care of it. Well, we have learned that in Texas alone, hundreds of thousands of people simply wouldn't be able to have the care they need. Yesterday Jeb Bush went so far as to say this, a direct quote: ''I'm not sure we need half a billion dollars for women's health issues.''

Unfortunately, the attack on women's health is only one example of the many legislative riders Republicans are pursuing. This isn't just talk; they have actually done it in the various bills that have come out of the House in the appropriations process and over here by the Republicans. These partisan riders have nothing to do with funding the government and everything to do with ideology and special interests.

For example, there is a legislative rider to block implementation of the Affordable Care Act, which would deny health coverage to millions of Americans—that, after almost threescore different attempts to repeal ObamaCare. Each of them turned out the same: They were defeated overwhelmingly.

There is a legislative rider on behalf of Wall Street to protect institutions that are too big to fail, making taxpayers more vulnerable to future bailouts.

There is a legislative rider to undermine the President's work to address the dangers of climate change. And the dangers of climate change exist. Spread across all the news today is the fact that the Forest Service is going to be spending 75 percent of its money fighting fires in the future. There will be no money left for anything other than fighting fires.

There is a fire going on in California now. It is 15 or 20 percent contained. There are 7,000 or 8,000 firefighters trying to stop that fire from spreading even more. That is only one of the many fires burning as we speak.

There is a legislative rider in their legislation attacking immigrants by undermining President Obama's recent Executive actions.

There is a legislative rider to block the Federal Communications Commission from implementing its recent net neutrality order. Let's not forget that this is what the Republican leader wanted; in fact, this is what he promised. It was just last month that he told the Lexington Herald Leader that he and Republicans would ''line the interior appropriations bill with every rider you can think of.'' In this instance, he certainly is a man of his word.

Democrats disagree with these Republican attacks, and we are going to resist them. We believe in standing up not for billionaires and tea party ideologues but for everyday, working families. Take sequestration, for example. While Republicans want relief only for the Pentagon, we insist on equal, dollar-for-dollar treatment for the needs of America's middle class—for jobs, for education, for health care. We insist on strengthening Social Security and Medicare, not cutting and privatizing them. And we insist on supporting women's health, not gutting it.

We know that Republicans disagree with us about these middle-class priorities, but I hope these disagreements—serious though they are—won't get in the way of keeping the government operating. Whatever our differences, we should act responsibly. We should at least be able to agree to not shut down the government. Republicans should not once again take legislative hostages to get some rightwing prize that is within their grasp.

Mr. President, would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CYBERSECURITY INFORMATION SHARING ACT OF 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 754, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 28, S. 754, a bill to improve cybersecurity in the United States through enhanced sharing of information about cybersecurity threats, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Under the previous order, the time until the cloture vote will be equally divided between the bill managers or their designees.

The Senator from California.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding that although the Senate had been scheduled to vote at 10:30 on a cloture motion, that time might be changed. However, I wish to make some further remarks in addition to what I said yesterday on the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act.

I think it is fair to say that I have been very disappointed over the past couple of days that we have not moved to this bill more quickly and that we haven't reached an agreement to take up and begin considering amendments. There has been a lot of talk about committee jurisdictions and germaneness of amendments and process issues that the American people just don't care about and which, frankly, don't make anyone safer. So I wish to take a few minutes to point out what we are really talking about.

Here are a few facts and figures. As I said in my remarks yesterday, cyber attacks and cyber threats are getting more and more common and more and more devastating. This isn't going to stop. It is going to get worse, and it affects everyone. That is why last night the White House had a simple message, and I hope my colleagues will hear it. A White House spokesman said yesterday: ''Cybersecurity is an important national security issue and the Senate should take up this bill as soon as possible and pass it.''

Here is why this is so important.

Last year the cyber security company McAfee and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, which we call CSIS, estimated that the annual cost of cyber crime is more than $400 billion—that is the annual cost—and could cost the United States as many as 200,000 jobs. That is not my analysis; that is the analysis of security experts. Also last year the cyber security company Symantec reported that over 348 million identities were exposed through data breaches—348 million people had their data exposed.

Poll information out this week from the Financial Services Roundtable shows that 46 percent of Americans were directly affected by cyber crime over the past year—that is almost one-half of the American population—and 66 percent are more concerned about cyber intrusions than they were last year. Why are people so concerned? Well, here is a list of 10 of the most noteworthy cyber breaches and attacks from the past year and a half.

Of course, we all know OPM. June of this year, Office of Personnel Management. There was an announcement that roughly 22 million government employees and security clearance applicants had massive amounts of personal information stolen from OPM databases.

Primera Blue Cross. In March of this year, Primera Blue Cross, a health insurer based in Washington State, said that up to 11 million customers could have been affected by a cyber breach last year.

Anthem. In February 2015, Anthem, one of the Nation's largest health insurers, said that hackers breached a database that contained as many as 80 million records of current and former customers.

Sony Pictures Entertainment. In November of last year, North Korean hackers broke into Sony Pictures Entertainment and not only stole vast amounts of sensitive and personal data but destroyed the company's whole internal network.

Defense Industrial Base. A 2014 Senate Armed Services Committee investigation found over 20 instances in the previous year of Chinese actors penetrating the networks of defense contractors to the military's Transportation Command.

JPMorgan Chase. In September of last year, it was reported that hackers broke in to their accounts and took the account information of 76 million households and 7 million small businesses.

Home Depot. In September of last year, Home Depot discovered that hackers had breached their networks and may have accessed up to 56 million credit cards.

EBay. In May of last year, it was reported that up to 233 million personal records of eBay users were breached.

There are people here who are concerned with personal information.

Look at the breach of personal information that has taken place because we haven't been able to stop it.

Destructive attack on Sands Casino. In early 2014, Iran launched a cyber attack on the Sands Casino in Las Vegas that rendered thousands of their electronic systems inoperable, according to public testimony of the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper.

Target. In December 2013, Target discovered that up to 70 million customers may have had their credit card information taken by hackers.

That is just the last year and a half. This Senator remembers, before this was disclosed in 2008, when hackers broke into Citibank and broke into the Royal Bank of Scotland and robbed individuals in each one of more than $10 million. That was not made public for a long time because they didn't want anybody to know. That was 2008. That was 7 years ago, and we haven't done anything about it.

Those are some of the breaches from the past year and a half. There are cyber crimes, theft of personal information, intellectual property, and money every single day.

In 2011 and 2012, there were denial-of-service attacks against major Wall Street banks and Nasdaq, showing that our financial institutions are vulnerable. In 2012, Saudi Aramco, the world's largest energy oil and gas company, had three-quarters of its corporate computers wiped out in a cyber attack. We are vulnerable and these attacks will continue.

This legislation, which was approved by a 14-to-1 vote in March and has been significantly improved since then, will not end these attacks, but it will greatly enhance the ability of companies and the U.S. Government to learn from each other about the threats they see and the defenses they employ.

I would like to make a couple of comments about the bill on specific points, if I may. We have made some 15 privacy information improvements in this bill, and I would like to read page 16 of the bill on ''Removal of Certain Personal Information.''

An entity sharing a cyber threat indicator pursuant to this Act shall, prior to such sharing—

(A) review such cyber threat indicator to assess whether such cyber threat indicator contains any information that the entity knows at the time of sharing to be personal information of or identifying a specific person not directly related to a cybersecurity threat and remove such information; or

(B) implement and utilize a technical capability configured to remove any information contained within such indicator that the entity knows at the time of sharing to be personal information of or identifying a specific person not directly related to a cybersecurity threat.

That is the first personal information scrub in this bill.

The second scrub is left to the agencies receiving the information. To that end, the Attorney General is directed to issue guidelines to all agencies once the information goes through the DHS portal and goes to the Defense Department or FBI or any other agency. Page 25 of the bill has details on the agencies' guidelines that will be developed to make a scrub:

Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall, in coordination with the heads of the appropriate Federal entities and in consultation with officers designated under section 1062 of the National Security Intelligence Reform Act of 2004 (42 U.S.C. 2000ee–1), develop, submit to Congress, and make available to the public interim guidelines relating to privacy and civil liberties which shall govern the receipt, retention, use, and dissemination of cyber threat indicators by a Federal entity obtained in connection with activities authorized in this Act.

(2) FINAL GUIDELINES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall, in coordination with heads of the appropriate Federal entities and in consultation with officers designated under section 1062 of the National Security Intelligence Reform Act of 2004 (42 U.S.C. 2000ee–1) and such private entities with industry expertise as the Attorney General considers relevant, promulgate final guidelines relating to privacy and civil liberties which shall govern the receipt, retention, use and dissemination of cyber threat indicators by a Federal entity obtained in connection with activities authorized in this Act.

Then there is a section on periodic review.

Then there is a section on content:

The guidelines required by paragraphs (1) and (2) shall, consistent with the need to protect information systems from cybersecurity threats and mitigate cybersecurity threats—

(A) limit the impact on privacy and civil liberties of activities by the Federal Government under this Act;

(B) limit the receipt, retention, use, and dissemination of cyber threat indicators containing personal information of or identifying specific persons, including by establishing—

(i) a process. . . .

And it goes on through page 27 of the bill. Everyone can pick it up and read it.

Section (E) on line 27 says it must ''protect the confidentiality of cyber threat indicators containing personal information of or identifying specific persons to the greatest extent practicable. . . . ''

Somebody can pick up this bill and read the section, pages 25, 26, and 27, and see the second personal information scrub that is in this bill. It happens, first, the company must scrub the information and then, second, the government must scrub the information. I think those are very substantial mandates.

I have been very disappointed by our inability to move this bill. Yesterday I cited the procedural history. This is the third bill we have dealt with. It gets into a question of committee jurisdiction, but the Intelligence Committee has been working on this issue for 5 years now. We have worked with companies. We have worked with technicians. Our staffs are very well aware of all the issues and the technical difficulties in putting together a bill.

The earlier bills were fragmented. This bill has a solid support from over 50 different companies and associations. I want to read just a few of them.

For the first time, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the bill; the Software Alliance supports this bill; the Information Technology Council supports this bill; yesterday I received a letter from General Motors supporting this bill; the American Bankers Association; the American Financial Services Association; the American Insurance Association; Agricultural Retailers Association; Airlines for America; Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers; American Cable Association; American Chemistry Council; American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers; American Gaming Association; American Gas Association; American Insurance Association; American Petroleum Institute; American Public Power Association; American Water Works Association; Association of American Railroads; Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies; The Clearing House; Consumer Bankers Association; Credit Union National Association; Electronic Transactions Association; Financial Services Forum; Independent Community Bankers of America; Investment Company Institute. It goes on and on and on.

I would point out Oracle and the National Association of Manufacturers support it; IBM; as I said, General Motors; and the U.S. Telecom Association support it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this list be printed in the RECORD.

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

SUPPORTERS OF THE CYBERSECURITY INFORMATION SHARING ACT OF 2015

U.S. Chamber of Commerce; BSA: The Software Alliance; Information Technology Industry Council; American Bankers Association; American Financial Services Association; American Insurance Association; Agricultural Retailers Association; Airlines for America; Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers; American Cable Association; American Chemistry Council; American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers; American Gaming Association; American Gas Association; American Insurance Association; American Petroleum Institute; American Public Power Association; American Water Works Association; ASIS International; Association of American Railroads.

Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies; The Clearing House; Consumer Bankers Association; Credit Union National Association; Electronic Transactions Association; Financial Services Forum; Financial Services Roundtable; Independent Community Bankers of America; Investment Company Institute; NACHA—The Electronic Payments Association; National Association of Federal Credit Unions; National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies; Property Casualty Insurers Association of America; Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association; BITS—Financial Services Roundtable; College of Healthcare Information Management Executives; CompTIA—The Computing Technology Industry Association; CTIA—The Wireless Association; Edison Electric Institute; Electronic Payments Coalition.

Electronic Transactions Association; Federation of American Hospitals; Food Marketing Institute; Global Automakers; GridWise Alliance; HIMSS—Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society; HITRUST—Health Information Trust Alliance; Large Public Power Council; National Association of Chemical Distributors; National Association of Manufacturers; National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies; National Association of Water Companies; National Business Coalition on e-Commerce & Privacy; National Cable & Telecommunications Association; National Rural Electric Cooperative Association; NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association; Property Casualty Insurers Association of America; The Real Estate Roundtable; Software & Information Industry Association; Society of Chemical Manufacturers & Affiliates.

Telecommunications Industry Association; Transmission Access Policy Study Group; Utilities Telecom Council; Oracle; National Association of Manufacturers Association; IBM; General Motors (GM); US Telecom Association.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. So I want to say something about jurisdiction of committees. The Homeland Security Committee is certainly free to do a bill. The Judiciary Committee is certainly free to do a bill. We have the one on the Intelligence Committee—and the Presiding Officer is a member of this committee—which has been working on this for a long time. We have done two bills previously. This bill, I believe, has hit the mark of support across the Nation, from the companies—both corporate and privately owned—that would have to use this.

It is all voluntary. It does not force anybody to do anything they do not want to do. If one does share, and share according to the strictures of this bill, you are protected with liability insurance. If you reduce it to its basic elemental truth, it is the on-ramp to cyber security protection in this country. It gives companies the ability to talk to each other about a well-defined cyber threat indicator, to talk with the government, and to be able to take advice from the government. If they follow the bill, they don't have to worry about a lawsuit. That is what this bill does.

So this Senator must say we have made at least 15 different privacy amendments to meet individual Senators' needs. There is a managers' package, a substitute amendment, if you will, that takes out any use of this information from being used for any other purpose—violent crime—other than cyber security because a number of Senators weighed in, and they felt it could be used to be monitored as a surveillance bill.

This is not a surveillance bill. What it is meant to be is a voluntary effort that companies can enter into with some protection if they follow this law. It gives the Attorney General the obligation to come up with secure guidelines to protect private information.

It is very hard for me, candidly, to understand why this has become such a big issue because we protect privacy information. Today out in this vast land of the Internet, there is very little privacy protection. You can see that by the cyber interruptions. You can see that by the use of insurance data by company to company. You can see that by companies that are designed to accumulate data about an individual so they can sell that data to other companies, which can tell you who uses a credit card, how you use it, where you use it, and at what time you use it. To me that is a privacy violation.

We have taken every step to prevent privacy violations from happening under this bill. Yet there are individuals who still raise that as a major concern. I believe it is bogus. I believe it is a detriment to us in taking this first step to protect our American industries. If we don't pass it, the thefts are going to go on and on and on.

