need to look at policies at the State, local, and Federal levels to ensure that we are holding police officers to the highest standards, and I hope we will be having serious bipartisan discussions on these issues in the coming weeks.

I know at least one Senate Republican has already introduced legislation to require law enforcement agencies to report the use of lethal force. But bipartisan discussions will not be forwarded by extreme and irresponsible proposals like abolishing the police departments that help protect our communities. I hope that such proposals will not gain any traction here in the U.S. Senate.

## BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, we are very busy—hard at work—here in the Senate. Our main business on the floor this week will be the Great American Outdoors Act, legislation crafted by Senators DAINES and GARDNER and others, that will help address the significant maintenance backlog in our national parks, among other things.

Out of the limelight, Senators will also be discussing how best to respond

at the Federal level to the tragedy of George Floyd's killing.

Responding to the coronavirus continues to be at the top of our agenda. Right now, we are focused on monitoring the implementation of the \$2.4 trillion that Congress has provided so that we can identify what more we need to do to fight this virus.

Our committees play a leading role in this, and they have kept up a steady stream of hearings examining implementation and identifying next steps.

This week, we have no fewer than eight—eight—committee hearings on various aspects of the COVID crisis, including unemployment insurance, a Senate Finance Committee hearing later today that I will be participating in, reopening schools, and the Federal Government's procurement and distribution strategies.

The Democratic leader has spent a lot of time on the floor lately, complaining about what is happening in the Senate. He is, apparently, not happy that we are in session, and he claims we are not doing anything on the coronavirus.

Well, on the first point, I would just like to say that the majority leader brought the Senate back into session because we have responsibilities that we need to fulfill. One of the issues that we have to respond to, as a matter of our constitutional obligation, is the issue of dealing with nominations, both to judicial and executive branches of our government. We continue to have to do that.

There are important vacancies that we need to fill, some important national security vacancies, judicial vacancies. Last week, we confirmed the inspector general for the pandemic, somebody who was confirmed by a 75-to-15 vote.

Now, it is possible that we could do those and not be here. The Democratic leader has said on various occasions he doesn't know why we are here doing these types of nominations. Well, the reason we are here doing these types of nominations is that they insist on it.

Even in cases where the nominee has broad bipartisan support—in some cases, overwhelming support—we continue to have to stay here and go through the procedural roadblocks that Democrats throw up to getting these nominees across the finish line.

In fact, if you look at the historical context of nominations, we are living in unprecedented times. The Democrats have filibustered now—totaled—314 nominees that President Trump has put forward. For all of the previous Presidents combined—all of the previous Presidents combined in our Nation's history—only on 244 occasions did cloture have to be invoked to shut down a filibuster on nominees.

Think about that. In the first 3½ years of President Trump's term, we now have had 314 nominees—judicial or executive—filibustered. In the rest of the history of the U.S. Senate, even if you go back and say that the advent of

the filibuster is only in the last half century or so. Think about that: 244 times, throughout all of the Presidencies combined—combined—in our history, but this President has seen his nominees filibustered 314 times.

So if the Democratic leader wants to know why we are here doing nominees, that is why. We have to. It is our job. It is our constitutional responsibility. If the minority continues to make it as difficult as they have and continues to filibuster and force the leader to file cloture on all these nominees, we have to be here to vote. That is our job, and that is why we are here.

Of course, there is also the work, as I said, of responding to the coronavirus. There is also work we have to do that doesn't stop just because there is a pandemic.

If you look at the Paycheck Protection Program, when it ran out of money, it took way too long to convince Democrats to do something as simple as appropriate more funding for pandemic-stricken small businesses.

Funding our government, protecting our Nation, making sure these important positions in the government, as I mentioned, are filled—we just can't skip those things because of the coronavirus, and they have made it increasingly difficult—virtually impossible—for us to do any of this by unanimous consent while the Senate was out of session.

As for the Democratic leader's charge that the Senate hasn't been doing anything on coronavirus, as I pointed out, that is just a simply ridiculous charge to make. Coronavirus has been at the forefront of the Senate activity since we returned in May.

Our committees have held a constant stream of hearings examining implementation of the coronavirus assistance that we have already passed and looking forward to what will be needed in the future.

As I mentioned, last week, we confirmed the nomination of Brian D. Miller to be Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery at the Treasury Department, a key position with responsibility for ensuring the coronavirus funding is spent properly.

We also passed last week legislation to update the Paycheck Protection Program to give additional flexibility to small businesses. Clearly—clearly—the Senate has been making coronavirus a priority.

I would argue that much of what we have already done is having the desired result. The jobs numbers that came out last week are encouraging. Obviously, we have a lot of work to do. We have to keep it in perspective. It is no time to be spiking the football. But those job numbers were encouraging.

I think one of the reasons we had those strong numbers is because we have a very resilient economy, No. 1, and, No. 2, because of policies we have put in place—tax and regulatory policies that have encouraged businesses to invest, consumers to spend.

The PPP program, the Paycheck Protection Program, obviously, I think has done a lot of good out there. It has kept, literally, millions of businesses in business. It has kept, literally, tens of millions of workers employed, and that is exactly what we wanted to see happen.

Those dollars were among the best spent dollars, I think, of all the several trillion dollars that we put out there. My State of South Dakota is a good example. We have over 21,000 businesses that have benefited from the Paycheck Protection Program, to the tune of about \$1.6 billion. I bet, if you look at the numbers in every other State around the country, you would see the same thing. It is one of the reasons, I believe, that we are seeing some encouraging economic numbers and employment numbers. Let's hope that we can continue to build on that.

I guess that when the Democratic leader complains that the Senate hasn't been doing anything on coronavirus, what he actually means to say is the Senate hasn't passed another \$3 trillion bill. The House of Representatives, the Democrat majority there, in a very partisan way with zero Republican support and, in fact, some Democrats opposing it, passed another \$3 trillion.

Well, it is true we haven't done that here in the Senate. It is because we don't believe we should be playing fast and loose with the American people's money like that. As I pointed out, Congress has already provided \$2.4 trillion in funding to respond to the virus, which is a staggering amount of money, equal to roughly half of the 2020 Federal budget.

It was money we needed to spend, and we were glad to do it. We will probably have to spend more before this crisis is over, but we have to make sure that we are appropriating what is really needed and not mindlessly throwing around trillions of dollars. The way we do that is by monitoring the implementation of the funding that we have already put out there, that has already been delivered, which is exactly what we have been doing.

I have to say, for a lot of the funding that has been authorized, some of it hasn't even been put out there yet. The \$175 billion that we have authorized to help healthcare providers—hospitals, nursing homes, those folks on the frontline—only about \$75 billion of that has been made available already. So less than 50 percent of those dollars are even out there yet.

It is pretty hard to decide whether you are going to throw more money at something before you have determined whether the money you have already spent is having the desired effect and whether there is a need for more. So we need to see where that money goes before we decide what else we need to appropriate.

I have said it before, and I will say it again. Every dollar that we have provided to fight the coronavirus is bor-

rowed money, a significant addition to an already massive amount of national debt.

Democrats may like to pretend that we can continue to borrow more and more money forever, but the truth is we cannot. The greater our national debt, the greater the threat it represents to the health of our economy, not to mention the future of today's younger workers.

So while we may need to borrow more money to meet our needs before the crisis is over, it is crucial that we keep that borrowing as low as possible and spend only what is absolutely necessary.

So far, the Democrats' major proposal for the next phase of our coronavirus response is a \$3 trillion bill produced by the House of Representatives that mentions the word "cannabis" more often than it mentions the word "job," which I think tells you all you need to know about how seriously some are taking this issue.

If Democrats really wanted to move additional relief forward, they would be sitting down with Republicans to develop reasonable legislation that actually has a chance of passing Congress and being signed by the President, but they are not. Instead, they are proposing outlandish, far-left messaging bills and engaging in the kind of partisanship that has become the modus operandi during this administration.

