

But the attorney general of Texas and 25 other Republican Governors and attorneys general filed a lawsuit stating that the President had exceeded his authority. This decision affects millions of American families who are now subject to being torn apart, and as many as 5 million immigrants could be set for mass deportation.

I expect the administration will swiftly appeal this decision to the Supreme Court and that the Court will find the actions lawful. It is sad that Republicans are wasting their time talking about mass deportation when they could be doing things to solve the problem, such as passing a bill that reforms our immigration system once and for all. The Republican Party has neglected the lessons of the 2012 elections and has plunged over a cliff following Donald Trump, Ben Carson, and the others.

The Executive actions were neither a complete nor a permanent solution to the problems plaguing the immigration system, but they were a commonsense step in the face of inaction.

As Judge Carolyn Dineen King stated in her dissent very clearly, "a mistake has been made." So it is now up to the U.S. Supreme Court to correct this grave mistake—a mistake that sets not only a dangerous precedent but one that is bad for families, bad for our communities, and bad for the future prosperity of our country. Again, as Judge King said, "a mistake has been made."

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

Mr. REID. Madam President, today I want to address more directly the Republican leader's remarks that he gave yesterday regarding the Iran nuclear agreement. In short, no matter how Republicans misrepresent the Iran nuclear agreement, the agreement brought about the long-sought goal of preventing Iran from having a nuclear weapon. The agreement is nothing more, nothing less. It prevents Iran from having a nuclear weapon.

HOSTING PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU

Mr. REID. Madam President, later today the Republican leader and I will host Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, as we have done on many other occasions. It is always a pleasure to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu and reaffirm America's longstanding commitment to the security of Israel. Israel knows it has an ally in the United States—in fact, no greater ally in the world than our great country.

While some Republicans in Congress are trying to drive a false narrative of acrimony between the United States and Israel, I choose to see the full picture, and the full picture is one of strengthened cooperation and shared interests.

Israel has always and will always depend on the United States to be by its

side. That is why the United States and Israel are negotiating right now a new 10-year memorandum of understanding on security assistance. Much of yesterday's meeting between the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Israel centered on the continued assistance we would provide Israel. Israel's interests have always been protected by the United States in matters that come before the United Nations, as Israel has always protected the interests of the United States before the United Nations.

In recent years we have seen how resolutions before the United Nations General Assembly and the U.N. Human Rights Council have unfairly targeted the people of Israel. The administration has denounced such efforts, but we also stand against Palestinian attempts to use the United Nations to go around a negotiated peace process. Wherever, whenever, and however, the United States will always stand by Israel.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. REID. Madam President, I share the Republican leader's hope that we can conclude the Military Construction-VA bill later this morning. I commend the managers of that legislation for doing a good job. There is no Senator I admire more than JON TESTER from Montana, and he has been ably leading the direction of this bill.

I join with the Republican leader as we honor our veterans tomorrow on Veterans Day.

Madam President, I just want to take a brief minute to talk about a veteran, whom I look to with admiration.

Today the chaplain gave a prayer saying that he prayed for veterans who have already left us and those veterans who are still alive.

My town is Searchlight, NV, a little tiny town with not a lot of people in it. It has been that way for a long time. For a brief period Searchlight was bigger than Las Vegas. It had 3,000 people there.

During World War II a young man who was already married and had children went to a movie with his wife in Las Vegas. He came out of the movies and told his wife: I think I have to join. He didn't have to, but he felt he had to.

So this young man joined the U.S. Army Air Corps, which is now the U.S. Air Force. It was a huge sacrifice for him and his family. He traveled with his wife and children to Georgia where he did his training and then went to the European theater as a pilot.

He served gallantly, bombing, strafing, and all the other things you did in the air in World War II. He had been through 68 different missions. He was through. But as happens sometimes in life, things develop that change your life. He volunteered for one more flight because one of the other pilots was unable to go.

On his 69th flight, somewhere over Belgium, Bill Nellis, the boy from

Searchlight, was shot down. He is still there. That is where his grave is.

I know his family. I know his son Gary and his Aunt Thelma, whom I knew in Searchlight.