I understand that the cloture vote has been postponed until 2 o'clock. I will vote for cloture. I believe we have, in good faith—Senator BURR and I, the committee as a whole, the staffs on both sides of the aisle—gone out of our way to listen to Senators, to present amendments where they felt they were workable and applicable to the bill. We need to get on with it because the litany I read in the last year and a half of almost half of the American people being affected by cyber crime cannot go on.

I make these remarks and hope at least it can clear the air somewhat, so when a cloture vote does come at 2 o'clock, we will have the votes to proceed to the bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Democratic leader and myself continue to discuss the way forward on cyber. I think we have made some progress, but to make that more possible for us to reach some kind of agreement, I now ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the cloture vote with respect to the motion to proceed to S. 754 occur at 2 p.m. today; further, that the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII be waived.

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. 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.

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

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time during quorum calls be charged equally to both sides.

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

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

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

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this is not the first time, nor will it be the last time that I speak in this Chamber about the Iran nuclear agreement. I listened to some of the hearings on this subject in both the House and the Senate, last week, and I want to provide a bit of my perspective on the challenge before us.

I was a law student in Washington during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. My wife and I were living probably 2 miles from the White House, and we were paying very close attention to what might happen. Afterward, as more of the history came out, we realized that some of President Kennedy's top advisers and Members of Congress pushed for a military attack on Cuba—actually, a military attack against the then-Soviet Union. A war between the two nuclear superpowers would have at the very least risked the annihilation of both countries. Fortunately, President Kennedy had the thoughtfulness, patience, and fortitude to resist the pressure to go to war.

It is not easy to stick with the long road of tough negotiations when many are clamoring for a military solution rather than negotiations. It is the same today as it was back in the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Today we are considering an agreement at the end of such negotiations between the United States and our allies, and Russia, China, and Iran to curb an illicit nuclear program that threatens the Middle East and the world.

I know from my conversations with the President and with Secretary Kerry and Secretary Moniz how difficult this was. I also know from my conversations with them that they were prepared to walk away rather than settle for a bad deal. But based on what I have heard so far, this is not a bad deal.

There are aspects of the agreement that I and others have legitimate questions about, but we already know a lot about it.

We know that prior to negotiations, Iran's nuclear program was hurtling forward despite multinational sanctions.

I remember back in September of 2012, I had been named the Senate delegate to the U.N., and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke. He warned that Iran was within months—months—of producing a nuclear bomb. Well, whether or not that was accurate then, it certainly is not accurate if this agreement is implemented.

We know negotiations succeeded in freezing Iran's nuclear development in place, and now we have an agreement to roll back Iran's program.

We know that this is the most rigorous monitoring and inspection regimen ever included in a nonproliferation agreement. Actually, I think it is a lot more rigorous than many observers predicted it would be.

We know that without this deal, the monitoring and the onsite inspections would go away, and so would support for the international sanctions we painstakingly built. Remember, it took years for us to put together a coalition of other countries to impose the sanctions. Many of them did so at great economic cost to their own economies, but they stuck with us because they thought we would negotiate in good faith and that diplomacy could succeed. If we walk away now, many of these countries are going to say: OK, you are in this by yourself. The United States can impose sanctions, but they will be nowhere near as effective as they were when we joined you.

We know that the sanctions reprieve in this agreement is limited and reversible. It is structured so that many sanctions remain in place, sanctions in which other countries have joined us. If Iran fails to meet its commitments, we and our partners can revoke the limited relief and we can impose additional sanctions.

Some criticized this agreement within minutes of the agreement being announced. They are long on scorn, but they are short on alternatives.

Again, I remember that speech by Prime Minister Netanyahu years ago when he warned that Iran was just months away from building a nuclear weapon. Today, people are expressing concern about what may happen 15 years from now, not a few months from now. They ignore the fact that if Congress rejects this agreement, Iran can immediately resume its development of highly enriched uranium. Iran can build a nuclear weapon in far less than 15 years. I would ask, is that the alternative they support?

Or is it another war in the Middle East, which our senior military leaders say could spiral out of control and at best would delay the resumption of Iran's nuclear weapons programs by 2 to 3 years, after which it would not be subject to international inspections?

Some of the most vociferous critics of this agreement reflexively supported sending American troops to overthrow Saddam Hussein and occupy Iraq. We did this after having hearings and meetings in which the Vice President of the United States implied that Iraq was involved in the attack on 9/11 and made it very clear that they had weapons of mass destruction.

I voted against that war because I read the intelligence files, and they were very clear that there was no credible evidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and it was very clear that they had nothing to do with 9/11. That colossal mistake killed or maimed thousands of Americans, hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis, and by now has cost more than $2 trillion and the meter is still running—$2 trillion. It is the first time in this Nation's history when we went to war on a credit card; we didn't enact a tax to pay for it. Even unpopular wars, like Vietnam and Korea, were paid for.

Is it the critics' alternative to reject this agreement and then somehow convince the other parties to it—Russia, China, and the rest of the P5+1—to impose even stronger multilateral sanctions? Have they bothered to ask officials in any of those governments what the chances of that would be? Certainly the statements those officials have made make it very clear that those chances—to use a precise expression—are zilch.

I am as outraged as anyone by Iran's support of terrorism, its arbitrary arrests and imprisonment of Americans, its denial of due process, its use of torture and other violations of human rights, and its summary executions of political opponents, just as I object to similar abuses by many countries we deal with every day.

But as horrific as Iran's behavior is, it pales compared to the havoc Iran could wreak if it obtains a nuclear weapon. A nuclear-armed Iran could commit acts of terrorism that dwarf by thousands or even millions of times over those it engages in today. There is simply no comparison.

A workable agreement doesn't just buy more time, it can also buy more opportunities. In Iran, the impetus for reforming its hostile and destabilizing foreign policy comes from the Iranian people. For decades, the Iranian middle class has been smothered—first by a revolution that crushed their aspirations and then by a regime that imposed the harsh consequences of its own criminal behavior on the Iranian population.

Ordinary Iranians overwhelmingly do not want an empire; they want more economic opportunities, freedom of expression, and to reengage peacefully with the world. With this agreement, the Iranian middle class can continue to be a factor in future negotiations.

It is well understood that in the Congress, we agree or disagree, we debate, and we vote. That is one of the reasons I wanted to be a Member of this body. Ideally, we do so in a manner that reflects the respect each of us owes to this institution. For a nation of over 300 million Americans, there are only 100 of us who have the privilege at any given time to serve in this body. We are but transitory occupants of the seats the voters have afforded us the opportunity to occupy. In carrying out our responsibilities, we should do our best to live up to the standards of those who created what we take pride in calling the world's oldest democracy.

I mention this because, as I said earlier, I listened to portions of the hearings in the various House and Senate committees on the Iran nuclear agreement at which the Secretaries of State and Energy testified. Presumably, they were asked to testify because the members of those committees had questions and concerns about those agreements and wanted to hear the witnesses' responses. However, rather than a respectful, substantive exchange, what has too frequently occurred has been an embarrassing display of political theater.

What we have heard is a series of speeches often containing assertions or accusations that are either contradicted by the actual words of the agreement or without factual basis, and then they are followed by questions the witnesses were unable to answer because when they tried, they were interrupted or told the time had expired.

Many Vermonters have talked to me about those hearings. They were often embarrassing to watch, and they did a disservice to the American people who deserve to know that their representatives are engaged in a substantive, in-depth exchange of views on the hugely important issue of how to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

I have questions myself because, short of unilateral surrender by one party, every agreement involves compromise. That is as true for international diplomacy as it is for the Senate. Neither side gets everything it wants. Anyone who suggests that was a possible outcome here is fooling themselves or, even worse, deceiving the voters who sent them here.

The President has been unwavering in his insistence that the goal of this agreement is to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. I commend him for his vision and resolve. I have spoken with him at length about this.

I will say to my colleagues what I said to the President. It is now up to Congress to carry out its oversight responsibility. We can strive to make this work, keeping in mind the vital national security interests at stake for our country and for our allies, or we can impulsively sabotage this chance.

But we should engage in this process in a manner that enhances the image of the U.S. Senate and that affords those in our government who spent years forging this agreement the respect and appreciation they deserve.

Mr. President, there have been many thoughtful articles and opinion pieces written about the Iran nuclear agreement. I am sure there will be many more. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD one of those articles, authored jointly by Eric Schwartz and Brian Atwood, two former Assistant Secretaries of State.

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

[Commentary, July 30, 2015]

CHEERLEADERS FOR WAR ARE STILL SO WRONG CONGRESS NEEDS TO ''PRACTICE HISTORY'' AND OK THE AGREEMENT.

(By Eric Schwartz and Brian Atwood)

In ''Practicing History,'' historian Barbara Tuchman observed that there are ''two ways of applying past experience: One is to enable us to avoid past mistakes and to manage better in similar circumstances next time; the

other is to enable us to anticipate a future course of events.''

Tuchman would find it strange today that many of the loudest opponents of the Iran nuclear agreement are the same prominent individuals and organizations who unequivocally supported the most significant national security blunder by the U.S. in recent memory, the war of choice in Iraq.

As evidence has accumulated since the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the price of that foreign policy engagement has become obvious to most. The cost to the U.S. includes trillions of dollars lost to future generations of Americans, tens of thousands killed or injured, the opening of a Sunni-Shia Pandora's box of sectarian strife, the ascendance of Iran and the diminished influence of the U.S. in the Middle East.

Remarkably, there are still unrepentant cheerleaders for that war, as well as those who argue that the U.S. invasion was a good idea in principle that was just executed poorly. And they are among the most influential voices opposed to the agreement with Iran.

Why does it matter that the pundits who were so convinced about invading Iraq more than a decade ago now pursue with passionate certainty the defeat of the diplomatic effort involving Iran?

It matters because, then and now, these voices suffer from a greatly exaggerated view of the ability of the U.S. to unilaterally dictate geopolitical outcomes that we desire. In the case of Iraq, this was perhaps best expressed by former Vice President Dick Cheney who, when pressed before the war on our capacity to remake Iraqi society, argued that we would be ''greeted as liberators.'' Of course, the experience in Iraq, the resulting ascendance of Iran and reduced U.S. influence in the region have only further diminished our capacity to act without the support of others and have underscored the importance of smart power—diplomacy backed with all of the resources at our disposal to achieve our objectives.

The nuclear agreement, now endorsed unanimously by the United Nations Security Council, is long and complex, and it is presumed that Congress will study carefully the details. Are the verification provisions adequate and does the International Atomic Energy Agency have the resources to monitor compliance? What is the process by which sanctions could be reimposed if violations occur? Are all paths to a nuclear bomb blocked? What are the alternatives to this approach and are they acceptable to the American people?

Our expectation is that a serious examination of this agreement should win over a bipartisan majority. The agreement's substantial reductions in uranium stockpiles and installed centrifuges, robust inspection regime and dramatically diminished capacity for an Iranian breakout and ''race to a bomb'' provide unprecedented means to ensure Iran will meet its stated commitment to never build a nuclear weapon.

But these elements will not win over those with an unrealistic view of the capacity of the U.S. to play the Lone Ranger in international politics. And while opponents say they support diplomacy, the so-called alternatives they would prefer—like pressing for a harder line on sanctions relief—would put us at odds with our allies, be rejected by Iran and increase the risks of another war in the Middle East that would be tragic for both the U.S. and for Israel.

The nuclear agreement will of course pose challenges for U.S. policymakers, as sanctions relief will provide benefits to Iran and opportunities to make mischief in the region. But through our continued presence, support of regional friends and allies, and an enforceable nuclear agreement, we have the strongest capacity to manage such challenges effectively.

Americans must hope that Congress will be preoccupied with the substance of the Iran agreement and the poor alternatives to it, and not be influenced by voices of the past that cling to dangerous views about our prospects as a go-it-alone superpower. Congress should ''practice history'' and recognize that this agreement has the potential to interrupt the downward spiral in the region, from conventional war and terrorism to nuclear conflict.

Forcing the president to veto a rejection resolution would reflect badly on the Congress and the United States of America. Even worse, overriding a presidential veto would have grave implications for the U.S., for Israel and for the region for many years to come.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I will speak further on this subject, but I see no other Senators seeking the floor. While I do appreciate the opportunity to be here, I must admit that, looking at the weather and live views of Vermont this morning, I will look forward to the time we complete our work because after the last vote of this week, I will be on the first flight I can get on and look forward to being in Vermont. I will miss all of you, of course, but not so much I want you all to come and join me.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

WORKING TOGETHER IN THE SENATE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, as Senators get ready to head home for the August recess, I think it is a good time to look back at what we have been able to achieve so far this year.

I would say, by any measure, the record of the Senate this year has been one of great accomplishments and bipartisan achievements because we have worked together to find solutions to help the country move ahead.

With Republicans in charge, the Senate set a very fast pace for the first 100 days of the new Congress. We have kept up that pace now over the first 6 months of the Congress, and we are going to continue to build on that momentum for the rest of the year and, I believe, achieve even greater success on behalf of all Americans.

Under Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL, Senate Republicans are now governing, and we are doing it in a bipartisan way, just as we promised.

The Senate passed the first budget resolution with the House since 2009—the first one since 2009. The Appropriations Committee passed all 12 spending bills for the first time in 6 years. We passed the longest reauthorization of the highway trust fund in almost a decade. The Senate passed trade promotion authority for the first time since 2002. We passed a permanent doc fix to prevent Medicare payment cuts—after 17 temporary patches since 2002. And the Senate ended Washington's test-based education policies by making States responsible and accountable.

A lot of people in Washington have written about gridlock, and they had gotten used to the gridlock when Democrats ran the Senate. Now they are starting to realize the Senate really is working again. They realize we can actually get things done. That is not me speaking. That is what the Bipartisan Policy Center recently said. This is a group of former Republican and Democratic Members of Congress. They came out with a report called their ''Healthy Congress Index.'' They did it for the first 6 months of 2015.

The headline of the report was ''Continued Signs of Life in Congress.'' Continued signs of life—imagine that—actual signs of life and activity taking place in Congress this year.

This bipartisan group reported that the total number of days worked is up from previous years—15 more days worked just so far in the first 6 months of the Senate compared to last year. That is 3 more weeks of work on the Senate floor than the year before under HARRY REID.

The Bipartisan Policy Center also said the committees are actually working again. ''Congressional committees have been extremely active, reporting a significantly larger number of bills than the previous two Congresses.'' That is because the committees are working again. In the first 6 months of this year we had 102 bills reported out of committees in the Senate, compared to just 69 in the first 6 months of the last Congress and just 42 in the Congress before that. Now, that is just through the end of June. Our committees have produced even more bills since then. So committees are working—and we are working together—to push out bipartisan bills.