While I am talking about Democrats' unhelpfulness, I just want to mention the Democratic leader's offensive suggestion on the floor last week that the judges that we are confirming in the Senate will not protect civil rights. This is, unfortunately, right in line with their general attitude that the only legitimate judges are Democrat judges, but it is, nevertheless, particularly irresponsible to be fanning the flames of division in this country right now by suggesting, untruthfully, that only Democrats' preferred judicial candidates will show a commitment to upholding civil rights.

The continued partisanship, even during a national crisis, has been pretty disheartening. But I am a hopeful guy, and I like to think that at least some Democrats are more interested in actually helping Americans than in far-left messaging bills, and I would invite those Democrats to work with us.

There is a lot more that we need to do before this pandemic is over, and Republicans are committed to getting our country through this crisis and to helping Americans thrive on the other side.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

H.R. 1957

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, the bill before us today, the Great American Outdoors Act, is landmark legislation. It would fulfill a longstanding promise to the American people to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

This measure will also make a downpayment on deferred maintenance plans of our Nation's beloved public lands, which includes over 400 national parks. It also includes more than 500 national wildlife refuges that are under the jurisdiction of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on which I serve as ranking member.

While I am proud to support the Great American Outdoors Act, we would be remiss if we did not put the Senate's consideration of this legislation in the context of everything else that is happening in our country today. As we have learned in the 15 days since the death of George Floyd, we also have other longstanding promises to fulfill. Let me mention four of them. The first is a promise of an end to racial violence in this country and a new beginning in the pursuit of racial justice. The second would be the promise of equality. The third would be the promise of a more perfect Union called for in our Constitution's preamble. The fourth, and last, would be the promise of a dream articulated nearly 57 years ago on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, not far from where we are gathered here today, by the late Martin Luther King.

Our national and State parks have always been places that bring people from all backgrounds together. Our national historic sites and monuments commemorate the events that have forged and tested us as a nation, as well as the sacrifices that we have made in our quest to become that more perfect Union.

They are also places from which people have called on their government, our government, for change and for equality. Yes, our national parks have served as places of protest, protected under the Constitution that Delaware was the first State to ratify on December 7, 1787. In fact, Delaware's national park, one of the newest in the Nation, was created, in large part, to celebrate that history.

The recent murders of George Floyd in Minneapolis and Breonna Taylor in Louisville have sparked, as we know, widespread civil unrest. From coast to coast, millions of Americans have come together to protest the deaths of unarmed Black Americans and to call for change, to call for justice, and to call for racial equality. In Washington, DC, some of those demonstrations have taken place in our National Park System.

Lafayette Square, the site of gassing and the troubling use of crowd dispersion devices last week in response to a peaceful demonstration, has seen its share of protests and turmoil. In its history, before the marble monuments

it now contains, the square served as a slave market, and it housed troops during the War of 1812 when the White House and the U.S. Capitol—this Capitol—were burned.

Today, and nearly every day, people are gathered in Lafayette Square in front of the White House, calling for action, as we debate the bill before us. But in January and February of 1917, women staged 2 months of protests out of a row house located on Lafayette Square in the pursuit of women's suffrage—the right to vote, one of our most sacred privileges.

Other national park sites in Washington have been front and center of the calls for racial justice in the last several days: the National Mall, the Lincoln Memorial, and one of our newest national historic sites, the memorial to Martin Luther King, who taught our country about the power of peaceful protests.

These places inspire us. They allow our voices to be heard, but they also give us strength; they give us solace; and they give us the opportunity to heal. The bill before us today helps us to ensure that our public lands remain places where we can remember, where we can reflect, and we can recharge.

Sometimes when I speak on the Senate floor, I share anecdotes from my morning runs. A number of them over the years have been on the National Mall as I run from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial and then past the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, etched with the names of over 58,000 men and women with whom I served in Southeast Asia. No matter how tired I might be when I get up in the morning, when I begin those runs, as I pass and pause at each of these places, I feel inspired, I feel rejuvenated, and I feel more determined than ever to take up our work in service to the American people who sent us here.

Interestingly, I have heard a similar sentiment from the hundreds of Delawareans who have asked me to support this legislation before us today. Many of our parks provide visitors a place to reflect, to reconnect, and to enjoy the beauties of nature. That is, in no small part, because of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Many of our colleagues know that Delaware has a proud history as the First State—the First State National Historical Park, which we worked for a decade to create not long ago, tells the story of the role Delaware played in the establishment of our country. Our national park is unique, with historical sites in all three of Delaware's counties that connect our communities, much like our State parks do.

What you may not know, though, is that the first land acquisition through the State side of the Land and Water Conservation Program in this country occurred in Delaware. Brandywine Creek State Park, located just north of Wilmington, DE—my hometown—was established in 1965. At the time of this monumental acquisition, there was not

much of a State park system in Delaware and certainly not in New Castle County, our northernmost county.

Since that time, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has enabled the purchase and development of many additional State parks that are crown jewels in all three counties of the First State. I will mention a few of them: White Clay Creek, Cape Henlopen, Fox Point, Bellevue, Killens Pond, and many more.

For us in Delaware, these spaces are places of community. People from all walks of life come to these parks for many different reasons. Some come to fish, others to bike, others to hike, play sports, fly kites, swim, go birding, learn, enjoy picnics, and enjoy concerts. Those are just some of the reasons why people come to our national parks—not just from Delaware, not just from America but from all over the world.

Some of the parks I have just mentioned might exist without the Land and Water Conservation Fund, but without it, they would not be the community cornerstones that they are today. When a park is revitalized, it can become the nerve center of a community and create new opportunities to bring us together. In many cases, we have seen just that happen in our State. For example, Bellevue State Park—located not far from our home—has been home to a community garden program for decades, providing a place for families like my own when our sons were young who may not have a lot of land on which to grow their own fruits and vegetables.

In 2017, just 3 years ago, the city of Wilmington was awarded an LWCF grant to improve Father Tucker Park, which had been in disrepair for decades. The park is vital for play, for cultural gatherings, and sports activities. It is now a valuable hub of that community.

Further, the Land and Water Conservation Fund enabled the first public pool in Kent County at the Killens Pond State Park, 10 miles south of Dover. It is now the Killens Pond Water Park, and it has grown quite popular with residents from across Kent County and well beyond Kent County's borders.

This legislation also helps us to bring economic activity to our communities, something that people might not think of at first blush. In Delaware, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has enabled an incredible network of greenways and trails that connect community facilities and institutions with businesses. People come from all over the country to ride, to run, and to walk on them.

Basic investment in preservation of land and investment in paths and trails is a tangible community building enterprise. People can get on their bicycle in downtown Wilmington, ride through the city and out into the suburbs and to the Delaware River in Fox Point State Park, just 3 miles from our

home. I might add, there is another one, too, from the train station where I caught the train this morning to come down here. There is the Jack Markell Trail that links the riverfront in Wilmington, DE, to New Castle, DE, where Ben Franklin first landed and brought with him the deeds to Delaware and Pennsylvania. Those paths that I just mentioned expand horizons; they connect people to each other; and they create common ground in our communities.

The Delaware State Parks Youth Conservation Corps even provides jobs and environmental restoration opportunities throughout our parks for young people from all backgrounds.

What is more, our Delaware State parks offer free summer concerts. These concert series attract different generations and diverse audiences. While the 2020 summer concert series was, unfortunately, canceled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Delaware State parks have remained open, and, get this, our State has waived entrance fees.

As it became clear that physical location was key to preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus, Delawareans, especially those in urban areas, sought solitude in our parks. For many, connecting with nature was critical for mental wellness, and, now, making that connection has grown more popular than ever. One example of that is Brandywine Creek State Park. Located just a few miles south of our border with Pennsylvania, it has seen record visitation this year.

As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, I have heard from hundreds of constituents in support of the Great American Outdoors Act. Many of them have shared stories about their treasured moments in State and national parks, particularly during troubled times.

I want to close my remarks today by sharing one of those stories from a friend, as it turns out, the executive director of Delaware Wild Lands, and her name is Kate Hackett. About a year and a half ago, Kate, along with her family and another family, traveled to a place called Big Bend National Park in the State of Texas. This park is on the U.S.-Mexican border, as some of you know. These two families were distressed by what was happening along our borders and wanted to visit border towns to experience their humanity themselves.