This good man was so gallant in the eyes of people from Nevada that a previous congressional delegation, in conjunction with the President of the United States, decided it would be appropriate to name the Las Vegas Gunnery School, as it was called at that time, Nellis Air Force Base.

Today Nellis Air Force Base, named after this man from Searchlight, is the finest Air Force fighter training facility in the world. Thousands and thousands of people serve there.

It was originally on the outskirts of Las Vegas. Now it is in Las Vegas in a very populated area. No one complains about it. We are so proud of that Air Force base. It is a huge facility that has the finest gunnery range for Air Force pilots in the world. We have exercises there every year where pilots from all over the world bring their own aircraft from Australia, Great Britain, and other places to train there.

We in Nevada are very proud of Nellis Air Force Base, as is the entire military complex in the United States. It is a wonderful facility. Tomorrow is the day we honor Bill Nellis and the other gallant people who have served and are serving in the U.S. military.

Would the Chair announce the business this morning.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2029, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2029) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Kirk/Tester amendment No. 2763, in the nature of a substitute.

Kirk amendment No. 2764 (to amendment No. 2763), to clarify the term "congressional defense committees."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 312

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I rise today to support and to request the Senate's approval of this resolution, which would designate the second week of November as National Pregnancy

Center Week in honor of the lifesaving and life-affirming work of America's community-supported pregnancy centers.

I am asking for my colleague's unanimous consent because there is absolutely nothing contentious about this resolution, S. Res. 312, nor is there anything contentious about the pregnancy resource centers commemorated by this resolution.

There are approximately 2,500 pregnancy resource centers in America. Every single day they serve an average of 65,000 women and men faced with challenging pregnancy decisions, providing them with a wide array of resources. That includes, at many centers, health care services such as pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, and testing for STDs and STIs. It includes emotional and educational support such as options counseling and parenting classes. It includes material and logistical assistance to help new moms and dads deal with all the little things that easily add up to big obstacles in the first few weeks and months of parenthood.

America's pregnancy resource centers aren't out to make a profit nor are they out there to push a particular political agenda. They are just there to help and to do so in a way that is compassionate, considerate of individual privacy, and respectful of the equal dignity of all human life.

Any way you look at it, America's pregnancy resource centers deserve our recognition and they deserve our respect and our gratitude. The real measure of their significance isn't in the words of a floor speech in the Senate or the outcome of a vote, it is in the thousands of lives they help save from the pain of abortion every year and in the millions of teachers, soldiers, nurses, neighbors, friends, and spouses whose lives and contributions to our communities we might never have known had it not been for the unassuming heroes down at the local pregnancy center who give their time to keep the lights on, answer the phones, and help young women find the hope and the courage to choose life.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 312, submitted earlier today; that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions 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 Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I would ask the Senator to modify his request and offer a resolution that actually helps to move women's health and rights forward.

Simply put, the resolution that the Senator has offered is more of the same. It is another effort to pander to the extreme Republican base by using women's health and constitutionally

protected rights as a political football. Unfortunately, it makes it clear for the umpteenth time that when it comes to improving access to affordable health care for women, some Republicans are determined to stand in the way of progress.

I expect that some of my Republican colleagues will say this resolution shows how much they care about women's health. The truth is it shows the opposite. It shows once again that the Republican Party wants to interfere in a woman's medical decision. Strengthening women's health care doesn't start with telling women what they should and should not do with their own bodies, but that is exactly what that resolution does.

If my Republican colleagues really want to support women's reproductive care, they would work with Democrats on improving access to affordable birth control under the Affordable Care Act, including emergency contraceptives, ensuring women and families make their own decisions about their health care—not their bosses—and fighting back against efforts across the country to undermine women's constitutionally protected health care rights.

It is time for Republicans to drop the political attacks on women's health and instead join Democrats to focus on these priorities and more like them, so that women—not politicians, not insurance companies, not CFOs or CEOs—are in control of their health care, as it should be.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 37

That is why I ask the Senator to modify his request and instead ask unanimous consent that the HELP Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 37, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator so modify his request?

