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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Merciful God, You alone have brought us to this moment. Help us to hear Your whispers and to follow Your leading. Speak to our lawmakers about the difficult issues of our time, reassuring them that You continue to take control of our destinies. Teach them to count their blessings, cultivating an attitude of gratitude. Give us the wisdom to shut out yesterday's disappointments and tomorrow's fears. Lord, show us how to live in day-tight compartments with total dependence on Your mercy and grace. Help us to cherish the freedom of this land as You continue to emancipate us from sin's slavery.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY AND GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD LABELING BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in the last national election, the American people elected a Republican Senate. Since then, we have accomplished a lot of important things for our country—landmark education reform, permanent tax relief for families and small businesses, significant action to repair America's roads and bridges—and, just last week, decisive steps to address the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic. The Republican Senate has been able to lead on many important issues because we focused on areas where both sides can agree, rather than just fight about issues where we don't.

Everyone knows one issue where we don't agree; that is, whether the American people deserve a voice in filling the current Supreme Court vacancy. Republicans think the people deserve a voice in this important vacancy. The President and Senate Democrats do not.

Whoever is chosen to fill the Supreme Court vacancy could radically change the direction of the Court for a generation. The American people obviously deserve a voice in such an important conversation. They can continue making their voices heard, and we can continue doing our work in the Senate to move America forward on important issues.

Americans elected this Republican Senate to serve as a check-and-balance to the President. It is natural that both parties will disagree in some areas. It is natural we will find common ground in others. Let's keep focused on those areas of common ground.

For instance, today I hope colleagues across the aisle will join us in working to protect middle-class families from unnecessary and unfair increases in their food and grocery bills. Vermont passed food-labeling legislation that will be implemented soon and could increase annual food costs across America by more than $1,000 per family. It is one State's decision, but it could negatively affect families—especially lower and middle-income families—in other States. Now we see other States following in Vermont's footsteps, which could lead to a patchwork of State laws. We should work to protect America's middle class from the unfair higher food prices that could result, and that is just what the Senate is working to do now.

We know this may be the last chance to stop this economic blow to the middle class, but we can't act if colleagues block us from helping the middle class. As our Democratic colleagues know, we are eager to continue working toward a solution. I would encourage our colleagues across the aisle to work with the bill managers to offer the amendments or alternative proposals they may have.

The commonsense, bipartisan legislation offered by Chairman PAT ROBERTS of the Agriculture Committee would set clear, science-based standards in order to prevent families from being unfairly hurt by a patchwork of conflicting State and local labeling laws passed in places where they don't even live. This bipartisan bill would help meet consumer interest for information about how food is made, while keeping costs from rising at every level of production. It has earned the support of more than 650 groups nationally, including farmers and small businesses. As Kentucky's agriculture commissioner put it, this bipartisan bill would ''allow for a more efficient flow of food to consumers everywhere and would cut down on production costs.''

We know this is not a safety or health issue. It is a market issue. Officials at both USDA and the FDA—the two agencies charged with ensuring the safety and delivery of our Nation's food supply—have found there are no health, safety, or nutritional risks associated with bioengineered crops and products. At the same time, we recognize that many families have a desire to know what is in the food they are purchasing. That is why the legislation Chairman ROBERTS is working on would offer incentives for the marketplace to provide more information to

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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consumers while also addressing many of the unintended consequences of a patchwork of State laws. I thank Senator ROBERTS for his continued work with colleagues from both sides of the aisle to move to a solution this week.

The Agriculture Committee recently passed the chairman's mark by a bipartisan vote, and the House passed its own legislation last summer. Now it is time for the full Senate to act so we can protect the middle class from higher food costs, and with continued cooperation from across the aisle, that is just what we can do.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD LABELING BILL AND FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 90 percent of Americans want to know what is in their food. All of Europe, China, Russia, they know what is in their food. We should know what is in our food. Senator STABENOW, the ranking member of the Agriculture Committee, has been trying to work to come up with some reasonable approach, but what she has gotten is not much help from the chair of the committee. There are no discussions going on right now that are meaningful. The Republican leader has offered an amendment that is a purely voluntary scheme, which is a quasi-Roberts proposal and would leave consumers actually in the dark, and that is the truth. But this is just another case of where Republicans in the Senate are trying to create an appearance of doing something without really doing anything at all. It happens so often. This has happened so often during the past year. Things that my friend the Republican leader comes to the floor and boasts about are things we tried to do and we were blocked by Republican filibusters. We have been happy in the minority to be responsible and work with the Republicans to get things done, and we continue to do that. It is the right thing for the country. We are not trying to block everything, as they in fact did. We are trying to get things done.

One of the things we need to get done that belies the fact of this great Senate Republican majority is the fact that we think there should be a Supreme Court Justice. There should be 9, not 8.

One hundred years ago today, this very day, this Senate concluded the confirmation hearing of Justice Louis Brandeis, the first Jewish Supreme Court Justice ever. Prior to his nomination, it was not a custom for the Senate to hold public confirmation hearings to set up Supreme Court nominations, but over the last century these hearings have become a vital part of the Senate's constitutional duty to provide its advice and consent. For 100 years, the Senate has had open hearings to deal with controversies—real or imagined—surrounding Supreme Court vacancies and nominees.

It is disappointing that Republicans are now willing to throw away a century of transparency and deliberation just to block President Obama's Supreme Court nominee. Republicans will not even meet with this man or this woman. Republicans will not allow a hearing for this man or this woman. Republicans will not allow a vote on this man or this woman, and that is wrong. We want transparency on what is going on here with the Supreme Court. We want transparency on the food we eat.

They are adamant that President Obama's nominee will have nothing—no opening hearing, no public hearing, no hearing at all. It is further evidence of how far Republicans will go to avoid their constitutional duties.

Mr. President, I see no one on the floor to speak, so I ask the Chair to announce the schedule of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. 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. TESTER. 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 is recognized.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD LABELING BILL

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, many of you know that in my real life I am a farmer. I know where my food comes from and how it is made. Unfortunately, that is not true for most Americans.

We will be dealing with a bill called the DARK Act shortly, and quite frankly the DARK Act does not empower America's consumers. It does not tell them what is in the packaged food they purchase, and it doesn't give them any information when we are dealing with genetically modified ingredients.

I was told that the customer is always right. If you are a good businessman, you listen to your customers. In this particular case, the customer has a right to know what is in their food. In fact, they expect it because 9 out of 10 consumers say they want labeling for genetically engineered foods. Some of the folks in this body are not listening to the customers. They are not listening to their constituents. Instead, they are listening to the big corporations that want to keep consumers in the dark, and we cannot allow that to happen in this body today. The Senate is above that.

Transparency in everything leaves better accountability and gives more power to average Americans, and that is also true when we talk about food. Free markets work when consumers have access to information. The U.S. Senate should not be in the business of hiding information from consumers.

Let's be clear. What the new DARK Act, which is sponsored by the Senator from Kansas, does is it tells the American people: We in the Senate know what is best for you, and quite frankly, whether you want this information or not, you are not going to get it.

How does this DARK Act do this? First of all, it blocks the States from enforcing their own laws, so we can throw States' rights out the window. Second, this ''compromise'' would hide the information behind 800 numbers and QR codes.

Let me tell you, if you think this is labeling, if you think this is giving the consumer a right to know what is in their food, you are wrong. This is a game. And for the mom who wants to know what is in her child's cereal or soup or bread, there may be a bunch of different 800 numbers out there, and I don't know about you, but when it comes to phone numbers, especially the older I get, the harder it is for me to remember. Or you will stand in a grocery store aisle and scan each individual product with a smartphone, if you have a smartphone and if you have cell phone coverage at that location, because, quite frankly, in rural America, we don't in a lot of places. And that is going to be the labeling. Unbelievable.

The fact is, if folks are so proud of the GMOs, they should label them. What they are saying is you can voluntarily do it. Frankly, voluntary standards are no standards at all. If they were standards, we would say to the super PACs: Tell us who you get your money from. Tell us what you are spending it on, why you are spending it. We don't know that. We don't know that in our elections, by the way, which puts our democracy at risk, and we won't know about our food if this DARK Act passes.

There are 64 countries out there that require GMO labeling. China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia are not exactly transparent countries, but they are requiring GMO labeling. Vermont passed a GMO labeling law that would go in effect in July. Maine and Connecticut have passed mandatory labeling laws. There are numerous States that require things like farm-raised or wild-

caught. FDA, in fact, even regulates terms such as ''fresh'' and ''fresh frozen.''

Some of the proponents of the DARK Act will say: Well, you know, folks from California and Washington defeated it when it was on the ballot.

Yes, they did. Let me give you some figures. In Washington, more than $20 million was spent in opposition to the labeling law—more than $20 million. By the way, about $600 of that came from Washington residents, according to the Washington Post. About $7 million was in support of that campaign, with at least $1.6 million of that $7 million coming from Washington residents.

In California, the opponents to labeling our food with GMOs spent about $45 million to defeat it. Monsanto alone spent $8 million of that $45 million. Supporters of the labeling spent about $7 million.

So let's be clear. When people have a choice to vote and get the facts, they want their food labeled. This DARK Act does exactly the opposite. It is bad legislation. It does not empower consumers. It does not empower the American people. In fact, it does what the title of this bill says: Keep them in the dark. That is not what the U.S. Senate should be about. We need to defeat this bill, whether it is through the cloture process or later on. This is bad, bad, bad policy.

I yield my time to the Senator from Oregon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, will my colleague from Montana yield for a question?

Mr. TESTER. Yes, I will.

Mr. MERKLEY. Thank you. I appreciate the Senator's presentation.

This Monsanto DARK Act 2.0—this new version—says to the States that they no longer have the right to respond to consumers' interest in providing a consumer-friendly label that alerts them to genetically engineered ingredients, but it does not replace that with a federal consumer-friendly label?

Mr. TESTER. Correct.

Mr. MERKLEY. Is it right that the Federal Government takes away this power from States, which are, if you will, our places of experimentation and creativity, and then does nothing at the national level? Is this an overreach of the Federal Government?

Mr. TESTER. Absolutely. The Senator came out of the State Legislature in Oregon. I came out of the State Legislature in Montana. Quite frankly, much of the work is done at the State level. We follow their lead. This bill does exactly the opposite. It prevents States from labeling for genetically modified foods, and it replaces it with a voluntary labeling system basically or QR codes that nobody is going to have the technology, quite frankly, or the time to be able to investigate. So the Senator is right. This tells folks in Vermont and Maine and Connecticut and many other States—as I said, 9 out of 10 consumers want genetically modified foods labeled, and this replaces it basically with nothing.

The proponents will walk out here and say: No, no, no, there is going to be a QR code or 800 number. That simply does not give the consumers the ability to know what is in their food. We live in a very fast-paced society. I can tell you, it happened just this weekend when I was home. I pulled up in a pickup. My wife ran in the grocery store, grabbed what she needed, came out, and we zipped home. People don't have the time to look unless it is sitting right there and they can see it. And that is what your bill does, I say to Senator MERKLEY. Your bill gives the consumer the ability to simply look at the package and know what is in it, and that is what we should be fighting for in this body. We shouldn't be fighting to keep people in the dark; we should fight to let people know so they can make good decisions. If you have good information—and it is true here and it is true amongst the American public—if you have good information, you can make good decisions. When parents buy food for their kids, they ought to have the information so they can make good decisions. It is simply a right to know what is in your food.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with my colleague from Montana.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I will use these papers as examples of food products. I have three different bags of rice, and I want to look. I can scan the ingredients list of these three products to see what they contain. Well, in about 5 seconds—if what is required of me is to pull out my phone, call up an 800 number, work my way through a phone tree, proceed to talk to someone who may or may not even know what I am calling about—and maybe I will get a busy signal or a message that says: I am sorry, our phone lines are very busy, but we will get to you in 25 minutes. How long am I going to have to stand there versus the 5 seconds that it takes if there is a symbol or an indication on the ingredients panel for these three products? While standing in the aisle of the grocery store, how long is it going to take me to try to find out if these three products have genetically engineered ingredients?

Mr. TESTER. Well, you said it. For the people who heard you explain the process you would go through, that is not labeling. That is not transparency. That isn't telling folks what is in their food.

Needless to say, I have to tell you, I think these are a pain in the neck. If I wasn't in this body, I don't think I would even have one, and there are a lot of people who feel that way. So now I am going to have to spend money and get a plan so I can determine what is in my food? Not everybody has the resources to have one of these. What does this do to folks who are poor? They deserve to have the food that they want to eat. They deserve to know what is in it. And they are not going to have that capacity. Then what about folks in places such as eastern Washington or all of Montana that isn't where a lot of people live? Oftentimes there is not that service. So it just does not make any sense. You are trying to replace what Vermont is doing with nothing, and that is not fair. It is not fair to the consumers.

As I said in my remarks, the consumer is always right. They are. It is a fact of business. We ought to be listening to folks. That is why we have single-digit approval ratings in this body. We need to listen. And we are not listening with the DARK Act.

Mr. MERKLEY. Is the Senator saying the whole idea presented in the Monsanto DARK Act 2.0 about putting a phone number on the package so someone can call a company is a sham?

Mr. TESTER. Bogus.

Mr. MERKLEY. Bogus.

Mr. TESTER. Yes. It is worse than nothing. At least if you had nothing, you know what you have.

Mr. MERKLEY. There is a second option put into the Monsanto DARK Act, which is the quick response code. You have to have a smartphone that can take a picture of that quick response code, take you to a Web site to get information—information, by the way, written by the very company that controls the product you are looking at. It is not some third party. I picture that as taking just as much time and being just as complex for the ordinary person as the 1–800 number. The QR code requires first that you actually have a data plan to be able to get to a Web site, that you have a smartphone instead of an ordinary cell phone, and furthermore it reveals information about you when you go to that Web site, so you are giving up your privacy.

So is the QR code option being discussed also a sham?

Mr. TESTER. Absolutely. It is just as bogus as the 800 number, quite frankly, if not more, for all the same reasons. First of all, you have to have a phone. You have to have service. Oftentimes that isn't the case.

Quite frankly, what we need is what your bill does, and that is, just tell folks what is in the package—parentheses, three letters, or an asterisk that says what it is, very simple. People can understand and they don't have to jump through all these hoops.

I know proponents of this DARK Act will say: Well, you know, that is going to cost a lot of money.

Look, Budweiser makes a beer labeled for every NFL football team in the country. At Christmastime, they put Santa Claus on, and then they make the ones in the blue cans too. It is standard stuff. It is all the same

price. Companies change their labels all the time.

So the fact that we are replacing what would be common sense—the Senator's bill, which is what we should be taking up and passing here on the floor because it makes sense, it gives consumers the right to know what is in their food—with something that has an 800 number or QR code is crazy. It is crazy. And the arguments that folks are using for keeping people in the dark simply are not factual.

Mr. MERKLEY. Well, in this Monsanto DARK Act 2.0 that has been put on the floor, there is a third option beyond the voluntary labeling and beyond the 1–800 numbers and QR code, and the third option—door No. 3, if you will—is that the company can put something on social media, which means, I assume, Instagram, Facebook, or who knows what. So if I am a customer and I am in the store and I see these three products and I want to find out if they have GE ingredients and there is no 800 number and there is no QR code because the company has chosen door No. 3, how am I to know that?

Mr. TESTER. You don't. And by the way, there are three doors here, and it is kind of like ''Let's Make a Deal.'' The problem is, what is behind No. 1, 2, and 3 are all zonks for the American consumers.

I say to Senator MERKLEY, this makes no sense to me whatsoever because it is confusing. It absolutely keeps the consumers in the dark. And we are actually going to try to promote something like that in the Senate? It doesn't make any sense to me.

Mr. MERKLEY. The majority leader has put this bill on the floor, and it has not even gone through a committee hearing because this is a new creation that we have just seen for the first time last night. Furthermore, it has been put on the floor the night before one of the most important primary days in the Presidential election, strategically scheduled, if you will, so that the news networks are busy with Florida and Ohio and Illinois and two other States, and they are not paying attention to this egregious proposal to take away States' rights and consumers' rights.

We had a pledge from the majority leader coming into here that due process—things would be considered in committee and things would be fairly considered on the floor with an open amendment process. Has this Monsanto DARK Act 2.0 gone through a committee process, and is it getting a full opportunity to be heard on the floor? In fact, the motion to close debate was filed within seconds of it being put on the floor last night. Is this a true opportunity for the American people to wrestle with a major policy decision taking away States' rights and consumers' rights?

Mr. TESTER. No. In a word, no. And of all the choices that we have out there, that we do every day, food is one of the most important choices we make. That is what we put in our bodies. It gives us power. It gives us intellect. It gives us the ability to do our daily jobs, to work, to be successful, to support our family. Quite frankly, this bill—and the timing of it is curious—this bill does none of those things to help move families and the people and society forward. It just keeps them in the dark, which is disturbing.

As I said in my opening statement, the Senate should be above this. We should be empowering people, not taking away their right to know.

Mr. MERKLEY. Well, this taking away the right to know—it isn't like the right to know some detail about how your car was manufactured. As the Senator put it, this is about the food you put into your mouth. This is about the food we feed our families. This is about what our children consume.

I was very surprised to read this from a scientific study: Two-thirds of the air and rainfall samples tested in Mississippi and Iowa in 2007 and 2008 contain glyphosate, which is the herbicide being applied in massive quantities because of the genetically engineered resistance of key crops, including corn and soybeans and sugar beets. So the herbicide is very prevalent in the rainfall samples and it is very prevalent in the air samples, or at least two-thirds of the air samples.

Then, a recent study published in the Journal of Environmental & Analytical Toxicology found that humans who consume glyphosate-treated GMO foods have relatively high levels of glyphosate in their urine. So, actually, residuals are finding their way into our bodies

There are other effects. Glyphosate is a known carcinogen. It has been defined as a known carcinogen. But this herbicide is also running into the streams. Study after study is showing big impacts on the microbial population, and that is at the base of the food chain, so it is affecting the food chain inside our rivers and our streams. There is gene transfer to relatives—weeds that are relatives of the growing crops. There is an impact on the evolution of bugs; specifically, the western corn root worm which is evolving, if you will, to become resistant to the pesticide that is in the plant because of the genetic—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. President. I ask unanimous consent to continue for another 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MERKLEY. I thank the Chair.

So we have these affects that scientific documents are showing.

So when people come to this floor and say that it is OK to suppress the consumers' right to know because consumers have no legitimate concerns, that there are no scientific studies that show any legitimate concerns about the impacts of genetically engineered plants, are they telling the truth? Is that accurate?

Mr. TESTER. Well, I think that is up to the consumer to find out, and the consumer never knows if it is not on the label. I think we put a lot of things on labels. I bought some orange juice last night. It was not from frozen concentrate; it was fresh squeezed. That is a consumer choice that I have. I buy that because I like it. I think it is better. I think it is better for you. That is what I choose to do.

I think what this DARK Act does is it doesn't allow consumers to make the choices they want. They can do the research. Once they see what is in it and make the decision whether they—some people may want to eat it. It may be a positive thing: This is good. It has GMO in it. I want to buy that. For other folks, they may say: No, I don't want to buy that. That is their choice. That is what this country is about. It is about freedom. Now we are stopping that. That is what this debate is about. It is about labeling of food. It is about letting consumers know what they are eating and letting them make the decision as to what is best for their family.

Mr. MERKLEY. I think my colleague summed it all up in the word ''freedom''—the freedom to choose. And that freedom to choose—if it is between wild fish and farmed fish, we facilitate that by giving the information on the package. If it is the freedom to choose between juice from concentrate versus fresh squeezed—juice from concentrate or fresh juice—that, in fact, is a freedom of the consumer, and they can exercise it from the package.

If someone decides they want to have a product that is vitamin A enriched, such as golden rice which has been done by GE engineering—maybe they need more vitamin A—they should have the freedom to choose it.

In fact, my point here is that there are scientific studies that show benefits in a variety of circumstances from genetic engineering, and there are studies that show legitimate concerns. On the benefits side we have cases—for example, sweet potatoes—in which they have been made to resist viruses that kill. In South Africa, that has been very important to the growth of sweet potatoes and the provision of that as part of a significant source of food in parts of that country. Then there is golden rice being enriched with vitamin A in regions of the world where people eat primarily rice, but they really lack vitamin A. But there are also studies that show concern.

Shouldn't we as consumers have freedom? Why is it that we have on the floor a bill which not only takes away States' rights to respond to consumers' interests in freedom, but proceed to squash, for all time and in all geographic areas, the freedom of an individual to make that decision? And then they put up a sham which says that somehow, the consumer could inquire by guessing at a social media outlet or going to a phone bank that is somewhere overseas in the Philippines to

find out whether or not there is a GE ingredient or having to give up their privacy and go to a Web site sponsored by the company that made the food. That is not information that allows the consumer to make a choice.

What if a consumer had to go to a phone company operating overseas to find out—I don't know—the calories that are in the food or the vitamins that are in the food? That would be ridiculous. It is absurd. It is a sham and a scam. It is a theft of individual freedoms in this country. And shouldn't we all in the Senate be standing up for freedom for American citizens who, by the way, when asked in a nationwide poll, 9 to 1 say they want this information on the package; 9 to 1 say that. Here we are in this deeply divided country where we have this huge spectrum of ideologies that we are seeing in the Presidential campaign. Yet, on this issue, Independents, Republicans, and Democrats, 9 to 1—I am rounding off slightly, but very close—9 to 1 in all three categories say they want this information on the package, and 7 out of 10 said they feel very strongly about this. So that is the desire of the American people. That is the ''We the People'' that is in our Constitution that we are pledged to support.

Here we have a bill on the floor that is designed in the dark of night while people are paying attention to Presidential primaries, the press is paying attention to that, and in the dark of night they are trying to take away that freedom. Isn't that just completely wrong?

Mr. TESTER. Well, absolutely. The Senator from Oregon hit the nail on the head. We need to defeat cloture. We need to defeat this bill. If we want to take up a labeling bill, we ought to take up the Merkley bill and pass it. That would empower consumers. It would give them freedom. It would live up to what our forefathers had in mind for this country. Instead, in my opinion, they are doing exactly the opposite.

This is a bad piece of legislation. The Senator is right. The polls do show that across the parties, we are all Americans on this one, 9 to 1. We have to listen.

If folks are having a hard time hearing what people are saying, they should just read their emails. Hear what the folks out in front of our offices are saying, because folks are talking and we need to listen. Read the editorial pages. Folks are not asking for anything out of the ordinary. They just want to know so they can make decisions.

So I hope this body will defeat this bill, put it to bed, and then we can talk about a labeling bill that makes sense for this country.

Mr. MERKLEY. I thank so much my colleague from Montana for being such a clear and powerful voice on this issue of freedom, of American consumers' rights, of States' rights, and for his solid opposition to this Monsanto DARK Act—Deny Americans the Right to Know—2.0. Thank you.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from Arkansas.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I grew up on a cattle farm in Dardanelle, where I started helping my dad around the farm when I was just a little boy. In fact, I was kicking hay bales off the truck when I was barely bigger than those hay bales. Growing up, most people I knew had some connection to farming, and I am proud to say that in Arkansas, that is still mostly the case today.

In honor of National Agricultural Day, I wish to say a few words about Arkansas' agriculture and what it means to our State.

Agriculture is Arkansas' largest industry. It accounts for over $20 billion in value added to our State economy each year and contributes to thousands and thousands of jobs. Arkansas is a top 25 producer in 23 different agricultural commodities, and we rank first in the Nation in rice production, producing close to 50 percent of the rice in the United States.