As the two families hiked along the Rio Grande River, Kate's friend sang her favorite lullaby, not in English but in Spanish. Her song echoed in the canyon. When she paused, an unknown voice from across the border emerged with the next verse of the same song. These two strangers—divided by the depths of a canyon—alternated verses, savoring a shared experience, regardless of borders, regardless of race, regardless of languages.

I was moved at the time to hear how Kate was able to use her family's outdoor experience that day. I am still

moved today to hear about how that day taught her children a lesson in compassion, a lesson in humanity, and a lesson in acceptance of us all.

As the soul of our Nation continues to be tested, I hope the legislation before us—the Great American Outdoors Act—might somehow provide similar opportunities for others. In fact, I challenge all of us to make sure that it does just that.

Most importantly, I also sincerely hope we will soon fulfill at least two other longstanding promises—for equality and justice—that are critical for the future of this country and our democracy. Our public lands can be part of a greater, multifaceted solution that brings equity and opportunity to all of our committees from sea to shining sea.

In the midst of all the turmoil we face in America today lies opportunity. It is our job to find that opportunity and to work together to move this country, which we love and revere, as imperfect as we are, forward. That is our challenge, and that is our opportunity.

I don't know a lot of Latin, but I do know two words, maybe a few more. My two favorites are these: *Carpe diem*, seize the day. This week we have the opportunity on this floor to seize the day. Right over your head where you are sitting are some other Latin words: *e pluribus unum*—from many, one. That is what this country is all about. I think this legislation—maybe not something we would have thought of—can actually help make those words not just Latin words carved in stone but a reality.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LOEFFLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GARDNER. Madam President, thank you to my colleagues last night for an incredibly strong vote, 80 to 17, on the motion to proceed to this debate on the Great American Outdoors Act. We have a lot of work ahead of us this week and obviously a lot more debate to take place. But one thing is certain, we have taken the first step toward a historic bill that protects our public lands, that enhances the incredible work that our national parks do and the policies and goals and ideas they represent around this great Nation.

The Great American Outdoors Act combines two long-held values of both our national parks and the Nation's crown jewel conservation program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Restore Our Parks Act, of course, establishes a fund to set aside dollars to catch up with our backlog of projects that needs to be done, the de-

ferred maintenance backlog in our national parks. It sets up about a \$1.9 billion a year fund to work on roads and visitor centers and the resources that are being loved to death at parks across the country.

It is beyond just parks, of course. It also funds our Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, now headquartered in Grand Junction, CO, and our Fish and Wildlife Service properties, as well as the Bureau of Indian Education.

This act will create jobs; it will create opportunities; but most importantly, it will enhance the resources that this country loves for generations to come.

The second part, of course, of the Great American Outdoors Act is the Land and Water Conservation Fund. You can see here, the monument, the Great Sand Dunes National Park. This one right here shows the Land and Water Conservation Fund along the scenic San Juan Byway.

This is an incredible opportunity for us to preserve the Land and Water Conservation Fund, make it permanently authorized, as we have done through the John D. Dingell Conservation Act, but also permanently fund it through the Great American Outdoors Act. This is a great opportunity for us to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

That bill that permanently authorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund passed 92 to 8. Last night, the cloture on the motion to proceed passed 80 to 17. This is not a red or blue issue. This is not a left or right issue. This is not a Republican or Democratic issue. This is an American people issue, an idea the American people instituted in this country centuries ago and, in the case of our Forest Service, a century ago—over a century ago. The opportunities to protect our public lands is significant this week, historic this week, one of the greatest conservation achievements that this Congress will have had in decades.

I want to turn to a little bit of the work that we have done in Colorado with the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This is an incredibly important opportunity for us because not only will it help with our most precious places, but it also helps provide access to land that we already have, owned by the American people, public lands that are already held by the American people, but we have no way to access them.

In fact, it is estimated that we have an area the size of Rocky Mountain National Park. Rocky Mountain National Park is the third most heavily visited park in the country. We have an area of land the size of Rocky Mountain National Park that is held by the public. It is owned by the public, but they can't get to it. They have no access to it.

So the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a tool that can be used to provide access to those lands for hunting,

for fishing, for hiking, for recreating. And if you look at that economy, if you look at what it means to our State, it is billions and billions of dollars in economic activity. It is hundreds of thousands of jobs in the great State of Colorado. Across this Nation, it is over 5 million jobs. That is the importance of having new access to places to hunt, to fish, to hike, to recreate—those opportunities.

If you go back to the picture of the sand dunes here—I talked a little bit about it last night—we were able to purchase the Baca National Wildlife Refuge, which is a key part of the Great Sand Dunes National Park. It preserved an ecosystem that helps keep the sand dunes in place.

It is important to recognize that this isn't just about protecting the sand dunes. This isn't just about saying "All right, the sand dunes go from point A to point B, and we are going to protect everything in between" because the entire ecosystem in the San Luis Valley plays a role in the formation of the Great Sand Dunes in this particular area, and the way the water is underground creates a charge, basically, that gives into the sand the particulates, and it is what holds the sand in place. Without that water that is underneath the sand dunes, the sand dunes simply blow away because they don't have the static charge, basically, to keep them in place.

So we are able to use the Land and Water Conservation Fund to preserve areas around the sand dunes that preserve that precious resource for the San Luis Valley that keeps the sand from blowing away. As a result, hundreds of thousands of people visit this area of Colorado. They spend money at hotels; they spend money at restaurants; they spend money at the sporting goods shops; and it helps grow the economy.

While it has been closed for a while, it is back open again. People are starting to get back out and to travel and to spend those dollars.

Colorado has benefited from 38 LWCF projects totaling \$281.2 million over the last 50 years at the Great Sand Dunes, the Uncompahgre, over at the Arapaho and Roosevelt, the Gunnison, the Rio Grande, Canyon of the Ancients National Monument, and beyond.

If you look at the list of LWCF projects that have benefited our local communities, it is page after page of ballfields and parks and water projects and recreation opportunities in counties from corner to corner across our great State.

If you dial in a little bit closer to Rocky Mountain National Park—as I mentioned, the third busiest park in the country—Rocky Mountain National Park has about \$84 million—a little over \$84 million—in deferred maintenance backlog. This bill will help overcome that.

We need to rehabilitate the Alpine Visitor Center developed area. The highest paved road in North America is

Trail Ridge Road, going through Rocky Mountain National Park and up to the Alpine Visitor Center, where you have an amazing, expansive opportunity to learn and to recreate. We need to resurface Beaver Meadows Road, to improve the visitor safety and visitor access at several trail heads, to rehabilitate the East Water System and Moraine Park Campground, to construct an emergency operations center—those are the kinds of things that we continue to work on at Rocky Mountain National Park.

At Mesa Verde—now, not everybody has been to Mesa Verde National Park, but think about this: It was established in 1906, well over 100 years ago, to preserve and interpret the archeological heritage of the ancestral Pueblo people, who made it their home for over 700 years—from 600 to 1,300 current events.

Today, the park protects nearly 5,000 known archeological sites—5,000 archeological sites—and 600 cliff dwellings, some of the most notable and best preserved dwellings in the United States. We have to continue our work. There is \$76 million in backlog at Mesa Verde Park alone; Black Canyon of the Gunnison, nearly \$8 million in backlog; Great Sand Dunes National Park, over \$8 million in backlog. We know we have additional Land and Water Conservation Fund efforts that we could protect, preserve, and promote with the passage of this bill.

I am just going to—and I know we are going to have more conversations today—talk about the economic benefit of this. In March, as the first waves of coronavirus started to pose the economic impact that we are dealing with today, some of the very first places hit in terms of economic impact were the Western Slope areas of Colorado—areas that had their ski season shut down months early, areas that had hotels empty and restaurants closed months earlier than they otherwise would have.

