

will use the funds Congress has provided in this bill for direct relief to eligible homeowners and to set up, staff, and administer the programs providing that relief.

As Congress has established in the bill, direct relief through the Homeowner Assistance Fund can include help with missed mortgage payments, financial help to make a mortgage modification viable, assistance with broadband and utility costs; and other relief that homeowners need to get back on track financially. At least 60 percent of a State or other eligible entity's funds must go to households at or below 100 percent of area median income or households below 100 percent of the national median income, whichever is higher, to ensure that help reaches those homeowners who need it most. Including homeowners with incomes of up to 100 percent of the national median income when that is higher than the area median income will ensure that funds adequately reach homeowners in Tribal areas and rural areas, where localized incomes may be lower. Remaining assistance funds are targeted to socially disadvantaged individuals, including homeowners of color, who too often are left behind in our economy and who data indicate are at disproportionate risk of foreclosure.

While Congress has authorized the program, the intent is for Treasury to play a vital role in making this program a reality by administering the Homeowner Assistance Fund prudently and flexibly to keep the greatest number of families in their homes. In the days ahead, Treasury must provide States and other eligible entities with the certainty they need to accept and distribute these funds efficiently. Treasury must set clear expectations for the types of eligible programs States can administer and the guidelines States must follow to administer these programs equitably and in accordance with the law. That includes ensuring States and other eligible entities understand up front that they can use a portion of the funds provided through the Homeowner Assistance Fund to establish and administer their programs, so that States can immediately get the systems and staffing in place to put funds into the hands of the people who need them. And if there is any uncertainty among States or individuals who might apply for assistance, Treasury should immediately clarify that any assistance received through the Homeowner Assistance Fund is not income for a homeowner.

Treasury must also establish reporting to ensure that funds are reaching the households who need them most. Both to comply with the law and to ensure funds are being used equitably, Treasury must establish periodic public reporting by State of key metrics, including the amount of funds disbursed, the acceptance rate of applicants, reasons applicants are denied, the number of individuals assisted, the number of households assisted by in-

come range, the types of assistance provided, the average amount of assistance per household, and household outcomes. These data should also be assessed by race, ethnicity, gender, and other factors to determine compliance with all laws, including the Fair Housing Act. While Fair Housing Act enforcement remains the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice, this program and all housing programs must be developed and administered to comply with this foundational civil rights law.

States and other eligible recipients will also be vital partners in getting relief out quickly. Too many homeowners have been struggling for nearly a year. We need to get them relief now. Following the 2008 economic crisis, State housing finance agencies in select States were great partners in providing direct relief to homeowners through the Hardest Hit Fund. In my home State of Ohio, the Ohio Housing Finance Agency helped tens of thousands of people with mortgage payment assistance, modifications with assistance, and more. We need all States to be prepared to get these funds out quickly and without unnecessary barriers. Treasury can help facilitate this with clear guidance and templates that allow States to put out funds without delay.

I will continue to fight for the assistance people experiencing homelessness, renters, and homeowners need to stay in their homes. I also look forward to working to successfully deploy the historic resources provided in this bill.

CONFIRMATION OF MERRICK BRIAN GARLAND

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I rise today to voice my support for the President's nominee for Attorney General, Judge Merrick Garland, who is not only a fellow Marylander, but somebody I have known personally for many years. And I know that President Biden has picked a nominee with impeccable credentials and unimpeachable character. His experience stretches from the halls of the Justice Department to the chambers of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and he embodies the decency, the impartiality, and the commitment to justice that our Nation deserves as the Attorney General of the United States. I am confident that Judge Garland will serve admirably and faithfully as the next Attorney General.

The Nation already knows Merrick Garland because of his Supreme Court nomination and as the former Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, where he earned a reputation as one of our Nation's finest and fairest jurists. But his tenure on the D.C. Circuit was just the most recent achievement in a life dedicated to serving the rule of law. After excelling at law school, Judge Garland

clerked for the Second Circuit Court of Appeals and then for the Supreme Court. He then rose through the ranks of a prominent law firm before jumping back into public service feet-first as a Federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office during the administration of President George Herbert Walker Bush and then later served as the Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General at the Department of Justice.

As a senior DOJ official, Judge Garland was tasked with overseeing the case of the Oklahoma City bombing, one of the deadliest domestic terrorist attacks in American history. It left 168 Americans dead and hundreds more injured. Merrick Garland brought a steady hand to an operation that involved massive amounts of evidence, pressure from the public, and a large team with diverse skills and backgrounds. With fidelity to the law and meticulous attention to detail and unrelenting focus, Merrick Garland helped bring the bomber, Timothy McVeigh, to justice. He has called this case the most important thing he has done in his life.

Mr. Chairman, ranking member, and committee members, we are going to need his experience as we once again confront the rise of domestic terrorism, particularly in the wake of the horrific events of January 6. And the next Attorney General must not only take on the rise of White supremacists and radical militia groups, but also ensure that justice is rendered equally and fairly by promoting and ensuring racial equity, rooting out discrimination in our criminal justice system, addressing police reform, and ensuring that we don't see a concerted effort to limit people's citizens' right to vote in the United States of America. As Justice Garland has himself stated, ensuring the rule of law and making real the promise of equal justice under the law are "the great principles upon which the Department of Justice was founded and for which it must always stand." Judge Garland has spent his career doing both, and I have no doubt he will honor that tradition as Attorney General.

