

that passed. And now Senator SULLIVAN and I are already discussing what 3.0 might look like.

I am not in a position to speak for Senator SULLIVAN, but I am interested in looking under the hood of the recycling industry. When you put your plastic waste into a blue bin to go off and get recycled, how much of it actually does get recycled? How can we make sure that there is, in fact, a circle in which plastic gets manufactured, put into use, brought back out of the system, and not left in the ocean, not left as waste on our lands? How can you develop what is called the circular economy for plastic?

Plastic is a weird thing. Nature hasn't seen plastic before. It doesn't biodegrade the way things that were made by the Lord biodegrade. Nothing eats it. If something does eat it, it just piles up in its body or goes through it neutrally. It provides no nutrition or value to anything. It is just this new thing out there. We need to figure out how to deal with it, and we need to get it the heck out of our oceans.

More to come on this. But let me take this moment to thank Senator MENENDEZ for his leadership, particularly, on the foreign side of this, and Senator SULLIVAN for his leadership and for being such a terrific ally in this cause.

With that, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Let me wrap up here by mentioning that, as we already talked about, the Congressional Research Service has called this the most comprehensive ocean cleanup legislation ever to come out of the Congress. As Senator WHITEHOUSE said, 6 years ago, we were starting at nothing. And then we got Save Our Seas 1.0, primarily about cleaning up our own coastlines.

There are a lot of funny stories there, but we did have a really interesting—and I thought entertaining—signing ceremony at the White House with the President and Senator WHITEHOUSE. The two hadn't met before. They got along really well, particularly talking about this issue. And it did motivate the Trump administration to start focusing more. You may have seen in the new NAFTA, the USMCA, the first trade agreement has a whole section on ocean cleanup and a whole section on fisheries and sustainable fisheries. This is a really important precedent for the U.S. government, regardless of party.

As Senator MENENDEZ mentioned, a lot of focus internationally. I want to thank him again, in terms of the Foreign Relations Committee. Our ability to help other countries—we are certainly not perfect, but the big challenge on a lot of the oceans, in terms of cleanup and what comes onto the shores of the United States, what comes onto the shores of Alaska in terms of plastics and pollution, comes from overseas. We need to help there. As Senator WHITEHOUSE also men-

tioned, improving our domestic infrastructure to prevent marine debris—so we are setting our own example, not just helping other countries—and then enhancing our own domestic response.

Senator WHITEHOUSE mentioned this Marine Debris Foundation. This is a congressionally chartered private organization. There are not many in the country. This is a big deal. Thank the Red Cross. Thank the American Legion. These are congressionally chartered organizations that will give this effort public-private partnership energy to address the problem. That is exactly what we are focused on here, and that is why we thought it was so important to have a Marine Debris Foundation as an enduring element of the U.S. leadership that is now exemplified by Save our Seas 2.0.

I will mention one final thing. You know, one of the things that I thought was very important—we are going to keep this together—is we worked hard not to single out one industry or one area: Hey, you are not doing a good job; you need to get your act together. What we said when we put this bill together is we are going to bring in all the stakeholders—Democrats, Republicans, the executive branch, Federal agencies, industry, key environmental groups, ocean conservancy, World Wildlife Foundation—and get everybody together—the Alliance to End Plastic Waste, which is an initiative in the private sector, and say: What can we do together to solve this problem? That is what we did. All the stakeholders came together. Everybody worked closely together, good ideas, pulling on the same oar. And that is how we got this done.

You know, one of our finest Senators, LAMAR ALEXANDER, gave his farewell speech just last week, and he talked about this idea of a split screen in the Senate. Yes, there is contention. Yes, there are battles. The media loves to play those up. But there is also another element about what we do here where there is strong bipartisan support on really big issues: the CARES Act, the NDAA, the Great American Outdoors Act—probably the biggest conservation bill in 50 years—21st Century Cures; these are all things that we are getting done here that matter to the American people in a bipartisan way. You don't always read about them in the press, but they are still happening. And now we can add to that list the biggest ocean cleanup legislation in the history of the country going to the President's desk for signing here in the next couple of days. It is something our fellow Americans should know about. And as Senator WHITEHOUSE said, we are going to build on that too.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I should add a few other thank-yous because this, obviously, took a lot of effort to get through all these different committees in the Senate and

the House and to get it passed on the Senate and House floor. I want to start on the House side, with the equivalent of the Whitehouse-Sullivan show is the Young-Bonamici show on the other side; Representative BONAMICI and Representative YOUNG, whom Senator SULLIVAN mentioned, were the key people working this issue.

I want to thank my delegation, JIM LANGEVIN and DAVID CICILLINE, because, during key points when it looked like things were jamming up over there, they jumped up with their leadership and with their colleagues to help move things along, and I believe Representative YOUNG did as well.