Of course, now we are into the summer season, and the summer recreation season has expanded dramatically, thanks to the bipartisan work the Congress has done over the past several years. Now those restaurants see fewer numbers and hotels see fewer numbers because it is now affecting the summer recreation season.

This bill—the Great American Outdoors Act—comes at a time to provide new jobs to those communities that have lost jobs. In fact, it is estimated that we will create over 100,000 jobs in just the parks part of this legislation alone; that for every \$1 million we spend in Land and Water Conservation Fund and outdoor recreation, we are going to create between 16 and 30 jobs; that it supports the creation of between 16 and 30 jobs for every \$1 million spent, at a time when America needs it most.

We have a chance to pass a bill—the Great American Outdoors Act—to create jobs, to create economic oppor-

tunity, to create the hope we need in communities across this country that have spent the last 3 months not in the great outdoors but in the great indoors, and they are ready to get back to life. There is no greater life than the opportunity to get out and enjoy the blessings of God's labor.

I want to thank my colleague JOE MANCHIN of West Virginia, my colleague STEVE DAINES from Montana for the great work they have done to get this bill to the floor this week.

Obviously, Senator PORTMAN and Senator WARNER and Senators ALEXANDER and KING and Senators HEINRICH and CANTWELL have played an incredible role.

We have a lot more votes this week, and I hope my colleagues will continue to support this opportunity to grow our economy, protect the outdoors, and make this beautiful part of our country last for generations more.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I rise today in support of the Great American Outdoors Act. After yesterday's vote, where we voted to move to debate this bill at an 80-17 margin, it felt good.

It felt good because some of us have been fighting this fight to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, in particular, for more than a decade.

It is a program that Senator UDALL explained yesterday that has worked out so very, very well since his dad introduced it back in the sixties.

But the Great American Outdoors Act does more than just permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is a huge accomplishment in and of itself. It also puts money into our Park Service and areas around our parks that are so important for this country. Really, the park system is one of the jewels of this Nation.

President Teddy Roosevelt was truly a visionary. At a time when there were plenty of wild places in this great Nation, he had the good sense to preserve some of them for future generations because he knew they would not be around forever.

Quite frankly, the National Park System encompasses 419 parks, more than 84 million acres, including two crown jewels in Montana—Yellowstone and Glacier National Park. These are places where Americans come together and experience the scale of America's natural beauty.

However, I will tell you, in recent years we—the Congress—have not lived up to President Roosevelt's legacy, and our parks have been left to fall in disrepair. Even as we have seen record numbers of visitors each year, the U.S. Congress has failed to make parks a priority and even make investments in them.

So the Great American Outdoors Act will go a long way to correcting Congress's neglect. In fact, it invests

\$9.5 billion in deferred maintenance on public lands across our country. Those are not only our national parks, but the areas around our national parks, preserving the legacy of America's great outdoors for generations to come.

While this is very, very important—this investment in our national park system, the first part of this legislation—we also need to know that we have places in this country, ecosystems in this country that will not be around for future generations if we don't preserve them today, and that is where the Land and Water Conservation Fund comes in.

The LWCF is the most important conservation tool we have at the Federal level. Nothing else comes close to it. It was founded five decades ago, and Montanans have used about \$540 million of this fund to increase outdoor opportunities on our public lands around our State.

We have used it to preserve tens of thousands of acres of world class elk habitat in central Montana. It has been an essential driver of Montana's growing \$7-billion-a-year outdoor recreation economy. And it has established city parks and open spaces in our more urban communities in Montana.

The best of it all is it doesn't cost the taxpayers a dime because the Land and Water Conservation Fund, as it was set up, was to take money from offshore oil and gas revenue. Well, that hasn't worked out so well, so today we are just saying that it is going to be funded, and it is going to be funded permanently into the future.

The LWCF is a no-brainer. It has overwhelming benefits for States in which investments are made for pennies on the dollar. We are receiving jobs, and we are receiving quality of life. We are receiving the ability to go out and hunt and fish and hike on our public lands.

Unlike any other country in the world, we have these areas where you don't have to be a millionaire to be able to go out and enjoy the outdoors. But these victories did not happen magically overnight. The fact is, we worked long and hard with local conservation groups and public land enthusiasts around the country to build support where it never existed before, and our years of work finally broke the dam earlier this year when President Trump and Senator MCCONNELL reversed their opposition to this legislation because of overwhelming bipartisan momentum that we had built on the ground. I welcome their change of heart, and I know it didn't come easy.

There are so many Montanans and folks around the country I want to thank for putting in the work and bringing my colleagues from darkness to light. Your work has inspired me and inspires future generations that are going to benefit from your selfless efforts.

I was at home last night, and I got a text message from one of those folks that said: Thank you. Thank you for

your hard work for the last 13 years on LWCF. I sent him back a text that said: I don't deserve the thank you. You do because, quite frankly, there have been folks that have been working on this much longer than I.

But now, since the vote yesterday, the clock is ticking. Every day we are losing ecosystems in this country, and because of our tardiness in not fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we have lost plenty of those ecosystems over the last 10 years, and we will lose even more if we don't get this funding.

The future of our Nation's wild places hang in the balance, and we have something to do about it this week. We can fix it. So I would urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote yes on the Great American Outdoors Act so that we can preserve our public lands for future generations, for our kids and our grandkids, just as that visionary President Teddy Roosevelt did for us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, this month will forever mark a historic moment for conservation across this Nation when the U.S. Senate votes on one of the most important conservation bills in decades.

The Great American Outdoors Act isn't just about tomorrow, next week, or even next year. This is a bipartisan bill about the future of our children and grandchildren, about legacy, about their ability to enjoy and access our great outdoors and our public lands.

Standing here today, I can tell you there aren't too many issues, unfortunately, that bring both Republicans and Democrats together, but protecting our public lands for future generations is something that brings us all here together.

Just yesterday, we saw a major bipartisan step forward to getting this bill across the finish line—an 80-to-17 vote to move forward with this important bill.

Today, I am joining my Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to share how important it is that we pass the Great American Outdoors Act as soon as possible.

Many may ask: Well, how is it, then, that we have finally built enough bipartisan momentum to get this across the finish line? Well, over a year and a half ago, my colleagues and I passed a historic bipartisan public lands package that permanently authorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund—a critical conservation program in Montana and across the country.

In fact, as I am standing here, I am looking across the Chamber at the ranking member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Senator JOE MANCHIN of West Virginia. This is what it is all about in Washington. This is what should be happening more and more. When Senators who sit on opposite sides of the Senate Chamber

because of the way we sit, with Democrats on one side, Republicans on the other—here we are together. We are not fighting each other right now. We are talking about how we are going to come together and pass this.

This is a great moment for our Nation—a time when we need to come together—and, once again, it is public lands that are pulling us together instead of dividing us.

Back in February, just a few months ago, I sat down in the Roosevelt Room with Senator GARDNER, Leader MCCONNELL, and President Trump to see what it would take to get full, mandatory funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and how we can fix this maintenance backlog, which is plaguing our national parks and our public lands, across the finish line.

In fact, I shared several of Montana's Land and Water Conservation Fund funded projects and shared how vital this funding is for Montana and those who visit. Seventy percent of our fishing accesses in Montana are funded by LWCF.

The President listened. I remember he sat back in his chair. He commented how beautiful the landscapes were that he saw in these pictures. He said that we need to get this across the finish line, and he said that he would sign it into law as soon as we did so.

Protecting and preserving our public lands play a direct role in our Montana way of life. In fact, this picture is of the Yellowstone River. It is not far from Chico. I remember as a kid, back in the sixties, having church potlucks at Chico.

I remember in 1979 I took the family Griswold station wagon, including the brown veneer on the side of it—wood veneer—with several of my high school classmates. That is where we had our homecoming dance dinner, at Chico, just a few miles from where this picture was taken.

I have spent countless days hiking the Beartooth Wilderness area, fishing the Gallatin and the Yellowstone, shown here, enjoying all of Montana's great outdoors in every corner of our State with my sweet wife Cindy, our four children, and our dogs Ruby and Reagan.