It doesn't end there. We are also a major exporter of crops like soybeans, cotton, poultry, and feed grains. Our catfish and timber industries are booming and our cattle inventory exceeds 1.7 million head. Our agriculture industry is also expanding by the day. We have recently become a big player in the peanut industry.

For Arkansas, agriculture is more than just a business; it is a passion and a way of life. We have nearly 50,000 farms in Arkansas, and 97 percent of them are owned by families. Neighborly chats in Arkansas often tend to focus on planting seasons and beef prices. And in towns like Dardanelle, kids don't have to worry about farm chores keeping them from playing with their friends on a Saturday because those friends are likely busy helping on their farms too.

Agriculture is who we are. I have certainly taken the lessons I learned growing up on a farm with me into the Army, the Congress, and now fatherhood.

So, today, and every day, let's remember Arkansas' and America's farmers and ranchers. Happy National Agriculture Day.

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.

Mrs. MURRAY. 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. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY AND WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor once again with a simple message for Senate Republican leaders: Do your job and let me do mine.

When President Obama sends us a nominee to fill this vacancy on the Supreme Court, Republican leaders need to stop playing politics, stop pandering to the tea party, and fulfill their responsibility to their constituents, their country, and the Constitution. That is what people across the country are demanding.

But the hearing Republicans on the Judiciary Committee held this morning makes it clear they are not getting the message, because while the Republicans on that committee say they won't take up their time to do their most important actual job, they were happy to spend their time this morning on their favorite hobby—doing everything they can to turn back the clock on women's health care. While they say they won't even hold a hearing on a Supreme Court nominee to fulfill their constitutional responsibilities, they were eager to hold the hearing this morning to attack women's constitutional rights.

Mr. President, I wish I were surprised by this, but, unfortunately, this is just the latest example of Republican leaders playing political games with the rights of women across the country and pandering to their extreme tea party base.

Republicans love to say they want to keep government out of people's lives, unless of course we are talking about women's health care and their choices. They love to talk about the Constitution, unless we are talking about a woman's constitutional right to make decisions about her own body or the part that lays out the Senate's responsibility when it comes to filling Supreme Court vacancies.

But people across the country are sick of the partisanship, sick of the gridlock, and sick of the games. They want Republicans to do their jobs, and they are not buying their excuses for inaction.

For the last few weeks, Republican leaders have been desperately trying to convince people that there is a precedent for their extreme obstruction in this election year. Well, first of all, their arguments have run up against the facts. They simply are not true. The Democratic Senate confirmed President Reagan's Supreme Court nominee in his last year in office. And that is just one example of many.

But in case the facts weren't enough, last week the Republicans' message facade began to crumble, and the truth began to come out. First, one Republican leader warned that any potential nominee should be aware that he or she

will be treated like a pinata. Republicans say they will refuse to even meet with the nominee. But they and their special interest groups are clearly getting ready to drag him or her through the mud.

Also, speaking to his constituents back home, another Senator made it clear that Republicans' refusal to do their jobs right now is nothing more than partisan politics. He said: If this President were a Republican, it would be ''a different situation,'' and there would be ''more accommodation.''

We all knew this Republican obstruction had nothing to do with what is actually right and everything to do with the fact they do not like that President Obama is President right now, but it was nice to hear a Republican Senator actually admit that out loud.

Another Republican, the senior Senator from South Carolina, admitted last week that this kind of blind obstruction, this refusal to even meet with a Supreme Court nominee or hold hearings, is absolutely unprecedented. He said Republicans wanted to create a new rule—right now—limiting President Obama's constitutional authority and responsibility. Well, I am glad he made clear that what Republican leaders have been saying about their obstruction being based on precedent isn't true, but creating this new partisan precedent for Supreme Court nominations would be absolutely wrong too.

Republicans may not like to hear this, but the American people spoke. They elected President Obama twice, and they entrusted him with the powers and responsibilities laid out in the Constitution. Those responsibilities don't just last for 3 years. They last a full term, and people across the country are making it very clear they expect Republicans to work with the President, to meet with the nominee, to hold hearings, and to do their job.

But if Republicans are open to new election-year precedents, I have one I would like to offer for their consideration that would actually be helpful. I propose that Republicans stop using attacks on women's health care to rally their tea party base, that they stop using women's rights as an election-year political football. That would be unprecedented for sure, but it sure would be a step in the right direction, and women across this country would really appreciate it.

So when President Obama sends us a nominee, I hope Senate Republican leaders will move out of the partisan corner they are in now, will stop focusing on throwing red meat to the tea party, and will do their jobs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Washington for her remarks and for her passion for women's health and also for doing our job—for doing our job.

The Senator from Washington is right. The Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee have vowed not to hold a single hearing on a Supreme Court nominee when the President does his job and sends us down his nomination. They refuse to do their job. And I would say that if every American just got up in the morning one day and said: You know what, I don't feel like doing my job, they would be fired. They would be fired.

But do our Republican colleagues have time to do other things with their time? Oh yes. What are they doing right now? My colleague pointed this out. They are holding a hearing today on legislation that, if passed, would threaten the health and the lives of women.

This is about using women's health as a political football once again. It is about reopening debates we have already settled, including the debate over Roe vs. Wade itself. That case was decided in 1973. Before that, women died from back-alley abortions. Women received no respect for private personal decisions they made with their doctor, they made with their God. Oh no, they have to keep challenging Roe v. Wade.

That is what Republicans are doing today in the Judiciary Committee, after they decided, well, they just don't have time enough or will enough to hold a hearing on the President's nominee for the Supreme Court.

Now, the decision in Roe was very clear. It said that in the early stages of a pregnancy, a woman has the right to decide whether to continue her pregnancy. Later decisions confirmed that, yes, she still has that right. Roe also affirmed that later in the pregnancy, the health and the life of the mother must always be protected. Let me say that again. The health and the life of the mother must always be protected. That is the law of this land.

Now, the major problems with the bills the Judiciary Committee is hearing today is they have no respect for the health and the life of the mother and they have no respect for doctors.

The first bill, the 20-week abortion ban, is a direct violation of Roe v. Wade and a grave threat to women. And, by the way, the Senate has already rejected that bill. They are bringing it back again. No matter what Roe says—that you can't threaten the health and life of a woman—they have brought it back. That bill—that 20-week abortion ban—offers no health exception for a woman facing cancer, facing kidney failure, facing blood clots, or other tragic complications during the pregnancy. And it would throw doctors in jail for doing nothing more than helping a woman who is at risk for paralysis or infertility or who has cancer and whose life would be in danger if the pregnancy continued.

That bill—that bill they say is going to help women—harms women. It also revictimizes survivors of rape and incest by assuming they are lying—lying—and creating unconscionable barriers to care.

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which represents thousands of physicians nationwide—physicians who help women with their first line of health care in many cases—said: These restrictions are ''dangerous to patients' safety and health.''

So that is the first bill they are hearing today—a bill that has already been rejected, a bill that will hurt women and their families.

The Judiciary Committee is also wasting precious time debating a second bill this morning because we already have a law that we voted for called the Born-Alive Infant Protections Act. That bill, which I supported, says that a fetus that is alive at birth has the same protections as every other human being. We voted on it, I say to my friend, in 2002.

So what they are doing over in the Judiciary Committee is rehearing a bill we already voted on, and they are rehearing a bill that passed, and then they are rehearing a bill that we voted down. This is politics, pure and simple.

Our job is to improve the health and lives of the people, not to undermine it. Our job is to act when there is a vacancy on the Supreme Court.

You know, the Republicans always quote Ronald Reagan. Some of us do as well, but he is definitely a Republican hero. Let's see what President Ronald Reagan said when there was an opening in an election year during his Presidency and he nominated Justice Kennedy. What did he say? Ronald Reagan said: ''Every day that passes with a Supreme Court below full strength impairs the people's business in that crucially important body.''

That is not BARBARA BOXER. That is not PATTY MURRAY. That is not President Obama. That is not Vice President BIDEN. That is not HARRY REID. That is not CHUCK SCHUMER. And I could go on. That is Ronald Reagan. So let me say it again. ''Every day that passes with a Supreme Court below full strength impairs the people's business in that crucially important body.''

You know what. We had a Democratic-controlled Senate, and we voted on Justice Kennedy in an election year, and we didn't give speeches and say: Well, let's wait for the American people to decide the next election. You know why we didn't say that? Because that would be laughable. Ronald Reagan got elected twice, just like Barack Obama got elected twice. He deserves respect. He needs to do his job, and we need to do our job.

So when you say you are not even going to hold a hearing on the President's nomination, you are showing disrespect for the Constitution—and let's see what the Constitution says—and disrespect to Ronald Reagan, I would argue. Look at what the Constitution says: The President ''shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and Judges of the supreme Court.''

My friends are saying that the Constitution should be obeyed, that they

are strict constructionists. Where are these people? They are hiding in the corner not doing their job. Look at what it says: The President ''shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint . . . Judges of the supreme Court.'' It doesn't say: P.S., unless you don't like who is President. It doesn't say that.

So I say to everyone on the other side of the aisle who says they are strict constructionists—and most of them do—read the Constitution and read what Ronald Reagan said.

The American people have three words for Republicans: Do your job. Stop disrespecting the Constitution. Stop disrespecting our President and stop threatening to create a manmade crisis at the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court has to do its job. This isn't some ideological discussion in a salon somewhere, because every day the Court considers cases with profound impacts for the American people—like whether States can have voter identification laws that put an unfair burden on voters or whether the American people have the right to organize and fight for fair pay. I could go on, because almost every issue that American families face eventually winds its way to the Court. So regardless of your political position or your personal position on any individual case, we have to fill the vacancy because Americans deserve a full functioning Supreme Court.

In closing, I want to quote Sandra Day O'Connor. Now, here is a woman—the first woman on the Supreme Court, appointed by Ronald Reagan—who made history. She says this to us in the clearest of terms: ''I think we need somebody there now to do the job, and let's get on with it.'' So if you don't want to listen to the Constitution, and you don't want to listen to Ronald Reagan, how about giving some respect to a woman who made history and understands how the Court functions. We have to get on with it.

Every one of us has to do our job. The Judiciary Committee should stop holding hearings to hurt women, and they should instead go down to the White House and advise and consent with the President on this nomination. They should stop playing politics. We should all come together. We see such division in the country. It is making a lot of our people afraid because there is no respect. How about we start off with respecting the Constitution and working together to fill this vacancy and showing the public that we can come together to have a fully functioning Supreme Court. The American people deserve nothing else.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

JUSTICE AGAINST SPONSORS OF TERRORISM ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak on two topics. The first is the piece of legislation that I introduced last year, along with the senior Senator from New York, Mr. SCHUMER, right after the anniversary of the September 11 attacks. This bill is entitled the ''Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act,'' or JASTA for short. It makes minor adjustments to our laws that would clarify the ability of Americans attacked on U.S. soil to get justice from those who have sponsored that terrorist attack.

The Senate Judiciary Committee considered this bill last month and reported it to the floor without any objection, so now it is my hope that we can soon take up this legislation because this is important to the victims of the 9/11 attacks. Actually, that is an understatement. This bill, if signed into law, will hopefully help victims and their families achieve the closure that they so terribly need from this horrific tragedy. But this legislation is more than that. As our Nation confronts new and expanding terror networks that are targeting our citizens, stopping the funding source for terrorists grows even more important. So I hope Senators can work together to get this critical bipartisan bill done soon.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on another note, I come to the floor to make a few remarks about the Supreme Court vacancy left by the death of Justice Scalia.

It is pretty clear that our colleagues across the aisle do not believe that the American people deserve a voice in the process by which the successor to Justice Scalia is selected. We have made our position pretty clear that there will not be a new Justice confirmed until the American people, in the elections that come up in November, make their preferences known about who will make that appointment.

Instead of following the rule book of the minority leader, the senior Senator from New York, and our current Vice President—the ones that they advocated for under a Republican administration—our Democratic friends now argue that a lameduck President should be able to nominate someone to a lifetime appointment to our Nation's highest Court, which will upset the ideological balance on that Court for a generation. As I have mentioned before, the last time a Supreme Court nominee was nominated and confirmed during an election year was 1932, and we have to go back much earlier, to 1888, to find a similar situation in divided government, which we have now.

When Vice President BIDEN was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, he made perfectly clear that a Supreme Court nominee should not be considered until after a Presidential election has concluded. As we all know, both Democrats and Republicans are well down the road to making their selection for their nominee for President, and obviously we will have that election in the coming November. But our friends across the aisle continue to contradict themselves and their previous statements, insisting that this decision is somehow unprecedented. Well, we know it is not, because if the shoe were on the other foot, they have made clear what they would do.

I thought I might share with my friends across the aisle what so many of my constituents in Texas have told me about our decision to let them have a voice in the selection of the next lifetime appointment to the Court.

Killeen, TX, is the home of Fort Hood, one of the largest military installations in the world. Last Friday, the town decorated a memorial to honor those who lost their lives in the terrorist attack of 2009, when MAJ Nidal Hasan went on his violent rampage. But John from Killeen wrote:

> President Obama is free to make any nomination he wants under the Constitution. The Senate, under the same Constitution, has no obligation to hold hearings on or confirm that nomination. The Judiciary Committee's decision to observe the so-called Biden Rule is absolutely correct. The replacement for Justice Scalia should be nominated by the next president.

I agree with the letter writer, and the minority leader agreed with him in 2005 as well. That is basically what Senator REID said in 2005 during the Bush 43 administration. While the President could nominate anybody he wanted, the Senate was not obligated under the Constitution to vote on that nominee.

At the end of the letter, John asked me to ''hold the line'' on this decision. He, like many Americans, is passionate about having a say in the selection of the next Supreme Court nominee. I intend to do everything I can to make sure they do have that voice.

Another constituent from Plano—just north of Dallas—was emphatic that the Senate should ''Give We The People a say.'' I couldn't agree with him more.

The American people made clear they wanted a check on the Obama administration in November of 2014 when they put Republicans in the majority of the Senate. Now we have an obligation to use that mandate from the people for issues that matter most to our country, and that includes the direction of the Supreme Court.

My constituents are right to care deeply about this because there is so much at stake. As I said, the next Supreme Court Justice could well change the balance of the Supreme Court for a generation and fundamentally reshape American society in the process. So the people should have a chance for input and should have a voice. I am proud to stand alongside my Republican colleagues and make sure their voice is

heard in the next selection of a lifetime appointment to the Court.

RECESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess, as under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:18 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany S. 764, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany S. 764, a bill to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill with McConnell (for Roberts) amendment No. 3450 (to the House amendment to the bill), in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell motion to refer the bill to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I suspect a quorum call has been initiated. If so, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is not in a quorum call.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, today is National Agriculture Day, and I wish to thank the farmers and ranchers of America. The Senate is considering legislation on an issue that is critically important to our Nation's food supply. It affects everyone from our producers in the fields to our consumers in the aisles of grocery stores. Without Senate action, this country will be hit with a wrecking ball—an apt description—that will disrupt the entire food chain. We need to act now to pass my amendment to S. 764. This is a compromised approach that provides a permanent solution to the patchwork of biotechnology labeling laws that will soon be wreaking havoc on the flow of interstate commerce, agriculture, and food products in our Nation's marketplace, and that is exactly what this is about. Let me repeat that. This is about the marketplace. It is not about safety. It is not about health or nutrition. It is about marketing. Science has proven again and again and again that the use of agriculture biotechnology is 100 percent safe.

In fact, last year the Agriculture Committee heard from three Federal agencies tasked with regulating agriculture biotechnology: the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Environmental Protection Agency—yes, the EPA—and the Food and Drug Administration, the FDA. Their work is based on sound science and is the gold standard for policymaking, including this policy we are debating today—one of the most important food and agriculture decisions in recent decades.

At our hearing, the Federal Government expert witnesses highlighted the steps their agencies have already taken to ensure that agriculture biotechnology is safe—safe to other plants, safe to the environment, and safe to our food supply. It was clear our regulatory system ensures biotechnology crops are among the most tested in the history of agriculture in any country. At the conclusion of the hearing, virtually all Senate Agriculture Committee members were in agreement. What happened? When did sound science go out the window? Since that hearing, the U.S. Government reinforced their decisions on the safety of these products.

In November, the FDA took several steps based on sound science regarding food produced from biotech plants, including issuing final guidance for manufacturers that wish to voluntarily label their products as containing ingredients from biotech or exclusively nonbiotech plants.

More important, the Food and Drug Administration denied a petition that would have required the mandatory labeling of biotech foods. The FDA stated that the petitioner failed to provide the evidence needed for the agency to put such a requirement in place because there is no health safety or nutritional difference between biotech crops and their nonbiotech varieties, regardless of some of the rhetoric we have heard on the floor of the Senate.

Thus, it is clear that what we are facing today is not a safety or health issue, despite claims by my colleagues on the Senate floor; it is a market issue. This is about a conversation about a few States dictating to every other State the way food moves from farmers to consumers in the value chain. We have a responsibility to ensure that the national market can work for everyone, including farmers, manufacturers, retailers, and, yes, consumers.

This patchwork approach of mandates adds costs to national food prices. In fact, requiring changes in the production or labeling of most of the Nation's food supply for a single State would impact citizens in our home States. A recent study estimates that the cost to consumers could total as much as—get this—$82 billion annually, which comes to approximately $1,050 per hard-working American family. This Vermont law, which is supposed to go into effect in July, will cost each hard-working family $1,050. Let me repeat that. If we fail to act, the cost to consumers could total as much as $82 billion annually and will cost each hard-working American family just over $1,000. Now is not the time for Congress to make food more expensive for anybody—not the consumer or the farmer.

Today's farmers are being asked to produce more safe and affordable food to meet the growing demands at home and around a troubled and very hungry world. At the same time, they are facing increased challenges to production, including limited land and water resources, uncertain weather patterns, and pest and disease issues. Agriculture biotechnology has become a valuable tool in ensuring the success of the American farmer and meeting the challenge of increasing their yields in a more efficient, safe, and responsible manner. Any threat to the technology hurts the entire value chain—from the farmer to the consumer and all those who are involved.

I also hear—and I do understand the concern from some of my colleagues about consumers and available information about our food. Some consumers want to know more about ingredients. This is a good thing. Consumers should take an interest in their food, where it comes from, and the farmers and ranchers who also produce their food. I can assure you the most effective tool consumers have to influence our food system or to know more about food is by voting with their pocketbooks in the grocery stores and supermarkets. This legislation puts forward policies that will help all consumers not only find information but also demand consistent information from food manufacturers. However, it is important, as with any Federal legislation on this topic, for Congress to consider scientific fact and unintended consequences.

The committee-passed bill created a voluntary national standard for biotechnology labeling claims of food. I have heard concerns that a voluntary-only standard would not provide consumers with enough information, even though there is no health, safety, or nutritional concern with this biotechnology. So we worked out a compromise to address these concerns by providing an incentive for the marketplace to provide more information.

This legislation will allow the markets to work. However, if they do not live up to their commitments and information is not made available to consumers, then this legislation holds the market accountable. Under this proposal, a mandatory labeling program would go into effect only if a voluntary program does not provide significant information after several years. The marketplace would then have adequate time to adjust and utilize a variety of options—a menu of options—to disclose information about ingredients, along

with a wealth of other information about the food on the shelves.

Simply put, the legislation before us provides an immediate comprehensive solution to the unworkable State-by-State patchwork of labeling laws. Preemption doesn't extend to State consumer protection laws or anything beyond the wrecking ball that we see related to biotechnology labeling mandates, and we do ensure that the solution to the State patchwork, the one thing we all agree upon, is effective. It sets national uniformity that allows for the free flow of interstate commerce, a power granted to Congress in the U.S. Constitution. This labeling uniformity is based on science and allows the value chain from farmer to processor, to shipper, to retailer, to consumer to continue as the free market intended. This ensures uniformity in claims made by manufacturers and will enhance clarity for our consumers.

Increasingly, many Americans have taken an interest in where their food comes from and how it is made. Let's keep in mind this is a good thing. We want consumers informed about food and farming practices, but at the same time we must also not demonize food with unnecessary labels.

This debate is about more than catchy slogans and made-up names for bills. It is about the role of the Federal Government to ensure the free flow of commerce, to make decisions based upon sound science, all the while providing opportunity for the market to meet the demands of consumers.

This is not the first time this body has addressed this issue. In 2012 and 2013, Members of the Senate soundly rejected the idea of mandatory labeling for biotechnology. That is right. Both times more than 70 Members voted to reject mandatory labeling. This body then stood up for sound science and common sense, and I trust my colleagues will continue to stand up and defend sound science again.

Time is of the essence for not only agriculture in the food value chain but also consumers who work together, face the wrecking ball of this patchwork of State-by-State mandates. This legislation has the support of more than 650 organizations. We never had 650 organizations contact the Agriculture Committee about any other bill, any other piece of legislation—more than 650. My staff now tells me that number is over 700, large and small, representing the entire food chain, and that number continues to grow every day. That is quite a coalition. They are here in Washington trying to say: Look, this is not going to work with regard to State-by-State regulation.

As I have said, never before in the Agriculture Committee have we seen such a coalition of constituents all united behind such effort. Their message is clear: It is time for us to act. It is time for us to provide certainty in the marketplace.

I appreciate the bipartisan support of those on the committee who joined me to vote out our committee bill. The vote was 14 to 6. We made significant changes to address the concerns of others. Now we must carry this across the finish line. I urge my colleagues to support this compromising approach and protect the safest, most abundant, and affordable food supply in the world.

I yield the floor.

Upon close inspection, 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. BOXER. 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. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a very important issue for the American people—what they feed their families. Here is a photo of a dad—a pretty typical photo of a dad taking his two kids shopping. You can see he has one toddler there and he has one infant in the cart. How well I remember doing this with my own kids and then watching my kids with their kids. It is kind of a tradition.

So we have a couple of questions we have to ask ourselves when we look at a photo like this. If this dad wants to know what ingredients are in the food that he gives his kids, he should have a right to know that. That is my deep belief. He has a right to know that, just as they do in so many countries all over the world.

The bill that is going to come before us, called the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act, is anything but that. I would call it the ''no label'' act. It is a ''no label.'' There is no label required. It is a totally voluntary system. It is a ''no label'' label. Even if in 3 years Senator ROBERTS' mandatory labeling kicked in, you still would not have a true label. I think it is an embarrassment. I think it is an insult to consumers, and it is a sham. The goal of the bill—and I hope we vote it down—is to hide the information from consumers. It is going to make it harder, not easier, for consumers to know if they are feeding their families genetically modified organisms, or GMOs.

So here again is our typical dad, and he has his kids in the cart. They are shopping, they have had their outing, and he picks up a product. He wants to see the ingredients, including whether it has been genetically modified. Guess what. There is no GMO label.

So what are his options? Well, in 3 years, maybe he will have an option. But before then, the voluntary program is going to make it literally impossible for him to know what is in his food. It is either going to be a QR code—so he will have to have a smartphone, and even when he puts the smartphone up against the code, they don't really have to tell you easily whether it is GMO, and it is going to have a whole bunch of other information—or he is going to have to call a 1–800 number.

Can you believe this? The man is going through the grocery store. He has 50 products in his cart. He is saying: Wait a minute, kids—just a minute. Here, have some chips. Then he calls 1–800 and he tries to find out, and he gets probably some person answering him in India, which is usually what you get, and you go around the mulberry bush. How embarrassing is this?