Right now both Houses of Congress are in a 60-day period of scrutinizing the Iran nuclear agreement. We are able to do that because the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act had unanimous support in the Foreign Relations Committee—Republicans and Democrats voting together—and then it got overwhelming bipartisan support on the Senate floor. That is just one more way the Senate is working again.

So far in this Congress we passed more than 64 different bills. The highway trust fund legislation was bipartisan. It will fund highways and transportation all across the country, and 26 Democrats voted in favor of that legislation. We passed the education reform bill with 40 Democrats in favor. When we passed the trade promotion authority, 14 Democrats joined Republicans to get that done. These important pieces of legislation are just part of our commitment to work together to solve problems for the American people.

Even Tom Daschle—Tom Daschle, the former Democratic Senate leader—

recently said: ''The good news is that Congress is continuing to move in the right direction: staying in session more often, empowering committees to work together.'' That is from a former Democratic majority leader in the Senate, Tom Daschle. He is exactly right. The Senate is working again, we are moving in the right direction, and we are just getting started. I am hopeful that we can continue to work together to find solutions on more issues that matter to the American people.

There is still a lot of work to be done, specifically related to our economy. People want a healthy economy. But there is still far too much redtape and regulation coming out of Washington, and it continues to strangle our economy.

New numbers came out last week about the slow pace of economic growth over the first half of the year. One of the headlines came out last Friday about the slow pace and it said: ''Worst Expansion Since World War II Gets Even Worse.'' ''Worst Expansion Since World War II Gets Even Worse.'' The article says: ''The economy expanded at a 2.3 percent annual rate in the second quarter [of the year], once again falling short of projections for a decisive rebound and raising concerns that the six-year old expansion will never pick up steam''—will never pick up steam, ever. So the recovery from the last recession has been far weaker than recoveries from other recessions under Presidents Reagan and Clinton.

One reason is that the Obama administration has tied the hands of those who hire others. It makes it much harder to get our economy going again. Hard-working families are still struggling because their wages are not growing.

That is what another set of government numbers said on Friday. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment costs had their worst gains ever in the second quarter of the year.

What does the White House plan to do about it? What is President Obama's plan for ''Worst Expansion Since World War II Gets Even Worse''? What does the President want to do about it? Well, on Monday President Obama and the administration announced its so-called—so-called—Clean Power Plan, and it is going to mandate massive new redtape and job-crushing regulations. It is a national energy tax.

More Americans will lose their jobs, and more hard-working families across the country will be hit with higher electric bills. Congress can stop this costly and destructive regulation from taking effect, and that is where we are headed.

The way to do it is by passing a bipartisan piece of legislation called the Affordable Reliable Electricity Now Act.

The American people have seen that Congress is capable of coming together to take on important issues, and this is certainly one.

Hardworking Americans are extremely anxious for us to continue working together to solve some of these problems that continue to face our country. We have done it before, and we can do it again, as long as we have a willing partner.

The Senate passed the bipartisan Keystone XL Pipeline jobs bill. Then President Obama vetoed it.

We passed an appropriations bill out of committee that funded the Department of Defense at the levels the President requested, and the Democrats here in the Senate have blocked those funds for our troops. In fact, Democrats are blocking all of the appropriations bills, including ones that passed out of the committee with bipartisan support.

The American people want their elected representatives in the Senate to deal with these issues. The American people want to see us get past the gridlock once more—as we have already done so many times this year. The American people want us to tear down the barriers to stronger economic growth so they can get back to work, they can earn a decent wage, and they can take care of their families.

This Senate has accomplished a lot in the first half of the year. I believe we can do even more in the second half of the year. That is the commitment Republicans made to the American people, and we are keeping that commitment.

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. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have had the honor of serving in the Senate now for three terms, and I'm in my fourth term. I have been on the Senate floor a major part of my public life and witnessed a lot of things that have occurred here. I remember quite a few of them, but the one that sticks in my memory goes back to 2002. It was the end of September or the beginning of October—I will get the exact date—and there was a critical debate taking place on the floor of the Senate that went late into the night. The final vote happened around midnight. The question was whether the United States should be authorized to invade Iraq.

I remember that debate because we were still reeling from the tragedy of 9/11. We were still determined to keep America safe. We worried about our vulnerabilities and our strengths. The George W. Bush administration, after several months of preparing for this debate, led most Americans to believe that Saddam Hussein, the leader in Iraq, possessed weapons of mass destruction. Some of the testimony even suggested those weapons could threaten our allies, our friends, and even the United States of America.

It was in that context that a decision was made to invade Iraq, but first the decision had to come through Congress. The American people had their chance through their elected representatives in the Senate and the House to make that decision.

The public sentiment behind the war in Iraq was overwhelmingly positive as we voted. The belief was that we had to stop Saddam Hussein before there was another attack on the United States like 9/11. Sentiments ran very high. The rhetoric was heated.

I remember that night. I remember there were two of my colleagues on the floor after everyone had gone home. One was Kent Conrad, the Senator from North Dakota, and the other was Paul Wellstone, the Senator from Minnesota. Now, 23 of us had voted no on authorizing the war in Iraq. It included the three of us who remained.

I was up for reelection, as was Senator Wellstone. I went to Paul Wellstone in the well of the Senate and I said: Paul, I hope that vote doesn't cost you the election in a few weeks.

Paul Wellstone said to me: It is all right if it does. This is who I am and this is what I believe, and the people of Minnesota expect nothing less.

The story unfolds. In the ensuing weeks Paul Wellstone died in a plane crash before the election took place, but I still remember that moment, and I remember what I considered to be an act of conscience by my friend and colleague from Minnesota.

I thought about the thousands of votes that I have cast in the House and the Senate, and only a handful are still right there in front of me. They include the votes that you cast that relate to war. You know if you vote to go to war even under the right circumstances, innocent people will die. Americans will die. There is no more serious or grave responsibility than to take those questions of foreign policy as seriously as or more seriously than virtually any other issue.

Fast forward to where we are today. We will leave this week and be gone for 4 or 5 weeks and return in September. The first item of business will be the Iran agreement. I view this vote on the Iran agreement in the same class as the vote on the war in Iraq. It is a question, a serious foreign policy question, about whether Iran will be stopped from developing a nuclear weapon. We have added into this conversation the decision of Congress as to whether they approve the President's treaty. That doesn't often happen, but it will in this case.

We have to look at the possibility that Congress will reject the Iran treaty. Even if the President vetoes it, there is still a question as to whether

Congress would override that veto. We have to ask ourselves: What happens if this Iran agreement comes to an end? Military action—some form of military action.

One of the Senators on the other side of the aisle assured us 4 days—we will take care of the Iranian nuclear problem in 4 days. He wasn't here when we were told the war in Iraq would last 2 weeks. So 4,844 American lives later, with tens of thousands injured, and trillions of dollars spent, that war ended with a result that none of us really view as a success for American foreign policy. Now we face that same question. Those who would reject the Iranian agreement have a responsibility to come to this floor and explain what happens next.

Yesterday we called a meeting. I asked the Ambassadors from the five nations that joined us in the negotiations with Iran to come meet with Members of the Senate on the Democratic side. We had the Ambassador from Russia, the Ambassador from China, the Ambassador from the United Kingdom, and the Deputies Chief of Mission from Germany and France. About 30 Democratic Senators gathered to ask questions in a completely off-the-record, informal atmosphere.

The first question asked was, what happens if Congress rejects this Iranian agreement? What happens the next day? What is the next step? They said the notion that we will sit back down at the table with the Iranians, in the words of one of these Ambassadors, is far-fetched.

We have spent 35 years bringing Iran to this table. These nations joined us in an effort to try to stop Iranians from developing a nuclear weapon. These nations are satisfied that what we have put together is an agreement that is verifiable with inspections.

When I think back to Ronald Reagan, I didn't agree with him on a lot of things, but I sure agreed with what he said when it came to these agreements, ''trust, but verify.'' There is verification in this agreement. The IAEA, which is the United Nations group that inspects atomic facilities around the world, is tasked with inspecting and reporting and continuing to investigate Iran throughout the life of this agreement.

Can we trust them? Well, just as a historic reminder, it was the IAEA that said to the United States: There are no weapons of mass destruction that we can find in Iraq.

We ignored them. We invaded. We paid a heavy price for it. It turns out they were right. Some of our leaders were just plain wrong. The agency has credibility, it has a track record, and it is authorized under this agreement to move forward.

What struck me, as I looked at those Ambassadors sitting across the table from 30 Members of the Senate yesterday, was how historic this moment is. China, Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the United States were all together negotiating, trying to bring at least some modicum of peace to the Middle East. Some of the statements that were made were compelling.

A gentleman from the German side said: I won't go into the history of Germany—you know it well—but I will tell you we are more committed to the survival of Israel than any nation in Europe.

Any student of history knows exactly what he was speaking of. Now we have an opportunity to turn to diplomacy to avoid the military and avoid war. And what do we find? In April of this year, 47 Senators on the other side of the aisle sent a letter to the Ayatollah in Iran, the Supreme Leader of Iran, and said: Do not negotiate with President Obama and the United States. Whatever you think you have agreed to is subject to congressional approval, and don't expect the next President of the United States to abide by any agreement.

Forty-seven Senators from the other side of the aisle signed that letter. What would have happened if 47 Democratic Senators had sent a letter to Saddam Hussein before the invasion of Iraq and said the same thing: Don't negotiate with President Bush. Don't even think that you can avoid a war.

I think they would have had us up on charges. At least Vice President Cheney would have. But in April, before the agreement was even announced on the other side of the aisle, 47 Senators said: Don't waste your time negotiating. I think they are wrong.

I think we ought to go back to the words of John Kennedy. John Kennedy said: We should never negotiate out of fear, but we should never fear to negotiate.

Leaders in our country—Republican Presidents—have stepped up to that negotiating table with a flurry of criticism that they would even sit down with these enemies of the United States and try to find a more peaceful world. Ronald Reagan sat down with Gorbachev looking for containment of nuclear weapons. It was Richard Nixon, another Republican President, who sat down with the Chinese to open relations with them while the Chinese were supplying and fortifying the North Vietnamese fighting American forces. Despite that criticism, they had the courage to sit down and look for a diplomatic way to find a more peaceful world, and that is what we face today.

This Iran agreement is our opportunity to test diplomacy, and I invite Israel, our friends and allies in Israel, to join us in holding Iran to the letter of the law in this agreement. Join us in reviewing these inspections. Join us in calling for the availability of these facilities so we know exactly what is going on with Iran from this point forward. Let's join together in a force to make this a more peaceful world. I think this is our chance. I know this is a vote of conscience for me, and I am sure it is for all of my colleagues. I hope there will be the courage to try diplomacy before we turn to war.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, in the days ahead, we are facing one of the most consequential issues we will face as a nation—this issue of an agreement with Iran. Some people want to make this into a partisan conversation. It is not a partisan conversation. It is a national security issue, and it is a world security issue.

The Senate has already held multiple hearings on Iran and on this particular agreement with the Intelligence Committee I sit on, the Armed Services Committee, and the Foreign Relations Committee. I personally met with Secretary of Treasury Jack Lew, Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, and Secretary of State John Kerry. I have been through the agreement and the classified portion of this agreement in every detail.

I wish I could also go through the IAEA information about how the inspections will actually occur because the agreement itself gives broad statements. The IAEA agreement will be the narrow, practical version of how they will actually do inspections. I have been told over and over again by the administration and by officials that the United States will not have a role in determining how the inspections will be done and that they will not even see the methods of how we will do inspections before they actually begin.

They told me they have been orally briefed on the process, but they have not actually seen it, which means since they haven't seen it, I can't see it. It seems odd to me that the final aspect of the agreement that actually gives the greatest detail of how the inspections will occur none of us can actually see. It is difficult to have this ''trust, but verify'' attitude when we were not given the ability to verify how they are verifying it and to see how much trust is actually being given in this process.

The White House has told us over and over again that if you don't like this deal, there are two options—it is either war or provide a better solution. I am telling everyone: Let's slow down. Let's look at both of those things, and let's also back up and see where we are.

For years the United States and the United Nations said that Iran should not enrich uranium. In fact, there are six U.N. resolutions saying that Iran should not enrich uranium. Why? Because Iran is the single largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world. Iran has propped up the Assad regime in Syria. They are paying the soldiers to walk side by side and to fight with Assad right now and hold up that Syrian Government. Iran is paying for and propping up the coup that is in Yemen right now on Saudi Arabia's southern border. They are still chanting in the streets ''Death to America,'' and they are actively pursuing larger and larger

weapons. I think there is a reason to take this seriously.

Now, back to the statement by the White House. They have said: If you don't agree with this agreement, then it is either war or you come up with a better option.

I will briefly touch on those two issues. I think in many ways this agreement actually pushes us faster to a process towards war. Why would I say that? Because the conventional weapons ban is lifted under this agreement, and Iran can freely purchase weapons from around the world that have been banned by a U.N. treaty, and that is now lifted under this agreement.

To pacify the Gulf States and Israel, the administration immediately went to the Gulf States and said: We understand the conventional weapons ban is being lifted there, so we are going to provide you greater technology and weapons, and we are going to provide you greater access to weapons and help to be able to get those weapons.

So help me understand why encouraging the Middle East to start dialing up with more and more weapons on both sides of this doesn't actually push us towards war even faster?

Then there is this statement about providing a better solution, as if this is the only option that is sitting out there. Well, the agreement itself was written in such a way that the U.N. would approve this first, the European Union would approve it second, and then the U.S. Congress would get it third. That was intentionally done to try to add pressure to this Congress to say: You can't turn away from this. The rest of the world has signed on to it, so you can't turn away from it.

This Congress should not process things under fear, and this Congress should not process things by saying: You are the last in line so you better sign up to where the rest of the world is.

We have to look at this because we are directly affected by this issue. Remember, Iran has said over and over again that the United States is the great Satan in the world. Anyone who believes that Iran wants to be able to come alongside us and be a peaceful member of the club is not listening to what Iran is actually saying, not to mention this whole theory of, if you don't sign onto this agreement, there is no better deal.

Last week Bloomberg reported that the French senior diplomat, Jacques Audibert—the senior diplomatic adviser to President Hollande, the individual who led the French diplomatic team in discussions with Iran in the P5+1 group, and the one who was in the room—earlier this month directly disputed Kerry's claim that a congressional rejection of the Iran deal would result in the worst of all words, the collapse of sanctions, and Iran racing to a bomb without restrictions.