I want to thank the majority leader, STENY HOYER, who at a really critical moment, when this could have gone one way or another, made sure it went the right way and got us teed up to get the thing done in the House and back here where we could move it in the Senate.

In the Senate, I have spoken about Senator MENENDEZ's critical role, but, of course, as chairman, Senator RISCIO also had to support and permit this to go forward. It had to clear Commerce, where Senator WICKER and Senator CANTWELL were supportive and helped move this along. Senator WICKER, indeed, has been a member of our Oceans Caucus from an early stage and has been very helpful on oceans issues.

Then on our—Senator SULLIVAN's and my—Environment and Public Works Committee, Chairman BARRASSO and our ranking member, Senator CARPER, were all very supportive.

Things like this don't get done without a lot of people pulling together, and I just wanted to make sure that I thanked all of them as I close out here on this subject.

So thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### FIRST STEP ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, as we approach the holiday season, many of us will be celebrating differently. COVID-19 may be limiting travel, family members we see in person, or other holiday traditions. Yet there is much to be grateful for.

For me, I am thankful for my health, my family, my country, and my staff. I am also grateful to serve Iowans and work in the Senate to tackle legislation, conduct oversight, and work for the best interests of the people of Iowa.

I am also thankful to reflect upon previous accomplishments. This time of year coincides with a milestone achievement, that being the anniversary of the passage of the FIRST STEP Act, and to remember that the criminal justice reform bill that we call the FIRST STEP Act is the most comprehensive overhaul of criminal justice legislation in a generation.

On December 18, 2018, the Senate passed the most significant criminal justice reform legislation in a generation, and 3 days later, President Trump signed the bill into law. The FIRST

STEP Act is an example of what the Senate can accomplish when we reach across the aisle to address our Nation's most pressing problems. I am proud that the FIRST STEP Act has been the law of the land now for 2 years.

The past 2 years have been uniquely challenging. In the first year of the law's tenure, I worked with Senate partners to oversee its implementation efforts. This included meeting with critical stakeholders in the Justice Department, reviewing the status of the law's implementation, and ensuring that the law's application reflected congressional intent.

In that first year, we accomplished a lot together, in a bipartisan way. Because of the FIRST STEP Act, thousands of inmates received the benefits of the retroactive application of the Fair Sentencing Act to resolve sentencing disparities that came about from legislation, I suppose, from almost 30 years ago between those convicted for crack and those convicted for cocaine.

In this first year, the Justice Department also released its risk and needs assessment system—a tool used to individually review the recidivism risk of each Federal inmate and place the inmate in programming to prevent future criminal acts. The Bureau of Prisons also issued procedures for more efficient access and use of the home confinement program.

Implementation efforts have faced significant challenges, however, namely, the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, the FIRST STEP Act provided tools that the administration has been able to use to help vulnerable inmates. During the pandemic, it has become apparent that inmates who are confined in Federal prisons are among the most vulnerable populations in the United States. As they are in Federal custody, it is quite obvious the Federal Government has a duty to ensure they are treated humanely.

To that end, Senator DURBIN and I urged the increased review of compassionate release and elderly home detention cases in light of the COVID-19 cases within our Federal prisons. We also asked the Justice Department inspector general to review the use of home confinement authority, the preventative safety measures connected with it, COVID-19 testing, screening, and isolation measures, and the availability of access by inmates to electronic communication. I am pleased to say that this administration responded to many of our requests, though more work needs to be done as we continue to grapple with the effects of COVID-19 in our Federal prisons.

One of the most important issues we must address is a key provision of the FIRST STEP Act, that being the requirement for the Bureau of Prisons to make programming available to prisoners to help them to live productive lives once they leave prison, and that will make it less likely, then, they will return to lives of crime.

The coronavirus has made it impossible for the Bureau of Prisons, at least at this time, to provide this programming as the law intends and requires because, as you know, inmates must be socially distanced from each other to prevent the virus's spread, which flies in the face of meeting in person to participate in recidivism reduction programming. Therefore, as we move forward, balancing effective programming access with the CDC-approved safety measures is critical.

As I return to the leadership of the Committee on the Judiciary, whether that is as ranking member or chairman, depending upon the outcome of the Georgia races, I want everybody to know that I am going to continue to make the implementation of the FIRST STEP Act a priority and will ensure the Justice Department and the Bureau of Prisons faithfully execute the law.

Lastly, as we embark on a new Congress and a new year, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to seek the middle ground on criminal justice reform. We have done it before, and we can do it again, and more needs to be done.

The FIRST STEP Act has made a difference in the lives of thousands of prisoners, and it will continue to impact many in the Federal criminal justice system. It gives prisoners a better opportunity to leave their criminal pasts behind and become productive members of society. In fact, we learned that from States like Texas, Mississippi, and North and South Carolina, where they actually did a good job of preparing people to return to society, with productive lives, saving the taxpayers money if there is not recidivism. Some of those States have even shut down some prisons.