Now, if he is lucky, he gets some products from companies that really are being fair about this, such as Campbell Soup Company. They are doing a really smart, voluntary label. It says: ''Partially produced with genetic engineering. For information visit . . .'' and they have a site. Campbell's, if he is lucky, has enough products in here that have a label. He may find out more information, but it is totally voluntary. It is totally voluntary. I want to say thank you to Campbell's for being upfront and putting the information right on the label.

As a mom and as a grandma, I want to know what is in my food. Because of work we have done before, you do have to list how much sugar is in the product, which is so critical as we combat diabetes and other things. Sometimes you read that sugar content, and you think: Oh my God, I am going to get something else. And you can see how many carbs, how much fat. Why can't you find out if the product is genetically modified? Seems to me, this is fair.

So while I call the Roberts proposal the ''no-label label,'' because it makes believe you are going to have a label, but there is no label—the groups, the consumer groups call it the DARK Act, because the label is voluntary. There is not going to be a label, at least for 3 years after that, if not longer. They will figure out another way to put it off indefinitely. Even if, after 3 years USDA decides they have to make something mandatory, information will be hidden behind Web sites or phone numbers or these QR codes that are so problematic.

So this busy dad that we have here, he is going to have to stop shopping for every item on his list. He would have to pull out his phone to make a call or go to a Web site or scan a code. You don't have to live too long to know this is not going to happen. This dad is not going to do that because he has two kids. By now they are screaming: Get me out of here; I am hungry, and where is mommy? So as to all of this notion that this dad is now going to deal with all of this—I don't care how much of a super dad you are, you are not going to make 50 phone calls to 1–800 numbers. You are not going to go look at 50 QR codes and find out whether the product has GMO. You are just not going to do it. It is not going to happen. The kids are going to be melting down. Even if he doesn't have kids with him, he has other things to do, by the way, like live his life outside the supermarket. He is going to want to get back home

or get back to work. It makes no sense at all.

By the way, this dad—and I ask Senator REID to take a look at this picture, if it doesn't remind him of one of his kids taking his grandkids shopping—is going to be expected—if he has 50 products and he wants to find out—either to have a smartphone and to put it up against the code and then find a whole bunch of information—

Mr. REID. Or call the 1–800 number.

Mrs. BOXER. Or he could call the 1–800 number, and we know what happens then. He will be transferred around the world.

So Americans should not have to run through hoops. Life is difficult enough already not to have to do that. This thing is a sham. It is an insult. It is a joke.

Why are they doing it on the other side of the aisle? Because they are beholden to the special interests that don't want to label GMOs, that are afraid if people know the food is genetically modified, they won't buy it, even though there is no proof of that at all.

Mr. President, 64 countries require labels. Some 64 countries today require simple labels, and many of our products are sold in those 64 countries. Let me tell you some of these countries.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a list of the 64 countries that require GMO labeling.

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

COUNTRIES WITH GMO LABELS

1. Australia, 2. Austria, 3. Belarus, 4. Belgium, 5. Bolivia, 6. Bosnia and Herzegovina, 7. Brazil, 8. Bulgaria, 9. Cameroon, 10. China, 11. Croatia, 12. Cyprus, 13. Czech Republic, 14. Denmark, 15. Ecuador, 16. El Salvador, 17. Estonia, 18. Ethiopia, 19. Finland, 20. France;

21. Germany, 22. Greece, 23. Hungary, 24. Iceland, 25. India, 26. Indonesia, 27. Ireland, 28. Italy, 29. Japan, 30. Jordan, 31. Kazakhstan, 32. Kenya, 33. Latvia, 34. Lithuania, 35. Luxembourg, 36. Malaysia, 37. Mali, 38. Malta, 39. Mauritius, 40. Netherlands;

41. New Zealand, 42. Norway, 43. Peru, 44. Poland, 45. Portugal, 46. Romania, 47. Russia, 48. Saudi Arabia, 49. Senegal, 50. Slovakia, 51. Slovenia, 52. South Africa, 53. South Korea, 54. Spain, 55. Sri Lanka, 56. Sweden, 57. Switzerland, 58. Taiwan, 59. Thailand, 60. Tunisia, 61. Turkey, 62. Ukraine, 63. United Kingdom, and 64. Vietnam.

Mrs. BOXER. I am going to name some of these countries that require the labels. So in other words, our companies have to put the label on if they want to sell there, letting people know if their food is genetically modified: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Mali, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Vietnam. I left some out, but they will be in the RECORD if anyone wants to see them.

Why is it that consumers in Russia have more information than our consumers do—the greatest country in the world? This makes no sense at all. Why is it that our companies are up in arms, since they have to put the label on in these other countries? They could put the label on here.

Now, if we care at all about what the public thinks, we should vote no on the Roberts bill. Some 90 percent of Americans want to know if the food they buy has been genetically engineered—90 percent. That is a majority of Republicans. That is a majority of Democrats. That is a majority of Independents. I think the other 10 percent are working for the big food companies, which don't seem to want to share this. Millions of Americans have filed comments with the FDA urging the agency to label genetically engineered food so they can have this information at their fingertips.

The bill also preempts any State in the Union from doing a label. Now, I don't like the notion of every State doing a label. That is why I support my bill—which has about 14 sponsors and simply says to the FDA to write a label and make this the law—or the Merkley bill, which comes up with four labels. Senator MERKLEY will talk about this. We say that would, in fact, be enough so that States wouldn't be able to act.

Meanwhile, this says no State action, and we are going to keep the status quo for at least 3 years—no labeling. Even after those 3 years, there may be no labeling at all. It is going to be barcodes, which are confusing, and 1–800 numbers, which probably take you to India to try and figure your way through it all.

Now, I have long believed in the power to give consumers information. I think you are all familiar with the dolphin-safe tuna labeling law. I am proud to say that I wrote that law. That law has been in effect since the 1990s, and people like it. But guess what. They see a smiling dolphin on the tuna can, and they know that tuna was caught in a way that does not harm the dolphins. We found out so many years ago that the tuna schools swim under the dolphins, and the tuna companies were purse seining on dolphins. They were putting nets over the dolphins, pulling them away and then catching the tuna, and the dolphins would die by the tens of thousands. So the schoolkids in those years said—at that time I was a House Member: Congresswoman BOXER, we don't want to have tuna that resulted in the death of all these dolphins. So we created the label, and the tuna companies were very helpful, just like Campbell Soup Company has been very helpful in labeling their products. When you have the companies come forward, it is very helpful. So we passed the bill. Everybody said: Oh, this is going to be terrible; no one will buy tuna. Actually, people started buying the tuna because they changed the way they fish for the tuna. The dolphins weren't harmed. We have saved literally hundreds of thousands of dolphins over the period of time that label has been in effect.

Now, as to this label, all we are saying is to let us know. Let us know. What we do know is that many of these genetically engineered products, as they are growing in the ground, require huge amounts of pesticides. Senator HEINRICH talked about that. That is one issue which has grown in importance to parents because they don't want to give their kids food that is covered in pesticides if they have an option.

So the power we give the consumers is critical—the power to simply know the truth. And, to me, knowledge is power. To me, it is respect. You tell people the truth; you don't give them a sham bill and say: Well, we won't require anything for 3 years, but then we may have a barcode, and then we may have a 1–800 number. No. It is pretty simple: Require a label. Require a label. A label is simple. A label works.

I see Senator MERKLEY on the floor, and I am finishing up. We have various ways we can do the label. One way is to give it to the FDA and tell them to come up with it, and another way is the way Senator MERKLEY has proceeded in a way to attract more support. He has given four options, all of which are very good and all of which would immediately give consumers the information they need.

In 2000, when I introduced the first Senate bill concerning the labeling of GE foods, my legislation had one supporter, and it was me. I had no other supporters back then. It was so long ago. It was in 2000. Now 14 Senators are cosponsoring the bill. I am so proud to cosponsor Senator MERKLEY's bill, the Biotechnology Food Labeling and Uniformity Act, which, again, will put forward four options for companies.

There are reasons people want this information, and not one of us here should decry what our people want, even if they want to know if the foods contain GMOs because of the prevalence of herbicide-resistant crops. We know from the USGS that growers sprayed 280 million pounds of Roundup in 2012—a pound of herbicide for every person in the country. That is what they spray on these foods that contain GMOs. Whatever the reason, Americans deserve to know what is in the food they are eating. Some want to know it just to have the information.

Some in the food and chemical industry say that adding this very small piece of information would confuse or alarm consumers. This is an old and familiar argument raised by virtually every industry when they want to avoid giving consumers basic facts. In fact, a 2014 study from the Journal of Food Policy shows there is little evidence that mandatory labeling of GE foods signals consumers to avoid the product. There is no proof of that.

The FDA requires the labeling of more than 3,000 ingredients, additives, and processes. Orange juice from concentrate must be labeled. Consumers should be able to choose the product they prefer. If they like it from concentrate, fine. If they prefer it in a different fashion, fine. There is no reason they can't also have the knowledge that the food they are buying is genetically engineered.

The world certainly has moved ahead of us. The Roberts bill would take us way back into the dark, and that is why consumer groups call it the DARK Act. It is a sham. It is an embarrassment. It is time for us to shelve the DARK Act, to listen to 90 percent of the American people. For God's sake, if we do nothing else, we ought to listen to 90 percent of the American people, and we ought to pass a real bill to help Americans make informed choices about the foods they eat.

Again, I wish to thank Senator MERKLEY for really delving into this issue and coming up with another alternative that will be very acceptable not only to me but to, I believe, the 90 percent of the people who are crying out for this information.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, this debate on the Monsanto DARK Act, which stands for Denying Americans the Right to Know, centers around two basic propositions. The first proposition is that it would be chaotic to have 50 States with 50 different labeling standards. How could a food company possibly always get the right label to the right store if there are 50 different State standards? This is not a problem we actually have yet because we have no States that have adopted a standard for GE labeling. We have one State—I should say no States have implemented it. One State has adopted a standard, and that won't be implemented until July. So we are far away from having any issue over conflicting standards. But I acknowledge the basic point. This makes sense. It makes sense that we don't want to have a world in which every State has a different approach: In this State you do X, Y, and Z, and in this State you do A, B, and C, and what the exemptions are differ, and the formats differ, and so on and so forth. So let's just concede that at this point, it makes sense to have a single standard for the country. But a single standard about what?

That brings us to the second basic proposition, which is that there be a consumer-friendly alert that there are GE ingredients in a product. That is all. If a State says they want to have a simple, consumer-friendly alert that there are GE ingredients, then they should be able to do that.

If we don't want 50 standards, then we need to have the replacement be a national standard that provides the same thing, that is a consumer-friendly alert that there are GE ingredients. Then the individual can do more investigation. They can go to the company's Web site and find out the details, including what type of genetic engineering it is, what is its impact, and so on and so forth.

Right now there is a coalition of individuals in this Chamber who don't believe in Americans' right to know. They want to take it away. They want to support a bill, which is currently on the floor right now, that denies Americans the right to know because they are getting pressure from Monsanto and friends, and they are not willing to stand up for the American citizen, their constituents. They don't believe in a ''we the people'' America; they believe in ''we the titans,'' that we are here simply on the end of a puppet string. But we are not here for that purpose. That is not the vision of our Constitution. The vision of our Constitution is that we are an ''of the people, for the people, and by the people'' world. That is what makes America beautiful, not that a few powerful groups can control what happens here in this Chamber, this honored and revered Chamber where it is our responsibility to hold up our ''we the people'' vision of the Constitution.

So this bill, this Monsanto Deny Americans the Right to Know Act 2.0, has a few shams and scams placed in it to pretend that it is a labeling law.

The first scam that it has in it—or sham—is an 800 number. I as a consumer can go to a grocery shelf and in 5 seconds I can check three products for an ingredient by looking at the label; 1 second, 2 seconds, 3 seconds—well, less than 5 seconds. In 3 seconds I can check and see whatever I want to find out. If I want to check the calorie count or check for vitamin A or what percentage of the daily recommended amount is in the food or if I want to see if it contains peanuts because I am allergic to peanuts, I can do it for three products in 3 seconds. That is consumer-friendly. That is why we put it on the label. That is why we say: Oh gosh, we are going to give people the information they want so they can exercise their freedom when they buy things to support what they want. That is integrity between the producer and the consumer.

But do we know what the opposite of integrity is? That is the DARK Act. Deny Americans the right to know and ban States from providing this basic information. It is the complete absence of responsibility to the citizen.

Well, there is a 1–800 number. How would that work? First of all, I have to find the 800 number. Then I have to make sure I have a phone with me. Then I have to make sure I have good cell phone coverage. Then I have to go to a phone tree. You know how these work. You go to the phone tree, you listen to eight options, you pick the option, it takes you to another list, you pick another option, and then finally, after about five levels, they connect you. They say: If you want an operator, press this, and you press it and you go to some call center in the Philippines. They don't know what you are talking about. This is not consumer-friendly.

Looking at the ingredient list takes 1 second. It is 10 minutes or more when you call that 800 number, and maybe you get a message: I am sorry, we have a large call volume right now, and we will be able to answer your call in 20 minutes. That is not consumer information; that is a scam and a sham.

That is not the only one that is in this DARK bill. The second sham is this idea of a quick response code, like this one in the picture, this square code. Again, as a consumer you can't look at the ingredients and see the answer, if there are GE ingredients, no. Now you have to have not just a phone but a smartphone. You have to hope it has a battery, that it has a photo appliance with it. You have to take a picture of that code, and then that code takes you to some Web site written by the very producer who gives you the answer, maybe, or maybe they lay out a whole architecture of stuff that obfuscates it, confuses you, and you don't really get the answer, when all you needed was a little tiny symbol on the package that indicated whether it had GE ingredients. So, again, how long does that take? Ten minutes per product? Thirty minutes for the first item on your shopping list as you compare three products? That is not consumer-friendly—3 seconds versus 30 minutes—and that is just the first item on your shopping list. There is not one person in this Chamber who truly believes this is a fair substitute for consumer-friendly information. This is a sham and scam No. 2.

If this QR code had a message on it and this message right here written on the back said ''There are GE ingredients, and for details, scan this code,'' that is consumer-friendly. That is all the consumer wants to know. That is all we are asking for—a consumer-friendly alert. Then that QR code for more information is fine. That is perfectly fine. But without it, nobody even knows why it is there. What is it there for? Is this where you find out information about the company? Is this where you find out information about the new products they are going to be putting out? Is this where you find information about special sales that are going on? Nobody has any idea.

Well, the DARK bill doesn't stop with sham No. 1 and sham No. 2. No, it gives us even more fake labeling because we see it says that a form of labeling is to have no label but to put the information on your Web site. Well, to call that a label is simply a misrepresentation—and ''misrepresentation'' is a fancy word for ''lie''—because there is not any information that even appears on the product. None.

So we say: Well, I was told there would be an 800 number. I am not finding it. I was told there might be a box, and I think it is for finding out if there

are GE ingredients. But I don't find that computer code box, no, because they have adopted door No. 3, and door No. 3 is to put something on some form of social media. But what social media? Are you supposed to go to Instagram or Facebook or Twitter? Nobody has any idea.

So now there is nothing—let me repeat: nothing—on the product. So what could be learned in 1 second by a consumer, now the consumer has fully no idea. And because this whole thing is voluntary, lots of products may just choose to put nothing up.

The proponents of the DARK Act say: No, we have a pathway to more information. If companies don't put up information in the form of a barcode or a phone number or something on a social media Web site, well then we will require something in one of those three areas. That requirement down the road still provides no consumer-friendly information. It is a pathway through a hall of mirrors that leads to a hall of mirrors. It never leads to concrete, simple information.

Don't you know that if you told consumers they would have to go to a Web site to find out if there is vitamin D in the product, that would be ridiculous? It should just be printed on the package.

Don't you know if someone were interested in high fructose corn syrup and they were told they had to dial a call center in the Philippines to find out that information, consumers would say that is absurd? We all know that is the case.

Ninety percent of Americans strongly believe—or believe when given the choice—that there should be this information directly on the label. I am rounding up from 89 percent. Let's round it off. When questioned as to whether there should be information on the label to say whether there are genetically engineered ingredients, 9 out of 10 Americans say yes, there should be, and 70 percent say they feel very strongly about this. So here are our constituents, and 9 to 1, they want us to provide information. But up here on Capitol Hill we have Senator after Senator who does not care what their constituents think. They care only what big Monsanto and friends want, which is to deny Americans the right to know. That is irresponsible. That is wrong.

When we look at this number, you can see by how high it is that this is not partisan because it would be impossible to have a big difference—100 percent of one party and 80 percent of another might round off to 90 percent. But that is not the way it is. Whether you are an Independent, Democrat, or Republican, in all 3 groups, 9 out of 10 individuals, plus or minus a few percentage points, say they want this information on the package.

So here we are with this vast difference in ideologies being displayed by the Presidential debate, from the tea party right to the far left and everything in between. There is disagreement on all kinds of things, but on this, all the citizens agree—the right, left, middle, far left, far right—because it is a fundamental freedom in America to use your dollars based on basic, accurate information. That is a basic freedom that a bunch of Senators on this floor want to take away. It is just wrong to take away the States' rights to answer that request, that need, that desire for information on GE ingredients and not to replace it with a national standard. That is just wrong.

There are folks who say: Wait, I want to be on the side of science, and I don't think there is any kind of scientific information that there is any kind of disadvantage to GE products. Well, that is fundamentally wrong. If you think there are no disadvantages, it is because you don't want to know.

There are benefits, and there are disadvantages. For example, recognize that this tool can be used in ways that produce some good results and some not so good results. That is why it is up to the consumer to decide how they want to use their dollars.

On the good side, we can talk about golden rice. There are parts of the world that primarily eat rice. If they have a vitamin A deficiency, there is rice that can be grown that has been genetically modified to supply more vitamin A and makes for a healthier community. That is a positive.

For example, sweet potatoes grown in South Africa are vulnerable to certain viruses, but they have been genetically modified to resist those viruses so there is more substantive food available to the community. As far as we know, there are no particular side effects, so that is a positive.

There are some interesting ideas that occur about edible vaccine technology. This is an alternative to traditional vaccines, and they are working to have transgenic plants used for the production of vaccines that stimulate the human body's natural immune response. Wouldn't that be amazing if we could essentially inoculate against major diseases in the world through some type of GE, as long as there weren't side effects? Who knows, that may end up being a major benefit.

Just as there are scientifically documented positives, there are scientifically documented negatives. For example, let's talk about our waterways. I put up a chart which shows that since the presentation or production of herbicide-resistant crops, the amount of herbicides put on crops in America has soared. We have gone from 7.4 million pounds in 1994 to 160 million pounds by 2012. It has gone up since. All of that glyphosate is basically being sprayed multiple times a year. It gets into the air, it gets into the plants, it gets into the runoff from the fields, and it goes into our waterways. It has an impact because it is a plant killer. That is what an herbicide is. It kills plants. If you put millions of pounds of herbicide into our rivers, it does a lot of damage.

I will not go through all the studies that have noted this damage. Let me just explain that when you kill things at the base of the food chain, you change the entire food chain. This is true for micro-organisms in sea water, which we refer to as marine systems, and it is very true in micro-organisms in freshwater systems.

Micro-organisms form the basis of food chains and provide ecological services. There are a bunch of studies that show the impact of all this plant-killing herbicide running into our rivers. It affects the soil too. Quite frankly, it even creates some potential for an impact on human health.

Let me explain. Two-thirds of the air and rainfall samples tested in Mississippi and Iowa in 2007 and 2008 contain glyphosate. Those are rain samples and air samples, two-thirds of which contained this herbicide. Well, what we know is that not only do humans absorb some therefrom, but they also absorb some because of residuals in the food. A study published in the Journal of Environmental & Analytical Toxicology found that humans who consumed glyphosate-treated GMO foods have relatively high levels of glyphosate in their urine because it is in their bodies. We also know that glyphosate has been classified as a probable human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, part of the World Health Organization.

Here we have a probable carcinogen present in such vast quantities—present in the rain, present in the air, present in the residuals on the food. That is a legitimate concern to citizens. Does that mean that it is causing rampant outbreaks of cancer? No, I am not saying that. I am just saying there is a legitimate foundation for individual citizens to say: I am concerned about the runoff into our streams. I am concerned about the heavy application and its impact on local plants and animals. I am concerned about the possibility of absorption of anything that might contribute to cancer. That is the citizens' freedom to have those opinions.

This is not a situation where Members of this body should say: We are smarter than they are, and we don't care that they have scientific concerns because, quite frankly, we want to suppress that information. We don't want to give them a choice. We don't want to let them know. It is just wrong. It is wrong to take away States' rights to provide such basic information and not have a consumer-friendly version at a national level. I will absolutely support a 50-State standard so there is no confusion and no cost of overlapping standards or difficulties in what food goes from what warehouse to what grocery store—absolutely support that—but don't strip States from doing something 9 out of 10 Americans care about and then proceed to bury that and not provide that information in the U.S. Senate.

I encourage my colleagues: Simply say no to this Monsanto Deny Americans the Right to Know Act, the DARK Act. Simply say no. Stand up. Have some respect for this institution.

This is a bill that never went through committee. Not a single phrase of this bill went to committee. This is a new creation put on the floor without juris, without consideration on committee, and no open amendment process. How many colleagues across the aisle cried foul over the past years when Democrats were in charge and didn't allow an amendment process? They insisted they would never vote for cloture unless there was a full amendment process that honored the ideas presented by different Senators. But there is no open amendment process here. So there we are—a bad process, mega influence by Monsanto and friends oppressing and stripping the freedom of American citizens. Let's not let that happen.

I have a host of letters I was planning to read, but I see my colleague from Ohio is wanting to speak to this issue, and in fairness to all sides of this debate or ideas that he might want to present, I am going to stop here. If there is an opening later, I would like to return to the floor because of the calls and letters overwhelmingly from citizens stating they resent the Senators in this body trying to strip them of their right to know.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Oregon, and I am sure he will be back on the floor again to talk about this issue.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. President, I want to address a couple of other issues quickly. One is the last act that this Senate took last week, which was passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. I didn't have a chance to speak on it because the Senate adjourned at that point, but I just want to congratulate my colleagues for coming together as Republicans and Democrats. It was a vote of 94 to 1. That never happens around this place. It is because people understand the significance of the challenge of heroin and prescription drug abuse and addiction back in our States and wanted to stand up and put forward Federal legislation that would help make the Federal Government a better partner with State and local governments and nonprofits that are out there in the trenches doing their best, with law enforcement who are trying their darnedest, and others in the emergency medical response community who are trying to deal with this issue.

While traveling the State of Ohio the last 3 days, this Senator heard about it constantly. Before I would give a speech, people would come up and say thank you for dealing with this issue because my daughter, my cousin, or my friend is affected. Today, I was with a group of young people talking about other issues, and one said that his cousin at 23 years old had just succumbed to an overdose—died from an overdose of heroin.

This a problem in all of our States. It is a problem where we can help make a difference. I want to congratulate my colleagues, Senator WHITEHOUSE and others, for working with me to put this bill forward. We worked on it over 3 years in a comprehensive way, using the best expertise from around the country.

Now I am urging my colleagues in the House of Representatives to follow suit. Let's pass this legislation. Let's send it to the President's desk for his signature. Let's get this bill working to be able to help our constituents all over this country to better deal with a very real epidemic in our communities.