The French senior diplomat actually said: If Congress votes this down, there will be saber-rattling and chaos for a year or two, but in the end nothing will change and Iran will come back to the table and negotiate a better deal that will be to our advantage.

I will run that by again. He said he thought if Congress votes this down, we will get a better deal. That means two things: He believes, again, that Iran will come back to the table on this, and he also believes there is a better deal out there, and that this is not the best deal we can get.

After going through the agreement, I have very serious concerns about it. I am concerned there are loopholes in this agreement that are big enough to drive a truck through. Specifically, this truck is the truck that is big enough to drive it through.

I will go through some of my concerns. This agreement assumes that the intelligence community can identify locations in a country the size of Texas—all the locations—for a possible inspection, notify the IAEA which places they should go, and that we would be able to contact Iran and get permission from them to visit those sites, which takes approximately 1 month—I will go into greater detail on that—and that we will actually access those sites and find the information we want there.

The IAEA is reporting that they can actually only track for uranium. So all of the other research that goes into building a nuclear weapon, they couldn't actually track that after 24 days, but if there was uranium there, they feel confident they could actually track that. So basically, if we are in the final stages of their assembling something, and we catch them and we are able to get permission to get in there, we could get to it. Not to mention the fact that the Iranian leaders have said over and over again since the agreement was signed that there is no way that the IAEA will get access to military sites in Iran. That is a loophole big enough to drive this truck through.

The IAEA has to give 24 hours' notice of its intent to inspect, and then Iran has 14 days to let the inspectors in. Of course, they can stall for 10 more days in the agreement itself. That is 25 days, minimum, to hide whatever they are working on. That is a lot of time to be able to move computer equipment and all sorts of installed things. At the end of it, the IAEA would say, we can actually determine if there were ever uranium there even after 25 days, but basically nothing else.

We have incredible people who work for us in the intelligence community that most Americans will never see and never meet. There are some amazing, patriotic Americans, but they can't see everything and they can't catch every needle in the haystack that is in Iran. It would help the intelligence community, and it would help us in our inspections, if we had access to the previous military dimensions for the nuclear weapons program that Iran has had on board. But the agreement itself only says we have to get all things from right now forward, that we don't have to have the documents previous. And if we do, Iran will actually pick the documents that we will see previous in their nuclear practice.

So now we have to find a location with no previous documents, with no way to be able to really see what research they have done and how far advanced they are. We are looking for different things, if there are different stages of their research and development on a nuclear weapon. To say in the agreement we are not going to have to get all the previous research they have done in the past is an enormous loophole and it is a definite detriment to what we are doing in our own discovery.

Iran has to dramatically decrease the number of centrifuges that are spinning and cascading to enrich uranium. That is true, and I am glad for that. They have to pull out what is a known stockpile and reduce it. I am glad of that, and that is a positive thing. But Iran can continue to enrich uranium with 5,000 cascading centrifuges, just in smaller amounts and using their older centrifuges. Again, that sounds like a win. But there is no reason, if they have peaceful purposes for uranium, to keep 5,000 centrifuges spinning—if they are only doing it for peaceful purposes.

Iran can continue testing their advanced centrifuges in small cascades—their IR–6s, their IR–8s.

Iran can continue doing research and development on their most advanced form of centrifuges. Worst of all, they can keep over 1,000 of their most advanced centrifuges still in a cascade in their most heavily fortified facility. They just have to promise they won't put uranium in there. But they can continue to do testing and development so when that time comes, they will be ready to accelerate uranium faster. So, basically, they can do everything in the process, except include uranium at that point.

We are allowing them time to increase their research, with 1,000 centrifuges in their most advanced level. Why would we agree to that? That doesn't seem to be a pathway to peaceful purposes. That seems to be a pathway to high-grade uranium and the development within country.

I have already mentioned that within just a very few years, the conventional weapons ban is lifted in this agreement, allowing additional conventional weapons to flood into the single largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world—not to mention the fact that what is flooding in before all of those conventional weapons are billions of dollars that have been held in sanctions.

Now, again, there has been no change on tactics of terrorism. There has been no change of statement from the leadership of Iran, but they are getting billions of dollars. Under sanctions, they used their money to prop up Yemen to form a coup there and to prop up Assad

in Syria. What are they going to do with an additional $60 billion, $70 billion?

The administration has said they desperately need that money so they can do infrastructure. They are getting billions of dollars. No one is going to tell me a major portion of that is not going to be used for terrorism.

As the administration has said, we have built in snapback sanctions so that if Iran violates something, immediately we will snap back the sanctions. But if we actually look at the details of how those snapback sanctions happen, it is months and months in the process of getting everyone back together and forming an agreement that we are going to do that. And if we snap back sanctions, written into the agreement it says Iran can then—if we snap back sanctions—kick out their part of the agreement as well and consider it a violation of the agreement and walk away, and now there are no restrictions on them. So, basically, we are the ones that are punished if we ever snap back sanctions. If we snap back sanctions, Iran could say, see, I told you so, and then immediately kick into the normal process they were into before. By the way, their advanced centrifuges are already spinning. They are still continuing. Nothing was diminished. I haven't even mentioned that their research and development can continue on all of their weapons systems. All of that is unabated. The only limitation seems to be around enriched uranium, but everything else continues the same.

I was also appalled as I went through this agreement and saw the leader of the Quds Force, General Suleimani, who personally coordinated the creation, distribution, and installation of improvised explosive devices in Iraq designed to kill Americans. This leader personally was engaged in killing hundreds of American soldiers in the war in Iraq—hundreds. The sanctions on that general are lifted so he can have normalized relationships worldwide, and four American hostages remain. Can someone tell me why for the murderer-of-Americans general, his sanctions are lifted, but American citizens still remain hostages in Iran?

I have to tell my colleagues, I was stunned by many things that were in this agreement and how many loopholes were built into it, but none surprised me more than the part of the agreement that we made as a country, apparently, that if Iran is attacked, the United States will now come to their defense. Help me understand this. As they continue a nuclear weapons program, if a country steps in and attacks them and says no, you can't do that, that is a violation and we are going to stop that, the United States is now agreeing to come defend Iran as they are advancing their nuclear program? Have we lost our mind?

Now, the administration, when asked about this, just said it won't happen. If it won't happen, why did we put it in the agreement? Why is it there at all? There seems to be a struggle to be able to get an agreement more than it is a struggle to say we have to prevent the world's largest sponsor of terrorism from getting a nuclear weapon at any cost. This is not about slowing their nuclear program. It should be about stopping their nuclear program.

This cannot come to our doorstep. This cannot come to the Middle East. And while the Middle East further weaponizes to prepare for a more aggressive Iran, we continue to step up and say we will help you weaponize, and I don't see how that is deterring us from war.

There is a better agreement out there, and we should push to get it. We should take care of the loopholes that are big enough to drive a truck through. We should resolve this issue. We should not pretend this is a partisan issue. This is not about Republican versus Democrat. This is about peace. This is about trying to work out the differences—and the differences are strong—with all nations and Iran. Let's work that out together, and let's keep pushing until we get this resolved.

I cannot support this agreement with Iran.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in favor of the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015.

I wish to first recognize the hard work of Chairman BURR and Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN and their leadership on this very important legislation. As a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I am well aware of the need to strengthen our computer networks against our adversaries, whether they be nation-states, such as China, Russia, and Iran, or terrorist groups or international criminal gangs or hacktivists.

Along with former Senator Joe Lieberman, I authored the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. This bill implemented many of the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission report in the wake of Al Qaeda's terrorist attack on our country that took the lives of nearly 3,000 people. Many of the reforms enacted in our law were well-known and recommended prior—far before—the attacks on our country on 9/11, but they simply were never implemented, despite the clear and present threat posed by Al Qaeda.

Today, my concern is that we are repeating much the same mistake when it comes to the cyber domain. Our Nation has unparalleled strength, but cyber space allows much weaker adversaries to target our people, our economy, and our military.

Just as modern passenger planes designed in the United States were turned against us and used as weapons back in September of 2001, so too could the digital tools designed in the United States be turned against us to deal a devastating blow to our economy, our national security, and our way of life.

We already know many of the steps necessary to reduce the likelihood of a cyber 9/11, yet many of these actions have not yet been taken in either the government or the private sector. As one former official told the 9/11 Commission last year in preparation for its 10th anniversary report, ''we are at September 10th levels in terms of cyber preparedness.'' How many experts have to tell us that it is not a matter of if we are going to be the subject of a major cyber attack but when? How many more serious intrusions do we have to have in the private sector with banks, major retailers affected or in the public sector, where we have had the huge and serious OPM breach which affects some 21 million Americans? How many more of these do we have to have occur before Congress finally acts?

Consider the fact that the economic and technological advantages that the United States enjoys today required decades of research and development and investment of literally billions of dollars. Yet these competitive edges are eroding because hackers and other countries are stealing the intellectual property that gives us our competitive edge in the world.

Three years ago, when I stood on the Senate floor with Senator Joe Lieberman to urge the passage of the Cyber Security Act of 2012, which we wrote, I quoted the then-NSA chief, General Keith Alexander, who said that we are in the midst of the greatest transfer of wealth in our Nation's history. Yet this transfer of wealth continues and accelerates. Information sharing remains fragmented, and the private sector is still hesitant about sharing and receiving information with government. We have lost 3 years and endured endless, expensive data breaches since the Senate refused to stop a filibuster on our cyber bill in 2012. I urge my colleagues: Let's not make the same mistake today.

Passing the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015 would make it easier for public and private sector entities to share cyber threat vulnerability information to stop the theft of trade and national security secrets, to stop the theft of personally identifiable information, and to help stop the theft of important information that all of us hold dear and consider to be private.

The bill would eliminate some of the legal and economic disincentives impeding voluntary two-way information sharing between private industry and government. It is a modest but essential first step, especially for businesses, large and small, trying to protect their networks and information.

Just this week, I met with an individual whose trade association has been compromised, according to the FBI. Indeed, back in 2012, when we were debating whether to bring the Lieberman-Collins cyber security bill to the Senate floor, one of the chief opponents was being hacked at that very time but did not know it until the FBI went to

that business organization and informed them.

While this bill promotes sharing between the government and the private sector—and that is an important and essential step—it does little to harden the protection of Federal networks or to guard the critical infrastructure on which we rely every day. Thus, I am introducing, with several of my colleagues, two amendments to further strengthen our Nation's cyber security posture. It would be a good first step if we could just pass this bill as it was reported by the Intelligence Committee, but I believe also strengthening the civilian side of the Federal Government and our critical infrastructure is essential for us to do the job completely and effectively.

I want to make clear that I recognize there is no law we could ever write that is going to prevent every cyber attack. That is not possible. But there are effective actions we can and should take that would lessen the chances of these attacks occurring and that would decrease the opportunities for these intrusions. So we must act. It is incumbent upon us.

For the millions of current, former, and retired Federal employees whose personal data was stolen from the poorly secured databases at the Office of Personnel Management, the threat posed by adversaries to inadequately protected Federal networks is all too real. As the FBI Director testified before the Intelligence Committee in open session last month, this breach is a ''huge deal'' and represents a treasure trove of information for potential adversaries. But this cyber hack also points to a broader problem—the glaring gaps in the process for protecting sensitive information stored in Federal civilian agency networks.

To respond, 2 weeks ago I introduced bipartisan legislation with Senators WARNER, MIKULSKI, COATS, AYOTTE, and MCCASKILL that would strengthen the security of the networks of Federal civilian agencies. Most importantly, our legislation would grant the Department of Homeland Security the authority to issue binding operational directives to Federal agencies to respond in the face of a substantial or imminent threat to Federal networks to ensure that immediate action is taken.

Think of all those IG reports that OPM leaders completely ignored. They go back to 2008. Last fall the IG issued a report which sounded a warning which was so serious that he recommended that certain networks be taken down until they were better protected. But OPM officials largely ignored those warnings, those calls for action. That is why we need to empower the Department of Homeland Security in a situation like that to act, just as NSA acts to protect the dot-mil domain, the military and intelligence agencies in the Federal Government.

I am pleased to report that all of the key elements of our bill were incorporated into legislation unanimously approved last week by the Senate homeland security committee. I thank the chairman, Senator RON JOHNSON, and the ranking member, Senator TOM CARPER, for making those improvements in their bill and incorporating our bill. We have joined together to file an amendment to add the committee-approved bill to the cyber security legislation.

The primary problem our amendment would solve is that the Department of Homeland Security has the mandate to protect the dot-gov domain, but it only has limited authority to do so. As I said, this approach contrasts sharply with how the National Security Agency defends the dot-mil domain, the information in the military and intelligence agency networks. The Director of the NSA has the responsibility and the authority from the Secretary of Defense to monitor all DOD networks and to deploy countermeasures on those networks. If the Director finds that there is an insecure computer system and wants to take it off the network, he has the authority to do so.

Although the Secretary of Homeland Security is tasked with a similar responsibility to protect Federal civilian networks, he has far less authority to accomplish this task. Yet—think about it—Federal civilian agencies, such as OPM, the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration, and Medicare, are the repositories of vast quantities of very sensitive personal data of Americans that must be better protected. We have that obligation. Our bill would help ensure that occurs.

Our amendment would harden Federal computer networks from cyber threats. I urge my colleagues to support the Johnson-Carper-Collins-Warner amendment.

I have also filed a second amendment aimed at protecting our country's most vital critical infrastructure from cyber attacks. For 99 percent of private sector entities, the voluntary information sharing framework established in this cyber legislation will be sufficient, and the decision to share cyber threat information should be left up to them. It should be voluntary.

A second tier of reporting is necessary to protect the critical infrastructure that affects the safety, health, and economic well-being of every American. My amendment would create a second tier of reporting to the government that would be mandatory but only for critical infrastructure where a cyber intrusion could reasonably be expected to result in catastrophic regional or national threats on public health or safety, economic security, or national security.

The Department of Homeland Security has already identified fewer than 65 entities—that is all we are talking about—out of all the hundreds of thousands of businesses and private sector entities in the United States, they have identified 65 entities where damage caused by a substantial but single cyber attack could cause catastrophic harm. How is ''catastrophic harm'' defined? It is defined as causing or having the likelihood to cause $50 billion in economic damage, 2,500 fatalities, or a severe degradation of our national security. My amendment would just take that definition and require reporting from those entities—that would be mandatory if there were a cyber attack—and no one else.

Without information about intrusions into our most critical infrastructure, our government's ability to defend our country against advanced persistent threats will suffer in a domain where speed is critical.