During Judge Garland's confirmation hearing his commitment to public service and ensuring equal justice were on display. He shared that he felt an obligation to payback our country for protecting and welcoming his grandparents who fled to the United States to escape anti-Semitism and persecution. He stated that serving as an Attorney General that combats injustice and discrimination would be "the highest, best use of my own set of skills."

While his professional experiences have prepared him for this job, it is his character that makes him right for this moment. Should he be confirmed, Judge Garland will be charged with restoring credibility and independence to the Department of Justice, making it clear that the Department is not the political instrument of the White House. I know Merrick Garland is up to

the task. The lengthy list of testimonials speaking to his fairness and sound judgement span the political spectrum. He is respected by lawmakers, scholars, and lawyers of every legal persuasion and political philosophy. And on a personal note, I can attest to the fact that his brilliance is matched by his kindness. His many achievements have never gone to his head. He has always stayed humble and treated everyone with respect.

It is for these reasons and many more that I was honored to vote for the President's nominee to serve as the next Attorney General of the United States, Judge Merrick Garland.

CONFIRMATION OF MICHAEL STANLEY REGAN

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, now is the time to take substantive action to combat climate change, address environmental justice, and help clean up the Chesapeake Bay. To help address these critical issues, President Biden nominated Michael Regan to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Michael Regan most recently served as secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. During that time, Mr. Regan led the implementation of North Carolina's Executive Order 80, a landmark effort to address climate change's impact and transition the State's energy economy. Mr. Regan also created North Carolina's first Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Board to address societal disparities exacerbated by environmental issues during his tenure as secretary.

Mr. Regan has a strong record of bipartisanship, having previously served at the EPA under both Democratic and Republican Presidents. He is committed to rebuilding EPA's Federal workforce, which saw record departures during the Trump administration. During the Trump administration, we saw the EPA workforce shrink to levels not seen since the Reagan administration, and those who resigned or retired include some of the Agency's most experienced scientific veterans, as well as young environmental experts who traditionally would have replaced them, causing a brain drain at the EPA. Maryland is home to many of those Federal employees, and I look forward to working with Mr. Regan to rebuild the civil servant backbone of the EPA.

One of EPA's most critical roles for the State of Maryland is its role in the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay. We are at a very critical junction in the implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement and our mutual goal of clean water in the Chesapeake Bay by 2025. On December 29, 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load—TMDL—a historic and comprehensive agreement that includes accountability features to re-

store clean water in the seven jurisdictions within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The agreement is a national and indeed international model for watershed restoration. It sets limits for pollution that equate to a 25-percent reduction in nitrogen, 24-percent reduction in phosphorous, and 20-percent reduction in sediment. As the Bay TMDL states, "The TMDL is designed to ensure that all pollution control measures needed to fully restore the Bay and its tidal rivers are in place by 2025[.]"

I look forward to working with Mr. Regan to make sure that EPA uses every tool available to them, including enforcement measures when necessary, to make sure that all jurisdictions are on track for our mutual goal of clean water in the Chesapeake Bay by 2025.

Furthermore, I am pleased that Mr. Regan has indicated that he will reconstituting the position of Senior Advisor to the Administrator of the EPA for the Chesapeake Bay.

I believe that Michael Regan is a strong choice to lead us into a new era at the EPA. For these reasons, I supported Michael Regan's nomination as the Administrator of the EPA.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DENNIS DAVIES

• Mr. DAINES. Madam President, this week I have the honor of recognizing Dennis Davies of Lewis and Clark County for his compassion and dedication to his community during the pandemic. While schools were closed to in-person instruction, Dennis saw that students needed a place to do their work at home. He rose to the occasion and began building desks for young Montanans enrolled in virtual school.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Dennis was inspired by a TV segment that profiled a teacher from Iowa who made desks for students and thought he could do the same for Montana's students.

At first, he paid desk supply expenses out of his own pocket. After the community recognized the service he was providing, donations began rolling in. Now, with the assistance of donated supplies and funds, he is able to expand his operation and build even more desks for kids. Dennis works alongside many Montanans who volunteer their time to help him build and deliver desks, and he hopes to provide 2,000 desks to students across the State. Though that amount may be daunting, he is excited to help do his part to help Montana families get through the pandemic.

It is my distinct honor to recognize Dennis for his compassion and dedication to the people of Lewis and Clark County in this trying time. His kindness and charitable approach to work serves as an inspiration to all Montanans.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:54 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1. An act to expand Americans' access to the ballot box, reduce the influence of big money in politics, strengthen ethics rules for public servants, and implement other anti-corruption measures for the purpose of fortifying our democracy, and for other purposes.

H.R. 842. An act to amend the National Labor Relations Act, the Labor Management Relations Act, 1947, and the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959, and for other purposes.

At 4:14 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 579. An act to make a technical correction to the ALS Disability Insurance Access Act of 2019.

The message further announced that the House has passed the following in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 8. An act to require a background check for every firearm sale.

H.R. 1446. An act to amend chapter 44 of title 18, United States Code, to strengthen the background check procedures to be followed before a Federal firearms licensee may transfer a firearm to a person who is not such a licensee.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 842. An act to amend the National Labor Relations Act, the Labor Management Relations Act, 1947, and the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. MANCHIN for the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

*David Turk, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of Energy.

By Mr. MENENDEZ for the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Wendy Ruth Sherman, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State.

*Brian P. McKeon, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)