Alerted to that, too often, Congress waits to learn something from our laboratories of our political system—the States. We learned a lot that brought about the FIRST STEP Act. There is more that we can learn, and we can build on the FIRST STEP Act. It is remarkable what we were able to achieve 2 short years ago. I am hopeful to carry that spirit into 2021 and beyond, whether I am chairman or ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

**SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR PANDEMIC RECOVERY EXPEDITED HIRING AUTHORITIES ACT OF 2020**

Now, Madam President, I have one other short point I would like to make that deals directly with negotiations going on right now for a COVID-19 package that we are trying to put together. Some people call it a stimulus package or something that could be put in the omnibus appropriations bill.

This goes back to the CARES Act that we passed in March when Congress authorized the creation of a Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery to oversee the billions of dollars in new Federal spending—hence, to make sure that those Federal dollars were spent according to the law. In the past, when

Congress created a special inspector general to fill a sudden need in new government oversight, this Congress quickly followed with additional legislation to provide the IG with expedited hiring authority to staff his new offices and also to begin timely oversight operations. Such timely oversight operations are particularly needed now because so much of this CARES money that was appropriated in March has gone out the door.

So, in the tradition of past Congresses setting up other special IGs to fill a sudden need, I introduced S. 3751, a bipartisan piece of legislation modeled on past special IG expedited hiring authority language. My bill provides the IG a short 6-month window to quickly hire the staff he needs to build his organization and begin carrying out the oversight mandated by Congress under the CARES Act. However, as of today, my bill still hasn't passed, and IG Miller has been left to work with an office that is still highly understaffed.

That is an outcome that should concern everyone here in the Senate if you are passionate about government oversight and making sure that money is spent responsibly. Whenever the government spends large sums of money, as we have in addressing this pandemic, there will always be bad actors somewhere out there, lying in wait, to test the system to see how much they can steal. We need a fully staffed and fully functional IG in place to meet those bad actors head-on to serve as an effective check on waste, fraud, and abuse.

Despite broad support for my bill from both sides of the aisle, I have heard rumors that some of my colleagues across the aisle may be wary of granting expedited hiring authority to the IG simply because they don't agree with the personal politics of the individual confirmed for that position. This amounts to an attempt to nullify the IG's confirmation by limiting his ability to conduct oversight and, hopefully, to make sure that all of the money that we are spending under all of these pandemic appropriations we have made is spent according to the law; hopefully, that implies responsibly spending the money.

Congress has already made the decision to establish this IG. Now we need to give the office the resources it needs to succeed. Personal and political disagreements are not reasons to deny the American people oversight of how billions of their tax dollars are being spent. Once the IG hires staff and has the ability to begin the substantive oversight work mandated by Congress, there will, as always, be an important place for congressional oversight to ensure the IG is doing his job.

I intend to conduct the same level of oversight of this IG that I have for others. I expect my colleagues will do the same.

That is why I urge my colleagues, regardless of any personal differences that they have, to support this bipartisan legislation granting expedited

hiring authority for the Special IG for Pandemic Recovery and included in the forthcoming COVID legislation.

Now, I have heard rumors within the last hour that there has already been a decision that they are not going to move ahead on this money for hiring to get this job. If that is true, I don't want anybody, whether it is a Republican or a Democrat, to ever complain about something that comes to light, that the money wasn't spent the way it was intended to be spent or it was wasted here or wasted there. Don't complain to me.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, while Senator GRASSLEY is on the floor, I would thank him for his remarks about the First Step Act and let him know that on the Judiciary Committee, I look forward to working with him to continue to advance that.

As the Senate knows, the Grassley-Durbin segment and the Cornyn-Whitehouse segment were the two key pieces of that bill, and it is terrific to hear the Senator and our chairman at the time chose support to continue that work. So I am grateful.

What I would like to do now is to follow the conversation we had about oceans a minute ago in the context of my "Time to Wake Up" speeches.

Obviously, the oceans are taking a colossal beating from climate change, from the warming, from the chemical acidification that it causes. It is warming at a rate of multiple detonations of Hiroshima-level nuclear weapons per second in the ocean. That is the amount of heat that is added, if you want to put an image to it.

So we have done some good things on oceans in this Congress, and I would like to summarize some of those.

One, obviously, is Save Our Seas 2.0 that Senator SULLIVAN, Senator MENENDEZ, and I just discussed, but we also have a little package of enforcement provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act that focus on what is commonly called illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing—IUU fishing—which is a really boring and bureaucratic name for extremely bad behavior.