Let me further explain why this amendment is necessary. The fact is that 85 percent of our country's critical infrastructure is owned by the private sector, and we are not nearly as prepared as we should be for a cyber attack that could cause deaths, destruction, and devastation. A recent study by the University of Cambridge and Lloyds Insurance found that a major cyber attack on the U.S. electric grid could result in a blackout in 15 States and Washington, DC, that could cause more than $1 trillion in economic impact and $71 billion in insurance claims.

Under my amendment, the owners and operators of our country's most critical infrastructure would be required to report significant cyber intrusions, similar to the manner in which incidents of communicable diseases must be reported to public health authorities and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Think about the ironic situation we have. Does it make sense that we require a single case of measles to be reported to the Federal Government but not an intrusion into the industrial controls controlling a piece of critical infrastructure that if it were attacked successfully could result in the deaths of 2,500 people?

The threats to our critical infrastructure are not hypothetical; they are already occurring in increasing frequency and severity. ADM Mike Rogers, the Director of NSA, has described the cyber threat posed against critical infrastructure this way: ''We have . . . observed intrusions into industrial control systems. . . . What concerns us is that . . . this capability could be used by nation-states, groups or individuals to take down the capability of the control systems.''

Multiple natural gas pipeline companies were the targets of a sophisticated cyber intrusion campaign beginning in December of 2011, and our banks have been under cyber attacks repeatedly, most likely from Iran during the past 2 years.

By implementing this tiered reporting system for our country's critical infrastructure at greatest risk of a devastating cyber attack, our government can develop and deploy countermeasures to protect its own networks as well as the information systems of

other critical infrastructure and help these critical infrastructure owners and operators to better safeguard their systems from further attacks.

Simply put, the current threat is too great and the existing vulnerability too widespread for us to depend solely on voluntary measures to protect the critical infrastructure on which our country and citizens depend.

Again, I want to emphasize, 99 percent of private sector entities would just have a voluntary system. I am talking about fewer than 65 entities that operate critical infrastructure that the Department of Homeland Security has identified as at risk and has described that the consequences would be either $50 billion in economic damage, 2,500 deaths or a severe degradation of our national security.

Surely, if we have a cyber attack of that severity, we want to know about it. We will need to act. Our laws have simply not kept pace with the digital revolution. We must not wait any longer to make these reforms or be lulled into the mistaken belief that small incremental steps will be enough to stay ahead of our adversaries in cyber space or, worse yet, that we take no action, that we allow a filibuster against even a modest bill to help us be more secure.

By adopting the underlying legislation, plus the two amendments my colleagues and I have offered, we can begin the long overdue work of securing cyber space. In doing so, we will be securing our economic and national security for the next generation.

I was in the Senate on that terrible day in September of 2001, on 9/11/2001, when our Nation was attacked. I was assigned the responsibility, along with Joe Lieberman and the other members of what was then the Governmental Affairs Committee, to look at whether that attack could have been prevented if the dots had been connected. The 9/11 Commission's conclusion was that most likely it could have been.

I don't want to be here after a massive cyber attack that has resulted in the deaths of thousands of our fellow Americans, severe economic damage or a terrible degradation of our national security and ask the question: Why did we not act? I am not saying any law can prevent every attack. Clearly, that is not the case. Our adversaries are infinitely creative, and they will keep probing our computer systems, our cyber networks, but surely we ought to be doing everything we can to make it far more difficult for any of these attacks to be successful, surely we ought to pass the bill reported with only one dissenting vote by the Intelligence Committee, and surely we ought to strengthen the protection of our critical infrastructure and our Federal civilian agencies.

We need to make sure we are doing everything we responsibly can do to lessen the possibilities of a cyber 9/11. I urge my colleagues to proceed to consider this important bill.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, for the information of my colleagues, I just wanted to list the cosponsors of the amendment that I described having to do with critical infrastructure. I listed the cosponsors of the amendment that deals with protecting civilian agencies but neglected to do so on the other. It is a bipartisan amendment. It is cosponsored by three other members of the Intelligence Committee: Senator WARNER, Senator COATS, and Senator HIRONO.

I just wanted that to be clear. I think it is significant that those members of the Intelligence Community do believe we need to go further in this arena.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

REMEMBERING DAVID ''DAVE'' RUHL

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I rise to honor a fallen hero, David or ''Dave'' Ruhl of Rapid City, SD. Dave was an engine captain on the Mystic Ranger District of the Black Hills National Forest near Rapid City. Since June 14, Dave had been serving our country on a temporary assignment as the assistant fire management officer on the Big Valley Ranger District on the Modoc National Forest near Adin, CA.

Dave had been bravely and selflessly fighting the Frog Fire near Alturas, CA, along with many other firefighters who were risking their lives to protect the people and communities near that fire incident. Friends say he took this voluntary assignment to learn more about firefighting and improve his skills because he was so passionate about his profession.

Tragically, the team lost contact with Dave on Thursday evening, July 30. Search and rescue teams worked diligently to locate Dave with the hope that he would be found safe. Sadly, Dave did not survive.

An investigation will reveal details about this very unfortunate and tragic loss of life, and there will be a learning which comes from this. His death is a great loss to the State of South Dakota, and his legacy and heroism will not be forgotten. Dave will be memorialized forever on the South Dakota Firefighter Memorial in Pierre, his name etched in history for all to honor.

Professionally, Dave will be remembered as a passionate, knowledgeable, and well-trained firefighter. That is according to his colleagues who admired him and respected him. His commitment to helping others was evident throughout his life. Dave began his Forest Service career in 2001 as a seasonal forestry technician. Prior to that, he served in the U.S. Coast Guard and as a correctional officer with the State of South Dakota.

Dave will also be remembered personally as a dad, a husband, and a selfless public servant who longed to help others. Dave leaves behind his wife Erin and their two children Tyler and Ava of Rapid City. To them, I offer my deepest sympathy.

While we cannot take away the hurt, please know we will never forget the sacrifice Dave made, and we will not forget the sacrifice that you as his family have made. Not everyone is willing to put their life on the line to protect us, but Dave did just exactly that. He put others before himself. Dave is a true hero.

We ask the Good Lord to bless the Ruhl family and their friends during this difficult time and we ask all Americans to keep the Ruhl family in their thoughts and in their prayers.

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

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

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, one thing we all agree on is that Iran cannot obtain a nuclear weapon. That has been the foundation of American policy. For a long time, it has been at the root of these negotiations. That has been our guidepost as a body. It certainly has been my guiding principle as I review the course of these negotiations and the agreement that is now before us. That is because we know what a nuclear-armed Iran would mean for U.S. security, for Israeli security, and for regional security. Not only would it make their provocations in the region even more dangerous by giving them a nuclear cover of protection, but it would also lead to a nuclear arms race in the region.

That doesn't mean Iran's unacceptable conduct begins and ends with its pursuit of a nuclear weapons program. This is one of the largest state sponsors of terrorism in the world. This is a country that has called for the obliteration of the Jewish State still to this day, chants for ''Death to America,'' a country that denies basic human rights and political liberties to its own citizens, and executes and imprisons thousands upon thousands of people who disagree with the regime.

But this agreement and these negotiations from the beginning have been about the nuclear issue. It has not attempted to resolve all of these other very dangerous and malevolent behaviors that Iran engages in, in the region. We are focused on the nuclear issue because we frankly believe we are more likely to deal with this other activity if we remove the question of a potential nuclear weapons arsenal cover from the equation.

So the test for this agreement is simple: Is Iran less likely to obtain a nuclear weapon with this deal than without it? Because I answer yes to this question—because I believe they are less likely to get a nuclear weapon with this agreement than without it—I am going to support the agreement when it comes before the Senate for a vote this September.

That doesn't mean there aren't parts of this agreement that I find distasteful. I would have preferred for the duration of the agreement to be longer than the 10 to 15 years of many of its components. I would have preferred to see fewer conditions on the inspections and on our access to contested sites. I would like for Congress's ability to impose new sanctions on nonnuclear activity of Iran to be clearer and less clouded as part of this agreement.

That being said, I think we achieved our objectives. Our negotiators achieved their objectives that they set out at the beginning. We have lengthened the breakout time from 2 to 3 months to now over a year. We have reduced by 95 percent the amount of stored nuclear material that is housed within Iran's borders. We get an inspection regime which is absolutely unprecedented. No other country has been subject to this kind of an inspection regime, not just as a declared site, not just the ability to get to undeclared sites but a view of the entire supply chain that backs up their nuclear program.

There is an ability to snap back sanctions should they cheat, an ability that is not conditioned on the support of countries such as Russia and China, and then an international consensus that undergirds this entire agreement.

To me, this isn't a referendum on the agreement, the decision we are going to make in the Senate; it is a choice. It is a choice between one set of consequences that flow from supporting the agreement and then another set of consequences that flow from a congressional rejection of the agreement.

The set of consequences that occur if Congress rejects this agreement are pretty catastrophic. I would argue it would result in a big win for Iranians. What would happen? First, the sanctions would fray, at best; at worst, they would fall apart. Iran would resume their nuclear program. Maybe they wouldn't rush to a bomb, but they would get closer. Inspectors would be kicked out of the country so we lose eyes on what Iran is doing.

For those who believe we should just come back to the table and get a better deal, you have a very high bar to argue. You have to make a case that there are going to be a set of conditions that will cause Iran to come back to the table and agree to something different, more strenuous, and more rigorous than they did today. How does that happen if the sanctions are weaker and their nuclear program is stronger? It doesn't. So this idea that you can get a better deal to me appears to be pure fantasy.

Finally, I wish to spend a few minutes talking about this juxtaposition that the President has created that I know has caused some in this Chamber to blanch—the idea that this is a choice between this agreement or going to war. I understand that feels and sounds very unfair because no one who votes against this agreement believes they are voting to go to war. I want to make the case it is not as unfair as some may think it is because if there is no deal, if there is no ability to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon through a negotiation, and if we accept the premise that we are not going to stand still, do nothing, and take a wait-and-see approach if they were to move closer to a bomb, then the only option is the military option. And I frankly think it is time we start taking seriously the rhetoric we are hearing from some Members of this body. Senator COTTON said this week that we could bomb Iran back to day zero if we took a military route to divorcing Iran from a nuclear weapon.

Let us get back to reality for a second about what a military strike would mean. You can set back Iran's nuclear program for a series of years, but you cannot bomb Iran back to day zero unless you are also prepared to assassinate everyone in Iran who has worked on the nuclear program. Why? Because you can't destruct knowledge. You can't remove entirely from that country the set of facts that got them within 2 to 3 months of a nuclear weapon.

So I know Members bristle at this notion the President is suggesting that it is a choice between an agreement or war, but there are Members of this body who are openly cheerleading for military engagement with Iran, who are oversimplifying the effect of military action, who are blind to the reality of U.S. military activity in that region over the course of the last 10 to 15 years. This belief in the omnipotent unfailing power of the U.S. military is not based in reality.

We could set back a nuclear program for a series of years, but the consequences to the region would be catastrophic. So I get that people don't like the choice the President presents, but at some point we have to take Senator COTTON and his allies seriously when they continue to make a case for war and oversimplify the effects of a military strike.

But let us be honest. This is all just a political agreement we are talking about here today. So we do have to reserve the possibility that if all else fails and there is no other way to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, we may have to take military action. None of us have taken that wholly off the table. But a military strike, if it is necessary, is made more effective if this deal is in place.

We will have more international legitimacy if we try diplomacy first and Iran rushes to the bomb in the context of this deal. We would have more partners in this military action if we stuck together on this agreement.

I won't say war isn't an option, but I know it is more likely to be successful and effective in the context of this agreement than without it. And I certainly would challenge anyone—Senator COTTON and others—who try to simplify the effects of a military strike or suggest that it is the immediate alternative to this agreement.

In 1993, Yitzhak Rabin said, when talking about Israel's decision to recognize the PLO, that ''you don't make peace with your friends, you make it with very unsavory enemies.'' Diplomacy is never easy, and the results of diplomacy are never pretty.

This isn't peace with Iran. We still reserve the right to fight them tooth and nail on their support for terrorism, on their denial of the right of Israel to exist, and their miserable human rights record. But the question still remains: Is the world better off with this agreement or is the world better off if this agreement falls apart at the hands of the Congress and we are right back to square one?

I believe Iran is less likely to become a nuclear weapons state with this agreement than without it, and I am going to support it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Iowa.

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor, as I often do, to speak about the efforts of whistleblowers. Many of you know my belief in and my respect for those patriotic people—men and women who, often at great cost to their own careers and personal well-being, raise their voices when they see things happening they know are wrong, usually against the law or the misuse of taxpayer money. So it was with great joy that I participated just last Thursday with about two dozen whistleblowers and hundreds of their families, friends, and supporters in the first annual congressional celebration of National Whistleblowers Day.

In my remarks to that group, I said that agency leadership needs to follow the example my colleagues and I set with the Whistleblower Protection Caucus. They need to send a strong signal that whistleblowers are valued and that retaliation will not be tolerated. After all, the need to protect whistleblowers is not new and it is not going away.

In the midst of the whistleblowers appreciation day celebration, I received yet another harsh reminder that retaliation is alive and well in the executive branch's bureaucracies. At the very time several of my colleagues and I shared our appreciation for whistleblowers, U.S. Marshals Service whistleblowers told me the hunt was on for folks in that agency who disclosed wrongdoing to my office.

How ironic, as we recognized the bravery and the benefits of whistleblowers in the past, a new set of

truthtellers were facing harsh consequences that all too often come with their brave action in exposing wrongdoing.

Agencies use many pretexts to hunt, to punish, and to intimidate whistleblowers. So what is the pretext the Marshals Service is using? I am told the Marshals Service has launched an internal affairs investigation to find what they describe as a leak to the media and what harm a leak to the media does.

Well, this is a dubious claim. For one, news stories about the problems at the Marshals Service are not new. Second, there are many stories in several different magazines and newspapers that strongly suggest there are many sources of those news leaks.

Finally, I understand the Marshals Service internal affairs has allegedly seized the personal property of at least one of its so-called targets. I also understand this personal property contains privileged communications with the target's attorneys and protected disclosures to Members of Congress.

I wish to note some things for leaders at the Marshals Service and at any Federal agency. First, protection for whistleblowers under the Whistleblowers Protection Act is not just there for reporting to Congress or reporting to the inspector general or reporting to the Office of Special Counsel. The Supreme Court has said disclosures to media may be covered if the disclosure is not specifically prohibited by statute or Executive order, even if such disclosure violates an agency rule.