Now the No. 1 cause of death in my State is overdoses—from these deaths that are occurring from overdoses of heroin and prescription drugs. Again, I congratulate the Senate for acting on that on a bipartisan basis and having thoughtful legislation that is going to make a difference.

READ ALOUD MONTH

Mr. President, I also rise today to speak about something that also affects our young people, which is literacy and learning. This happens to be Read Aloud Month. This U.S. Senate has established the month of March as being the month that we hold up those who read aloud to their kids, because we found it is incredibly important for a child's development—particularly for the ability of a child to become adept at other subjects at school by just being read to and the literacy that results from that.

There is a campaign called the Read Aloud campaign. I congratulate them for the good work they do around the country. They started in my hometown of Cincinnati, OH, so I am very proud of them, but now it is a national effort. In libraries and schools across the country, March is held up as Read Aloud Month, where we encourage parents and other family members to get into the habit of reading to their children, if only for 15 minutes a day. That is all the Read Aloud campaign is asking for. If parents and other caregivers read at least 15 minutes a day to their kids, what an incredible difference it would make.

There is one study that is now quite well known that shows, on average, by the time a child born into poverty reaches age 3, he or she will have heard 30 million fewer words than his or her peers who are not in poverty. What does that mean, 30 million fewer words? It means that those children born into poverty are at a severe disadvantage. It means they can have a lifetime of consequences that are negative for them. The more we learn about the way the brain develops, the more clear it is that verbal skills—like other skills—develop as they are used and atrophy as they are neglected. The younger the children are, the more important this is. So reading to children, particularly younger children, is incredibly important to their development.

Even though this information is now out there and the Read Aloud campaign is doing a great job of getting the education out there, even with all this information we are told that in 40 percent of families in America today parents and other caregivers are not reading to their kids.

There is a doctor at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Dr. Tzipi Horowitz-Kraus, who is a real expert on this topic. She stated: ''The more you read to your child, the more you help the neurons in the brain to grow and connect.'' So that is the physiological change that occurs.

We also know a child's vocabulary is largely reflective of the vocabulary at home from their parents and caregivers. There is a 2003 study by Elizabeth Hart and Todd Risley studying the impact of this 30 million word gap we talked about between households in poverty and those of their peers. They found that by age 3 the effects were already apparent. Even at that young age, ''trends in the amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction were well established and clearly suggested widening gaps to come.'' That is another study out there about what the impact of this is.

There are a lot of adults who might not know how important reading aloud is and don't feel they have enough to do it, but, again, 15 minutes a day is all they are asking. It adds up quickly and can help close this word gap. As parents, it may be the most important single thing we can do to help our children to be able to learn.

Illiteracy or even what is called functional illiteracy—not being illiterate but not being able to read with proficiency—makes it so much harder to do everything, to earn a living, obviously to get a job, and to participate fully in society. It hurts self-esteem. It hurts personal autonomy. Millions of our friends and neighbors are struggling with these consequences every single day. According to the Department of Education, there are about 32 million adults in the United States who can't read. Nearly one out of every five adults reads below a fifth grade level. Nearly the same percentage of high school graduates cannot read. So one out of every five high school graduates not being able to read is an embarrassment for us as a country, our school system, and certainly what is not going on in our families, which again can help to get these kids off to the right start. For these adults who are functionally illiterate or illiterate, they all started with this disadvantage we are talking about, not having this opportunity at home.

Some parents may say: OK, ROB. How do we afford this, because children's books aren't inexpensive. How do you get the online resources you might want to be able to read to your kids, if

not books? I have one simple answer for that, which is get a library card. Our libraries in Ohio and around the country are all into this effort. They have all rallied behind it, and they are all eager to be a part of this.

My wife Jane and I made it a priority to read to our kids when they were growing up, and a lot of that came from books we took out of the Cincinnati and Hamilton County Libraries. It also had the consequence of introducing our kids to the libraries and helped them to become lifelong readers and learners. That is one way for those who are wondering how to begin. Get a library card, go to your library, and get started there.

I am proud Ohio has led the way in this effort. This campaign began in Cincinnati and is now becoming a national movement.

We do talk a lot in this body about education. On a bipartisan basis, we recently passed legislation that had to do with K–12 education reform. I think it was an important step, but one thing it did is it returned more power back to the States and back to our families, which I think is a good thing.

The new law also authorized grant funding for State comprehensive literacy plans, including targeted grants for early childhood education programs—what we are talking about here, early childhood. It made sure those grants are prioritized for areas with disproportionate numbers of low-income families. We also authorized professional development opportunities for teachers, literacy coaches, literacy specialists, and English as a Second Language specialists. These grants will be helpful in empowering our teachers to do their part to help our young people to learn to read. Clearly, our wonderful teachers have a role to play.

To my colleagues, while this is all fine, there is no substitute for the family. There is no substitute for what can happen in a family before the child even goes to school and then while the child is starting school to be able to give that child the advantage of being able to learn more easily. Although I supported that legislation—there are some good things in there—let's not forget the fundamental role all of us play as parents or aunts or uncles or grandparents or other caregivers.

Washington may be the only place on Earth where 30 million words—which is this word gap we talked about, which is less than the length of our Tax Code and regulations—doesn't sound like a lot, but it is a lot, and there is no government substitute to close that 30 million word gap. Ultimately, it is going to be closed by parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, other caregivers, and brothers and sisters with the help of librarians, teachers, and others. We need to call attention to this issue to let parents know that this 15 minutes a day can make a huge difference. Every little bit counts. Every time you read to the child, you are giving him or her an educational advantage, you are making it easier for them to learn, helping to instill in them a love of learning that will last a lifetime.

Again, I thank the Read Aloud campaign. I am proud of their roots in my hometown and in Ohio. I thank them for all they are doing every day for our kids and for our future.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I wish to continue sharing some information about Monsanto and the Deny Americans the Right to Know Act that is on the Senate floor being debated right now.

The reason I want to turn to this is this is such an egregious overreach of the Federal Government, stripping States of the right to respond to their citizens' desire for clear information, consumer-friendly information, on GE—genetically engineered—ingredients and stripping American citizens of the right to know.

I have already gone through a number of the points that are important in this debate; that if you are going to eliminate the ability of States to provide consumer-friendly information on their label—which can be as simple as a tiny symbol or a letter such as Brazil uses—then there has to be a national standard that provides consumer-friendly information. Certainly, the hall of mirrors embedded in the DARK Act, which says consumers have to call call centers somewhere around the world and maybe they will eventually get an answer to their question about GE ingredients or they have to own a smartphone and have a data plan and take a picture of a computer code and give up some of their privacy in the process in order to try to find out this information or they have to guess where on social media the company has posted some information about the ingredients they have in their product—those three sets of components are completely unworkable, 100 percent unworkable.

Ask yourself if that would be a logical remedy to people trying to find out about the calories in a product. Instead of finding out in one second, it could take them 10 minutes or, for that matter, an hour or they may never even get an answer on the end of that call center because the call center is too busy.

The point is that 9 out of 10 Americans believe this information should be easily available on the label. I went through those numbers before. The numbers are basically the same for Republicans, basically the same for Democrats and Independents—slight variations. Throughout the ideological spectrum, this is something American citizens agree on. Along comes the Monsanto DARK Act and its proponents to say: We don't care that the American people have finally found something to agree on that goes to their core values about the right to know. We are going to stomp out their right to know because we simply don't work for the American people. We don't work for our constituents. We work for some powerful special interest.

That is wrong. I hope the American citizens will let their Senators know it is wrong. They are certainly letting me know how they feel, and I thought I would share some of those with you, but before I do that, I had some inquiries about this situation of basically all citizens throughout the ideological spectrum sharing this same point of view—9 out of 10. Is it also true for gender and age? Let me share that. Specifically, there was a followup question which asked: Does a barcode work to provide information on the label or do you want a physical label stating that there are GE ingredients? Physical label versus this barcode—which people don't even know where it is on the package.

It turns out again it is 90 percent. It is 88 percent of Democrats, 88 percent of Republicans, and 90 percent of Independents say: No, we want the physical label, not some mysterious label that we have to use our smartphone to interpret and give up some of our privacy.

How about men and women—87 percent of men, 97 percent of women.

How about younger and older—those who are less than 50 years old, 86 percent; those who are over 50 years old, 90 percent. Again, basically 9 out of 10 Americans, regardless of gender, regardless of age, regardless of ideology, say: No, this is a fundamental issue of American freedom, my freedom to exercise my choices based on basic information that should be on the label.

Let's turn to some real constituents and some real letters so we are not just talking numbers.

Bertha from Springfield writes:

> I urge you to vote against SB 2609 concerning labeling of foods that contain GMOs. Every American has the right to know what they are putting in their bodies. You were elected to represent all Oregonians and protect our rights, be assured I will check yours and every other representatives' voting records before I cast my votes in the future.

Let's turn to Eli from Medford, OR:

> I want to hear you come out publicly against S. 2609. Please lead the fight to get GMOs clearly labeled without delay.

Well, Eli, that is exactly what I am doing. I hadn't read your letter before I started speaking out strongly because I fundamentally believe we are here to represent our citizens—not to bow down to special interests—and this is as clear as it gets. This is as straightforward as it could possibly be.

Let's turn to Ms. JC in Salem, OR:

> Please, I am requesting you NOT to support (S. 2609) (referred by some as the Dark Act) when it comes up for a vote in the Senate. I know the Senate Agricultural Committee voted 14–6 to pass the Dark Act S. 2609 last week. I believe the government should protect OUR RIGHT TO KNOW what's in our food. Please DO NOT VOTE to block GMO labeling.

She goes on:

Most European nations do not allow these types of food to be grown or sold in their countries. This should give you some information about how people in other countries view genetically modified foods.

Please do not support this legislation. Your constituents will appreciate your support for their right to know what's in the foods we put on our plates to feed to our families.

That is a very personal issue: what you are putting in your mouth, what you are putting on your family's table for your partner and your children. That is a very powerful issue, and here we have Senators who do not care and want to take away that right for something so close to people's hearts.

Let's turn to Sheila in Pendleton, OR:

I want to urge Senator MERKLEY to vote against the S. 2609, which would block mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods. I urge the Senator to stand up for states' rights and individual rights to know. We have a right to know what is in our food so that we can make educated decisions about the food we eat.

She continues:

The free market can only work when consumers have the information they need to make informed choices. Contrary to what you hear from industry, GMO food labeling will not increase food prices. Companies frequently change labels for all sorts of reasons, without passing those costs on to consumers.

Let me dwell on that point for a moment. It is completely reasonable not to have 50 different State standards that are conflicting, but what is unreasonable is to say that putting simple information on the label—consumer-friendly information—costs a dime because that label is printed at the same cost whether or not it includes a symbol that says ''This food contains GE ingredients.'' It doesn't cost any more to print the calories on the label, doesn't cost any more to put the vitamin D content, doesn't cost any more to print a symbol or a phrase or an asterisk indicating there are GE ingredients. So let's just be through with that argument that somehow there is a cost issue.

Ronald from Medford writes:

Oppose S. 2609, the anti-GMO labeling bill. Allow States to enact their own GMO labeling laws.

And that is a point—States' rights. I hear all the time from colleagues here on this floor about States' rights, that the Federal Government should treat States as a laboratory to experiment with ideas, to see if they work, to perfect ideas that might be considered for national adoption. And isn't that exactly what Vermont is—a State laboratory that is implementing a bill on July 1? And we could all watch and see whether it works.

On July 1, there will be no conflicting State standards because there is only one State involved—Vermont. So we don't have to have confusing labels going from different warehouses to different States because there is just one State putting forward a standard. So it is an opportunity for us to view that as a laboratory and see how it works. Other States might want to copy if it works well, or they might want a different version. Then the Senate could say: You know what, now we have conflicting State standards, and let's address the core issue, which is a consumer-friendly indication on the package, and get rid of the conflicting State standards. That would be a fair and appropriate role for this Senate to play.

But to crush the only State laboratory that is about to come into existence in exchange for nothing but a hall of mirrors that does not give any reasonable opportunity for the consumer as a shopper to find out the information they need—the information they can get in 1 second by looking on the label but would instead take 10 minutes or 30 minutes or they may not even be able to get it at all while standing there in the grocery store looking at the very first product on their list.

Joshua of Eugene says:

Please support the public's right to know what food has GMO contained in it and work to defeat the DARK Act.

Additionally, I fully support also the public's right to know where their food comes from, the country of origin, as well as what nutritional content is in all food eaten in restaurants.

So he is suggesting that we should expand this conversation to restaurants. For now, let's talk about packaged foods. And he is also commenting on country of origin.

I want to live in a nation where, if I choose to buy the produce grown in America, I get to buy the produce grown in America. I want to live in a nation where, if I choose to buy the meat raised in America and support American ranchers, I get to support American ranchers. It may simply be because I want to help out my fellow countrymen. It may be because I think they have superior produce or make a superior product, a type of meat. It may just be patriotism. But it should be my right to know where that food is grown.

We have a law, country-of-origin labeling, that does exactly that because consumers want to know. It isn't about what steak to put in your mouth; it is about where the food was grown.

It so happens that we are part of a trade agreement—the World Trade Organization—that says our labeling of where pork and beef are grown is a trade impediment. I couldn't disagree more. We have lost case after case in the WTO over this topic. Finally, we had to take country-of-origin labeling off of our beef and off of our pork. We haven't had to take it off our other meats, other produce. I hope we get to the point where we can fully restore our country-of-origin labeling because it matters to Americans.

What kind of country are we when we don't even have the right to buy our fellow citizens' produce and our fellow citizens' meat? Talk about stripping away freedom. Yet here comes a group of Senators on this floor who want to further strip the rights of consumers. No wonder American citizens are angry with their government. No wonder they are angry specifically with Congress, that they rate us so unfavorably, below 10 percent. No wonder they are cynical because of things like this, where we ignore the fundamental desires of citizens and instead cave in to a powerful special interest. That is not the way it is supposed to be in the United States of America.

Terry of Lake Oswego writes:

GMO free food is information we need to have. I need the right to decide what to eat and feed my family. If the food industry want[s] to produce foods without meeting certain standards, using whatever they want to make their product, sell foods to us, what protection do we have? Do we really know the long term effects of altered food ingredients?

Well, Terry, no, we don't know all the effects, but we do know there is a series of potential benefits and a series of problems. Those problems are the massive runoff of herbicide—which is a name for plant-killing chemicals—massive runoff of plant-killing chemicals into our streams. There are plants in our streams—algae, microorganisms—that are the fundamental basis of the food chain, and that makes a difference. We do know this herbicide is classified as a potential human carcinogen by the World Health Organization. We also know those who eat GMO food end up with more glyphosate—that is herbicide—in their body.

But it is up to you, Terry, to decide whether you have concerns about this. You should get to decide. No Senator can come to this floor, Terry, and say: I know better. I want to strip your ability to make a decision because I know everything. And you know what. I don't care about the scientific research; I just want to serve these powerful ad companies that don't want you to know. So too bad, Terry, and too bad to the 90 percent of Americans, 90 percent of Democrats, 90 percent of Republicans, 90 percent of Independents, 90 percent of women, 90 percent of men—I am rounding off but pretty close—90 percent of the young. Too bad for all of that because Senators here want to deny you the information on which to make the decision you are asking for.

Gail of Portland, OR, says:

Please do all you can to defeat S. 2609. It is my understanding that under this bill, it would be illegal for States to require GMO labeling, even though polls show that 93 percent of Americans support labeling efforts.

Well, Gail, I don't have the poll you have that says 93 percent of Americans support labeling, but I do have this poll done in November 2015 by a reputable pollster that says 89 percent. So let's take your 93 percent and let's take this poll's 89 percent and just agree that basically 9 out of 10 Americans want this information on the product. And when asked if they want it in the form of a mysterious barcode that compromises

their privacy if they use it—they don't even know why it is on the product—or they want it in terms of a simple statement or symbol, they want the simple statement or symbol.

So, Gail, thank you for your letter.

William of Chemult, OR, said:

I was distressed to learn that the Senate Agriculture Committee last week approved the voluntary GMO labeling. . . . This would be a disaster if it became law. As your constituent, I'm writing to ask you to oppose this and any other scheme that would make GMO labeling voluntary.

William, I am sorry to report that it is even worse than voluntary because an actual label is banned by this bill. A State cannot put a real label or symbol on the product. Instead, this is the anti-label bill. It says you have to put on things so the customer can't see there are GE ingredients. It has banned putting clear, simple, consumer-friendly information on the product. Instead, it proposes a wild goose chase where you have to call some call center somewhere, some 800 number somewhere and hope that you can get through the phone tree; hope that eventually they will stop saying: Because of call volume, it will be another 30 minutes before we can talk to you; hope that somehow when you get to that call center, it is not staffed by folks who speak the English language with such an accent that you don't even understand what they are saying or they do not understand what you are saying.

It is even worse, William, because they want to put a barcode on as a substitute, with no indication for the purpose of this barcode, so that it is just a mystery. Why is this there? I don't know. Does this tell you about their upcoming products? Does this tell you about advertisements for discounts if you take your smartphone and you snap on this? Because the only way that barcode has value—and every Senator in this room knows this fact—it only has value if you tell the consumer why that barcode is on the package. If it says ''This product has GE ingredients. For details, scan this bar code,'' then that is a valuable contribution, but without that indication, this is just another wild goose chase taking customers on a crazy adventure with no real information when they could have had a symbol that in 1 second answered their question.

And, William, it gets worse. If you can believe it, it gets worse, because under this voluntary standard, what counts as a nonlabel—not only a 1–800 number or a barcode or a computer code of some sort—what also counts is putting something in social media somewhere. Well, what social media? There are a hundred different social media companies. How are you possibly supposed to discover, even if you wanted to, what the information is on that product?

All of this is designed, William, to prevent you from getting the information you want right on the package with a simple little symbol—not a symbol that is pejorative, not a symbol that is scary—chosen by the FDA just to give you the information. Brazil uses a ''t'' in a triangle. That would be fine. It doesn't really matter what the symbol is because citizens who want to know can find out that indicates there are GE ingredients. But, no, that would be giving you information, and the goal of the Monsanto Deny Americans the Right to Know Act is to prevent you from getting information.

I want to turn to Anna in Beaverton, OR. Anna says:

I wanted to ask that you share with your colleagues that this bill is insulting to the intelligence of Americans, limits citizens the right to make safe choices when purchasing food; hamstrings diet and medical professionals who treat, among other things, food allergies and therefore could result in an allergic person ingesting a food fraction that could result in a serious, even fatal, allergic reaction.

Here is the point: This bill is an insult to the intelligence of Americans. Anna, you have this right. This is about Senators who do not respect your intelligence, who do not honor your right to make a decision as a consumer. They know that this is an incredibly popular idea to put a symbol or phrase on a package to indicate it has key ingredients because citizens want to know. The Members here know this, and they don't care because they want to make the decision for you. They do not want to allow you freedom to make your own choices. They do not consider you to be an adult. They want to treat you like a child who is fed only the information they want to give you.

So, Anna, I am deeply disturbed about this insulting legislation that tears down the intelligence of our American citizens, that says to the 9 out of 10 Americans in every State in this Union that we want to strip away your ability to make your own choice.

Keri from Eugene writes: ''Why are we protecting large conglomerates and processed food companies instead of protecting the American people and the land?''

Well, that is a good question, Keri. I suppose it is because these companies make huge donations under the constitutional decisions of our Supreme Court.

It is a very interesting story about the evolution of our country. When our forefathers got together to draft the Constitution, they had a vision of citizens having an equal voice. That decision was somewhat flawed, as we all know—flaws we corrected over time related to race, related to gender. But the fundamental principle was that citizens got to have an equal voice.

What they pictured was this: They pictured a town commons, which cost nothing to participate in, and each citizen could get up and share their view in that town commons, could share their view before the town voted, or could share that view equally with the person representing them in Congress. This is what Thomas Jefferson called the mother principle—that we are only a republic to the degree that the decisions we make reflect the will of the people. He said for that to happen, the citizens have to have an equal voice. Those are the words he used: ''equal voice'' and ''mother principle.'' Lincoln talked about the same thing: equal voice as the foundation of our Nation.

So when you ask the question, Keri, about why are we protecting large conglomerates at the expense of where the American people stand, you have to go back 40 years ago to a case called Buckley v. Valeo. In Buckley v. Valeo, the Supreme Court stood this principle—the mother principle of equal voice—on its head because now we have a commons that is for sale. The commons is the television. The commons is the radio. The commons is the information on Web sites.

They basically said that Americans could buy as much of that commons as they want. So instead of an equal voice, Jefferson's mother principle, we instead have a completely unequal voice. Those with fabulous wealth have the equivalent of a stadium sound system, and they use it to drown out the voice of ordinary Americans.

Then a couple of years ago, on a 5-to-4 decision of the Supreme Court, they doubled down on the destruction of our ''We the People'' Nation. They tore those three words out of the start of our Constitution, and they did so by saying: You know what. We are going to allow the board members of a corporation to utilize their owners' money for the political purposes that the board wants to use, and they don't have to even inform the owners of the company that they are using their money for these political purposes. So we have this vast concentration of power in corporations because corporations are large. If they have a small board, the board says: We want to influence politics in this fashion, and we don't even have to tell the owners about it. So that is a hugely additional destructive force on top of Buckley v. Valeo. There is nothing in the Constitution that comes close to saying that corporations are people, and there certainly is nothing that says a few people who sit in the decisionmaking capacity should be able to take other people's money and spend it for their own political purposes. It was never envisioned.

Between these decisions over several decades, we have destroyed the very premise of our Constitution, Thomas Jefferson's mother principle, that we are only a republic to the degree that we reflect the will of the people.

That is the best I can do, Keri, to explain how it is possible that this bill, which flies in the face of 9 out of 10 Americans, has made it to this floor. This bill didn't go through committee. We have leadership in this body that pledged regular order. They were going to put things through committee and bring bills to the floor that had been passed by committee. But this hasn't been. That is how much, as Keri put it,

''large conglomerates'' are influencing what happens here in this Senate.

Judith of Grants Pass says:

Please do NOT support [this bill] that would block states from requiring labels on genetically modified foods. People have a right to know [whether or not they are considered safe].

She is right. She is absolutely right. It is whether or not there they are considered safe. This isn't a scientific debate. There is science of concerns—science that I have laid out here on the floor. There is also science about benefits. But that is not the issue. The issue is a citizen's right to make their own decision. If they are concerned about the massive increase in herbicides and the destruction it does to the soil, they have a right to exercise that in the marketplace. If they are concerned about the massive amount of runoff of herbicides affecting the basic food chains in our streams and rivers, they have that right. If they are concerned about the fact that there has been some movement of genes from crops to related weeds that then become resistant to herbicides, that is their business. If they are concerned that Bt corn is producing superbugs resistant to the pesticide, that is their business.

These are not phantom ideas or phantom concerns. These are scientifically documented concerns. None of this says it is unsafe to put in your mouth. I hear that all the time: Well, it is not unsafe to put these GE things in your mouth. But here is the thing: That isn't the basis on which we label. We label things people care about, and there are implications to how things are grown and their impact.

For example, we have a Federal law that says grocery stores have to label the difference between wild fish and farmed fish. Why is that? Well, there are implications to what happens in different types of farms, and citizens are given a heads-up by this law, and they can decide. They can look into it and see if it is a concern. They may not be at all concerned about how catfish are raised in a farm setting, but they may be very concerned about how salmon are raised in farm settings because we find there are some bad effects of salmon raised in pens in the ocean that transfer disease to wild salmon. That is their right. They get to look into that. We give them that ability by requiring this information be on the package.