Mr. LEE. Madam President, reserving the right to object, there is nothing divisive about this resolution I have offered today, nothing divisive whatsoever.

This simply seeks recognition of the great work that is performed by the men and women who staff these pregnancy centers. There is nothing about it that is a political football, nothing about it that is designed to drive a wedge.

Unlike our resolution, the resolution I submitted today, S. Res. 312, which mainly commends community volunteers around the country for helping young mothers and their children—hardly divisive—the Senator's counterproposal is divisive and controversial. My cosponsors and I only wanted to recognize the life-affirming and life-saving work, the kind of work that brings families and communities together; the counterproposal would only pull Americans further apart and fur-

ther away from the more humane and compassionate society that all Americans deserve.

If calling for recognition of these brave and noble men and women who serve people at pregnancy centers around the country is divisive, we have significant problems, but the fact is, it is not. I would encourage anyone within the sound of my voice to read S. Res. 312, and they will discover it is not the least bit divisive and doesn't discuss anything that is the least bit controversial.

On that basis, I can't agree with the modification, and I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard to the modification.

Is there objection to the original request?

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I object to the original request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Maryland.

ARMED SERVICES AUTHORIZATION BILL

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise to speak as in morning business in terms of the bill we will be voting on at 11:20 a.m. today, the armed services authorization, as well as what we are going to be voting on this afternoon, which is veterans health care. They actually go hand in hand and what a great set of votes in a symmetry that shows our support for national security, our support for our U.S. military, our support for our U.S. military who are on Active Duty today, and then also for our veterans who in their hearts are always on Active Duty.

Today we have the ability to actually show we can govern, we can pass bills on a bipartisan basis that will help our country be able to defend itself, show our support to the U.S. military, and honor our commitment to the veterans. I am looking forward to voting on the armed services authorization because it does give the tools we need to be able to defend ourselves. I commend Senators MCCAIN and JACK REED for their excellent work.

Madam President, I wish to speak now as the vice chair of the Appropriations Committee. I am so excited that we are bringing the MILCON-VA bill to the Senate. I have been voting for veterans ever since I have come to Congress. Veterans are our Nation's heroes. They put their lives on the line to fight for our freedom. They have made tremendous sacrifices for our country. Whether it is veterans who are still alive from World War II, those who fought on Pork Chop Hill during the Korean war, the Vietnam war at Mekong Delta, and of course Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan, we owe our veterans a debt of gratitude. We want to show our gratitude not only with words and yellow ribbons but with deeds. I believe the best deed is to make sure we adequately fund the Veterans' Administration to end the backlog for disability benefits—if you fought on the frontlines, you shouldn't stand in line to get your disability benefits—and to robustly fund veterans

health care, along with other benefits this Congress has so authorized.

We have accomplished a lot over the years working for our veterans, and we will have a lot to do with what is in our legislation. I wish to commend the subcommittee chair, Senator MARK KIRK, and our vice chair, Senator JON TESTER, for the work they have done. As we were working on our bill this summer and through the spring, veterans told me and they told them that the Senate funding was too spartan; that we were underfunding our veterans and not just by a few dollars but by \$850 million. So we held it up, not as a parliamentary ping-pong, not as a parliamentary temper tantrum but as a way of saying our veterans need more money.

As a result of the budget agreement, we are able to do this. We are on the floor today where an amendment will be offered by Senators KIRK and TESTER to add \$2 billion for veterans health care, \$2 billion to be determined by the Secretary.

What do we look forward to? Well, lifesaving drugs. One of course is this issue of being able to pay for hepatitis C; the other, while we are looking at actual hands-on medical care, we want to reduce the wait times. There is too much waiting at the Veterans' Administration, whether you are waiting for your disability claim or you are waiting to see your doctor or your mental health counselor or your ophthalmologist. We need to be able to reduce the wait times, and this is what part of this \$2 billion will do.

Then there are those who are not only chronically ill from the wounds of war but are chronically and devastatingly injured. So we looked at those who are unable to care for themselves but are being cared for at home by loved ones. This will add more funds to be able to help those caregivers who are stepping up for their responsibility. So they are taking family responsibility, but we have to take USA responsibility. That is what we fought for in the \$2 billion.