So not only does this investigation appear to be retaliatory, but its supposed justification is obviously not legitimate.

Second, even if there were nothing suspicious or retaliatory about the so-called investigation, it cannot be true that investigators need protected and privileged material to carry it out.

Third, the recent track record of the Marshals Service on whistleblower protection is pretty dismal. The internal affairs inquiry follows months of investigation by Congress, the inspector general, and the Office of Special Counsel into allegations of misconduct at the U.S. Marshals Service. It also follows at least two inaccurate and misleading responses from the Marshals Service and the Justice Department to letters from my committee. And it follows numerous letters reporting allegations of widespread retaliation and very deep fears that employees have of such reprisal.

Just so we are very clear, over 60 current and former U.S. Marshals Service employees have made disclosures to my office since March. That is over 1.1 percent of the agency. Many of the reports include allegations that the Marshals Service frequently uses internal affairs investigations as mechanisms for reprisal. Reprisal for what, one might ask—for engaging in activities that are explicitly protected by law.

Multiple whistleblowers from all across the Marshals Service have also told me that internal affairs does whatever it can to charge employees with misconduct, regardless of what the evidence actually says. So I thought the Justice Department would understand why I have concerns about this investigation and about the way the marshals are apparently handling it.

Remarkably, the Justice Department has told me that is all none of my business, and, of course, I strongly disagree. When you hear these sorts of things once or twice, there is a bit of a problem. When you hear them more than 60 times, coming directly to my office in less than 5 months, you start to understand there is a pattern out there.

From where I sit, it seems to me the best thing for the agency to do is to get some outside input into this so-called investigation. The Department should be willing to work with me, other Members of Congress, the inspector general, and the Office of Special Counsel to ensure that whistleblower rights are fully protected as the law intends. But officials won't even sit down and talk to us about it.

Senator LEAHY and I sent a joint letter to the Attorney General last Friday asking for a briefing as soon as possible. The answer? They claimed it would be inappropriate to discuss it with the two of us. I will tell you what would be inappropriate: using internal administrative inquiries to hunt down whistleblowers and stiff-arm a congressional scrutiny. That is what would be inappropriate.

If the Justice Department and the Marshals Service think I am going to go away or give up on this, they are even less competent than I fear.

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. 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.

(The remarks of Mr. SULLIVAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1944 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. SULLIVAN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH: Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, in the first decade of this century, when the policies of President George W. Bush entangled our Nation firmly in the war in Iraq, Iran's nuclear program surged ahead rapidly and unchecked. They added thousands and thousands of centrifuges. They built numerous and complex nuclear facilities. They stockpiled highly enriched uranium. As we evaluate the proposed nuclear accord with Iran, it is important to compare what we have achieved with our allies against this reality.

I firmly believe that as we work to ensure that Iran is never able to develop nuclear weapons, facts, data, and details actually matter far more than the rhetoric you hear here in Washington, DC. Perhaps it is just the engineer in me, but when the accord became public, I sat down that morning and I started highlighting numbers. People in Washington are amazingly adept at arguing that up is down and that right is left. But numbers and data are a little harder to bend to our rhetorical will.

Let's start with this most important and critical data point: Without a deal, Iran has enough nuclear material stockpiled that they could acquire enough highly enriched material for a bomb in 2 to 3 months. That is what you hear talked about on the news as breakout time. Today Iran's breakout time is 2 to 3 months. They have enough material that were they to move forward, they could break out in just a matter of months. With this accord in place, their pathway forward is blocked. What is more, the breakout time is pushed back to over a year, giving us and our allies around the world enough time to make sure they don't move down this very dangerous path.

Let's move on to another key data point. If you went back to 2003, Iran only had 164 centrifuges. They surged forward—adding centrifuges, adding more advanced and complex centrifuges—to where they now have 19,000 centrifuges today.

With this deal, once again, that number has rolled back. It has rolled back by two-thirds. But more importantly, of the 6,000 that remain, 1,000 of those cannot be used for enrichment, and all of them are the most basic and primitive IR–1 models.

In addition, without a deal, Iran has amassed 12,000 kilograms, which is over 26,000 pounds of enriched uranium. This slide shows the public a representative example of what that would look like today. Under this accord, that is rolled back by 98 percent to just 300 kilograms. So starting from over 26,000 pounds, or 12,000 kilograms, and reducing it by 98 percent, they no longer have the capacity or the stockpile to be able to quickly move forward to a weaponization scenario.

In addition, it is important to realize Iran had enriched some of its stockpile to 20 percent. That is a very dangerous figure because 20 percent is actually a lot closer to weapons grade, and that would enable them to move quickly to weapons grade. It actually takes far longer to get to 4 percent than it does to get from 20 percent to a weaponized enrichment level.

Under this accord, what previously was an enormous stockpile—and where some of that stockpile had actually reached dangerous levels of enrichment—will be rolled back to a point

where all of the very limited 300 kilograms have to be below 4 percent, a level of concentration and enrichment that is appropriate for peaceful energy purposes but not for a weapons program.

In addition, without this accord, Iran's uranium stockpile today is large enough to yield 10 to 12 nuclear bombs. With this accord, they won't have enough stockpile—enough material—to produce even a single nuclear bomb.

Now, we all know that verification is key to success, and under this deal Iran must allow 24/7 inspections and continuous video monitoring at its nuclear infrastructure, including Natanz, Fordow, the Arak reactor, and all of its uranium mining, milling, and processing facilities. Furthermore, there is a mechanism in place that will allow inspections of any additional sites, should we suspect covert action is being taken to build a bomb outside of their existing supply chain. Consequently, this accord breaks each and every pathway that Iran has developed to create a weaponized nuclear device, including any potential covert effort that they might pursue. We should welcome each of those developments as a major step toward both regional and international security.

I have thought about these issues for a long time. I have thought about both the science and the politics of the nuclear age since I was a young boy. I remember growing up listening to my dad because he was there when this age started. He watched nuclear devices being exploded in the Marshall Islands in the South Pacific. He told me stories of what it was like to watch a mushroom cloud form over Enewetak Atoll.

When I was studying engineering at the University of Missouri, I worked at one of the largest research reactors in the country. I know what it is like to look down into that blue glow of a reactor pool. As a Senator from the State of New Mexico, I have seen firsthand many of the world's centrifuges which are housed in my home State of New Mexico and dedicated to the peaceful production of energy.

Serving on the Armed Services Committee, I helped set policy on nonproliferation and nuclear deterrence. As a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, I have received numerous briefings on both Iran's nuclear program and their capabilities. I am well acquainted with the steps necessary to successfully construct a nuclear weapon and the steps necessary to detect that kind of activity. It is because of this familiarity that I am confident in this accord.

The comprehensive, long-term deal achieved earlier this month includes all of the necessary tools to break each potential Iranian pathway to a nuclear bomb. Further, it incorporates enough lead time—the breakout time that we talked about before, which we currently are in dire need of—so that should Iran change its course in the future, the United States and the world can react well before a device can be built. We hope that scenario never occurs, but should that happen—even with this accord—it truly leaves all of our options on the table, including the military option.

Some of my colleagues in the Senate object to this historical accomplishment, saying that we could have done better; however, none of them have offered any realistic alternatives. The only concrete alternative, should Congress reject this deal, has been to engage in a military strike against Iran. While the military option will always remain on the table for the United States, even as we implement this accord, it should remain our absolute last resort.

As one can imagine, our military and intelligence leaders have looked at the potential repercussions should a direct military conflict with Iran occur. That dangerous path would provoke retaliation, instability, and would likely lead to a nuclear-armed Iran in a matter of just a few years rather than decades or never. Needless to say, this would be an irresponsible mistake.

As former Brigadier General and Deputy to Israel's National Security Advisor Shlomo Brom has said, ''This agreement represents the best chance to make sure Iran never obtains a weapon and the best chance for Congress to support American diplomacy—without taking any options off the table for this or future presidents.''

For too long, our country has been engaged in overseas military conflicts that have cost our Nation dearly in both blood and treasure. We must always be ready at a moment's notice to defend our country, to defend our allies, and even our interests, but we must also look to avoid conflict whenever a diplomatic option is present and possible. At this extraordinary moment, I am convinced that this accord is in the best interest of our Nation and that of our allies.

I am still deeply distrustful of Iran's leadership. To make peace, you negotiate with your enemies, not with your friends. Obviously any deal with Iran will not be without risk, but the risks and the consequences of rejecting this deal are far, far more dire. This deal sets the stage for a safer and more stable Middle East and, for that matter, a more secure United States of America. We must seize this historic opportunity.

I yield the rest of my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the cloture motion with respect to the motion to proceed to S. 754.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 28, S. 754; I further ask that Senator BURR then be recognized to offer the Burr-Feinstein substitute amendment and that it be in order for the bill managers or their designees to offer up to 10 first-degree amendments relevant to the subject matter per side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. For the information of all Senators, the first amendments on the Republican side will be the following: Paul No. 2564, Heller No. 2548, Flake No. 2582, Vitter No. 2578, Vitter No. 2579, Cotton No. 2581, Kirk No. 2603, Coats No. 2604, Gardner No. 2631, Flake No. 2580.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I assume we would alternate with Republican and Democrat amendments; is that right?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the agreement be modified to allow 11 Democratic amendments instead of 10.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. They will be as follows: Carper No. 2627, Coons No. 2552, Franken No. 2612, Tester No. 2632, Leahy No. 2587, Murphy No. 2589, Whitehouse No. 2626, Wyden No. 2621, Wyden No. 2622, Mikulski No. 2557, and Carper No. 2615.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.J. RES. 61

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks on Tuesday, September 8, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.J. Res. 61 and that the majority leader or his designee be recognized to offer a substitute amendment related to congressional disapproval of the proposed Iran nuclear agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I want the debate we are going to have in a matter of weeks to be—and I think all of us do—dignified and befitting the gravity of one of the most important issues of the

day. This is a step forward, and I do not object.

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

The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, with this agreement, we set up expedited consideration of the cyber bill and the Iran resolution. The Senate will hold voice votes on Executive nominations, but there will be no further rollcall votes this week.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, so that all are clear with respect to where matters are with the cyber security legislation, a couple of days ago it was my fear that this bill would be brought up—it is a badly flawed bill—with no opportunity for Senators on either side of the aisle to fix the legislation. I was afraid that it would come up with no amendments and people would say ''Oh my goodness, there are serious cyber threats.'' And that is unquestionably correct. My constituents in Oregon, for example, have been hacked by the Chinese. I was concerned that people would say ''We have all of these cyber threats; we have to act'' and there would be no real opportunity to show how the legislation in its current form creates more problems than it solves.

So that all concerned understand where things are, there are going to be more than 20 amendments to this badly flawed bill. Those of us who want to make sure there is a full airing of the issues have come to understand that there is no time limit that has yet been agreed to on those amendments. So there is going to be a real debate, and, of course, that is what the Senate is all about.

I particularly wish to commend the millions of advocates around the country who spoke out. I understand there was something like 6 million faxes that were sent to Members of this body.

I am going to take a few minutes—I see my colleagues are here as well—to describe where I think this debate is and give a sense of what the challenge is going forward.

I start with the basic proposition that we have a very serious set of cyber security threats, and I touched on seeing it at home. Second, information sharing can be valuable. There is certainly a lot of it now. It can be constructive. Information sharing, however, without vigorous, robust privacy safeguards, will not be considered by millions of Americans to be a cyber security bill. Millions of Americans will say that legislation is a surveillance bill.

So what I am going to do tonight—just for a few minutes because it is my understanding there are colleagues who would also like to speak—is describe exactly where this debate is.

As written, the cyber security legislation prevents law-abiding Americans from suing private companies that inappropriately share their personal information with the government. When I say personal information, I am talking about the contents of emails, financial information, basically any data at all that is stored electronically. CISA, as the bill is called, would allow private companies to share large volumes of their customers' personal information with the government after only a cursory review. Colleagues who want to look at that provision ought to take a look at page 16 of the bill.

We were told repeatedly that this legislation is voluntary. The fact is, it is voluntary for the companies, but for the citizens of Pennsylvania, the citizens of Oregon, citizens across this country, it is not voluntary. The people of Pennsylvania won't be asked first whether they want their information sent to the government. Oregonians won't have the chance to say whether they want that information sent. For them, this legislation is mandatory.

To explain the damage that I believe this legislation would do, I want to take a minute to explain how cyber security information sharing works now. Right now the Department of Homeland Security operates a national cyber security watch center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This watch center receives cyber security threat information from around the Federal Government and from private companies, and this watch center sends out alerts and bulletins to security professionals to provide them with technical information about cyber security threats. In fiscal year 2014, this watch center sent out nearly 12,000 of these alerts to more than 100,000 recipients. That happens today, with lots of companies participating.

The system that is in place today includes rules to protect the privacy of law-abiding Americans. These rules ensure that companies have a strong interest in protecting the privacy of their customers. But the legislation as it has been written now overrides those rules. The bill in front of us prevents individual Americans from suing companies that have mishandled their private information. As a result, companies would suddenly, in my view, not have the same incentives with respect to caring about sharing their customers' personal information with the government. And my concern and the concern, I believe, of millions of Americans is that the interests of some who are overzealous—overzealous in government, overzealous in the private sector—would overwhelm the interests of all of those customers who voluntarily handed over their information.

I thought I would give a couple of examples of the problems the bill in its current form causes. Imagine that a health insurance company finds out that millions of its customers' records have been stolen. If that company has any evidence about who the hackers were or how they stole this information, of course it makes sense to share that information with the government. But that company shouldn't simply say ''Here you go'' and hand millions of its customers' financial and medical information over to a wide array of government agencies.

The records of the victims of a hack should not be treated the same way that information about the hacker is treated. If companies are sharing information for cyber security purposes, they ought to be required to make reasonable efforts to remove personal information that isn't needed for cyber security before that information is handed over to the government. And those government agencies ought to focus on using that information to combat a cyber security threat.

That, I say to my colleagues, is not what the bill says. Page 16 of the bill would very clearly authorize companies to share large amounts of personal information that is unnecessary for cyber security, after only a cursory review.

Now I wish to speak about just one other issue specifically that I think Senators are not familiar with, and that is the issue of cyber signatures. Cyber signatures are essentially recognizable patterns in online code. A number of informed observers have raised the concern that once individual cyber signatures are shoveled over to the government by private companies, they could be used as the basis for broad surveillance affecting law-abiding Americans. I am not going to confirm or deny any of the press reports that have raised concerns about cyber signatures being used in this way, but I believe Senators should understand that this is certainly—and it is being widely discussed in the public arena—a theoretical possibility, and that helps underscore the importance of including a strong requirement for private companies to remove unrelated personal information about their customers before dumping data over to the government.