I don't hear anyone in this Chamber standing up right now and saying they want to strip our packages of the information of wild fish versus farmed fish. We have basic information on packages regarding whether juice is fresh or whether it is created from concentrate because citizens care about the difference. So we give them this basic information to facilitate their choice. And that is the point: We facilitate their choice.

Kimberly writes in:

I am writing you today to urge you to vote no on . . . [anything that would] block Vermont's . . . [bill].

The right to know what we eat is critical.

Richard from Portland writes: ''I urge you to filibuster, if need be, to stop the 'Dark Act.' ''

Well, I would like to do that, RICHARD. I would like to do anything I can to slow this down so the American people know what is going on. But here is the level of cynicism in this Chamber: Last night, when the majority leader filed this bill, which has never gone through committee, he simultaneously filed a petition to close debate. Under the rules of the Senate, that means, after an intervening day, there is going to be a vote, and there is no way that my speaking here day and night can stop it because it is embedded in the basic rules.

However, I can try to come to this floor several times and lay out these basic arguments and hope to wake up America to what is being plotted and planned in this Chamber right now. So that is what I am trying to do. I hope that it will have an impact. I hope that when the vote comes tomorrow morning after this intervening day—Tuesday being the intervening day—that my colleagues will say this is just wrong—stripping from Americans the right to know something 9 out of 10 Americans want, stripping States of the ability to respond to their citizens' desires, shutting down a single State laboratory in Vermont when there is no conflict on labels at this point because only one State is implementing a law.

I hope that they will say: You know what. This should be properly considered in committee. This bill should be in committee. It should be given full opportunity when it does come to the floor—and I assume it would—to be openly amended so that anyone who wants to put forward an amendment would be able to do so. That is the way the Senate used to work.

When I was here as an intern in 1976, I was asked to staff the Tax Reform Act of that year. I sat up in the staff gallery. At that point there was no television on this floor; therefore, nobody outside this room could track what was going on. There were no cell phones. There was no other way to convey what was occurring. So the staff sat up in the staff gallery, and when a vote was called, you would go down the staircase to the elevator just outside here. You would meet your Senator, and you would brief your Senator on the debate that was happening on that amendment. That is what I did—amendment after amendment, day after day. Then, as soon as that amendment was voted on, there would be a group of Senators seeking recognition of the Presiding Officer, and you would hear everyone simultaneously go, ''Mr. President,'' because the rule is that the Presiding Officer is supposed to recognize the very first person he or she hears, and so everyone tried to be first the moment that an amendment was done, the moment the vote was announced. Well, with all those people simultaneously seeking the attention of the Chair, it is really impossible for the Chair to sort out exactly who is speaking first. So they call on someone on the left side of the Chamber, and then, when that amendment was done an hour later—because they would debate it for an hour and hold the vote; when the vote was done, they called on somebody on the right side of the Chamber. They worked it back and forth so that everyone got to have their amendment heard. That is an open amendment process.

I have heard many of my colleagues across the aisle call for that kind of process when the Democrats were in charge, and I support that kind of process. I supported it when I was in the majority; I support it when I am in the minority. Everything I have proposed or talked about to make this Senate Chamber work better as a legislative body I have supported consistently, whether I am in the majority or whether I am in the minority.

So here is the thing. We have the opposite of that right now. We don't have the Senate of the 1970s, where Senators honor their right to debate and have an open amendment process. That would really change this. That would provide an opportunity for all viewpoints to be heard. We would never have had a cloture motion filed within seconds of the bill first being put on the floor, and it would have been incredibly rare for a bill that had not gone through committee to be put on the floor.

We have to reclaim the legislative process, and right now we don't have it. So that is a great reason to vote no tomorrow morning. Voting no tomorrow morning is the right vote if you believe in States' rights. It is the right vote if you believe in the consumers' right to know, the citizens' right to know. And it is the right vote if you believe we shouldn't have a process in this Chamber that just jams through something for a powerful special interest at the expense of the 9 or 10 Americans who want this information.

So tomorrow, colleagues, let's turn down this insult to the intelligence of Americans, this assault on States' rights, this deprivation, this attack on the freedom of our citizens.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the next Supreme Court Justice could dramatically change the direction of the Court. And the majority of this body believes the American people shouldn't be denied the opportunity to weigh in on this question. We believe there should be a debate about the role of Supreme Court Justices in our constitutional system.

With that in mind, I wanted to spend a few minutes discussing the appropriate role of the Court. Before I turn to that, I wish to note that the minority leader continues his daily missives on the Supreme Court vacancy.

Most of us around here take what he says with a grain of salt. So, I am not going to waste time responding to everything he says. I will note that this is what he said in 2005 when the other side was filibustering a number of circuit court nominations, and a few months before they filibustered the Alito nomination to the Supreme Court:

> The duties of the Senate are set forth in the U.S. Constitution. Nowhere in that document does it say the Senate has a duty to give presidential nominees a vote. It says appointments shall be made with the advice and consent of the Senate. That is very different than saying every nominee receives a vote.

With that, I will turn to the appropriate role of a Justice under our Constitution. Part of what makes America an exceptional Nation is our founding document. It is the oldest written Constitution in the world. It created a functioning republic, provided stability, protected individual rights, and was structured so that different branches and levels of government can resist encroachment into their areas of responsibility. A written Constitution contains words with fixed meanings. The Constitution, and in many ways the Nation, has survived because we have remained true to those words. And our constitutional republic is ultimately safeguarded by a Supreme Court that enforces the Constitution and its text.

Our Constitution creates a republic where the people decide who will govern them, and by what rules. The Supreme Court can override the people's wishes only where the Constitution prohibits what the people's elected officials have enacted. Otherwise, the Court's rulings are improper. Stated differently, the Justices aren't entitled to displace the democratic process with their own views. Where the Constitution is silent, the people decide how they will be governed.

This fundamental feature of our republic is critical to preserving liberty. The temptation to apply their own views rather than the Constitution has always lurked among the Justices. This led to the Dred Scott decision. It led to striking down many economic regulations early in the last century. And Americans know all too well in recent decades that the Supreme Court has done this regularly. Justice Scalia believed that to ensure objectivity rather than subjectivity in judicial decision-making, the Constitution must be read according to its text and its original meaning as understood at the time those words were written.

The Constitution is law, and it has meaning. Otherwise, what the Court offers is merely politics, masquerading as constitutional law. Justice Scalia wrote that the rule of law is a law of rules. Law is not Justices reading their own policy preferences into the Constitution. It is not a multifactor balancing test untethered to the text. We all know that Justices apply these balancing tests to reach their preferred policy results.

The Court is not, and should not, be engaged in a continuing Constitutional Convention designed to update our founding document to conform with the Justices' personal policy preference. The Constitution is not a living document. The danger with any Justice who believes they are entitled to ''update'' the Constitution is that they will always update it to conform with their own views. That is not the appropriate role of a Justice. As Justice Scalia put it, ''The-times-they-are-a-changin' is a feeble excuse for disregard of duty.''

Now, when conservatives say the role of Justices is to interpret the Constitution and not to legislate from the bench, we are stating a view as old as the Constitution itself. The Framers separated the powers of the Federal Government.

In Federalist 78, Hamilton wrote, ''The interpretation of the laws is the proper and peculiar province of the courts.'' It is up to elected representatives, who are accountable to the people, to make the law. It is up to the courts to interpret it.

These views of the judicial role under the Constitution were once widely held. But beginning with the Warren Court of the 1960s, the concept took hold that the Justices were change agents for society. Democracy was messy and slow. It was much easier for Justices to impose their will on society in the guise of constitutional interpretation.

Acting as a superlegislature was so much more powerful than deciding cases by reading the legal text and the record. The view took hold that a Justice could vote on a legal question just as he or she would vote as a legislator. Perhaps the Framers underestimated what Federalist 78 called the ''least dangerous branch,'' one that ''can take no active resolution whatever.'' Since the days of the Warren Court, this activist approach has been common: striking down as unconstitutional laws that the Constitution doesn't even address.

Now, to his credit, President Obama has been explicit in his view that Justices aren't bound by the law. While he usually pays lip service to the traditional, limited, and proper role of the Court to decide cases based on law and facts, he is always quick to add that on the tough cases, a judge should look to her heart or rely on empathy.

The President's empathy standard is completely inconsistent with the judicial duty to be impartial. Asking a Justice to consider empathy in deciding cases is asking a Justice to rule based on his or her own personal notion of right and wrong, rather than law.

As I have said, everyone knows this President won't be filling the current vacancy. Nonetheless, the President has indicated he intends to submit a nomination. That is ok. He is constitutionally empowered to make the nomination. And the Senate holds the constitutional power to withhold consent, as we will. But as we debate the proper role of the Court, and what type of Justice the next President should nominate, it is instructive to examine what the President says he is looking for in a nominee.

The President made clear his nominee, whoever it is, won't decide cases only on the law or the Constitution. He wrote that in ''cases that reach the Supreme Court in which the law is not clear,'' the Justice should apply his or her ''life experience.''

This, of course, is just an updated version of the same standard we have heard from this President before. It is the empathy standard. Of course, a Justice who reaches decisions based on empathy or life experience has a powerful incentive to read every case as unclear, so they have a free hand to rely on their life experiences to reach just outcomes.

The President also said any Justice he would nominate would consider ''the way [the law] affects the daily reality of people's lives in a big, complicated democracy, and in rapidly changing times. That, I believe, is an essential element for arriving at just decisions and fair outcomes.''

With all respect to the President, any nominee who supports this approach is advocating an illegitimate role for the Court. It is flatly not legitimate for any Justice to apply his or her own personal views of justice and fairness.

Perhaps most troubling is the President's statement that any nominee of his must ''arrive[] at just decisions and fair outcomes.'' That is the very definition of results-oriented judging. And it flies in the face of a judge as a fair, neutral, and totally objective decision-maker in any particular case. A Justice is to question assumptions and apply rigorous scrutiny to the arguments the parties advance, as did Justice Scalia.

Under the President's approach, a Justice will always arrive where he or she started. That isn't judging. That is a super-legislator in a black robe. In our history, regrettably, we have had Justices who embraced this conception. Chief Justice Warren was infamous for asking, ''Is it just? Is it fair?'' without any reference to law, when he voted.

Justice Scalia's entire tenure on the Court was devoted to ending this misplaced and improper approach. In reality, a Justice is no more entitled to force another American to adhere to his or her own moral views or life experiences than any other ordinary American.

Imposition of such personal biases subjects citizens to decrees from on high that they can't change, except through constitutional amendment. And those decrees are imposed by officials they can't vote out of office.

This is not the constitutional republic the Framers created. The American people deserve the opportunity during this election year to weigh in on

whether our next Justice should apply the text of the Constitution, or alternatively, whether a Justice should rely on his or her own life experiences and personal sense of right and wrong to arrive at just decisions and fair outcomes. Senate Republicans will ensure the American people aren't denied this unique and historic opportunity.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I listened to what my good friend from Iowa said about the standards that he is afraid an Obama nominee would utilize. I note that in the dozens and dozens of cases—probably hundreds—that Obama nominees have been voted on, my friend from Iowa did not mention a single case where they applied it to anything but the law, and I suspect that standard would apply to anybody the President would nominate.

Now, Mr. President, on another matter, I want to set the record straight. Contrary to the remarks of the Senate majority leader yesterday, Vermont has not recently passed a GE food-labeling law. I mention that because I am old-fashioned enough to like to have things clear and accurate in this Chamber.

It was in May 2014—nearly 2 years ago—that after 2 years of debate, more than 50 committee hearings featuring testimony from more than 130 representatives on all sides of the issue, the Vermont Legislature passed and the Governor of Vermont signed into law a disclosure requirement for genetically engineered ingredients in foods.

Now, in this body: After one hearing 5 months ago that was only tangentially related to the issue, and without any open debate on the floor, the Republican leadership has decided that it knows better than the State of Vermont. Today we are being asked to tell Vermonters and constituents in other States with similar laws that their opinion, their views, and their own legislative process simply doesn't matter because we can decide on a whim to ignore them. We are actually being asked to tell consumers that their right to know isn't, frankly, theirs at all.

I think in my State, in the Presiding Officer's State, and all the other Senators' States, consumers think they have a right to know. Now we are telling them: Not so much.

I hear from Vermonters regularly and with growing frequency that they are proud of Vermont's Act 120. It is a law that simply requires food manufacturers to disclose when the ingredients they use are genetically engineered. It doesn't tell them they can't use those ingredients; it simply says: Consumers have a right to know. Tell us what you are doing.

Vermonters are concerned and some are actually outraged that the Congress is trying to roll back their right to know what is in the food that they give their families. Vermont is not the only State whose laws are under attack; we just happen to be the State with the fastest approaching deadline for implementation.

The bill we are considering today is a hasty reaction—a reaction with no real, open hearing—in response to a 2-year-old law that is set to finally take effect and doesn't fully take effect until the end of this year. Instead of protecting consumers and trying to find a true compromise, this bill continues the status quo and tells the public: We don't want you to have simple access to information about the foods you consume. You don't need to know what is in the food. Trust us. We know better. We, Members of the Senate, know better than you do, so we are not going to let you know what is going on. It is no wonder that people get concerned.

Vermont's law and others like it around the country are not an attack on biotechnology. Vermont's law and others like it merely require factual labeling intended to inform consumers. All we are saying is, if you are going to buy something, you ought to know what you are getting. If you want to buy it, go ahead. Nobody is stopping you. But you ought to be able to know what is in it.

Producers of food with GE products have nothing to hide. Let's take Campbell's, which is a multibillion-dollar brand. It is certainly one of the biggest brands in this country. They are already taking steps to label their products. They have to do that to comply with similar laws in other countries. They said: Sure, we will comply, and we will label our packages.

Our ranking member on the Agriculture Committee, Senator STABENOW, has had commitments from other CEOs in the food industry who are ready and able to move ahead with labeling and national disclosure. They actually know that consumers really care about what they are getting. Now the U.S. Senate wants to tell those millions of consumers ''You have no right to know. We are going to block your chance to know, and we are going to keep you from knowing what is in your food.'' And some of these large companies are saying that they agree with the consumer. An asterisk, a symbol, a factual notation on a product label is not going to send our economy into a tailspin and cause food prices to spiral out of control.

Again, let's get rid of the rhetoric. I heard some on the floor in this Chamber argue that Vermont's labeling law will cost consumers an average of $1,000 more per year on food purchases. Wow. The second smallest State in the Nation passed a law that simply tells companies to disclose the ingredients in the food consumers are buying, and somehow that law is going to cost consumers $1,000 more per year in food purchases? If the claim wasn't so laughable, we might be able to ignore it. But we found out where that cost estimate came from. It came directly from a study paid for by the Corn Refiners Association and is based on every single food manufacturer in the United States eliminating GE ingredients from their food. We are not asking anybody to eliminate anything—this is not what anyone is asking companies or farmers to do. We are just saying: If I buy something and I am going to feed it to my children—or in my case, my grandchildren—or my wife and I are going to eat it, I would kind of like to know what is in it. All we are asking for is a simple label.

At a time when too much of the national discourse is hyperbolic at best, why don't we set an example for the rest of the country? Try a little truth in this Chamber. GE labeling should be the least of our woes.

In fact, the bill before us today is an attack on another Vermont law. That law has been on the books for only, well, 10 years. Oh my God, the sky is falling. It is actually similar to a law that is on the books in Virginia these are genetically engineered seed labeling laws. Farmers in both Vermont and Virginia have benefited from this law, and those selling seed to other States have complied with it. Why preempt State laws that have worked well for 10 years and with which companies are already complying? Are we going to do that because one or two companies that are willing to spend a great deal of money feel otherwise?

GE labeling is about disclosure. It gives consumers more information, more choices, and more control on what they feed themselves and their families. If we hide information from the consumers, we limit a measure of accountability for producers and marketers.

I don't know what people are trying to hide. Our producers and marketers in Vermont are proud to showcase not just the quality of their products but the methods by which they are produced. We are not blocking our markets to anybody, whether it is GE foods or otherwise. If it works, we ought to give people a choice. Why have 100 people here say: Oh no, we know better than all of you.

I am a proud cosponsor of Senator MERKLEY's bill. It provides for a strong national disclosure standard. It would give manufacturers a whole variety of options to disclose the presence of GE ingredients in their food, and they can pick and choose how they do it.

I am equally grateful to Senator STABENOW. She has fought hard to negotiate a pathway toward a national disclosure standard. We should not move forward with this bill without an open and full debate. We shouldn't just say to consumers throughout the country: We know better than you.

I am not going to support any bill that takes away the right of Vermont or any State to legislate in a way that advances consumer awareness. If we don't want to have a patchwork of State disclosure laws, then let's move

in the direction of setting a national mandatory standard. Some of the biggest food companies in this country are moving forward and complying with Vermont's law.

This week is Sunshine Week, so let's hope the Senate rejects efforts to close doors and not let the American public know what is in their food. I hope they will oppose advancing this hastily crafted legislation and work towards a solution that actually lets the consumers in Texas, Iowa, Vermont, or anywhere else know what is in their food.

I see the distinguished majority deputy leader on the floor. I have more to say, but I will save it for later.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

FOIA IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2015

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, last week, when the Senate passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, I spoke on this floor about the good work that is getting done in the Senate since Republicans took over. Time and again, we have seen both sides of the aisle come together to find practical solutions to real problems facing the American people.

That is the way the Senate is supposed to work, and we need to keep that momentum as we move forward to tackle other critical issues.

As chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I continue to be proud of the role we have played in getting work done in a bipartisan manner.

Today, on the floor of the Senate, we are doing that once again. We are passing another Judiciary Committee bill that carries strong, bipartisan support. We are passing another Judiciary Committee bill that solves real issues and is supported by folks on all ends of the political spectrum.

Don't get me wrong. Finding agreement on both sides of the aisle is no easy task. Even the most well-intentioned efforts can get bogged in the details.

But the fact that we are here today is a testament to good-faith negotiations and a commitment to make government work for the American people. And it is another indication of what this institution can be and what it was meant to be.

The FOIA Improvement Act makes much-needed improvements to the Freedom of Information Act, and its passage marks a critically important step in the right direction toward fulfilling FOIA's promise of open government.

I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of the FOIA Improvement Act, and I want to thank Senator CORNYN and the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, Senator LEAHY, for their tireless, bipartisan work to advance this bill through the Senate.

I am especially proud that the bill's passage occurs during this year's Sunshine Week, an annual nationwide initiative highlighting the importance of openness and transparency in government.

Every year, Sunshine Week falls around the birthday of James Madison, the father of our Constitution. This isn't by mistake.

Madison's focus on ensuring that government answers to the people is embodied in the spirit of FOIA, so passing the FOIA Improvement Act this week is a fitting tribute to his commitment to accountable government and the protection of individual liberty. And it is an opportunity for us all to recommit ourselves to these same higher principles.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of FOIA's enactment. For over five decades, FOIA has worked to help folks stay in the know about what their government is up to. The Supreme Court said it best when it declared: ''The basic purpose of FOIA is to ensure an informed citizenry, vital to the functioning of a democratic society, needed to check against corruption and to hold the governors accountable to the governed.''

To put it simply, FOIA was created to ensure government transparency, and transparency yields accountability.

After all, a government that operates in the dark, without fear of exposure or scrutiny, is one that enables misdeeds by those who govern and fosters distrust among the governed. By peeling back the curtains and allowing the sunlight to shine in, however, FOIA helps fight back against waste, fraud, and abuse of the taxpayer's dollar.

No doubt, FOIA has successfully brought to light numerous stories of government's shortcomings. Through FOIA, folks have learned about public health and safety concerns, mistreatment of our Nation's veterans, and countless other matters that without FOIA would not have come to light.

But despite its successes, a continued culture of government secrecy has served to undermine FOIA's fundamental promise.

For example, we have seen dramatic increases in the number of backlogged FOIA requests. Folks are waiting longer than ever to get a response from agencies. Sometimes, they simply hear nothing back at all. And we have seen a record-setting number of FOIA lawsuits filed to challenge an agency's refusal to disclose information.

More and more, agencies are simply finding ways to avoid their duties under FOIA altogether. They are failing to proactively disclose information, and they are abusing exemptions to withhold information that should be released to the public.

Problems with FOIA have persisted under both Republican and Democrat administrations, but under President Obama, things have only worsened, and his commitment to a ''new era of openness'' has proven illusory at best.

In January, the Des Moines Register published a scathing editorial, outlining the breakdowns in the FOIA system and calling on Congress to tackle the issue head-on.

The editorial described: ''In the Obama administration, federal agencies that supposedly work for the people have repeatedly shown themselves to be flat-out unwilling to comply with the most basic requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.''

It continued: ''At some federal agencies, FOIA requests are simply ignored, despite statutory deadlines for responses. Requesters are often forced to wait months or years for a response, only to be denied access and be told they have just 14 days to file an appeal.''

According to the editorial: ''Other administrations have engaged in these same practices, but Obama's penchant for secrecy is almost unparalleled in recent history.''

These are serious allegations, and no doubt, there are serious problems needing fixed.

So reforms are necessary to address the breakdowns in the FOIA system, to tackle an immense and growing backlog of requests, to modernize the way folks engage in the FOIA process, and to ultimately help change the culture in government toward openness and transparency.

What we have accomplished with this bill—in a bipartisan manner—is a strong step in the right direction.

First, the bill makes much-needed improvements to one of the most overused FOIA exemptions. It places a 25-year sunset on the government's ability to withhold certain documents that demonstrate how the government reaches decisions. Currently, many of these documents can be withheld from the public forever, but this bill helps bring them into the sunlight, providing an important and historical perspective on how our government works.

Second, the bill increases proactive disclosure of information. It requires agencies to make publicly available any documents that have been requested and released three or more times under FOIA. This will go a long way toward easing the backlog of requests.

Third, the bill gives more independence to the Office of Government Information Services. OGIS, as it is known, acts as the public's FOIA ombudsman and helps Congress better understand where breakdowns in the FOIA system are occurring. OGIS serves as a key resource for the public and Congress, and this bill strengthens OGIS's ability to carry out its vital role.

Fourth, through improved technology, the bill makes it easier for folks to submit FOIA requests to the government. It requires the development of a single, consolidated online portal through which folks can file a request. But let me be clear: it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Agencies will still be able to rely on request-processing systems they have already built into their operations.

Most importantly, the bill codifies a presumption of openness for agencies to follow when they respond to FOIA requests. Instead of knee-jerk secrecy, the presumption of openness tells agencies to make openness and transparency their default setting.

These are all timely and important reforms to the FOIA process, and they will help ensure a more informed citizenry and a more accountable government.

So I am pleased to see this bill move through the Senate. President Obama has an opportunity to join with Congress in securing some of the most substantive and necessary improvements to FOIA since its enactment.

On July 4 of this year, FOIA turns 50. Let's continue this strong, bipartisan effort to send a bill to the President's desk before then. Let's work together to help fulfill FOIA's promise.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the senior Senator from Iowa for his remarks. As he knows, I have worked for years on improving FOIA along with my friend, the senior Senator from Texas. We are celebrating Sunshine Week, a time to pay tribute to one of our Nation's most basic values—the public's right to know. Our very democracy is built on the idea that our government should not operate in secret. James Madison, a staunch defender of open government and whose birthday we celebrate each year during Sunshine Week, wisely noted that for our democracy to succeed, people ''must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.'' It is only through transparency and access to information that the American people can arm themselves with the information they need to hold our government accountable.