I urge my colleagues to move ahead and be able to vote for this bill. I do believe this legislation, by adding the money and the kind of excellent work that has been done by our authorizers, the insistence of good provisions being put into the bill—we are going to shrink that VA backlog. Also, we are going to do something else. We are going to advance funding for mandatory veterans' benefits. So no matter what government means, if we ever get into more shutdown, slamdown, slowdown politics due to us, the veterans' benefits will go forward.

I have been working on this backlog for a long time. By the time we got to March 2013, we were at a national standoff. There were over 600,000 claims pending. In Maryland we had one of the worst claims offices in my own hometown of Baltimore. I couldn't believe it. When I met with my Veterans Advisory Board and stories poured out of

the kinds of calls that were coming into my Constituent Services Offices, not only were they waiting in line—this isn't like just standing in line at the supermarket, this is for disability benefits, for people who are in danger of losing their homes and other kinds of things. So we went to work on a bipartisan basis. I am proud of what we did. I am proud of our authorizers.

I see Senator ISAKSON from Georgia is on the floor. He was a big part of the reform effort. It shows our military knows how to win wars, but we need to know how we can govern so they don't have to fight a war with the VA bureaucracy. We hope we will be able to make these reforms. We are not going to throw money at it. We are going to insist on metrics.

The last point I wish to talk about is the advance appropriations. People will say: Aren't VA benefits mandatory? They are unless we get into one of our parliamentary ping-pong debates.

So I worked with the Disabled Veterans of America and a coalition of several voluntary veterans service organizations—great groups: the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans and Iraq and Iran Veterans of America. They asked me to add advance appropriations to the omnibus 1 year in advance—making sure we funded things 1 year in advance—protecting them from shutdown and slamdown politics. We were able to do that again, and I hope we can do that again this year.

I know I have other colleagues on the floor who wish to speak now, but I wish to say we can really show we not only know how to fight for America and its security, but we know how to fight for those who do the fighting.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I rise on the eve of Veterans Day to urge my colleagues to support the fiscal year 2016 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill.

This marks the first time in 2 years that we have had the opportunity to debate, amend, and vote on this important legislation on the Senate floor. It is vital to those who serve and to those who have served our Nation.

I first learned to honor our veterans from my father. My father is a World War II veteran who was wounded twice in the Battle of the Bulge and earned his Purple Heart and his Bronze Star. It was he who would take me to the parades on Veterans Day and on Memorial Day and boost me high on his shoulders. From the best vantage point in the parade, I would watch our veterans march by. He taught me of their sacrifice and that we have a never-ending obligation to thank those who wore the uniform of our country.

Passing this bill fulfills important obligations that we owe to our Nation's 22 million veterans, 127,000 of whom live in the great State of Maine. It sends an important message to our veterans: We will honor the sacrifices that

you made and are making on our behalf. It would be a mistake to send the opposite message by further postponing or delaying consideration and final passage of this important bill before we celebrate our veterans, honor, and remember them tomorrow.

As a member of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee, I know this bill before us now is the result of bipartisan compromise. I commend the leadership of Chairman KIRK and Ranking Member TESTER, who have worked hand in hand to craft the managers' amendment that they will be bringing before us today.

In May of this year, the Appropriations Committee reported this funding bill by a strong vote of 21 to 9. Since then the Bipartisan Budget Act has been enacted, which provides needed additional resources to fund vital national priorities and that will be reflected in the managers' amendment. The managers' substitute would provide a total of \$79.7 billion in funding, which I would note represents more than \$1 billion more than the President's budget request.

This bill increases funding for our veterans in areas where they need it most, including mental health care and benefit claims processing, two issues which the Senator from Maryland has been so active in resolving. This bill also includes funds aimed at reducing veterans homelessness. This is a special priority of mine as the chairman of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee. I worked with Senator MURRAY on this issue, and we have made real progress—exciting progress—in reducing the number of homeless veterans across this country through the VASH Program, but there is still more work to be done. In addition, this bill includes \$270 million in funding for the Office of Rural Health, through which the Access Received Closer to Home or the ARCH Program is funded. In five pilot States in which it operates, ARCH ensures that rural veterans, who often have a very difficult time accessing the regular VA health care system—particularly the VA hospitals—can receive care closer to where they live and where their families live.