In wrapping up, I would be remiss if I didn't note that a secret Justice Department legal opinion that is clearly relevant to the cyber security debate continues to be withheld from the public. This opinion interprets common commercial service agreements, and in my judgment it is inconsistent with the public's understanding of the law. So once again we have this question of what happens when the people of Pennsylvania, Virginia, or Oregon think there is a law because they have read it in the public arena or on their iPad at home and then there is a secret interpretation.

I have urged the Justice Department to withdraw that secret Department of Justice opinion that relates directly to the cyber security debate. They have declined to do so. I suspect many Senators haven't had the chance to review it. As I have done before on this type of topic, I would urge Senators or their staffs to take the time to read it because I believe that understanding the executive branch's interpretation of these agreements is an important part of understanding the relevant legal landscape on cyber security.

I am going to close by speaking about the question of effectiveness. I think we all understand that we are facing very real cyber threats. I am of the view that this bill in its present form would do little, if anything, to stop large, sophisticated cyber attacks like the Office of Personnel Management had.

I don't think Senators ought to just take my word for it. In April, 65 technologists and cyber security professionals expressed their opposition to the bill in a letter to Chairman BURR and Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN. In referring to the bill and two similar bills, they wrote:

> We appreciate your interest in making our networks more secure, but the legislation proposed does not materially further that goal, and at the same time it puts our users' privacy at risk.

As they wrap up their letter, this group of technologists and cyber security professionals state:

> These bills weaken privacy law without promoting security.

That has always been my concern. If we look back at our experiences, we have tried to write these new digital ground rules. Fortunately, we took a step in the right direction as it related to NSA rules. The challenge has always been the same. The people of our country want to be safe and secure in their homes and in their businesses and in their communities, and they want their liberty. Ben Franklin said anybody who gives up their liberty to have security doesn't deserve either.

What troubled me and why I am glad that the Senate has stepped back from precipitous action where we would have just passed this bill without any amendments—we will have a chance in the fall to look at ways to address cyber security in a fashion that I think does respond to what our people want, and that is to show that security—in this case, cyber security—and liberty are not mutually exclusive. It is sensible policies worked out in a bipartisan way that will respond to the needs of this country in what is unquestionably a dangerous time.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

ISLAMIC STATE

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, we are about to start our traditional August recess. Congress is in an interesting place because we not only get a recess—a vacation—as many Americans do, but we are legally required to take one. That is right. By an act of Congress, Congress is required, absent a separate agreement, to take a month off during August. I learned that just yesterday during a great presentation from one of our Senate Historians, Kate Scott.

This mandated August adjournment is part of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970. The act provides that in odd-numbered years, the Houses adjourn from the first Friday in August until the Tuesday after Labor Day. There is an exception: The mandated recess ''shall not be applicable if on July 31 of such year a state of war exists pursuant to a declaration of war by Congress.'' Again, the mandated recess is not applicable if on July 31 of such year a state of war exists pursuant to a declaration of war by Congress. This provision makes basic sense, doesn't it? Congress shouldn't go out for a mandatory 30-day vacation when the Nation is at war. It is not right that American troops should risk their lives overseas far from home while Congress takes a month off. The Congress that passed this bill in 1970 had an expectation about how serious war was and how Congress—the institution charged with declaring war—would treat such a serious obligation.

Well, we are about to go on a 1-month adjournment with the Nation at war. In fact, this Saturday, August 8, marks 1 year since President Obama initiated U.S. airstrikes against the Islamic State in northern Iraq.

In the past year, more than 3,000 members of the U.S. military have served in Operation Inherent Resolve—and thousands are there now—launching more than 4,500 airstrikes, carrying out Special Forces operations, and assisting the Iraqi military, the Kurdish Peshmerga, and Syrians fighting the Islamic State. Virginians connected with the USS Roosevelt carrier group are stationed there right now.

We have made major gains in northern Iraq and, more recently, in northern Syria, but the threat posed by the Islamic State continues to spread in the region and beyond. The war has cost over $3.2 billion through mid-July—an average of $9.5 million a day—and seven American servicemembers have lost their lives serving in support of the mission.

Recently we have heard that the administration may be expanding the scope of the war to defend U.S.-trained Syrian fighters against attacks, including from the Assad regime. We are expanding our cooperation with Turkey in the region. We even hear rumors of a U.S.-Turkish humanitarian zone in northern Syria. Each of these steps is potentially significant and could lead to even more unforeseen expansions of the ongoing war. We have already had testimony by military leaders to suggest that the war will likely go on for years.

But as the war expands and our troops risk their lives far from home and as we prepare to go on our traditional 1-month recess, a tacit agreement to avoid debating this war persists in Washington.

The President maintains that he can conduct this war without authorization from Congress. He waited more than 6 months after the war started to even send Congress a draft authorization of the mission.

Congressional behavior has been even more unusual. Although vested with the sole power to declare war by article I of the Constitution, Congress has refused to meaningfully debate or vote on the war against the Islamic State. A Congress quick to criticize any Executive action by the President has nevertheless encouraged him to carry out an unauthorized war. As far as our allies, the Islamic State, or our troops know, Congress is indifferent to this war.

I first introduced a resolution to force Congress to do its job and to debate this war in September of 2014. That led in December to an affirmative vote by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to authorize the war with specific limitations. But the matter wasn't taken up on the floor because the Senate was about to change to a new majority, and that party wanted to analyze the issue afresh.

Six months then went by, and Senator JEFF FLAKE and I introduced, finally, a bipartisan war resolution in June to prod the Senate to take its constitutional responsibility seriously after so many months of inaction. We wanted to show there is a bipartisan consensus against the Islamic State. The result: a few discussions in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but otherwise silence.

One year of war against the Islamic State has transformed a President who was elected in part because of his early opposition to the Iraq War into an Executive war President. It has stretched the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force that was passed to defeat the perpetrators of 9/11 far beyond its original meaning or intent. It has shown to all that neither the Congress nor the President feels obliged to follow the 1973 War Powers Resolution, which requires the President to cease any unilateral military action within 90 days unless Congress votes to approve it. And it has demonstrated that Congress would rather avoid its constitutional duty to declare war than have a meaningful debate about whether and how the United States should militarily confront the Islamic State.

This 1-year anniversary also coincides a few minutes ago with a vigorous congressional effort to challenge U.S. diplomacy regarding the Iranian nuclear agreement. The contrast between congressional indifference to war and its energetic challenge to diplomacy is most disturbing.

So, why isn't Congress doing its job?

Last month I asked Marine Commandant Joseph Dunford, nominated to be the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whether congressional action to finally authorize the war against the Islamic State would be well received by American troops. His answer said it all. ''I think what our young men and women need—and it's really all they need to do what we ask them to do—is a sense that what they're doing has purpose, has meaning, and has the support of the American people.''

A debate in Congress by the people's elected representatives and a vote to authorize the most solemn act of war is how we tell our troops that what they

are doing—what they are risking their lives for—''has purpose, has meaning, and has the support of the American people.'' Otherwise, we are asking them to risk their lives without even bothering to discuss whether the mission is something we support. Can there be anything—anything—more immoral than that—to order troops to risk their lives in support of a military mission that we are unwilling even to discuss?

One year in, our servicemembers are doing their jobs, but they are still waiting on us to do ours. And as I conclude—oh, yeah, what about that August recess? How can we go away and adjourn for a month in the midst of an ongoing war?

Why, that is easy. The part of the statute that creates an exception for the mandatory August adjournment applies only if there has been ''a declaration of war by the Congress.'' Because we haven't even bothered to debate or authorize this war in the year since it started, we are still entitled by statute to take the month of August off.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR AMERICAN WORKERS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, in today's economy, too many of our workers across this country are underpaid, they are overworked, and they are treated unfairly on the job. In short, they lack fundamental economic security.

In Congress, we have got to act to give our workers much needed relief. We need to grow our economy from the middle out, not the top down. And we should make sure our country works for all Americans, not just the wealthiest few. There is no reason we can't get to work on legislation to do just that. That is why I am here this afternoon, joining my colleagues in calling for us in the Senate to move on some important policies that will help restore economic security and stability to more of our workers.

Mr. President, I understand that we are waiting for one of my Republican colleagues to come to the floor before I ask unanimous consent, so I will pause for just a minute.

But I will say while we are waiting that we are very concerned about many Americans today who make few dollars an hour, who don't have paid sick leave, who are told to go to work at hours that they cannot control or know about, and we are introducing legislation or asking to introduce legislation today to deal with all of those issues.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1150

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Democratic leader and no later than Friday, October 30, the HELP Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1150, the Raise the Wage Act; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be read a third time; that the Senate vote on passage of the bill, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on behalf of the chairman of the HELP Committee, Senator ALEXANDER, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 497

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Democratic leader, and no later than Friday, October 30, the HELP Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 497, the Healthy Families Act; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be read a third time; that the Senate vote on passage of the bill, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on behalf of the chairman of the HELP Committee, Senator ALEXANDER, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1772

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Democratic leader and no later than Friday, October 30, the HELP Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1772, the Schedules That Work Act; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be read a third time; that the Senate vote on passage of the bill, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on behalf of the chairman of the HELP Committee, Senator ALEXANDER, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, reclaiming the floor, it is disappointing to us that the Republican majority has objected to bringing these bills forward and blocking our efforts to provide some much needed economic stability and security for our workers in this country. Our workers have been waiting a long time for relief from the trickle-down system that has hurt our middle class.

This Senator wants to put the Senate on notice that the Democrats are going to keep working on ways to grow our economy from the middle out, not the top down, and we are going to be working to make sure our workers and our families have a voice at the table. We are going to continue to focus on making sure our country works for all Americans, not just the wealthy and few.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the Senator from Washington knows how much I admire and respect her. We have had great opportunity to work together in a very productive way, but what we have just seen from our friends across the aisle is not designed to actually get anything done. It was a show to try to claim political advantage and to try to create a narrative which simply isn't borne out by the facts.

The facts are that these costly proposals are unfunded mandates designed to make it hard for Americans to find jobs or become employers and create jobs for millions of people working for a step up the economic ladder. What Americans need, rather than show votes, are more job opportunities, more flexibility at work, and the freedom to negotiate a schedule that works for them.

Our friends across the aisle have been in charge and we have seen the results: an economy that grew last year at 2.2 percent—as a matter of fact, in at least one quarter it actually contracted. So we know what the fruit of these policies are because they have had their chances.

Their policies will destroy jobs, smother innovative startups in job creators like Uber, and perpetuate the Obama part-time economy, which has left a shocking 6.5 million Americans in part-time work as they search in vain for full-time work—and, I might add, a 30-year low of the labor participation rate—the percentage of people actually in the workforce that are employed, people that would otherwise want to work. We have seen what the results are.

The voters last November decided to try something different. They have given us a chance to show what we can do while we are in the majority, and I think the results are pretty good. We passed a budget for the first time since 2009. We passed a 6-year highway bill just recently, and we are still working with the House to try to figure out how to do that on a bicameral, bipartisan basis. We passed unanimously the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act to fight the scourge of human trafficking, which targets teenage girls predominantly for sex. We have passed the Defense authorization bill to make sure our men and women in uniform have the authority and what they need in order to keep us safe here and abroad.

We actually have had a very productive year so far in the 114th Congress under Republican leadership. What our

Democratic colleagues want to do is take us to the past with slow economic growth and policies that simply don't work.

That is why I am happy to stand here today and object to these show requests that aren't actually designed to do anything but are designed for fundraising, press releases, and other publicity stunts that simply are not what is going to help the American people the most.

TRIBUTE TO RUSS THOMASSON

Mr. President, on another note, I want to talk a little bit about my chief of staff who is leaving. My chief of staff in the whip office is Russ Thomasson, who I hope is somewhere around here. He is at the back of the Chamber. His son Austin is down here as one of our pages.

The bottom line is, Russ and I learned together from the time he came as my military legislative assistant in 2003. From that time until now, we learned how to be effective on behalf of the 27 million people I work for in the State of Texas and to work with all of our colleagues to try to produce positive results for the American people.

He is leaving now for greener pastures. I mean that not exactly literally, but he is going into the private sector where he will no doubt be compensated for what his skills and experience are worth.

Back when I started in the Senate, Russ came on board as my military legislative assistant. He brought with him great experience as an Air Force intel officer. He is an engineer; I am not. It was helpful to bring with him the attention to detail that engineering training brings. He is also a Russian specialist, which we didn't need a lot of in my office in Texas, but he brought great knowledge and experience to the forefront, helping me in my job on the Armed Services Committee, given that great background.

We had some big challenges in 2005 as all of our colleagues here at the time remember. That was the Base Closure and Realignment Commission. Texas likes to tout the fact that 1 out of every 10 persons in uniform comes from Texas. Our military is very important to us. I was raised in a military family. Being effective on behalf of our men and women in uniform who happen to call Texas home is particularly important to me, and Russ did a tremendous job there and elsewhere.

As a matter of fact, he did such a good job as my MLA, my military legislative assistant, that when the opportunity came, he was promoted to legislative director. There he got to apply his knowledge and expertise far beyond just national security and foreign affairs and helped me navigate all of the various policy issues we confronted during the time he was my legislative director from 2007 to 2012.

Some of these are issues that particularly hit home in Texas, things like immigration, Supreme Court nominations, and the ObamaCare debate. Not only did Russ bring valuable policy perspectives to that role as legislative director, but he was also able to help on the communications side because he understands it is not just important for us to do a decent job—or at least to the best of our ability—it is important to be able to communicate what you are doing in a way so the American people, and in particular the people of Texas, can understand. Yet he also understood the politics that go along sometimes with the job we have in the Senate.

Perhaps just as importantly, he brought with him his good judgment to help me hire an outstanding legislative staff. I believe firmly that part of my responsibility—and I am sure the Presiding Officer and our other colleagues feel the same way. I believe one of the most important things we can do is hire the best and brightest staffers because if we do that, and we work with them, we can benefit tremendously and our constituents benefit tremendously from their advice.

Russ has set a high bar as my legislative director. He is a tireless worker who has given a lot of himself.

Then I would like to say just a word about his job as my chief of staff—as the whip. When I became the whip, he came with me to the whip office. We have found ourselves in a few nail-biting situations in tense moments, and Russ's calmness and personality, his calm demeanor and his diligence have simply helped us get the job done for the Senate and for the new majority.