Essentially, it is modern slavery at sea for the crew, who are miserably trapped on these illegal, pirate fishing vessels. They are also an avenue for trafficking of humans, of narcotics, of arms, or whatever. Once you are out in a boat outside, beyond the realm of the law, operating illegally and doing whatever you can for money, you will do pretty much anything there is. So in addition to ransacking our common seas, these pirate fishing fleets are really dangerous vectors for really dangerous criminal conduct.

I am glad that we have put a little more heat on the Navy to up its game and report on its implementation of previously passed measures. I am glad

that we have directed the Navy to work with the Coast Guard, which has the substantive jurisdiction over all of this, and to work with the private sector involved in solutions to this. There are such things as private sector satellites that track the wake and the signal of these illegal fishing vessels, and coordinating that with our intelligence and our research I think will really help in fighting that battle, so that we are sharing the information that we can and gathering the information that we can to be more effective.

Finally, as I recall from my travels with the late Senator McCain, when you went to coastal countries near China, you always heard the same complaint. We went to the Philippines and heard it. We went to Vietnam and heard it. We went to Indonesia and heard it. There are probably others if I could remember more clearly that I could add to that list. But the complaint was that the Chinese fishing fleet is incredibly aggressive, it is trespassing into foreign sovereign waters, it is fishing illegally and outside of any respect for the domestic protections of these nations, and it is often violently protected by Chinese vessels, by navy or other vessels of the Chinese Government. So focusing on that as a place to push back and protect our oceans while at the same time diminishing this bad behavior by China is also a good thing.

So that was our suite of progress on pirate fishing in the NDAA.

In the omnibus, we expect at least \$75 million to go, for the first time, into a new fund to tackle ocean plastics and for ocean plastic work in the administration.

So those are bits of good news, and I am delighted that those things have happened. The less good news from this past year is that coasts remain sadly underfunded, and we have missed some real opportunities.

Two of the accounts that demonstrate how badly funded coasts are facing these threats from the changing oceans are the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which should properly be called the inland and freshwater conservation fund, and the Army Corps Flood and Coastal Storm Damage Reduction Fund.

If you go back and look at how this money actually gets spent, for every dollar that the Land and Water Conservation Fund spends in an inland State, in a landlocked State, per capita, it spends only 40 cents in a coastal State—a dollar per capita inland, 40 cents per capita coastal. And that actually understates the coastal discrepancy because it doesn't count the spending in coastal States that isn't on coasts. You have coastal States like New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas that have big, big upland inland areas in which most of the Land and Water Conservation Fund money goes.

So what we really ought to do is call this what it is, which is an inland and freshwater conservation fund, and have a parallel coastal and saltwater preser-

vation fund to make sure that coasts are treated fairly.

I did not even get the chance to ask for some adjustments to treat coasts more fairly as an amendment when we reconsidered the Land and Water Conservation in the so-called Great American Outdoors Act, which was frustrating because everybody—at least on my side of the aisle—talks a good game about how we need to have more amendments, we need to have more amendments. That deal got locked down before it got to the Senate floor. Nobody was allowed an amendment. So that was frustrating, but we will fight on because coasts need to be treated fairly, and with sea level rise and warming and fisheries moving about and storm surge worsening and more hurricanes, the dangers to coasts are greater than before, not less.

On the Army Corps account, that is even more extreme. If you go back through the last 10 years, the best year the coasts had in the flood and coastal storm damage account was 1 coastal dollar for every 19 inland dollars—1 coastal dollar for every 19 inland dollars. Tell me how that is fair to coasts facing those same risks. And that is the best year. The worst year was 120 times more for inland projects than for coastal projects—less than a penny on the dollar. Less than a penny on the dollar for America's coasts.

So we have a lot of work to do to make sure that we are doing what we need to do for our coasts. I am hoping that we can move the OFFSHORE Act—that there is even a faint chance of getting it done in the last few days. It had a successful hearing in Energy and Natural Resources. It has 19 bipartisan cosponsors, including Commerce Chairman WICKER, and it would treat wind energy offshore the same way for revenues that we treat oil drilling offshore—i.e., 37.5 percent to the nearby State, 12.5 percent to a dedicated fund. In this case, it would be the Oceans and Coastal Fund because it is oceans and coastal. It is one of the ironies that most of the money that comes off of coastal oil drilling—offshore oil drilling—gets moved into the Land and Water Conservation Fund, where it goes out West and is spent on inland, not coastal, projects.

So we continue to have real work to do. There is the BLUE GLOBE Act, which I have with Senator MURKOWSKI, on data monitoring in the oceans and Great Lakes—we are going to continue to push forward—and our Blue Carbon bill, which will help us address the changes in the oceans that climate change is wreaking. With Blue Carbon, things like growing mangroves are incredibly powerful as a carbon sink, kelp and sea grass—to get that research done and do the work we need to to deacidify our oceans while we still have reefs that are alive.

My ideal would be a "big blue bill"—a big blue bill that combines BLUE GLOBE, Blue Carbon, and others and,