In fact, take a look at some of these photos. These are photos I have taken on my phone in some of Montana's public lands. That is Ruby, and there is Reagan. This was up in the Beartooth Wilderness area a few years ago.

In fact, I have another picture here, one of Ruby. We like to take our dogs along because this is wild country. This is country where there are a lot of grizzly bears, and having your dog along oftentimes can be a good deterrent, along with some bear spray.

There is Ruby up at what is called the Mount Villard Spires. In fact, Granite Peak, the highest point in Montana, was one of the last summited high points in the lower 48 when it was climbed. Granite Peak is just around the corner. I summited that back during my college years.

I can tell you, when I talk about public lands and protecting them and making sure we preserve that for generations to come, this is not some kind of theoretical discussion. This something that I live and breathe personally. During the August recess, when we get to leave this town, when it is hot and humid in DC, I get to be up in the wilderness areas of Montana—we do that every August—where the area is crisp, the air is clean.

That is why, as Montana's voice in the U.S. Senate, I am standing here today, fighting to bring this vote to the floor and to make the Great American Outdoors Act a reality.

Many folks may not understand the importance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and what it means for Montana and States across our country. Let's go over a few important facts.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is critical for public access to public lands. As an avid outdoorsman, a hunter, and a fly fisherman, I understand the importance of our public lands. This program helps connect trails. It funds over 70 percent of Montana's fishing access, and it does much more than that. The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides certainty to land managers, sportsmen, and conservation groups.

The Land and Water Conservation money invests in Montana's outdoor economy, and it helps create jobs in our rural and gateway communities. Let me tell you something. They are struggling right now because our national parks were closed for too long, and they need this boost by getting this passed.

Speaking of the outdoor recreation economy, Montana contributes over \$7 billion and supports 71,000 jobs in Montana alone. In fact, 81 percent of Montanans participate in outdoor recreation every year—81 percent. In fact, every \$1 million invested in the Land and Water Conservation Fund creates between 16 and 30 jobs.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund costs the taxpayers nothing. Let me say that again. It costs the taxpayers nothing, and it promotes energy development. Now, here is the balance we need in our Nation: to continue to develop energy independence and global energy dominance by developing American natural resources, and at the same time the revenues coming off of there are used for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Here is the balance between the two: promoting natural resource development and promoting conservation. This program is primarily funded by oil and gas revenue, and it makes conservation inextricably linked to a strong energy sector, which means the Land and Water Conservation money is already paid for.

Through the Forest Legacy side of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we will see the promotion of working forests to get our mills back up and running and help support and



create good-paying timber jobs. It will do a much better job of managing our national forests because we will thin them and reduce the risk of wildfires. Perhaps you may have heard otherwise, but this program actually helps promote better land management.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund acts as an important tool for land managers and agencies to address checkerboard land ownership. I decided today to bring pictures of the beautiful landscapes in Montana. I could have gotten a little more technical and showed the checkerboard nature of land ownership in a place like Montana and why we need LWCF to provide better access to our public lands. Because we have 1.5 million acres of Federal land in Montana that is landlocked, Montana directly benefits from the Land and Water Conservation Fund projects that work to consolidate land ownership. You will have a private end holding, you will have a State piece, and another Federal piece in this checkerboard nature, and by consolidating it and working with willing sellers, we can make the overall landscape management easier for agencies and private landowners and provide better access.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund supports locally driven solutions from the ground up. These are collaborative projects that have local support. The LWCF is authorized at \$900 million annually. However, we aren't seeing nearly that much appropriated from that fund every year. In fact, only twice, since it was enacted going back to 1964, have we seen funding levels at \$900 million, and that was the original congressional intent.

Let's be clear. What we are doing here by passing this bill is bringing it back to what Congress intended when it was first originated back in the midsixties. Mandatory funding for the Great American Outdoors Act would create certainty for land managers that the full \$900 million goes toward this program every year moving forward. It is so important because some of these complex checkerboard land ownership structures take many years to sort out. Now we have certainty.

If there is someplace with a lot of uncertainty, it is the U.S. Congress. This removes one of those uncertainties from Congress going forward. We must not forget about the other critical aspect of the Great American Outdoors Act: addressing the maintenance backlog facing our national parks, our forests, and our public lands. We are seeing record levels of visitation in our public lands.

As I think about our national parks, I call them our office of first impression. I believe they are what set us apart from the rest of the world. People come from all over the world to see our national parks. They are unique, and it is part of the amazing American experience.

With this increased visitation every year, our park infrastructure has inevi-

tably experienced a lot of wear and tear. We are fraying a lot on the edges. While this is a good indicator that folks around the world love to enjoy our parks in Montana, we must address the maintenance backlog to ensure that folks continue to come and enjoy what we refer to in Montana as the "Last Best Place." If you look at some of these pictures, I think you might agree with me.

Today, there is nearly \$20 billion in maintenance backlog on our public lands, forests, wildlife refuges, and parks, and \$12 billion of that is for our national parks, including \$700 million in Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks and over \$34 million in Montana's smaller national parks.

Addressing this \$12 billion backlog through the Great American Outdoors Act will play a vital role in getting our national parks back on track. This will create jobs, support our gateway and rural communities, and enhance visitor experience and safety.

The restoration of our national parks could generate over 100,000 additional jobs at a time when our economy needs that kind of boost. While this was an issue we have been working on for years with Members on both sides of this infamous aisle, this is needed maybe now more than ever.

Montanans are raised to love and respect the outdoors. Only once in a great while does such a historic piece of conservation legislation come along—perhaps once every 50 years. It is essential to protect and maintain access to these lands for future generations.

It is my highest honor to serve the people of Montana in the U.S. Senate. I encourage my colleagues to join us in supporting this great piece of legislation, one that has helped bring a divided government together.

I believe it is a conservative principle to conserve, and I will always continue fighting for that principle. I know I and my colleagues here today are ready to get this done. Montanans know what it takes to practice conservative principles and work to conserve their public lands. Now it is time for Congress to come together in a bipartisan way and support the Great American Outdoors Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I thank my colleague Senator DAINES from Montana and all my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans. Everyone has been so excited about getting up and showing pictures of their beautiful State. All of us—it is the United States of America—every one of us has something to be proud of and show off, and the LWCF and restore our historic parks bills will protect each and every one of them.

I have been in the Senate for almost 10 years. I have not seen any piece of legislation that has brought us together with more enthusiasm than this

piece of legislation, the Great American Outdoors Act, because the entire Nation benefits from it. Whether it be in West Virginia, Colorado, or Montana, wherever it may be, our outdoor resources is something that all of my colleagues can enjoy because we all can visit and enjoy the great American outdoors, if you will.

The strong support for the Great American Outdoors Act is a testament of the importance of this legislation and what it does. We have never had a financial recovery, an economic recovery without infrastructure investments in spending. We don't have a better piece of legislation that does this. It is a win-win all the way around.

More than 150,000 jobs will be created by this bill. I think every county in America—I have 55 counties in West Virginia. Every county in West Virginia, basically, is receiving some sort of help from the LWCF. We have all been greatly impacted by this.

Today, I want to talk about the impact that the Land and Water Conservation Fund has had on my home State of West Virginia. To date, 54 of the 55 counties have benefited, as I said, from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It is responsible for some of our most cherished outdoor spaces in West Virginia. In fact, since 1965, \$243 million has been spent to enhance recreation and conservation in the Mountain State alone.

The LWCF has supported projects at Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Gauley River National Recreation Area, New River Gorge—and this is the New River Gorge. This is the New River. If you are in the eastern part of the United States and you haven't floated on the New River or the Gauley, you are missing a great opportunity. The scenery is unbelievable, and floating through the rapids is something special. To float through there is an experience. I welcome and recommend everyone to come visit at least once in your life the wild and wonderful West Virginia on the New River and the Gauley River. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has also helped towns like Marlinton, WV. Mayor Sam Felton was able to turn a vacant lot into the Discovery Junction, a multipurpose community gathering space, with the help of \$86,000 from LWCF.