Whether it is trafficking, trade, highways, funding the government, a budget—the first budget that we have passed since 2009—his fingerprints are all over those, along with those of other members of my whip staff who have done a great job. As I learned from the majority leader, he wants to know where the votes are before the vote is actually cast. My whip team, both staff and my deputy whip team, of which the Presiding Officer is one, have done a great job providing that essential information and knowledge to the majority leader so we can efficiently and effectively represent our constituents in the Senate.

By the way, I would say that Russ's intelligence background has proven to be invaluable—gathering information, talking to people, and understanding the situational awareness that is so necessary in order to be as effective as we can be. The results prove he has made a big contribution to helping us turn the Senate around, going from dysfunction to function and actually producing important results for the American people.

So here is how Russ describes the task ahead in the Senate. He likes to talk about the four P's. This is supposedly the key to what makes the Senate work and how to be effective in the Senate. The first P is policy. The second is pressure. The third is politics. The fourth is power. So I think by his four P's, he encapsulates one of the ways to be most effective in the Senate.

I guess, in the end, everything comes down to people and our relationships, the level of trust we are able to build working with each other because that is what helps us be effective and helps Russ be an effective chief of staff in the whip office. The truth is, as I have gone from No. 99 in the Senate when I came here, sitting in that back row over there, down to this desk over the last 12 years, I could not have done it without great staff like Russ Thomasson and all of my staff, both in the whip office as well as my staff in my official office. Many of them I know are here sitting in the back.

So on behalf of all of Team Cornyn, I want to wish Russ, his wife Cindy, Sasha, and Austin all the very best in the next chapter of their lives. We used to kid that it is sort of like the Eagles song ''Hotel California,'' you can check out, but you can never leave, once you become part of Team Cornyn. That is as true today as it was then.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I have never faced a more difficult decision than the vote on the Iran nuclear weapons agreement which is currently scheduled for mid-September. The stakes could not be higher, the issues more complex or the risks more difficult to calculate. In approaching this decision, I have taken a two-pronged path. The first is to have learned everything I possibly could about the agreement itself and then carefully analyzed the alternatives.

This second step is critically important, particularly in this case. No negotiated agreement is perfect. It is easy to pick apart whatever agreement is before you, but the question is, Compared to what? Often, an imperfect agreement is preferable when compared to the likely alternatives. Starting with a close reading of the agreement over several nights and early mornings back in July, and following hearings, classified briefings and sessions, meeting with experts inside and outside the administration, extensive readings about the agreement and its implications and discussions with my colleagues, this is where I have come out: First, if implemented effectively, I believe this agreement will prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon for at least 15 years and probably longer; second, at the end of that 15 years, if we take the right steps, we will have the same options then that we have today if Iran moves toward the building of a bomb; third, the current alternatives, if this agreement is rejected, are either unrealistic or downright dangerous.

So based upon what we know now, I intend to vote in favor of the agreement. This is why: The deal itself, I believe, is strong and explicit in terms of the burdens it places upon Iran's nuclear program for the first 15 years—a

98-percent reduction in their current stockpile of enriched uranium, strict numerical limits on further enrichment, the effective dismantling of the plutonium reactor at Arak, and dismantlement of two-thirds of their current fleet of enrichment centrifuges.

But many argue that after 15 years, Iran could become a nuclear threshold state, which is certainly a possibility we need to be prepared to address, but Iran is a nuclear threshold state today. To be arguing about what may or may not be the case in 15 years and ignore the fact that they are a nuclear threshold state today, it seems to me, is the height of folly. If they decided to build a bomb today, they could get there in 2 to 3 months. After the rollbacks required in this agreement, however, this period is extended to at least 1 year, and we would know almost immediately if they were on track to a bomb.

I might mention that we will have a much greater insight into their activities if this agreement is enacted than we do today. The inspection and verification provisions, as I mentioned, which will be monitored and enforced by the International Atomic Energy Agency, coupled with the tools and capabilities of the U.S. intelligence community and those of our international partners which, by the way, is an important part of the verification regime.

There is a lot of discussion about the IAEA, as if those are the only people who will be watching, but indeed the intelligence agencies of at least half a dozen countries will also be watching. I believe the combination of the IAEA and our intelligence assets provide us with a high level of confidence that any attempt by Iran to cheat on its enrichment program will be detected.

IAEA inspections at known nuclear sites indeed are anytime, anywhere, and include Iran's entire uranium supply chain. While it is true that inspections at hidden sites—sites we don't know about—could be delayed for up to 24 days from when the IAEA requests access and that some covert work at such a site could be harder to detect, it is in the nature of uranium that traces can be detected long after 24 days, no matter how much they try to clean it up.

The half-life of uranium-235 is 700 million years. They are not going to be able to clean it up in 24 days. In the end, to build a bomb, there has to be nuclear material. But what about after 15 years when most of the restrictions on enrichment are lifted? If the Iranians try to break out at that point, we have the some options we have today, including the reimposition of sanctions or a military strike.

In other words, we are in a similar place in 15 years to where we are now, but we will have achieved 15 years of a nuclear weapon-free Iran. If Iran violates the terms of the agreement at that point, I believe reimposing the effective international sanctions involving the rest of the world would be stronger and more likely than it would be today because it would be Iran breaching the agreement, not us walking away from it. I cannot argue, nor can anyone, that this deal is perfect. For example, I would prefer that the 15-year limits be 20 or 25 or 30 years or that the U.S. arms embargo would remain in place indefinitely. I would prefer to see that in the agreement.

In fact, I think Congress can and should have a role to play in seeking to ensure the strict enforcement of the agreement and to mitigate some of its weaknesses, as well as reassuring our regional allies and partners and further strengthening our ability to ensure Iran never becomes a nuclear weapons state, but then we get to the central question. As I said, it is easy to pick apart a deal: I don't like this aspect. I don't like that. I think it should be longer. I think it should be shorter.

But the question is, Compared to what? What are the alternatives? What happens next if we reject this agreement? The usual answers I have heard in this body, in hearings, and in meetings over the last month or so are sort of vague references to reimposing or strengthening the sanctions, bringing Iran back to the table, and getting a better deal.

The problem with this is that the countries which have joined us in the sanctions—and by doing so have considerably strengthened the impact of those sanctions on Iran—believe this deal is acceptable. They have accepted it. Our unilateral rejection would almost certainly lead to those sanctions eroding rather than getting stronger. I would not argue they will collapse, but they will definitely erode. It is hard to argue that the sanctions will get stronger when the countries that have helped us to enforce and make those sanctions effective believe we should endorse and enter into this agreement.

If that happens, we have the worst of all worlds: Iran is unfettered from the terms of the agreement, and they are subject to a weaker sanctions regime. It is important to remember, and this often is not conveyed much in the information that is shared, this is not simply an agreement between the United States and Iran, this is an agreement between the United States and Germany and Great Britain and France and China and Russia and Iran. This is not a unilateral agreement. This is an agreement that has been entered into by the major world powers. They have found it acceptable.

The other option, if we cannot somehow find our way to a better deal—and I have not heard anybody credibly argue why or how that would happen. The only other option, of course, is a military strike, which the experts estimate would only set the Iranian nuclear program back between 2 and 3 years. Where are we then? Are we in a position where there would have to be follow-on strikes to prevent the reconstitution of Iran's nuclear facilities every 2 or 3 years? That would be at an unpredictable and incalculable cost.

It is true that as a result of Iran's acceptance of the limitations of the agreement, they get relief from the nuclear sanctions and the release of approximately $50 billion of restricted foreign assets that they will be able to spend, but it is important to remember they only get that after they comply with the limitations. If we sign on to this agreement, they don't get the money the next day. They have to meet the limitations in the agreement and the IAEA has to verify that. Let me repeat. There is no sanctions relief until Iran implements and the IAEA verifies that its nuclear commitments have been met. To get that relief is why they entered into these negotiations in the first place. And to get them into the negotiations is why we led the imposition of the nuclear weapons sanctions in the first place.

In other words, sanctions relief in exchange for acceptance of limitations on their nuclear program is the essence of the deal. Neither the sanctions nor the negotiations were ever about Iran foreswearing terrorism or recognizing Israel or releasing hostages. All of those things are things I wish we could do. I believe those are good policies, but that isn't what this negotiation was about. To try to add them now or argue that the deal falls short because they aren't included is simply unrealistic.

The United States, along with our allies and partners, must redouble our efforts outside of the nuclear agreement to address these issues. They are critically important issues. We need a strategy to deal with an expansionist Iran that is completely separate from the nuclear issue—I don't deny that—and to deal with Iran's malign activities in the region. It is also important to reiterate that all U.S. sanctions on Iran related to terrorism and human rights will remain in place.

When President Kennedy was negotiating the removal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba, he did not throw in that Cuba had to depose Castro or that the Soviets had to foreswear their dangerous enmity to the West. The phrase they used was this: ''We will bury you.''

He simply wanted to get those missiles out. He didn't try to settle all the issues in the Cold War. And, indeed, so it is with this deal. The idea is to constrain. The idea has always been to constrain Iran's nuclear capability, not settle all the issues of the Middle East—no matter how desirable that might be.

In my book there is only one thing worse than a rogue Iran seeking to make trouble for its neighbors and us, and that is a rogue Iran seeking to make troubles for its neighbors and us armed with nuclear weapons. That is the issue before is.

Finally, of equal importance as the terms themselves of the nuclear agreement is ensuring that it is effectively implemented. One of the principles of my life is that implementation and

execution are as important as vision. If this agreement is approved, that is day 1 of the critical implementation and execution period. There is a real risk, I believe, that as time wears on, the attention of the international community on this issue will diminish. It will be vital to the United States, across successive Presidents, to maintain focus on implementing and enforcing the terms of the agreement.

Congress also will have a crucial role to play, both in oversight of the deal's implementation and in making certain that the IAEA and our intelligence agencies have the resources they need to monitor and assure compliance, and more broadly to ensure that all of our options to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon—whenever they may decide to take that step—remain viable if the agreement collapses.

I have negotiated lots of contracts over the years, and one side or the other rarely wins in a negotiation. The idea is that all sides get something they want or need, and, in the end, I believe that is what happened here. If this deal is implemented properly, I believe it will accomplish our national security objectives, while preserving or improving all of our existing options to ensure that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon.

There is no certainty when it comes to this question. As I said at the beginning, I believe this is the most difficult decision I have ever had to make. There are risks in either direction, and there are credible arguments on both sides. But, in the end, I have concluded that the terms of this agreement are preferable to the alternatives—and that is the crucial analysis; what are the alternatives—and that it would be in the best interests of the United States to join our partners in approving it.

I intend to remain deeply engaged in this issue in the weeks and months ahead because the process does not end the day of our vote. If this agreement moves forward, it will fall to future Presidents and future Congresses to oversee it and make it work. We owe the American people our best judgment, and it is my belief that this agreement, if implemented effectively and in conjunction with the other measures we must take to ensure its ongoing vitality, will serve our Nation, the region, and the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about the deal negotiated between the P5+1 and Iran to deny Iran's access to a nuclear weapon.

First, I commend the administration and others involved in the negotiations for seeking a diplomatic solution. There always needs to be a credible threat of military force to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, but it is incumbent upon us to test every avenue for a peaceful solution before resorting to such force.

I am mindful that—like any agreement involving multiple parties that are friendly, belligerent, and somewhere in between—this agreement can't be used against the ideal. It has to be judged against the alternative. On the whole, this agreement measured against the ideal doesn't look all that good. Against the alternative, it is a much closer call.

I must say that I am not as sanguine as some of my colleagues about the ability to reassemble the multilateral sanctions regime that has brought Iran to the negotiating table.

On the nuclear side, Iran's ability to amass sufficient fissile material to assemble a nuclear weapon would be severely curtailed for up to 15 years. The inspections regime to ensure compliance, at least as it pertains to known nuclear facilities, is fairly detailed. That is no small achievement. Much credit is due to the scientists and others who assisted with the negotiations.

On the other hand, I have grave concerns regarding our ability—and if not our ability, our willingness—to respond to nefarious nonnuclear activities that Iran may be involved with in the region.

We are assured by the administration that under the JCPOA, Congress retains all tools, including the imposition of sanctions, should Iran involve itself in terrorist activity in the region. However, the plain text of the JCPOA does not seem to indicate this. In fact, it seems to indicate otherwise. Iran has made it clear that it believes that the imposition of sanctions similar to or approximating those currently in place would violate the JCPOA.

My concern is that the administration would be reluctant to punish or deter the unacceptable nonnuclear behavior by Iran in the region if it would give Iran the pretext not to comply with the agreement as it stands. I don't believe this is an idle concern. The degree to which the administration has resisted even the suggestion that Congress reauthorize the Iran Sanctions Act, for example, which expires next year, just so that we might have sanctions to snap back, makes us question our willingness to confront Iran when it really matters down the road.

Now, if this were a treaty, that could be dealt with with what are called RUDs—or reservations, understandings and declarations—where we could clarify some of these misunderstandings. But since this was presented to Congress as an Executive agreement, we don't have that option.

We have had numerous hearings and briefings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I commend Senator CORKER, the chairman of the committee, and the minority ranking member, Senator CARDIN, for the manner in which they have engaged in these hearings and briefings.

We have had a lot of questions raised. Some have been answered; some have not. These hearings will continue. I will leave from this Chamber to go to another briefing that we are having. I expect to hear more in the coming weeks and will seek to answer questions that I still have about the agreement. The bottom line is I can only support an agreement that I feel can endure—not just be signed but that can endure—and that will serve our national interests and the interests of our allies.

Again, I commend those who have been involved in this process. I commend those involved in ensuring that Congress had a say here. I will continue to evaluate this agreement based, as I said, not on the ideal but the alternative. There are many questions I wish to have answered.

I encourage the administration to work with Congress in the coming weeks on legislation that would clarify some of these misunderstandings. It would take the place of so-called RUDs if this were a treaty.

I have mentioned before that this kind of legislation is going to come. It will come prior to implementation day, and I think it behooves the administration and the Congress to begin now to work together on items that we can agree on that clarify this, assuming that this agreement will go into effect. It ought to be clarified now and not down the road. That would make it far more likely to be an enduring document rather than one that is simply signed and forgotten later.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

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

The Senator from Utah.

RECESS

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 6:15 p.m.

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 5:05 p.m., recessed until 6:15 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. TILLIS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor once again to make an attempt at passing a very important, commonsense piece of legislation that is bipartisan. It helps to ensure that the drinking water supplies in northern Ohio, Lake Erie, and throughout our State, the freshwater reservoirs and other lakes that are providing water—and also around the