We are also celebrating the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA, our Nation's premier transparency law. I was actually at the National Archives yesterday, and I looked at the actual bill signed into law in 1966 by then-President Johnson, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, and Speaker John McCormack, all who were here long before I was. I was thinking that, 50 years ago, the Freedom of Information Act became the foundation on which all our sunshine and transparency policies rest, so I can think of no better way to celebrate both Sunshine Week and the 50th Anniversary of FOIA than by passing the FOIA Improvement Act.

This bipartisan bill, which I coauthored with Senator CORNYN, codifies the principle that President Obama laid out in his 2009 executive order. He asked all Federal agencies to adopt a ''presumption of openness'' when considering the release of government information under FOIA. That follows the spirit of FOIA put into place by President Clinton, repealed by President Bush, and reinstated as one of President Obama's first acts in office, but I think all of us felt we should put the force of law behind the presumption of openness so that the next President, whomever he or she might be, cannot change that without going back to Congress. Congress must establish a transparency standard that will remain for future administrations to follow—and that is what our bill does. We should not leave it to the next President to decide how open the government should be. We have to hold all Presidents and their administrations accountable to the highest standard. I do not think my friend, the senior Senator from Texas, will object if I mention that in our discussions we have both said words to the effect that we need FOIA, whether it is a Democratic or Republican administration. I do not care who controls the administration. When they do things they think are great, they will release a sheath of press releases about them. However, it is FOIA that lets us know when they are not doing things so well. The government works better if every administration is held to the same standard.

The FOIA Improvement Act also provides the Office of Government Information Services, OGIS, with additional independence and authority to carry out its work. The Office of Government and Information Services, created by the Leahy-Cornyn OPEN Government Act in 2007, serves as the FOIA ombudsman to the public and helps mediate disputes between FOIA requesters and agencies. Our bill will provide OGIS with new tools to help carry out its mission and ensure that OGIS can communicate freely with Congress so we can better evaluate and improve FOIA going forward. The FOIA Improvement Act will also make FOIA easier to use by establishing an online portal through which the American people can submit FOIA requests, and it will ensure more information is available to the public by requiring that frequently requested records be made available online.

Last Congress, the FOIA Improvement Act, which Senator CORNYN and I wrote, passed the Senate unanimously. The House failed to take it up. So as the new Congress came in, to show we are bipartisan with a change from Democratic leadership to Republican leadership, Senator CORNYN and I moved quickly to reintroduce our legislation in the new Congress. The Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously approved our bill in February 2015. Sometimes it is hard for the Senate Judiciary Committee to unanimously agree that the sun rises in the east, but on this issue, we came together. Our bill has been awaiting Senate action for over a year. I urge its swift passage today. I want the House to take it up. I want the President to sign it into law. I am proud to stand here with my good friend, the senior Senator from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague, the Senator from Vermont, for being together with me on what some people would regard as the Senate's odd couple—people with very different views on a lot of different things but who try to work together on legislation such as this, freedom of information reform legislation, but I can think of others that we worked on as well, such as patent reform and criminal justice reform.

I think most people are a little bit surprised when they see us fighting like cats and dogs on various topics, which we will—and those fights are important when they are based on principle—I think they are a little bit surprised when they see us then come together and try to find common cause, common ground on things such as this, but this is the sort of thing that makes the Senate work. This is the sort of thing that the American people deserve, when Republicans and Democrats, people all along the ideological spectrum, work together to find common ground.

I couldn't agree with the Senator more about, really, a statement of human nature. It is only human nature to try to hide your failures and to trumpet your successes. It is nothing more, nothing less than that. But what the Freedom of Information Act is premised on is the public's right to know what their government is doing on their behalf.

I know some people might think, well, for somebody who is a conservative, this is a little bit of an odd position. Actually, I think it is a natural fit. If you are a conservative like me, you think that the government doesn't have the answer to all the challenges that face our country, that sometimes, as Justice Brandeis said, sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Indeed, I know something else about human nature: that people act differently when they know others are watching than they do when they think they are in private and no one can see what they are doing. It is just human nature.

So I have worked together with Mr. LEAHY, the Senator from Vermont, repeatedly to try to advance reforms of our freedom of information laws, and I am glad to say that today we will have another milestone in that very productive, bipartisan relationship on such an important topic. This is Sunshine Week, a week created to highlight the need for more transparent and open government.

Let me mention a couple of things this bill does. It will, of course, as we said, strengthen the existing Freedom of Information Act by creating a presumption of openness. It shouldn't be incumbent on an American citizen asking for information from their own government—information generated and maintained at taxpayer expense—they shouldn't have to come in and prove something to be able to get access to something that is theirs in the

first place. Now, there may be good reason—classified information necessary to fight our Nation's adversaries, maybe personally private information that is really not the business of government, but if it is, in fact, government information bought for and maintained by the taxpayer, then there ought to be a presumption of openness. This legislation will, in other words, build on what our Founding Fathers recognized hundreds of years ago: that a truly democratic system depends on an informed citizenry to hold their leaders accountable. And in a form of government that depends for its very legitimacy on the consent of the governed, the simple point is, if the public doesn't know what government is doing, how can they consent? So this is also about adding additional legitimacy to what government is doing on behalf of the American people.

I just want to again thank the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. We had a pretty productive couple of weeks with passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which the Presiding Officer was very involved in, and now passage of this legislation by, I hope, unanimous consent.

PRESUMPTION OF OPENNESS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, Senator CORNYN and I have worked together to improve and protect the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA—our Nation's premiere transparency law—for many years and look forward to continuing this partnership.

The bill we passed today codifies the principle that President Obama laid out in his 2009 Executive order in which he asked all Federal agencies to adopt a ''presumption of openness'' when considering the release of government information under FOIA. This policy embodies the very spirit of FOIA. By putting the force of law behind the presumption of openness, Congress can establish a transparency standard that will remain for generations to come. Importantly, codifying the presumption of openness will help reduce the perfunctory withholding of documents through the overuse of FOIA's exemptions. It requires agencies to consider whether the release of particular documents will cause any foreseeable harm to an interest the applicable exemption is meant to protect. If it will not, the documents should be released.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank Senator LEAHY for his remarks and for working together on this important bill. This bill is a good example of the bipartisan work the Senate can accomplish when we work together toward a common goal. I agree with Senator LEAHY that the crux of our bill is to promote disclosure of government information and not to bolster new arguments in favor of withholding documents under FOIA's statutory exemptions.

I want to clarify a key aspect of this legislation. The FOIA Improvement Act makes an important change to exemption (b)(5). Exemption (b)(5) permits agencies to withhold documents covered by litigation privileges, such as the attorney-client privilege, attorney work product, and the deliberative process privilege, from disclosure. Our bill amends exemption (b)(5) to impose a 25-year sunset for documents withheld under the deliberative process privilege. This should not be read to raise an inference that the deliberative process privilege is somehow heightened or strengthened as a basis for withholding before the 25-year sunset. This provision of the bill is simply meant to effectuate the release of documents withheld under the deliberative process privilege after 25 years when passage of time undoubtedly dulls the rationale for withholding information under this exemption.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank Senator CORNYN for his comments, and I agree with his characterization of the intent behind the 25-year sunset and the deliberative process privilege. This new sunset should not form the basis for agencies to argue that the deliberative process privilege somehow has heightened protection before the 25-year sunset takes effect. Similarly, the deliberative process privilege sunset is not intended to create an inference that the other privileges—including attorney-client and attorney work product, just to name a few—are somehow heightened in strength or scope because they lack a statutory sunset or that we believe they should not be released after 25 years. Courts should not read the absence of a sunset for these other privileges as Congress's intent to strengthen or expand them in any way.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank Senator LEAHY for that clarification and agree with his remarks. If there is any doubt as to how to interpret the provisions of this bill, they should be interpreted to promote, not detract, from the central purpose of the bill which is to promote the disclosure of government information to the American people.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 17, S. 337.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 337) to improve the Freedom of Information Act.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Cornyn substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 3452) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The bill (S. 337), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Presiding Officer.

Again, let me express my gratitude to my partner in this longstanding effort. Since I have been in the Senate, Senator LEAHY has worked tirelessly, together with me and my office and really the whole Senate, to try to advance the public's right to know by reforming and expanding our freedom of information laws.

Thank you.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I thank the distinguished senior Senator from Texas. He has worked tirelessly on this, and I think we both agree that the best government is one where you know what they are doing.

NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2015—Continued

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, on another matter—and I thank the distinguished Senator from Florida for not seeking recognition immediately. I ask unanimous consent that as soon as I finish, I can yield to the Senator from Florida.

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

REMEMBERING BERTA CACERES

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, the woman in the photograph next to me is Berta Caceres, an indigenous Honduran environmental activist who was murdered in her home on March 3.

Ms. Caceres was internationally admired, and in the 12 days since her death and since my remarks on the morning after and on the day of her funeral on March 5, there has been an outpouring of grief, outrage, remembrances, denunciations, and declarations from people in Honduras and around the world.

Among the appalling facts that few people may have been aware of before this atrocity is that more than 100 environmental activists have reportedly been killed in Honduras just since 2010. It is an astonishing number that previously received little attention. One might ask, therefore, why Ms. Caceres' death has caused such a visceral, explosive reaction.

Berta Caceres, the founder and general coordinator of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras, COPINH, was an extraordinary leader whose courage and commitment, in the face of constant threats against her life, inspired countless people. For that she was awarded the prestigious 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize.

Her death is a huge loss for her family, her community, and for environmental justice in Honduras. As her family and organization have said, it illustrates ''the grave danger that human rights defenders face, especially those who defend the rights of indigenous people and the environment against the exploitation of [their] territories.''

This is by no means unique to Honduras. It is a global reality. Indigenous

people are the frequent targets of threats, persecution, and criminalization by state and non-state actors in scores of countries.

Why is this? Why are the world's most vulnerable people who traditionally live harmoniously with the natural environment so often the victims of such abuse and violence?

There are multiple reasons, including racism and other forms of prejudice, but I put greed at the top of the list. It is greed that drives governments and private companies, as well as criminal organizations, to recklessly pillage natural resources above and below the surface of land inhabited by indigenous people, whether it is timber, oil, coal, gold, diamonds, or other valuable minerals. Acquiring and exploiting these resources requires either the acquiescence or the forcible removal of the people who live there.

In Berta Caceres' case, the threats and violence against her and other members of her organization were well documented and widely known, but calls by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for protective measures were largely ignored.

This was particularly so because the Honduran Government and the company that was constructing the hydroelectric project that Ms. Caceres and COPINH had long opposed were complicit in condoning and encouraging the lawlessness that Ms. Caceres and her community faced every day.

The perpetrators of this horrific crime have not been identified. Since March 3, there has been a great deal of legitimate concern expressed about the treatment of Gustavo Castro, the Mexican citizen who was wounded and is an eyewitness, and who has ample reason to fear for his life in a country where witnesses to crime are often stalked and killed. In the meantime, for reasons as yet unexplained, the Honduran Government suspended, for 15 days, Castro's lawyer's license to practice.

That concern extends to the initial actions of the Honduran police who seemed predisposed to pin the attack on associates of Ms. Caceres. This surprised no one who is familiar with Honduras's ignominious police force.

The fact is we do not yet know who is responsible, but a professional, comprehensive investigation is essential, and the Honduran Government has neither the competence nor the reputation for integrity to conduct it themselves.

There have been countless demands for such an investigation. Like her family, I have urged that the investigation be independent, including the participation of international experts. With rare exception, criminal investigations in Honduras are incompetently performed and incomplete.

They almost never result in anyone being punished for homicide. As Ms. Caceres's family has requested, the Inter-American Commission is well suited to provide that independence and expertise, but the Honduran authorities have not sought that assistance just as they refused the family's request for an independent expert to observe the autopsy.

The family has also asked that independent forensic experts be used to analyze the ballistics and other evidence. The internationally respected Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation, which has received funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development for many years, would be an obvious option, but the Honduran Government has so far rejected this request, too.

Like Ms. Caceres's family, I have also urged that the concession granted to the company for the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project be cancelled. It has caused far too much controversy, divisiveness, and suffering within the Lenca community and the members of Ms. Caceres's family and organization. It clearly cannot coexist with the indigenous people of Rio Blanco who see it as a ''permanent danger'' to their safety and way of life. It is no wonder that two of the original funders of the project have abandoned it. The Dutch, Finnish, and German funders should follow their example.

This whole episode exemplifies the irresponsibility of undertaking such projects without the free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous inhabitants who are affected by them. Instead, a common practice of extractive industries, energy companies, and governments has been to divide local communities by buying off one faction, calling it ''consultation,'' and insisting that it justifies ignoring the opposing views of those who refuse to be bought.

When a majority of local inhabitants continue to protest against the project as a violation of their longstanding territorial rights, the company and its government benefactors often respond with threats and provocations, and community leaders are vilified, arrested, and even killed. Then representatives of the company and government officials profess to be shocked and saddened and determined to find the perpetrators, and years later, the crime remains unsolved and is all but forgotten.

Last year, President Hernandez, Minister of Security Corrales, and other top Honduran officials made multiple trips to Washington to lobby for Honduras' share of a U.S. contribution to the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity of the Northern Triangle of Central America. Among other things, they voiced their commitment to human rights and their respect for civil society, although not surprisingly they had neglected to consult with representatives of Honduran civil society about the contents of the plan.

The fiscal year 2016 Omnibus Appropriations Act includes $750 million to support the plan, of which a significant portion is slated for Honduras. I supported those funds. In fact I argued for an amount exceeding the levels approved by the House and Senate appropriations committees because I recognize the immense challenges that widespread poverty, corruption, violence, and impunity pose for those countries.

Some of these deeply rooted problems are the result of centuries of self-inflicted inequality and brutality perpetrated by an elite class against masses of impoverished people. But the United States also had a role in supporting and profiting from that corruption and injustice, just as today the market for illegal drugs in our country fuels the social disintegration and violence that is causing the people of Central America to flee north.

I also had a central role in delineating the conditions attached to U.S. funding for the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity, and there is strong, bipartisan support in Congress for those conditions. They are fully consistent with what the Northern Triangle leaders pledged to do and what the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development agree is necessary if the plan is to succeed.

I mention this because the assassination of Berta Caceres brings U.S. support for the plan sharply into focus. That support is far from a guarantee.

It is why a credible, thorough investigation is so important.

It is why those responsible for her death and the killers of other Honduran social activists and journalists must be brought to justice.

It is why Agua Zarca and other such projects that do not have the support of the local population should be abandoned.

And it is why the Honduran Government must finally take seriously its responsibility to protect the rights of journalists, human rights defenders, other social activists, COPINH, and civil society organizations that peacefully advocate for equitable economic development and access to justice.

Only then should we have confidence that the Honduran Government is a partner the United States can work with in addressing the needs and protecting the rights of all the people of Honduras and particularly those who have borne the brunt of official neglect and malfeasance for so many years.

Madam President, I yield the floor to the distinguished Senator from Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I would just add to Senator LEAHY's comments that a year ago, unfortunately, Honduras was known as the murder capital of the world, with the highest number of per capita murders per 100,000 people. That has improved somewhat. But that little, poor nation, under its new President, is struggling to overcome the drug lords, the crime bosses who prey on a country that is ravaged by poverty. It is such a tempting thing when all kinds of dollars are put in front of their noses in order to tempt them to get involved in these crime syndicates that have a distribution network of whatever it is—drugs,

trafficking, human trafficking, other criminal elements—a distribution that goes from south to north on up into the United States.

So I join Senator LEAHY in his expression of grief and condolences for the lady who was murdered.

DRILLING OFF THE ATLANTIC SEABOARD

Madam President, this Senator has conferred with the administration on its proposal for the drilling off the Atlantic seaboard. At least the administration listened to this Senator and kept the Atlantic area off of my State of Florida from proposed drilling leases for this next 5-year lease period. They did that last year. We are grateful they did that for the reasons for which we have fought for years to keep drilling off of the coast of Florida, not only because of what we immediately anticipate—tourism, the environment—but also our military training and testing areas.

So this Senator made the argument to the Obama administration that if you are coming out there with leases off the Atlantic seaboard, don't put it off of Florida. We have military and intelligence rockets coming out of Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. We have the rockets coming out of the Kennedy Space Center for NASA. Obviously, we can't have oil rigs out there when we are dropping the first stages of these rockets. And the administration complied.

But the administration then went on to offer for lease tracks of the Atlantic Ocean from the Georgia line all the way through the Carolinas, including up to the northern end of Virginia—very interesting. Just this morning the administration has walked back the offering of those leases off the eastern seaboard of the United States.

Now, it is certainly good news not only for the fact that they never did it in the first place off of Florida, but it is good news for the Atlantic coast residents who then fought so hard to keep the drilling off their coast. They first released this draft plan in January of 2015, a year ago, and the Department of the Interior had suggested opening up these new areas of the Mid-Atlantic. As we would expect, communities up and down the Atlantic seaboard voiced their objection, and they did it in a bipartisan way. From Atlantic City to Myrtle Beach, cities and towns along the coast passed resolutions to make clear their opposition to the drilling off their shores. Obviously, they weren't the only ones because—surprise, surprise—just this week the Pentagon weighed in and voiced its concerns, having been just corroborated in the Senate Armed Services Committee when I asked the question of the Secretary of the Navy about the concerns that drilling in the Mid-Atlantic region would impact the military's ability to maintain offshore readiness because of the testing and training areas.

The Pentagon had voiced this concern two administrations ago with regard to drilling in the gulf off of Florida, which is the largest testing and training area for our U.S. military in the world. So today, there is the Interior Department's decision to remove the Atlantic from the 5-year plan. Well, what about the next 5-year plan? And what about the rigs already operating in other areas off of our coast, such as off of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas in the gulf.

We have carried on this fight now for four decades, and today we still have a renewed push to allow drilling off of these sensitive areas for the reasons I have mentioned. Some of our own colleagues are offering an amendment to a little energy bill that is about energy efficiency. It is a nongermane amendment. But what they want to do is to sweeten the pot with all of the revenues for offshore drilling that would normally go to the Federal Government instead to go to the States—another incentive to do that drilling by the oil industry. But what we saw was that the coastal communities—in this case the Mid-Atlantic seaboard—rise up and voice objections, regardless of their partisan affiliation.

We have seen again today that the Pentagon raised its objection, and, unfortunately, we have found a Federal safety regulator asleep at the switch. It has been nearly 6 years since we faced one of the greatest natural disasters that our country has ever seen, and that was the gulf oilspill. Yet, according to the GAO report released just last week, we are no better off now than we were before that tragic accident. As a reaction to that accident, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion that, I remind my colleagues, killed 11 men and sent up to almost 5 million barrels—not gallons, barrels—of oil gushing into the gulf, there were a number of questions that were asked: How could this happen? Where were the safety inspectors?

Well, it soon became clear that the agency in charge—a subdivision of the Department of the Interior, the Minerals Management Service—was so cozy with the oil and gas industry that the Interior Department's own inspector general considered it a conflict of interest. And in response to the IG's findings, the Interior Department decided to reorganize, and it split that agency—the Minerals Management Service—into two, one in charge of leasing and the other in charge of safety.

Last Friday, the GAO—what is the GAO? It is the General Accounting Office. It is the independent, nonpartisan research arm of Congress. The GAO released a report that found that the ongoing restructuring—that splitting into—actually ''reverses actions taken to address the post-Deepwater Horizon concerns, weakening its oversight.''

The report goes on to say that the Interior Department's newly created agency in charge of safety—one of the two that were split—the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, suffers—this is the report's words—''a lack of coherent leadership'' and ''inconsistent guidance.''

So here we are 6 years after the gulf oilspill, and we are weakening oversight—the very words of the report—6 years later. Obviously, this is inexcusable. That is why a number of us have asked the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to hold a hearing on this troubling report to get to the bottom of it.

Now, at some point, the objections of the vast majority of people who live along the coast and the economies that depend on those environments and those white sandy beaches and crystal blue water and the military bases that are utilizing the testing and training areas over those waters have to be heard. Their concerns have to be addressed. We can't continue to keep having a fight every time this comes up every 5 years. There is too much at stake. Yet the fight goes on. Now there is the new evidence mounted just last Friday and—lo and behold—the results of that new evidence this morning—pulling the plug on the leasing off the eastern coast of the United States.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I come to the floor today in support of the biotechnology labeling solutions bill.

This legislation will avoid a patchwork of State labeling regulations and in so doing will save families thousands of dollars a year to protect American jobs and provide consumers with accurate, transparent information about their food.

First of all, I wish to thank Chairman PAT ROBERTS for his leadership on the issue of bioengineered food and for bringing forward his chairman's mark. Specifically, the biotechnology labeling solutions bill does three things. It immediately ends the problem of having a patchwork of inconsistent State GMO labeling programs. Second, it creates a voluntary bioengineered labeling program within 1 year. So USDA would set up a voluntary program within a year, and then within 3 years, it requires the Department of Agriculture to create a mandatory bioengineering labeling program if there is insufficient information available on products' bioengineered content.

So it makes sure that we don't have a patchwork of 50 State labeling laws. It sets up a voluntary program within 1 year. Then, if the information isn't out there sufficient for consumers, it makes sure that USDA follows up and ensures that the information is provided and that it is provided in a variety of ways that work for consumers but also work for our farmers and ranchers and for the food industry so that we don't raise costs for our consumers.

This bill will ensure that the Vermont GE labeling law, which goes into effect on July 1 of this year, does

not end up costing American families billions of dollars when they fill up their grocery carts. If we don't act soon, food companies will have one of three options for complying with the Vermont law. No. 1, they can order new packaging for products going to each individual State with a labeling law; No. 2, they could reformulate products so that no labeling is required; or No. 3, they can stop selling to States with mandatory labeling laws. Of course, all of these options or any of these options would not only increase the cost of food to consumers but could result in job losses in our ag communities.

For millions of Americans, the GMO or bioengineered food labeling issue will impact the affordability of their food. Testimony provided by the USDA, FDA, and the EPA to the Senate Agriculture Committee last fall made clear that foods produced with the benefit of biotechnology are safe. Nobody is disputing that the food is safe. The real risk is if we don't address the Vermont GMO law, real families will have a tougher time making ends meet, they will face higher costs, and they are going to have more challenges getting the foods they want.

In fact, if food companies have to apply Vermont's standards to all products nationwide, it will result in an estimated increase of over $1,050 per year per household. For families having a tough time paying bills, this is in essence a regressive tax. It will hurt people of low incomes more than it will hurt people with substantial means.

From a jobs perspective, the story is also concerning. It has been calculated that if Vermont's law is applied nationwide, it will cost over $80 billion a year to switch products over to non-GMO supplies. Those billions of dollars a year in additional costs will hurt our ag and food industry that creates more than 17 million jobs nationwide. In my home State of North Dakota alone, 94,000 jobs or 38 percent of our State's economy rely on the ag and food industry.

This is a bad time to make it more expensive to do business in the ag sector. Recently, an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City testified that net farm income in 2015 is more than 50 percent less than it was in 2013, and it is expected to go down again in 2016. So this is an issue that affects our family farms directly across the country.

If Vermont's law goes forward, many farmers who rely on biotech crops to increase productivity will be deprived of that critical tool. This Senator knows how hard our farmers work and how much they put on the line every year when they have to take out an operating loan for crops that may or may not materialize. We shouldn't ask them to feed the Nation with one hand tied behind their backs by taking away biotechnology.