The fund is also important for our hunting community. Hunting is a way of life. It is part of our culture. It is a tradition that we all cherish and value. The Great American Outdoors Act will increase access to all Federal lands for hunting and fishing all across the country. A lack of access to Federal inholdings is a problem, and I know this has frustrated sportsmen for years.

As the Congressman from Montana has said, over 1.5 million acres is owned in his State by the Federal Government, but all of it doesn't have access. We are able to provide access now with the funding that it will take from this legislation.

Another thing that is very important that has been mentioned, LWCF does not use one iota of taxpayer dollars. This is basically coming off of the royalties of our offshore oil and gas revenues.

I want to mention also that we have some of our Senators whom we tried to accommodate in this piece of legislation. There are a few of the Senators whom I want to make a public commitment that I will work, as ranking member on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, to do everything I can to make sure we understand the needs of the coastal States and the restoration and protection of our coastal States as it is impacted by the changing environment. My commitment to them is I will work diligently with my Southern States and also my Northern States for all of my coastal States. The Senator from Rhode Island has my commitment, and the Senator from Louisiana has my commitment. We will work to make sure they have the needed funds it takes to protect their coastline and all the work that they have done and all the assets that they have contributed to our great country and the value, as far as in their coastal States. We are going to make sure that during the committee I will do everything I can to make sure we have the proper hearings and proper attention for the changes that need to be made. We were unable to put that in this piece of legislation, but I am committed to help work through that, and I will do that.

Because Federal lands are surrounded by private lands, they can be essentially inaccessible, and we have to make sure we have access. Hunting in West Virginia is a time-honored tradition. As I have said, I have been a hunter my entire life, and I look forward to opening day in hunting season each year for all different types of game. I also enjoy fishing immensely. I don't think I have a better day than when I am on the river or I am in the river walking the streams for the trout that we have plentiful amounts of. It is something I have handed down to my children, my son, and my grandson. They all enjoy it. With this bill, we are going to be able to pass on this legacy.

When you think about spending time in the U.S. Senate, most of us have been in public life for some time in other aspects. I have been honored to serve in the State legislature as a member of the house and member of the State senate, and secretary of state and Governor of my great State, and now representing them in the U.S. Senate. You want to leave a legacy, so you keep thinking what can I do that will really make an impact on future generations. I can't think that there is anything we can do that is going to be more impactful than what we are doing today, working on this piece of legislation, the Great American Outdoors Act, to be able to enjoy the great national parks that we have throughout this country, to be able to take your

family and have a family outing, and also the history that goes with it and who we are.

If we don't know where we come from, you don't know where you are going, and the history we have in America is pretty special. Our national parks represent that. Also, to have the access to the beautiful outdoors and the wonderful nature that we have with the LWCF funding, the \$900 million a year, that is a legacy I am proud of. I am proud that my children and my grandchildren and future generations would say that, hey, part of my family was involved in this. We worked this hard. We worked together—and to see Democrats and Republicans in the most troubling time our country has faced in many decades come together enthusiastically, being able to speak and enjoy being with each other and talking about how we can get more of our colleagues involved and having a vote that we had last night, a vote of 80 votes.

I see the Senator from Tennessee who has worked so hard on our national parks and has one of the most beautiful national parks in his State that I am proud of. I just can't tell you how much I think this piece of legislation means to all of us—100 Senators—in this most challenging time that we have in our country right now.

West Virginia has approximately \$62 million in deferred maintenance just for our little national park areas alone. This includes crumbling roads, bridges, outdated wastewater plants, electrical systems, and deteriorating monuments, which I know we are going to be able to start repairing. On average, 1.6 million visitors enjoy our beautiful national parks in West Virginia every year. From New River Gorge National River to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, visitors to our national parks generate \$73 million from the surrounding communities. This act, the Great American Outdoors Act, will ensure our national parks, forests, and other Federal lands are well taken care of and remain accessible for everyone to enjoy.

West Virginians take great pride in our great outdoor playgrounds. We invite all of you—all of you—to come to wild and wonderful West Virginia and enjoy everything we have to offer. We thank you so much. I thank my staff and the staff of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, of which I am the ranking member, for working tirelessly through the pandemic and through the virus to make sure we are able to have a piece of legislation that generations of Americans will be able to enjoy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, while he is on the floor, I congratulate the Senator from West Virginia for his leadership. Sometimes he says too many cooks spoil the pot or whatever the phrase is. There could be too many

cooks but not in this case. Senator MANCHIN, because of his senior leadership on the Energy Committee and on this bill, has been really a bulwark in bringing it to this point. I thank him for that. He has been excellent about including all sorts of us in the bill.

We have an unusual assortment of U.S. Senators, outside sportsmen groups, conservation groups, the President of the United States, and all of the former Secretaries of the Department of the Interior from Babbitt to Zinke, someone said, going alphabetically—we all support this bill that came up last night with 80 different votes.

Among those who deserve a lot of credit is another Member of the U.S. Senate who is also on the floor right now, Mr. WARNER from Virginia. He became interested in this bill as soon as anyone. He may have been the first one to put his toe in the water. He and Senator PORTMAN from Ohio, they formed a very strong team to bring this bill forward.

Since then, Senators DAINES, GARDNER, HEINRICH, and KING all have joined in, and then Senators MANCHIN and GARDNER, especially, have added the Land and Water Conservation Fund. I thank all of them for their leadership.

I will speak just briefly about what we call the Great American Outdoors bill, and I think it helps first to say what we are talking about. We are talking about the Chilhowee campground on Chilhowee Mountain at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. It was closed for 2 or 3 years. Why? Because the sewage system didn't work. So 500 families who normally would use that campground in the summer—go up there and have this majestic view of the highest mountains in the Eastern United States—didn't have that possibility.

The Great Smoky Mountains has about 12 million visitors a year. That is three or four times as many as Yellowstone does or any of the western parks because it is in the East. It has \$224 million of deferred maintenance like that campground. Its annual budget is \$20 million a year. So you don't have to have gone too far in mathematics in the Maryville City School system to understand that it will probably take 15, 20, 25 years, or never to be able to get rid of the deferred maintenance in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, our most visited national park.

Now, that is a massive disappointment to people who consider our national parks as our greatest treasures, to go there and find a campground closed, a bathroom that doesn't work, a bridge that is closed, a road with a pothole, a trail that is worn out, and visitor centers that are dilapidated, as they are in some of our centers around the country. This is what we are talking about.

This is what we are talking about. We are talking about deferred maintenance, things that are broken and



don't work and interfere with the ability of the American people to go outdoors. Of all the times in our recent history when people would like to go outdoors, it would be right now, just to get out of the house and get away. Of all the times when we need some extra jobs, it would be right now, when we have 14 percent of the people in Tennessee out of work. Some of them could go to work on the roads and the bridges and the trails and the potholes and the sewage systems and the other things that need to be fixed, if we had the money.

So that is the first thing this bill is about. It is about the deferred maintenance in the national parks—but not just in the national parks. With President Trump's enthusiastic support, we have added to the bill, as it has made its way through the Senate, other public lands; for example, the Fish and Wildlife Service lands, the U.S. Forest Service lands, the Bureau of Land Management lands, and the Bureau of Indian Education schools. There are lots of Indian schools that are rundown and need to be fixed.

All of those are part of this bill, which is why, among the 800 organizations—800 outside groups—who have called all of us and asked us to vote last night, among the most enthusiastic are the fishermen and the sportsmen—the Ducks Unlimited, headquartered in Memphis. They are really for this bill because we want to use the public lands. We want them preserved. Fishermen want access to their streams. Tourists want to be able to drive to the top of Newfound Gap in the Great Smoky Mountains or to see the Grand Canyon or to visit Pearl Harbor or to walk on the National Mall. All of these are part of our deferred maintenance problem.

So there are two parts to the bill. The first is the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Now, this is a fund that was created in 1964. It was a pretty good idea, I have always thought. You take an environmental burden—drilling offshore for oil and gas—and you create an environmental benefit—take some of the money and use it to buy treasured lands.