I will never forget the story shared with me by a Maine veteran who broke his hip during a terrible snow storm and needed urgent care. The ARCH program, located at Cary Memorial Hospital in Caribou, ME, ensured he could receive the care he needed in his community and close to his family, rather than enduring a 4-hour drive over bumpy winter roads during a ferocious snow storm to the Togas VA Medical Center in Augusta, ME. ARCH has made a tremendous difference for our veterans and continues to help those who live in rural communities and who are facing similar challenges and emergencies.

The managers' substitute also increases Veterans Affairs medical services by nearly \$2 billion, including \$10

million for programs supporting caregivers. We all know of the wonderful work that Elizabeth Dole has done in this area, and I have been very pleased to join with my colleague Senator PATTY MURRAY in introducing the Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act. The bill before us is going to help provide benefits for those who shoulder the responsibilities associated with long-term care for critically injured veterans. This bill would expand comprehensive caregiver benefits for those who take on those responsibilities.

I would note, Madam President, that the Senator from Wisconsin, Senator BALDWIN, and I have a broader bill dealing with caregivers that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions is considering and I hope will be approving shortly.

In addition to the vital funds for veterans programs, this bill also funds military construction projects, which unfortunately had been adversely affected—cut, delayed, deferred—as a result of the budget caps and the impact of sequestration. Therefore, I am particularly pleased this bill includes \$7.2 million in funding needed to repair, renovate, and upgrade the 101st Air Refueling Wing's fire and crash rescue station in Bangor, ME. This is funding for which I have strongly advocated, and I thank the managers for including it the bill. The 101st "MAINEiacs" provide critical 24/7 air and ground refueling services that support local military operations, and this funding will strengthen their capabilities.

I would note, Madam President, that I recently met with General Breedlove, our NATO commander, and he told me he refueled at Bangor, ME, on his way back from Europe recently.

Madam President, I could go on and on about the important programs and priorities in this bill. They are essential to providing what we owe to our servicemembers and our veterans: safe and reliable infrastructure so that our troops can complete the missions they are assigned, access to medical care, earned compensation and benefits, and assistance to help our veterans successfully transition to their civilian lives.

Tomorrow, on Veterans Day, our Nation will pause to honor all those who served. Today, we have the opportunity to say to the American people, to our veterans, and to those who are considering military service to our Nation that no matter what partisan issues may divide us, we stand united in fulfilling our commitment to those who serve and those who have served.

We can send that message by passing this measure and sending to the President a funding bill that takes care of our servicemembers, our veterans and their families, and that honors their service to our great country.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

(At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. VITTEB. Madam President, I wish to support the Military Construc-

tion and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. This bipartisan bill provides critical resources for our active military, veterans, and their families.

The courage and sacrifice that define our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coastguardsmen, and all servicemembers over the years cannot be understated. Major chapters in our Nation's rich history have been and continue to be written by our brave servicemen and women, many of whom hail from Louisiana.

The very least we can do in return is keep our commitments to them. It is our obligation to fund veterans' health care and benefits, and this bill does just that while also making necessary reforms to the scandal-plagued Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our Louisiana veterans have waited a long, long time to have efficient access to effective health care, and they deserve much better than what has been handed to them. That is why I have worked for years to authorize new VA clinics and build interim clinics in southwest Louisiana, including one in Lake Charles, LA, that is expected to open before the Thanksgiving holiday.

The latest National Defense Authorization measure has been revised to reflect the recent budget deal, which modified the spending caps for both base and war defense spending. In light of these changes, I firmly believe the administration should honor past statements that current military reductions are due to defense budget cuts stemming from sequestration, which have now been postponed for 2 years.