More than just overcoming the problems associated with having a patchwork of State regulations, I think it is important for Americans to know this legislation ensures that consumers have consistent, accurate information about the bioengineered content of their food. The biotechnology labeling solutions bill creates greater transparency for consumers by putting in place, within 1 year, a new voluntary bioengineered food labeling program to ensure products labeled as having been produced with biotechnology meet a uniform national standard.

As I mentioned, food produced with the aid of bioengineering are, according to the FDA, EPA, and USDA, safe. However, many consumers want to know if the food they are buying is produced using biotechnology, which is why this legislation's national voluntary bioengineering standard makes so much sense. The voluntary program in this legislation will ensure that a consumer who buys a food product with a bioengineering smart label in North Dakota is purchasing a product that is held at the same disclosure standards as food sold in New York, California, or North Carolina.

This voluntary program will let the marketplace respond to consumer demand for information. You can look at the USDA organic food program, a voluntary label many consumers look for in our grocery stores. Yet this bill goes further to create a mandatory bioengineered food disclosure program if the Secretary of Agriculture finds that there is insufficient consumer access to information about bioengineered foods.

We need a solution, and this bill helps keep our Nation's food affordable, it supports jobs, and it provides consumers consistent information about bioengineered foods. I urge my colleagues to work together to support this bipartisan measure.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

Madam President, I would like to take just a minute to acknowledge, recognize, and thank our Nation's farmers on National Agriculture Day.

Today on National Agriculture Day, I want to celebrate and thank America's ag producers. That includes those in my home State of North Dakota who provide us with the lowest cost, highest quality food supply not just in the world but in the history of the world. America's grocery stores abound with fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats. Our dinner tables are able to offer our families a greater variety of nutritious, flavorful foods than ever before. They are a testament to the hard work, commitment, and innovation of our Nation's agricultural producers. Agriculture and ag-related industries is also an important part of the American economy, contributing $835 billion to our Gross Domestic Problem in 2014.

Further, our America's food and ag sector provides jobs for 16 million people and contributes billions of dollars to the national economy. Agriculture also has a positive balance of trade and produces a financial surplus for our country.

I especially want to thank the men and women of North Dakota who farm and ranch. They made agriculture North Dakota's largest industry with nearly $11 billion in sales last year. I am proud to say North Dakota leads the Nation in the production of 9 important commodities and is first or second in 15. This includes half of all the duram and spring wheat, more than 90 percent of the Nation's flax, and more than 85 percent of the Nation's canola.

America's farmers and ranchers work through drought and floods, crop disease, hail, and other challenges year in and year out. Yet they still get up every morning, put on their boots, and go out in the field and pastures for our country. Our farmers and ranchers built America, and today they sustain it. On National Agriculture Day, we acknowledge the enormous debt of gratitude we owe them.

Thank you, Madam President, and with that I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Thank you, Madam President.

I thank the distinguished Senator from North Dakota for his comments, and I would like to be associated with all of them, in fact, particularly recognizing our farmers in North Carolina. The Senator from North Dakota and I have had discussions about the friendly competition among the agriculture States and the hard work they are doing to feed America and the world, but today I rise to express my support for Chairman ROBERTS' bill for the biotechnology labeling legislation.

I am supporting Chairman ROBERTS' effort because it addresses a real problem. The problem is that a small portion of the food industry is trying to impose their policy preferences onto the entire food supply chain in the United States. We are where we are because the Vermont law is not written in a way that merely impacts the citizens of Vermont. It is astonishing to hear the misleading claim that the Vermont law is about the right to know. If the Vermont law is about the right to know, why is it that the law exempts so many products?

Here are some examples of the absurdity of the Vermont law. Vegetable cheese lasagna would be labeled, but meat lasagna wouldn't. Soy milk would need to be labeled, but cow's milk would not. Frozen pizza would need to be labeled, but delivered pizza would not. Chocolate syrup would need to be labeled, but maple syrup would not. Vegetable soup would need to be labeled, but vegetable beef soup would not. Food at a restaurant would be totally exempt, but not food at a grocery store. Vegetarian chili would need to be labeled, but meat chili would not. Veggie burgers made with soy would need to be labeled, but cheeseburgers would not.

By my way of thinking, it is a patchwork that doesn't make sense if you are trying to come up with a consistent way to communicate to consumers what is in the food they are eating. The

Vermont law is a classic case of the government picking winners and losers and putting the burden of those decisions on the backs of hard-working Americans.

I had this slide up to begin with, but this is something we have to continue to be focused on. If you were to take the Vermont law and have a couple dozen States create their own variance and have all the complexity added, it is estimated the added cost of compliance would result in a cost of some 1,000 additional dollars per household. In this economy, how many families can afford another $1,000 a year for food?

I am surprised that number is not higher. It most likely will be and here is why: Manufacturers are subject to a $1,000 fine if one of their products is mistakenly or inadvertently found for sale in Vermont on a store shelf. The food industry will have over 100,000 items in the State of Vermont—a State that has roughly 625,000 residents. If only 5 percent to 10 percent of those products are even unintentionally mislabeled, that means fines of as much as $10 million per day, in addition to the millions per year companies will have to pay to actually change their supply chains to comply with the law to serve a population of 625,000.

We are often told in this Chamber we need to be more cognizant of the science. Those who are irresponsibly scaring the American people to defend the Vermont mandatory labeling law need to understand the science is against them. Late last year, the FDA rejected a petition calling for mandatory labeling of foods from genetically engineered products stating that ''the simple fact that a plant is produced by one method over another does not necessarily mean that there will be a difference in the safety or other characteristics of the resulting foods. . . . To date, we have completed over 155 consultations for GE plant varieties. The numbers of consultations completed, coupled with the rigor of the evaluations, demonstrate that foods from GE plants can be as safe as comparable foods produced using conventional plant breeding.''

During a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing last week, USDA Secretary Vilsack responded to questions regarding GMOs by emphasizing that the mandatory labeling efforts are not about food safety, nutritional benefits, or sound science. Two weeks ago, the Secretary was quoted at a conference referring to genetically modified products saying, ''I am here to unequivocally say they are safe to consumers.''

Chairman ROBERTS' language does exactly what Congress should be doing with regard to marketing standards; that is, setting rules of engagement that are consistent, balanced, and fair for all players in the industry by providing consistent information to consumers about the content of their food. With the chairman's bill, the marketplace has an opportunity to find the best approaches to getting consumers the information they want without imposing new regulations that add costs to our food supply, complexity, and no more real information or clarity.

If we as a nation are going to have a discussion on the necessity of labeling biotechnology products, fine, but the Vermont law is not the catalyst for that debate, and that conversation should be with the American people, not one State with roughly 625,000 people dictating to the market of more than 317 million people.

I encourage my colleagues to recognize that we should do everything we can to inform consumers about the content of their food. There is a right way to do it and there is a wrong way to do it. There is a more costly way to do it as proposed by the Vermont law or there is a more straightforward, effective, and consistent way, and that is what Chairman ROBERTS is trying to accomplish with this bill. I encourage everyone to support it.

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

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

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss Presidential nominations. I think most people in this body know I am probably one of the least partisan people—looking at the issues, working across the aisle, always reaching out to my friends and colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I don't look at the barrier a lot of people look at here.

I know we are able to debate and we are able to advise and consent on nominations because we just did it. I have a tremendous problem in my State, and I think in all of our States—Colorado and all across the country—with opioid addiction and drug abuse. With that being said, I truly believe that for us to fight this war, we have to have a cultural change within the FDA. The President of the United States nominated Dr. Robert Califf, a very good man, but a person who came from within the industry and who I did not think would bring a cultural change. Still, he was the recommendation of the President.

The majority leader from Kentucky basically brought that to the floor for a vote. I thought it was the wrong person, even though this was a nomination from a President of my party, and me being a Democrat. So I think it is a misnomer for us to believe we are going to hold hard to party lines.

I have said that I didn't think Dr. Califf would bring the cultural change. I hope he proves me wrong. I am willing to work with him on that, and I will fight to make sure we rid this country of the scourge of legal prescription drug abuse that is ruining families and destroying lives. I think we have proved the President can bring people up, which is his responsibility, and we can look at that person and agree. In this case, I had only four votes on my side. The majority of all the Republicans but one—yes, all the Republicans but one—voted for him. I still think it was wrong, but we are going to make the best of it that we can.

The bottom line is we did our job. We truly did our job, and I can live with that decision. I look at the Constitution, and it is very clear. It says the President ''shall.'' It doesn't say ''may.'' Being in the legislature—and the Presiding Officer has been in the legislature as well—the words ''shall'' and ''may'' are worlds apart. It says ''shall,'' and we know he will nominate.

Why are we not willing to go through this process? I am as likely to find someone he might recommend who I will not vote for as maybe the Chair and maybe our other colleagues. I saw what happened when I first got here. We got condemned for not voting at all. We weren't getting any votes because there was protection going on. Basically, for whoever is up in the cycle, tough votes make it very difficult for people to get reelected. We proved that to be wrong because basically we saw a big switch in the Senate from the majority to the minority and the minority to the majority.

I have said very strongly that no vote is worse than a tough vote. A no vote in this body is worse than a tough vote. If you are saying that you would rather not vote at all because it might cause a problem back home, I think we have more problems if we don't do our job. That is why I can't figure this out.

If the President brings a person up, there is going to be 2 or 3 months, and if we can't find someone we can agree on—60 of us—that means it will take at least 14 Republicans to find someone they can agree on and they think is good for the country and move forward. If not, then it will run right into the next administration, whoever that may be. But basically we would be doing our job.

I just have a hard time on this one. I am going to evaluate that nominee based on their legal qualifications and judicial philosophy. I am going to look and basically see what type of jurist they have been, what types of decisions they have made, what types of social media they have been on, and what they have talked about. I will look at all of that, which is what we should be doing, to find out as much about that person as I can and to see how they will govern and rule in the future. Hopefully we will find someone who will look at the issues, look at the rule of law, and look at who we are as a country. I think we all can do that. I know very well the Chair can. I know very well every one of our colleagues

on both sides of the aisle is able to do that.

I don't believe the President can count on all Democrats, just because he is a Democrat, falling in line. If that were the case, we wouldn't have had Senator MARKEY of Massachusetts, DICK BLUMENTHAL, and I voting against Robert Califf, who was the President's nominee.

So we are going to have to find that right person. But if we never get the chance to evaluate the person, I don't know how we can do that. Again, it truly gets down to the fact that this is the job we are supposed to do. We talk about orderly business. We are getting things done. I have heard people say: Oh, yes, we are getting things done now that the Republicans are in the majority. The Chair has been here long enough to understand that the majority might set the agenda, but it is the minority that drives the train as to whether we get on something or not. So we have to work together.

We have proved the old game plan didn't work. The new game plan is fine. Let's have an open amendment process, let's go through it and debate it, and then let it go up or down on its merits. That is what we are asking for on this. Let it go to committee. When the nomination comes, let it go to the committee and look at the nomination. I mean dissect it in every way, shape, or form, whoever that person may be—he or she. I am willing to live with whatever the committee comes out with, and I am going to do my own research. When it comes to the floor, there is no guarantee that I am going to vote for that person—absolutely not. And I have already proved that. All of us have proved that we haven't just blindly followed party lines, nor should we. We aren't expected to. Our constituents don't expect us to do that. They do not want us to do it, that is for sure.

Again, the Constitution states that the President ''shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint. . . . '' He can appoint only if we have the advice and consent of the Senate. There is no other way this President or any other President can make that decision. We make the final decision.

Again, we are to the point now where the rhetoric is back and forth and it gets a little harsher and everybody gets ingrained, entrenched: By golly, we are not going to take anybody up; we don't care who that person will be. And I just hate to see that. We are all friends. We all know each other, and we all truly, I believe, are here for the right reasons and want to do the best job we can. But we are still expected to do our job.

At the end of the day, did you do your job? Yes, we looked; the President gave us somebody; we didn't think that person was qualified; we didn't think they were centrist enough; they didn't have the background or a record that we could extract what we felt their performance would be in the future; and for those reasons, we voted against that person. Or the President gave us somebody who basically we found did not have political ties to either side, who basically ruled on the law—the best interpretation of the law—and with the Constitution always at the forefront. That is the person he gave us, and that is the person we would support. But if we never get a chance to look at whoever is given to us, there is no way we can move forward.

When I was Governor of my great State of West Virginia, I had to do the job 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every minute of every day, every day of every week, every week of every month, every month of every year. It was expected. That was my job, and I tried to do the best I could. There were some times when I had to make some tough decisions. There were times I drew people together and times when there was so much division that we had to basically let it cool off and then move forward. But we always kept trying to do a better job for the people of West Virginia.

I think the American people expect us to do a better job. I really do. I don't care who gets credit for it—Republicans, Democrats. Basically, it should be all of us because the way this body works, it takes 60 votes to get on something, if we want to make that the criteria.

With that being said, I can assure you there will not be a person the President of the United States gives us—whether it is this President or the next administration and the next President—who will be the perfect jurist. We are not going to find that perfect jurist. We are not going to find someone slanted too far to the left or too far to the right so that we can't get 60 votes. We are going to have to find somebody who has shown some common sense and has some civility about them, basically using the Constitution as the basis and framework for the decisions they made as a jurist, and show that is how they are going to govern in the highest Court in the land and be a model for the rest of the world, reflecting that we are still a government of rules. We are a body where the rule of law means everything. It is hard for us to do that if we can't find someone who we feel is qualified to do the job.

So, Mr. President, I urge all my colleagues—all of my colleagues in this great body and all of my dear Republican friends—to look and think about this. If the right person is not there, don't vote for them. As a matter of fact, I would probably vote against them too. I have before. I think I am the most centrist Member of this body, and I am going to vote for what I think is good for my country and for the State of West Virginia. I think the people of West Virginia expect me to do that, and they expect me to do my job too.

With that, I hope we have another opportunity to think this over. The President probably will be giving us somebody in very short order. I would hope we are able to move to where the Judiciary Committee is able to look at that person, give us their findings on that person, and either tell us why we should not advise the President we are going to consent or find a person we can all agree upon and move forward.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NEVADA PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to honor the 75th anniversary of the Nevada Parent Teacher Association. The Nevada PTA will formally celebrate 75 years of advocacy and work for and on behalf of the children of Nevada, at various events in the State during the last week of April.

Since 1941, the Nevada PTA has been part of the Nation's largest volunteer child advocacy association. The organization promotes education, health, safety, and the arts to the children of Nevada and has been instrumental in fostering the growth of countless students. The Nevada PTA takes pride in ensuring that schools are a central part of the communities in which they reside. The organization has led efforts to curb childhood obesity, foster connections between children and the important men in their lives, and promote volunteering in innovative ways.

Since its inception, they have also been a strong supporter of art programs that allow children to grow as students and people. Working with the national association, the Nevada PTA has participated in art programs that allow children to create original works of art in categories such as photography, film, and music composition. These programs not only encourage students to be creative, but also allow connections with fellow classmates that share common interests.

Nevada PTA exemplifies the broader objective of the National PTA, advocacy for all children. Multiple schools in Nevada have been recognized by the National PTA for the School of Excellence Awards which are granted to institutions that promote diversity, demonstrate clarity in academic standards,

and establish meaningful connections with their local parent teacher association.

I applaud President David Flatt and his team for his strong leadership in one of the most important organizations for children in the State of Nevada. I am pleased that, through yours and other's selfless efforts, incalculable numbers of students, teachers, and parents have been positively affected by the Nevada PTA. This organization is an invaluable part of communities throughout the State, and I would like to extend my best wishes for continued success.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, due to a prior commitment, I regret I was not present to vote on the nomination of Dr. John B. King to be Secretary of the Department of Education. Had I been present, I would have voted in support of his confirmation. I look forward to working closely with him as the Department of Education continues implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS

• Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, today I congratulate Casey Family Programs for 50 years of public service to help vulnerable children and families in the child welfare system. Founded in 1966 by Jim Casey, the founder of United Parcel Service, UPS, this private operating foundation has been working quietly and effectively on behalf of our most vulnerable children and families.

At the beginning, Casey Family Programs started with a specific focus on providing quality foster care. After gaining considerable experience in providing direct services, Casey Family Programs recognized that it could help more families and children by working to support long-lasting improvements across entire child welfare systems. Today the foundation provides strategic consultation, technical assistance, data analysis, and independent research and evaluation at no cost to all 50 states. It also serves county and tribal child welfare jurisdictions across the Nation, including my State of Colorado.

Casey Family Programs seeks a unique partnership with the States by asking what jurisdictions hope to achieve as it relates to the foundation's mission.

In my State of Colorado, this means helping State leaders implement Colorado's Federal waiver program. It means developing initiatives to reduce reliance on congregate care, if other options may be more appropriate for the child and family. It means working with our Denver courts with a judicial engagement team to enhance collaboration among the courts, agencies, and families. Casey Family Programs also has a specific team based in Denver dedicated to Indian Child Welfare.

At the Federal level, Casey Family Programs offers its experience, research, and data to help policymakers understand and address the complicated issues of child welfare and foster care. Over the years I have been proud to work with Casey Family Programs, and I appreciate their dedication and commitment to the original vision of their founder, Jim Casey.

I believe we all share this vision of helping children find a safe and stable home, but achieving it is more challenging than it seems. I congratulate Casey Family Programs on 50 years of public service, and I look forward to continue working with the foundation in Colorado and in Congress for years to come.•

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:59 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 2426. An act to direct the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to obtain observer status for Taiwan in the International Criminal Police Organization, and for other purposes.

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

H.R. 1268. An act to amend the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 to promote energy efficiency via information and computing technologies, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2080. An act to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Clark Canyon Dam.

H.R. 2984. An act to amend the Federal Power Act to provide that any inaction by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that allows a rate change to go into effect shall be treated as an order by the Commission for purposes of rehearing and court review.

H.R. 4411. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 4412. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 4427. An act to amend section 203 of the Federal Power Act.

H.R. 4721. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolutions, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 75. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the atrocities perpetrated by ISIL against religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria include war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

H. Con. Res. 121. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress condemning the gross violations of international law amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Government of Syria, its allies, and other parties to the conflict in Syria, and asking the President to direct his Ambassador at the United Nations to promote the establishment of a war crimes tribunal where these crimes could be addressed.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH) announced that on today, March 15, 2016, he has signed the following enrolled bills, which were previously signed by the Speaker of the House:

S. 1172. An act to improve the process of presidential transition.

S. 1580. An act to allow additional appointing authorities to select individuals from competitive service certificates.

S. 1826. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 99 West 2nd Street in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, as the Lieutenant Colonel James ''Maggie'' Megellas Post Office.

H.R. 1755. An act to amend title 36, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the congressional charter of the Disabled American Veterans.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 1268. An act to amend the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 to promote energy efficiency via information and computing technologies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2984. An act to amend the Federal Power Act to provide that any inaction by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that allows a rate change to go into effect shall be treated as an order by the Commission for purposes of rehearing and court review; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 4411. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 4412. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 4427. An act to amend section 203 of the Federal Power Act; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The following concurrent resolutions were read, and referred as indicated:

H. Con. Res. 75. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the atrocities perpetrated by ISIL against religions and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria include war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H. Con. Res. 121. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress condemning the gross violations of international law amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Government of Syria, its allies, and other parties to the conflict in Syria, and asking the President to direct his Ambassador at the United Nations to promote the establishment of a war crimes tribunal where these crimes could be addressed; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 2080. An act to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Clark Canyon Dam.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time:

S. 2686. A bill to clarify the treatment of two or more employers as joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act.

ENROLLED BILLS PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, March 15, 2016, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bills:

S. 1172. An act to improve the process of presidential transition.

S. 1580. An act to allow additional appointing authorities to select individuals from competitive service certificates.

S. 1826. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 99 West 2nd Street in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, as the Lieutenant Colonel James ''Maggie'' Megellas Post Office.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1492. A bill to direct the Administrator of General Services, on behalf of the Archivist of the United States, to convey certain Federal property located in the State of Alaska to the Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska (Rept. No. 114–228).

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, without amendment:

S. 2133. A bill to improve Federal agency financial and administrative controls and procedures to assess and mitigate fraud risks, and to improve Federal agencies' development and use of data analytics for the purpose of identifying, preventing, and responding to fraud, including improper payments (Rept. No. 114–229).

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1252. A bill to authorize a comprehensive strategic approach for United States foreign assistance to developing countries to reduce global poverty and hunger, achieve food and nutrition security, promote inclusive, sustainable, agricultural-led economic growth, improve nutritional outcomes, especially for women and children, build resilience among vulnerable populations, and for other purposes.

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2512. A bill to expand the tropical disease product priority review voucher program to encourage treatments for Zika virus.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PETERS, Mr. REED, Mr. REID, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. SCHUMER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. UDALL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 2677. A bill to make college more affordable, reduce student debt, and provide greater access to higher education for all students of the United States; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. TESTER, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. COLLINS, and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 2678. A bill to direct the NIH to intensify and coordinate fundamental, translational, and clinical research with respect to the understanding of pain, the discovery and development of therapies for chronic pain, and the development of alternatives to opioids for effective pain treatments; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. TILLIS):

S. 2679. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish within the Department of Veterans Affairs a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. CASSIDY, and Mr. MURPHY):

S. 2680. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide comprehensive mental health reform, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. HEINRICH (for himself and Mr. UDALL):

S. 2681. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to retire coal preference right lease applications for which the Secretary has made an affirmative commercial quantities determination, to substitute certain land selections of the Navajo Nation, to designate certain wilderness areas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 2682. A bill to provide territories of the United States with bankruptcy protection; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. 2683. A bill to include disabled veteran leave in the personnel management system of the Federal Aviation Administration; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. INHOFE:

S. 2684. A bill to provide for the operation of unmanned aircraft systems by owners and operators of critical infrastructure; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. BENNET):

S. 2685. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to improve mental and behavioral health services on campuses of institutions of higher education; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. ISAKSON, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BURR, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. COATS, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CORKER, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. HATCH, Mr. HELLER, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KIRK, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. LEE, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. THUNE, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. VITTER, and Mr. WICKER):

S. 2686. A bill to clarify the treatment of two or more employers as joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act; read the first time.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. BENNET, Mr. HATCH, Mrs. MURRAY, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 2687. A bill to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to improve plans of safe care for infants affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms, or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Ms. STABENOW (for herself, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. FRANKEN):

S. Res. 399. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of ''National Professional Social Work Month''; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. ISAKSON (for himself and Mr. CASEY):

S. Res. 400. A resolution designating March 25, 2016, as ''National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Day''; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 207

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 207, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to use existing authorities to furnish health care at non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities to veterans who live more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest

medical facility of the Department that furnishes the care sought by the veteran, and for other purposes.

S. 262

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 262, a bill to reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, and for other purposes.

S. 373

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 373, a bill to provide for the establishment of nationally uniform and environmentally sound standards governing discharges incidental to the normal operation of a vessel.

S. 480

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 480, a bill to amend and reauthorize the controlled substance monitoring program under section 399O of the Public Health Service Act.

S. 586

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 586, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to foster more effective implementation and coordination of clinical care for people with pre-diabetes, diabetes, and the chronic diseases and conditions that result from diabetes.

S. 764

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, his name and the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) were withdrawn as cosponsors of S. 764, a bill to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes.

S. 849

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 849, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for systematic data collection and analysis and epidemiological research regarding Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's disease, and other neurological diseases.