Senator DAINES of Montana points out that 80 percent of the access to good fishing in Montana comes with funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. So for 64 years we have had some money come through Congress for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, but—the problem is—not all of the money that Congress intended, because in 1964 Congress said, Set aside a certain amount of money, about \$900 million, for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, put it in the Treasury, and then spend it for this purpose: half to the States for their land acquisition and half to the Federal Government. But Congress didn't ever appropriate all that money.

We took that back up in 1985 and 1986 with President Reagan's Commission on Americans Outdoors, which I

chaired and Gil Grosvenor from the National Geographic was the cochairman.

The No. 1 recommendation for President Reagan's Commission on Americans Outdoors was to permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This bill does that. We permanently authorized it earlier in this Congress. This year we will permanently fund it.

The second part is to restore our parks and our public lands. In that case, as I just described, whether it is the national parks or the fishing or the access roads or the bridges or other rundown and worn-out trails or buildings or sewage systems, at the rate we are going, it will take about 15 to 20 years, maybe longer—maybe never—to finish all that deferred maintenance, but, with this bill, we should reduce that substantially.

The idea is to take about up to \$14 billion over 5 years and use it to pay for deferred maintenance. Now, how do we pay for that? Well, we pay for it with real money. We pay for it with earnings from energy exploration on Federal lands.

Now, this is not a new concept. As I mentioned, the Land and Water Conservation Fund put that into law in 1964: environmental burden, environmental benefit. It is also not a new concept for all the coastal States in our country because we take money—I think it is 27 percent of the money we get from drilling just off the coastal States—and we give it to those States.

We also take some money from drilling in what we call an area beyond the 3-mile limit for southern States and give them 37 percent of that money. We also take some money from drilling, say, in Wyoming and give Wyoming 50 percent of that money—or in Alaska, 90 percent of that money.

The difference is, we do all of that before we give the rest to the Treasury. So the idea that we are spending real money from energy drilling in a new and different way is stretching it a little bit because we already spend a lot of money that we earn from energy exploration on Federal lands by giving it to States before we give the rest of it to the Treasury. The difference here is, after we give the rest of it to the Treasury, we are going to take half of that for 5 years and use it for deferred maintenance. Senator PORTMAN, who used to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget, calls it using real money to reduce an unpaid debt.

Now, it is absolutely true that the way the Congressional Budget Office looks at that, it is not offset. But there is a difference of opinion here. President Trump looks at it in a different way. He thinks it is real money for deferred maintenance. The Office of Management and Budget disagrees with the Congressional Budget Office. They approve this spending. The President's budget includes this spending.

We are spending, as I said earlier, money that we already—the same kind of money we spend that we give to

States before we give it to the Federal Government.

So, if I am walking down Broadway in Maryville, TN, where I am from, and I am trying to say to them “Where does this come from?” we would say that we use real money. We use money from energy exploration on Federal lands. We are going to use it for 5 years—in the case of everything but the Land and Water Conservation Fund for 5 years. If we don't have the money, we don't spend it. If we do have the money, we do spend it.

As a result of that, we are going to be able to fix those broken bridges, those sewage systems, those dilapidated visitor centers, those roads with potholes, those trails that are worn out. Instead of maybe never fixing them or doing them at a rate of 20 or 25 years, we will be able to cut in half that deferred maintenance backlog and reduce substantially the time it takes to make these public lands the kinds of lands that all of us expect when we go to visit.

So I am delighted to be in full support of this. I thank Senator WARNER, Senator PORTMAN, and all the others who have worked so hard on it. I hope that the vote we had last night, with 80 Senators of both parties in support of moving ahead with the bill, signals that, as we go through the other procedural efforts this week, we will have significant bipartisan support, send it to the House where an identical bill is being introduced, and send it to the President.

President Trump is fully in support of it. In fact, without him and his Office of Management and Budget, we wouldn't have a chance to do it.

More than 2½ years ago, Secretary Zinke, a big fellow from Montana who was the Interior Secretary, came down to Tennessee and asked me if I would get involved in this because it was so important. He said that he had talked to Mick Mulvaney, who was then in the Office of Management and Budget, and to the President and they wanted it done.

So I got involved. I found myself in pretty good company with Senator WARNER and a lot of other folks, and here we are today. So I hope we have great success with this bill. I know the people of Tennessee are looking forward to it.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out—I pointed out that, with the Smokies, our backlog is about \$224 million, and our annual budget is about \$20 million, so we will never get the backlog fixed if we don't pass a bill like this or this bill.

The same applies to other public lands in our State. The Cherokee National Forest, which is the largest piece of public land in Tennessee, will get help with their \$27 million maintenance backlog to make sure their access roads and trails are kept open for 3 million visitors each year. That is about as many visitors as many of our most popular western parks have.

The Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge will get help with their \$8.4 million maintenance backlog to make sure the hunters and fishers can safely use the boat ramps and the boat docks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, the timing has worked out pretty well. It is great to be able to speak on this piece of legislation after my friend the Senator from Tennessee has just completed speaking.

We were hearing some, I think, classic legislating coming from Senator ALEXANDER. He was very generous in his compliments to Senator MANCHIN, to me, to Senator PORTMAN, to Senator DAINES, and to Senator GARDNER, but we all know that we wouldn't be here on the cusp of passing the most significant piece of environmental outdoor lands legislation in a generation or, for that matter, in 50 years if it hadn't been for the leadership of Senator ALEXANDER from Tennessee.

So many of us who have had an opportunity to work with him and become friends with him over his years in the Senate have tried to emulate him at times and listen to him all the time. He is a Senator I wish we had more of in this Senate, who says more often than not: Let's not worry about who gets the credit; let's just see if we can get some things done.

There were two pieces of legislation that had to come together. There was the challenge of getting the administration in, the challenge that we had, at one point, too many Democrats and maybe not enough Republicans, and it was Senator ALEXANDER who kind of guided us through this—at least from the parks side—3-year journey.

I just want to publicly acknowledge his enormous leadership on this piece of legislation, thank him for his friendship, and thank him for the great work that he has done garnering, as well, the over 800-plus environmental groups that have come to support this legislation. I know that my friend the Senator from Tennessee is not going to stand for reelection, and I know he will have many, many legacy items from his tenure in the Senate, but I believe this Great American Outdoors Act will rank in the top three or top five of his legislative accomplishments in that kind of quiet "Let's not worry about whose name is first on the bill, but let's just get it done" way that is playing out this week, as we saw last night with a remarkable, remarkable 84 votes.

It may not end up with 84 votes on the final passage, but, again, the path to get here has been a fascinating one and one that I have learned from. So I do want to rise to join all of the colleagues I have mentioned and others in support of the Great American Outdoors Act.

I got involved in this issue over 3 years ago. We, in Virginia, are blessed with a lot of great national parks. We

are blessed with a number of historic battlefields and other historic sites. We have some of the parkland roads, the parkways—in Northern Virginia, the George Washington Memorial Parkway that I come to work here in the Capitol on every day, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Colonial Parkway. We have over \$1.1 billion of that backlog, and this legislation is so critically important.

The legislation, it has been mentioned, represents the most significant investment in our public lands in a generation, and I believe, at this moment in time, something critically important as well: a job creator in our outdoor economy.

The Great American Outdoors Act will provide up to \$9.5 billion over 5 years to address not only the deferred maintenance and backlogs at the National Park Service but other Federal land agencies as well. This is the kind of mastery of Senator ALEXANDER in combining the two pieces of legislation.

The bill also finally provides full and mandatory funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It has been a long road getting to this point, but I am thrilled that we are finally at this moment in time on this important, job-creating legislation that is also preserving the legacy that God granted this country in terms of the outdoors, in terms of our history. This is really a gift to our kids, grandkids, and future generations.

Now, many of us have indicated how we got here, and I am going to add my voice as well. Years of chronic underfunding has forced the Park Service to defer maintenance on countless trails, buildings, and historic structures, as well as thousands of miles of roads and bridges.