It is critically important to recognize that the newly revised 2-year budget deal provides necessary relief for the Department of Defense and allows a much-needed opportunity to avoid further cuts to the Active-Duty Army's troop strength. Since 2013, the U.S. Army alone has decreased troop strength 21 percent. That is both dangerous and unacceptable.

I have fought against dangerously steep drawdowns and was proud to fight this issue on the Senate floor last year. The United States cannot afford continued troop cuts at a time when military leaders say that we are facing an unprecedented number of threats.

I urge my colleagues to support our military and to support this bipartisan bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

VETERANS DAY

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, this Veterans Day we pause to honor the men and women in our military who stepped up to fight for our freedom and to protect our families. In my home State of Washington, we have a lot to be thankful for. More than 600,000 of our friends, our neighbors,

and our family members have bravely served their country.

As the daughter of a World War II veteran, I know the sacrifice it takes to keep our country safe and protect our values. Thanks to my father and the countless other veterans I have had the honor of meeting, I believe that when brave individuals sign up to serve our country, we must fulfill our promise to support them when they come home. We should honor our veterans by showing them we have their backs long after the war is over.

While I would like to stand here and say that our country is doing everything we can for the people we owe the most to and that we are fulfilling the promise we made to them when we sent them off to fight for us, I believe our work is far from over. Though Congress passed a sweeping bill last year to provide new resources and add more accountability to the VA, I continue to hear from veterans across my home State of Washington about care that is falling short. Despite structural changes at the VA, veterans are still waiting on surgeries and MRIs and oncology appointments, mental health screenings, you name it. Our veterans have already fought for our country. They should not have to fight to get their health care or the benefits they were promised, so we have to fight on their behalf.

As the senior member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am committed to making this country work better for our veterans. Even though there are challenges, there is hope. Just 2 weeks ago, we successfully passed the Homeless Veterans Services Protection Act out of the Senate to make sure a VA policy change doesn't cut off services and force veterans onto the street. That bill cleared one hurdle; now I call on my colleagues in the House to get this done.

I am also fighting to end the VA's outdated ban on fertility services for veterans so they can start families. There is absolutely no reason to deny this service for members of our military, especially when they are injured while fighting for our country. And I believe we must extend the critically important military caregiver support services program to veterans of all eras—a program that enables injured veterans to recover and stay in their homes with their families instead of being in a hospital or a nursing home.

Madam President, these aren't the only things I am working on. Because our veterans kept their end of the bargain, we have to keep ours. That means they should have access to mental health care to help deal with the often invisible wounds of war. That means a solid path to a college degree. That means job training programs and transitional services so that veterans have a path to good careers after their military service is complete. These things aren't about going above and beyond; they are the bare minimum of what our country should be doing to fulfill its promise to care for our veterans.

So as our country recommits to that promise this Veterans Day, I want to let veterans know in my home State of Washington and across the country that I will not stop fighting for them. I again want to express my heartfelt thanks to all the veterans around the country who have served and for all who are still serving today.

I call on all of my colleagues and fellow citizens to honor our veterans every day of the year with the kind of action that shows them we are grateful for their service.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I want to thank Senator KIRK and Senator TESTER for their outstanding work on this appropriations bill; Senator MURRAY for her cooperation and help on caregivers and so many programs in the committee; and Senator COLLINS and her work on MILCON. I want to encourage all my fellow Members of the Senate to vote favorably on this legislation when it comes before us later today.

I want everyone to stop, take a deep breath, and think about three things: No. 1, today is the 240th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps—the strongest veterans we have, veterans who fought and died for us around the world for 2½ centuries. Tomorrow, at the eleventh hour, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, we celebrate the armistice of World War I and Veterans Day in America. And today on the floor of the Senate, we are fixing some problems that have confronted our veterans for the better part of the last 10 years. As the Members of the committee who are on the floor know, the VA literally almost collapsed 2 years ago. Health services in Phoenix, AZ, were a disaster. People were cheating on appointments and shortening veteran times to make themselves look better. The VA had a reputation of being the worst agency in the Federal government.

Now, I don't take credit for it as chairman, but I will tell you what your committee members have done—members like Senator TESTER and Senator MURRAY. Instead of complaining about people, instead of putting targets on the wall and saying they are the problem, we decided to be part of the solution. I want to recite for just a second what has happened in the last 10 months.

No. 1, we passed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, and this bill funds it. It will help to reduce the number of suicides. Today, 22 veterans per day commit suicide, and we want that reduced to a perfect score of zero at some point in time. But you do that only by investing funds, hiring psychiatrists, and making a commitment. This Senate and the House have done so.

We had an overrun of \$1.428 billion—more than I can count to—in the Denver hospital the VA was trying to

build. They were 13 years into construction and not even half finished. This committee said that will not stand. We passed legislation to complete the funding by taking the money out of VA without additional appropriations from the Congress, and more importantly we got the VA out of the construction business. We said: You guys are supposed to take care of the health of our veterans, not—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority time has expired, Senator.

Mr. ISAKSON. I ask unanimous consent to have 3 additional minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. TESTER. I just need about 1 minute, JOHNNY—sorry, the Senator from Georgia. You can have everything, but just give me 1 minute.

Mr. ISAKSON. How much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Approximately 2½ minutes, Senator.

Mr. ISAKSON. Well, let me just give you the closing, and I will leave all the juicy parts for later on. We will talk about those in the press release.

The story that should be read about this appropriations bill is we are not letting our veterans down. We are uplifting our veterans, and we are seeing to it they get what they deserve. We are seeing to it that the problems we have seen illustrated in the papers of the United States of America are being fixed.

The VA is a work in progress. There will still be problems but not because of attitude or lack of funding and not because of a lack of commitment by this Congress. We are going to do what our veterans did for us. We are going to stand ground, we are going to take the hill, we are going to hold the hill, and we are going to see to it that those who fought and died for the United States of America are rewarded, not only for themselves and for their health care but for their retirement benefits and for their loved ones as well.

I commend Senator TESTER on what he has done, Senator KIRK for what he has done, and all the members of the committee.

I yield back the remainder of the time to the distinguished Senator from Montana, who can call me JOHNNY any time he wants to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Georgia. I appreciate his comments and very much thank him for the compliments. This MILCON-VA appropriations bill is a critically important bill. Why? Because we are demanding a lot from the VA. In order to demand a lot, we need to give them the tools and resources they need to be successful. It would be totally unfair to put them on the line without the resources they need to take care of our veterans.

That is important because today we have unprecedented demand. Not only are our Vietnam veterans getting

older, not only do they need services like never before, but we have been at war for 15 years in the Middle East, and we have folks coming back with complex injuries. We have men and women who need help when they get back. Some of these veterans would not have survived if they had been in any other war but this one. So the pressure on the VA is incredibly important, and if we are going to fix the access problem, if we are going to serve our veterans in the way they need to be served, we need to pass this bill.

Let me finish with a quick story. Not long ago a guy by the name of Henry—a Vietnam vet from Helena, MT—walked into my office. Henry fought in Vietnam. He was awarded four Purple Hearts for his combat and for his sacrifice. Henry walked into my office, sat down across from my staff member, and said: I can't live any more. Henry was in trouble. He had behavioral health problems that he needed professional help to get fixed. We were able to get him to the VA. The VA had a behavioral health professional who was able to help Henry, and Henry is living a good life today.

Our veterans deserve no less than to make sure they get the help they need when they need it, and that is what this bill is about. So we will be voting on a managers' package soon, and then we will be voting on passing this bill and getting it to the President's desk. Hopefully, we can do it with a strong, healthy vote—a unanimous vote, as a matter of fact—because this is an important bill not only for military construction but also for veterans.

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

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

RELATING TO PROVISIONS OF THE BORDER PATROL AGENT PAY REFORM ACT OF 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair lays before the Senate the House message to accompany S. 1356, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 1356) entitled "An Act to clarify that certain provisions of the Border Patrol Agent Pay Reform Act of 2014 will not take effect until after the Director of the Office of Personnel Management promulgates and makes effective regulations relating to such provisions," do pass with an amendment.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H. CON. RES.

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Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate proceeds to the consideration of H.