So today, the National Park Service faces a deferred maintenance backlog of over \$12 billion. As a matter of fact, over half of all Park Service assets are currently in desperate need of repairs.

As I mentioned, in Virginia alone, the deferred maintenance backlog sits at over \$1.1 billion. That means, in Virginia, we trail only the District of Columbia and California in terms of jurisdictions in total backlog.

To address this growing problem in Virginia and across the country, 3 years ago Senator ALEXANDER, Senator PORTMAN, my good friend Senator ANGUS KING, and I introduced the original legislation, the Restore Our Parks Act, which would provide significant funds to the Park Service to reduce its maintenance backlog and utilize unobligated energy resources.

In March, our bill was combined with Senator GARDNER and Senator MANCHIN'S LWCF legislation to form the Great American Outdoors Act. This bill on the floor today will provide, as I indicated, up to \$6.65 billion over 5 years to restore and repair our national parks. That is enough to address more than half of the currently deferred maintenance backlog and completely fund the highest priority de-

ferred maintenance projects within the agency.

This represents one of the largest—if not the largest—investments in infrastructure in our national parks in the over 100-year history of the National Park Service.

In addition to preserving our national treasures for future generations to enjoy, this legislation will also create tens of thousands of jobs across the country and provide a positive economic impact for those gateway communities.

The Senator from Tennessee mentioned Chilhowee in Tennessee. We have a Chilhowee in Southwest Virginia as well. Those gateway communities depend on our national parks.

As a matter of fact, a recent study by the National Park Service indicates that the Great American Outdoors Act will actually support over 100,000 jobs and contribute \$17.5 billion in total economic output through this legislation. In Virginia alone, that means over 10,000 jobs could be created by eliminating this maintenance backlog.

Let me give you a few examples that are a more parochial basis of what that will mean in Virginia. Here in the national capital region, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which is managed by the National Park Service, has over \$700 million in deferred maintenance. As a matter of fact, anyone who travels on that road knows that, north of the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge, we actually had a sinkhole appear in the parkway within the last year—an enormous safety threat as well as a huge inconvenience to the traveling public.

Our legislation would help rebuild this critical transportation route between Virginia, Washington, and Maryland—again, reducing traffic and creating jobs.

I mentioned that in Virginia we are blessed with a number of historic battlefields. The Richmond National Battlefield Park has over \$5 million in deferred maintenance, and the nearby Petersburg National Battlefield has nearly \$9 million in deferred maintenance.

Our legislation would help preserve these important pieces of our heritage while also supporting the local economies. At the Shenandoah National Park, one of the crown jewels of the National Park Service, the maintenance backlog sits at \$90 million.

Our legislation will put people to work on these overdue repairs, including Skyline Drive and stretches of the Appalachian Trail, which are, again, at the heart of Virginia's outdoor tourism industry.

As you head further southwest in Virginia, the Blue Ridge Parkway has accumulated over \$508 million in deferred maintenance needs. That is over \$1 million per mile of the parkway. The Great American Outdoors Act would put Virginians to work on these repairs so that visitors can continue to appreciate the beauty of the Appalachian Highlands in support, again, of the local economy.

I will just give you one final example—the Colonial National Historical Park, which is home to Historic Jamestowne and the Yorktown Battlefield. At this park, containing some of our Nation's most significant sites—beginning our Nation and the birth of our Nation in terms of the revolution—there are deferred maintenance needs totaling over \$433 million.

With this legislation, the wait on these repairs is over. We are going to create jobs and make sure this important part of our history is around for years to come.

In addition to securing these funds for the Park Service and other public lands, the Great American Outdoors Act also provides the full mandatory funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

LWCF is the most important tool the Federal Government and States have to conserve natural areas, water resources, and cultural heritage, and expand recreation opportunities to all communities.

Over the past four decades, Virginia has received over \$360 million in LWCF funding that has been used to preserve critical places in the Commonwealth, like the Rappahannock River Valley and Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

With full funding from the LWCF, we will be able to conserve additional critical lands in the Commonwealth and provide more recreational opportunities for Virginians from the coalfields to the Chesapeake Bay and everywhere in between.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to support this historic legislation that will help restore our national parks and public lands, create tens of thousands of jobs across the country, and expand recreation opportunities for millions of Americans. This bipartisan piece of legislation, which also has the support of the administration, is legislation whose time has arrived. I look forward to its successful passage later this week.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that if my remarks go over the time for the recess at 12:30 that they be allowed to extend beyond that.

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

#### NOMINATION OF CHARLES Q. BROWN

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, this is going to be a historic day for the U.S. Senate, as we come to the floor after the recess, after lunch here, to be voting on the confirmation of Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr., to be the Chief

of Staff of the U.S. Air Force—Gen. C.Q. Brown. I will be voting for General Brown because he is the right man, at the right time, for this very important job. Let me explain why.

General Brown has an impressive academic record and a sterling record of service to our great Nation and, of course, to the U.S. Air Force. He is a distinguished graduate of the Armed Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, with a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from Texas Tech—the Presiding Officer might like that—as well as a master's degree in aeronautical science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Currently, General Brown is the commanding officer—the four-star general—in charge of Pacific Air Forces, all Pacific Air Forces. Of course, Mr. President, you know that is really important because he is literally on the frontlines in implementing the national defense strategy, which has a focus on great power competition, particularly China, as the pacing threat to our Nation for the next 50 to 100 years. General Brown is in that battle right now, frontlines, every day, in his current billing. That is really important.

Prior to being commander of the Pacific Air Forces, he was the deputy commander of U.S. Central Command for 2 years. He knows all about the national security challenges that we have from that region of the world, which are still very significant—particularly violent extremist organizations, like al-Qaida and ISIS—that continue to threaten the United States.

From 2015 to 2016, he served as the U.S. Air Force's Central Command Combined Force Air Component Commander, where he oversaw the strategic bombing campaigns against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, as well as operations against insurgent groups in Afghanistan.

With a record like that—pretty remarkable—he understands the threats we are currently facing. He understands the big challenges we are seeing over the horizon with regard to China. And he is ready to lead the Air Force to take on those threats as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Secretary of the Air Force, Barbara Barrett, said of General Brown:

He has unmatched strategic vision and operational expertise. His leadership will be instrumental as the service continues to focus on the capabilities and talent we need to implement the National Defense Strategy.

That is the Secretary of the Air Force on Gen. C.Q. Brown.

In my conversations with him, I certainly believe these qualities, these characteristics, the Secretary of the Air Force describes to certainly be true. I have had many good conversations with him on strategy, on strategic basing, including in the Asia-Pacific region, and I am very confident that, again, he is the right person for the right job at this moment.

I also want to mention that he will be the first African-American to serve

as a chief in our military's history. I have known General Brown for some time, but I was actually surprised when I realized this. Colin Powell was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and did an amazing job, but we have not had an African-American serve as chief in any other services in the history of the United States.

I think that is very important right now. In many ways, this is a historic nomination, particularly, as our country is roiling over the killing of George Floyd and the protests that are taking place—peacefully now, which is great—to demand justice for him and his family, and as we look at some of the challenges we have in our Nation with regard to countering racism across America.

In a very moving video address last week, General Brown recently talked about what is on his mind in terms of some of these challenges. He talks about many of the things that are on his mind, many aspects of his career. It is very powerful. I would recommend that people who care about these issues take a look at that very powerful speech. He said that he was thinking about the conversations his wife of 31 years, Sharene, and his two sons, Sean and Ross, have had on these times recently but, also, the immense responsibility that comes from his historic nomination. He was thinking, of course, about how he could make our country better for others from a national security standpoint and with regard to other issues.

Think about that. That is a tremendous weight for anyone to carry, but I firmly believe that General Brown's shoulders are broad and strong enough to carry this weight.

I am going to be voting enthusiastically yes with regard to the vote we are going to take at 2:15 this afternoon. I want to encourage all of my colleagues to vote yes, to have a 100-to-0 vote for this important, impressive nomination to be the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force.

I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:32 p.m., recessed until 2:16 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The VICE PRESIDENT. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., for appointment as Chief