S. 857

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 857, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage under the Medicare program of an initial comprehensive care plan for Medicare beneficiaries newly diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and for other purposes.

S. 1538

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1538, a bill to reform the financing of Senate elections, and for other purposes.

S. 1714

At the request of Mr. MANCHIN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1714, a bill to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to transfer certain funds to the Multiemployer Health Benefit Plan and the 1974 United Mine Workers of America Pension Plan, and for other purposes.

S. 1785

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1785, a bill to repeal the wage rate requirements of the Davis-Bacon Act.

S. 1830

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1830, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the coverage of marriage and family therapist services and mental health counselor services under part B of the Medicare program, and for other purposes.

S. 1865

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) were added as cosponsors of S. 1865, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act with respect to eating disorders, and for other purposes.

S. 1890

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1890, a bill to amend chapter 90 of title 18, United States Code, to provide Federal jurisdiction for the theft of trade secrets, and for other purposes.

S. 1982

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1982, a bill to authorize a Wall of Remembrance as part of the Korean War Veterans Memorial and to allow certain private contributions to fund the Wall of Remembrance.

S. 2055

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2055, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to national health security.

S. 2067

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2067, a bill to establish EUREKA Prize Competitions to accelerate discovery and development of disease-modifying, preventive, or curative treatments for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, to encourage efforts to enhance detection and diagnosis of such diseases, or to enhance the quality and efficiency of care of individuals with such diseases.

S. 2151

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2151, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide liability protections for volunteer practitioners at health centers under section 330 of such Act.

S. 2166

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2166, a bill to amend part B of title IV of the Social Security Act to ensure that mental health screenings and assessments are provided to children and youth upon entry into foster care.

S. 2185

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2185, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in recognition of the fight against breast cancer.

S. 2216

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2216, a bill to provide immunity from suit for certain individuals who disclose potential examples of financial exploitation of senior citizens, and for other purposes.

S. 2437

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2437, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the burial of the cremated remains of persons who served as Women's Air Forces Service Pilots in Arlington National Cemetery, and for other purposes.

S. 2512

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2512, a bill to expand the tropical disease product priority review voucher program to encourage treatments for Zika virus.

S. 2550

At the request of Mrs. MCCASKILL, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2550, a bill to repeal the jury duty exemption for elected officials of the legislative branch.

S. 2577

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) were added as cosponsors of S. 2577, a bill to protect crime victims' rights, to eliminate the substantial backlog of DNA and other forensic evidence samples to improve and expand the forensic science testing capacity of Federal, State, and local crime laboratories, to increase research and development of

new testing technologies, to develop new training programs regarding the collection and use of forensic evidence, to provide post-conviction testing of DNA evidence to exonerate the innocent, to support accreditation efforts of forensic science laboratories and medical examiner offices, to address training and equipment needs, to improve the performance of counsel in State capital cases, and for other purposes.

S. 2630

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2630, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to require certain disclosures be included on employee pay stubs, and for other purposes.

S. 2646

At the request of Mr. BURR, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) were added as cosponsors of S. 2646, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish the Veterans Choice Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve health care provided to veterans by the Department, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 199

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, her name was withdrawn as a cosponsor of S. Res. 199, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding establishing a National Strategic Agenda.

S. RES. 340

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 340, a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS or Dáesh) is committing genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, and calling upon the President to work with foreign governments and the United Nations to provide physical protection for ISIS' targets, to support the creation of an international criminal tribunal with jurisdiction to punish these crimes, and to use every reasonable means, including sanctions, to destroy ISIS and disrupt its support networks.

S. RES. 383

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 383, a resolution recognizing the importance of the United States-Israel economic relationship and encouraging new areas of cooperation.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PETERS, Mr. REED, Mr. REID, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. SCHUMER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. UDALL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 2677. A bill to make college more affordable, reduce student debt, and provide greater access to higher education for all students of the United States; to the Committee on Finance.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about an issue that is of the utmost importance to me, Marylanders, and American families—college affordability.

I have said this often, but we in this country enjoy many freedoms: the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press, and the freedom of religion. But there is an implicit freedom our Constitution does not lay out in writing, but its promise has excited the passions, hopes, and dreams of people in this country since its founding. It is the freedom to take whatever talents God has given you, to fill whatever passion is in your heart, to learn so you can earn and make a contribution to society—the freedom to achieve.

The freedom to achieve should never be stifled in this country because of economic reasons. Your freedom to achieve should never be determined by the zip code you live in, by the color of your skin, or by the size of your family's wallet. It should be, in a democratic country, that everyone has access to be able to do that. That means affordable education. That means access to the opportunity ladder that students and families can count on, because we know a degree is something that no one can ever take away from you.

When I was a young girl at a Catholic all-girls school, my Mom and Dad made it very clear that they wanted me to go to college. But, right around graduation, my family was going through a rough time because my father's grocery store had suffered a terrible fire. I offered to put off college and work at the grocery store until the business got back on its feet. My Dad said, ''BARB, you have to go. Your mother and I will find a way, because no matter what happens to you, no one can ever take that degree away from you. The best way I can protect you is to make sure you can earn a living all of your life.'' My father gave me the freedom to achieve.

When it comes to higher education, I believe in choice and opportunity. Anyone willing to work hard has a right to learn so you can get a college degree or certificate. Millions of American students are graduating colleges and universities, but as they are handed their diplomas, they are being handed a lifetime of debt.

More than 58 percent of Maryland college students have taken on an average debt of $27,000 or more. Having this debt is like a first mortgage, making it hard to buy a home, start a business, or a family. I am worried about them, as should the rest of us, and what it means for their future. College is a part of the American dream; it should not be a part of the American financial nightmare.

That is why, over the last several months, I embarked on a college affordability tour across the state of Maryland. I wanted to find out what were some of the challenges students faced when it came to college. I wanted to know how the Federal Government can help them be successful. The stories I heard were poignant, and were likely ones that everyone in this chamber has heard time and time again.

I met a bright young woman last year. She had the financial support of her parents to attend college. Unfortunately, during her sophomore year, her mother—who was a nurse—lost her job. To make sure she could still go to college, her family made the decision to dip into their retirement savings to help pay. This goes to show that her family knew how important it was that she continue her education. Even with this additional financial support, she still had to rely on Federal financial aid to pay for books.

Or the young man who is the first in his family to go to college. He hopes he is not the last. He would not be where he is today had it not been for a strong support system in high school through participation in a college bound program that gave him the opportunity to be exposed to college classes. While he came to college academically prepared, he still needed help navigating our complex Federal financial aid system.

This is just a small sample of the stories I heard. But they all say the same thing: ''We need help.'' Many students and families are stressed and stretched, having to work and save to pay for college. They want to know what Congress is doing for them. They need a Federal Government that is on their side.

Student loan debt is more than $1.3 trillion, exceeding total credit card and car loan debt, and eclipsed only by mortgage debt. Family incomes are not keeping pace with inflation, which means they are less able to help with the costs of higher education.

Getting a college education is the core of the American dream. Let us continue to fight to make sure that every student in America, whether you are in rural Eastern Shore or in big cities like Los Angeles, has access to that dream. Let us work together to make sure that when students graduate, their first mortgage is not their student debt. Carrying the burden of student loans drags down young people's financial future, making it harder to buy a home, start a family, or save for retirement.

It is my belief that this bill—the In The Red Act—will make college a reality for millions of Americans. I am pleased to see that provisions in this bill would allow eligible student borrowers the opportunity to refinance their Federal loans. I believe that if

you can refinance a yacht, you should be able to refinance your student loans. This will help more than 24 million students in the United States, including more than 800,000 student borrowers in Maryland.

I am also pleased to see that this bill increases Pell Grants to keep pace with rising costs. This will ensure that college students, who rely on Pell Grants, can pay for tuition, books, room and board, and other living expenses like child care.

The In The Red Act is absolutely a great bill for students, and it is a great bill for America. It gives our students access to the American dream. It gives our young people access to the freedom to achieve, to be able to follow their talents, and to be able to achieve higher education in whatever field they will be able to serve this country. It is my hope that we come together to pass this bill in a swift, expeditious, and uncluttered way.

While our work is not done when it comes to ensuring access to affordable higher education, this bill helps us get there. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to move this issue forward.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. BENNET):

S. 2685. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to improve mental and behavioral health services on campuses of institutions of higher education; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2685

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The 2014 Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors Survey found that the average ratio of counselors to students on campus is nearly 1 to 1,833 and is often far higher on large campuses. The International Association of Counseling Services accreditation standards recommends 1 counselor per 1,000 to 1,500 students.

(2) College counselors report that 10 percent of enrolled students sought counseling in 2014.

(3) More than 90 percent of counseling directors believe there is an increase in the number of students coming to campus with severe psychological problems; today, 44 percent of the students who visit campus counseling centers are dealing with severe mental illness, up from 16 percent in 2000, and 24 percent are on psychiatric medication, up from 17 percent in 2000.

(4) The majority of campus counseling directors report that the demand for services and the severity of student needs are growing without an increase in resources.

(5) Many students who need help never receive it. Only 15 percent of college and university students who commit suicide received campus counseling. Of students who seriously consider suicide each year, only 52 percent of them seek any professional help at all.

(6) A 2015 American College Health Association survey of more than 93,000 college and university students revealed that, within the last 12 months, 57 percent of students report having felt overwhelming anxiety, 35 percent felt so depressed it was difficult to function, and 48 percent felt hopeless. However, only 12 percent of students reported receiving professional treatment for anxiety within the past 12 months, and 11 percent reported receiving treatment for depression within the past 12 months.

(7) The 2015 American College Health Association survey also found that 9 percent of students have seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months, a 20 percent increase compared to 2012.

(8) Research conducted between 1997 and 2009, and presented at the 118th annual convention of the American Psychological Association found that more students are grappling with depression and anxiety disorders than were a decade ago. The study found that of students who sought college or university counseling, 41 percent had moderate to severe depression in 2009, that number was 34 percent in 1997.

(9) A survey conducted by the student counseling center at the University of Idaho in 2000 found that 77 percent of students who responded reported that they were more likely to stay in school because of counseling and that their school performance would have declined without counseling.

(10) Students with psychological issues often struggle academically and are at risk for dropping out of school. Counseling has been shown to address these issues while having a positive impact on students remaining in school. A 6-year longitudinal study found college and university students receiving counseling to have a 11.4 percent higher retention rate than the general college and university population.

(11) A national survey of college and university students living with mental health conditions, conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, found that 64 percent of students who experience mental health problems in college or university and withdraw from school do so because of their mental health issues. The survey also found that 50 percent of that group never accessed mental health services and supports.

SEC. 3. IMPROVING MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

Title V of the Public Health Service Act is amended by inserting after section 520E–2 (42 U.S.C. 290bb–36b) the following:

''SEC. 520E–3. GRANTS TO IMPROVE MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

''(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section, with respect to settings at institutions of higher education, to—

''(1) increase access to mental and behavioral health services;

''(2) foster and improve the prevention of mental and behavioral health disorders, and the promotion of mental health;

''(3) improve the identification and treatment for students at risk;

''(4) improve collaboration and the development of appropriate levels of mental and behavioral health care;

''(5) reduce the stigma for students with mental health disorders and enhance their access to mental health services; and

''(6) improve the efficacy of outreach efforts.

''(b) GRANTS.—The Secretary, acting through the Administrator and in consultation with the Secretary of Education, shall award competitive grants to eligible entities to improve mental and behavioral health services and outreach on campuses of institutions of higher education.

''(c) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant under subsection (b), an entity shall—

''(1) be an institution of higher education; and

''(2) submit to the Secretary an application at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require, including the information required under subsection (d).

''(d) APPLICATION.—An application for a grant under this section shall include—

''(1) a description of the population to be targeted by the program carried out under the grant, including the particular mental and behavioral health needs of the students involved;

''(2) a description of the Federal, State, local, private, and institutional resources available for meeting the needs of such students at the time the application is submitted;

''(3) an outline of the objectives of the program carried out under the grant;

''(4) a description of activities, services, and training to be provided under the program, including planned outreach strategies to reach students not currently seeking services;

''(5) a plan to seek input from community mental health providers, when available, community groups, and other public and private entities in carrying out the program;

''(6) a plan, when applicable, to meet the specific mental and behavioral health needs of veterans attending institutions of higher education;

''(7) a description of the methods to be used to evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of the program; and

''(8) an assurance that grant funds will be used to supplement, and not supplant, any other Federal, State, or local funds available to carry out activities of the type carried out under the grant.

''(e) SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS.—In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall give special consideration to applications that describe programs to be carried out under the grant that—

''(1) demonstrate the greatest need for new or additional mental and behavioral health services, in part by providing information on current ratios of students to mental and behavioral health professionals;

''(2) propose effective approaches for initiating or expanding campus services and supports using evidence-based practices, including peer support strategies;

''(3) target traditionally underserved populations and populations most at risk;

''(4) where possible, demonstrate an awareness of, and a willingness to, coordinate with a community mental health center or other mental health resource in the community, to support screening and referral of students requiring intensive services;

''(5) identify how the institution of higher education will address psychiatric emergencies, including how information will be communicated with families or other appropriate parties;

''(6) propose innovative practices that will improve efficiencies in clinical care, broaden collaborations with primary care, or improve prevention programs; and

''(7) demonstrate the greatest potential for replication and dissemination.

''(f) USE OF FUNDS.—Amounts received under a grant under this section may be used to—

''(1) provide mental and behavioral health services to students, including prevention, promotion of mental health, voluntary

screening, early intervention, voluntary assessment, treatment, management, and education services relating to the mental and behavioral health of students;

''(2) conduct research through a counseling or health center at the institution of higher education involved regarding improving the mental and behavioral health of students through clinical services, outreach, prevention, or academic success, in a manner that is in compliance with the health privacy and security rules promulgated under section 264(c) of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (42 U.S.C. 1320d–2 note);

''(3) provide outreach services to notify students about the existence of mental and behavioral health services;

''(4) educate students, families, faculty, staff, and communities to increase awareness of mental health issues;

''(5) support student groups on campus, including athletic teams, that engage in activities to educate students, including activities to reduce stigma surrounding mental and behavioral disorders, and promote mental health wellness;

''(6) employ appropriately trained staff;

''(7) provide training to students, faculty, and staff to respond effectively to students with mental and behavioral health issues;

''(8) expand mental health training through internship, post-doctorate, and residency programs;

''(9) develop and support evidence-based and emerging best practices, including a focus on culturally and linguistically appropriate best practices; and

''(10) evaluate and disseminate best practices to other institutions of higher education.

''(g) DURATION OF GRANTS.—A grant under this section shall be awarded for a period not to exceed 3 years.

''(h) EVALUATION AND REPORTING.—

''(1) EVALUATION.—Not later than 18 months after the date on which a grant is received under this section, the eligible entity involved shall submit to the Secretary the results of an evaluation to be conducted by the entity (or by another party under contract with the entity) concerning the effectiveness of the activities carried out under the grant and plans for the sustainability of such efforts.

''(2) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report concerning the results of—

''(A) the evaluations conducted under paragraph (1); and

''(B) an evaluation conducted by the Secretary to analyze the effectiveness and efficacy of the activities conducted with grants under this section.

''(i) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may provide technical assistance to grantees in carrying out this section.

''(j) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term 'institution of higher education' has the meaning given such term in 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

''(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.

''SEC. 520E–4. MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH OUTREACH AND EDUCATION ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

''(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to increase access to, and reduce the stigma associated with, mental health services to ensure that students at institutions of higher education have the support necessary to successfully complete their studies.

''(b) NATIONAL PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN.—The Secretary, acting through the Administrator and in collaboration with the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shall convene an interagency, public-private sector working group to plan, establish, and begin coordinating and evaluating a targeted public education campaign that is designed to focus on mental and behavioral health on the campuses of institutions of higher education. Such campaign shall be designed to—

''(1) improve the general understanding of mental health and mental health disorders;

''(2) encourage help-seeking behaviors relating to the promotion of mental health, prevention of mental health disorders, and treatment of such disorders;

''(3) make the connection between mental and behavioral health and academic success; and

''(4) assist the general public in identifying the early warning signs and reducing the stigma of mental illness.

''(c) COMPOSITION.—The working group convened under subsection (b) shall include—

''(1) mental health consumers, including students and family members;

''(2) representatives of institutions of higher education;

''(3) representatives of national mental and behavioral health associations and associations of institutions of higher education;

''(4) representatives of health promotion and prevention organizations at institutions of higher education;

''(5) representatives of mental health providers, including community mental health centers; and

''(6) representatives of private- and public-sector groups with experience in the development of effective public health education campaigns.

''(d) PLAN.—The working group under subsection (b) shall develop a plan that—

''(1) targets promotional and educational efforts to the age population of students at institutions of higher education and individuals who are employed in settings of institutions of higher education, including through the use of roundtables;

''(2) develops and proposes the implementation of research-based public health messages and activities;

''(3) provides support for local efforts to reduce stigma by using the National Health Information Center as a primary point of contact for information, publications, and service program referrals; and

''(4) develops and proposes the implementation of a social marketing campaign that is targeted at the population of students attending institutions of higher education and individuals who are employed in settings of institutions of higher education.

''(e) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term 'institution of higher education' has the meaning given such term in 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

''(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.''.

SEC. 4. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON COLLEGE MENTAL HEALTH.

(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to provide for the establishment of a College Campus Task Force to discuss mental and behavioral health concerns on campuses of institutions of higher education.

(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services (referred to in this section as the ''Secretary'') shall establish a College Campus Task Force (referred to in this section as the ''Task Force'') to discuss mental and behavioral health concerns on campuses of institutions of higher education.

(c) MEMBERSHIP.—The Task Force shall be composed of a representative from each Federal agency (as appointed by the head of the agency) that has jurisdiction over, or is affected by, mental health and education policies and projects, including—

(1) the Department of Education;

(2) the Department of Health and Human Services;

(3) the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(4) such other Federal agencies as the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in consultation with the Secretary, determines to be appropriate.

(d) DUTIES.—The Task Force shall—

(1) serve as a centralized mechanism to coordinate a national effort—

(A) to discuss and evaluate evidence and knowledge on mental and behavioral health services available to, and the prevalence of mental health illness among, the age population of students attending institutions of higher education in the United States;

(B) to determine the range of effective, feasible, and comprehensive actions to improve mental and behavioral health on campuses of institutions of higher education;

(C) to examine and better address the needs of the age population of students attending institutions of higher education dealing with mental illness;

(D) to survey Federal agencies to determine which policies are effective in encouraging, and how best to facilitate outreach without duplicating, efforts relating to mental and behavioral health promotion;

(E) to establish specific goals within and across Federal agencies for mental health promotion, including determinations of accountability for reaching those goals;

(F) to develop a strategy for allocating responsibilities and ensuring participation in mental and behavioral health promotions, particularly in the case of competing agency priorities;

(G) to coordinate plans to communicate research results relating to mental and behavioral health amongst the age population of students attending institutions of higher education to enable reporting and outreach activities to produce more useful and timely information;

(H) to provide a description of evidence-based best practices, model programs, effective guidelines, and other strategies for promoting mental and behavioral health on campuses of institutions of higher education;

(I) to make recommendations to improve Federal efforts relating to mental and behavioral health promotion on campuses of institutions of higher education and to ensure Federal efforts are consistent with available standards and evidence and other programs in existence as of the date of enactment of this Act; and

(J) to monitor Federal progress in meeting specific mental and behavioral health promotion goals as they relate to settings of institutions of higher education;

(2) consult with national organizations with expertise in mental and behavioral health, especially those organizations working with the age population of students attending institutions of higher education; and

(3) consult with and seek input from mental health professionals working on campuses of institutions of higher education as appropriate.

(e) MEETINGS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Task Force shall meet not less than 3 times each year.

(2) ANNUAL CONFERENCE.—The Secretary shall sponsor an annual conference on mental and behavioral health in settings of institutions of higher education to enhance coordination, build partnerships, and share best practices in mental and behavioral health promotion, data collection, analysis, and services.

(f) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ''institution of higher education'' has the meaning given such term in 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 399—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF ''NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH''

Ms. STABENOW (for herself, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. FRANKEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 399

Whereas the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people, especially the most vulnerable in society;

Whereas social work is one of the fastest growing careers in the United States with more than 640,000 members of the profession;

Whereas social workers work in all areas of our society to improve happiness, health and prosperity, including in government, schools, universities, social service agencies, communities, the military, and mental health and health care facilities;

Whereas social workers daily embody this year's ''National Professional Social Work Month'' theme, ''Forging Solutions Out of Challenges'', by helping individuals, communities and the larger society tackle and solve issues that confront them;

Whereas social workers have helped the Nation live up to its ideals by successfully pushing for equal rights for all, including women, African Americans, Latinos, people who are LGBTQ, and various ethnic, cultural, and religious groups;

Whereas social workers have helped people in the Nation overcome racial strife and economic and health care uncertainty by successfully advocating for initiatives such as the Medicaid program under title XIX of the Social Security Act, unemployment insurance, workplace safety initiatives, benefits under the Social Security Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act;

Whereas social workers are the largest group of mental health care providers in the United States and work daily to help people overcome depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other disorders so they can lead more fulfilling lives;

Whereas the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs employs more than 12,000 professional social workers and social workers help bolster the Nation's security by providing support to active duty military personnel, veterans and their families;

Whereas thousands of child, family, and school social workers across the country provide assistance to protect children and improve the social and psychological functioning of children and their families;

Whereas social workers help children find loving homes and create new families through adoption;

Whereas social workers in schools work with families and schools to foster future generations by ensuring students reach their full academic and personal potential;

Whereas social workers work with older adults and their families to improve their quality of life and ability to live independently as long as possible and get access to high-quality mental health and health care; and

Whereas social workers have helped the United States and other nations overcome earthquakes, floods, wars, and other disasters by helping survivors get services such as food, shelter, and health care, and mental health care to address stress and anxiety: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of ''National Professional Social Work Month'';

(2) acknowledges the diligent efforts of individuals and groups who promote the importance of social work and observe ''National Professional Social Work Month'';

(3) encourages the people of the United States to engage in appropriate ceremonies and activities to promote further awareness of the life-changing role that social workers play; and

(4) recognizes with gratitude the contributions of the hundreds of thousands of caring individuals who have chosen to serve their communities through social work.

SENATE RESOLUTION 400—DESIGNATING MARCH 25, 2016, AS ''NATIONAL CEREBRAL PALSY AWARENESS DAY''

Mr. ISAKSON (for himself and Mr. CASEY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 400

Whereas a group of permanent disorders of the development of movement and posture that are attributed to nonprogressive disturbances that occur in the developing brain is referred to as ''cerebral palsy'';

Whereas cerebral palsy, the most common motor disability in children, is caused by damage to 1 or more specific areas of the developing brain, which usually occurs during fetal development before, during, or after birth;

Whereas the majority of children who have cerebral palsy are born with cerebral palsy, but cerebral palsy may be undetected for months or years;

Whereas 75 percent of individuals with cerebral palsy also have 1 or more developmental disabilities, including epilepsy, intellectual disability, autism, visual impairment, or blindness;

Whereas according to information released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—

(1) the prevalence of cerebral palsy is not decreasing; and

(2) an estimated 1 in 323 children has cerebral palsy;

Whereas approximately 800,000 individuals in the United States are affected by cerebral palsy;

Whereas although there is no cure for cerebral palsy, treatment often improves the capabilities of a child with cerebral palsy;

Whereas scientists and researchers are hopeful for breakthroughs in cerebral palsy research;

Whereas researchers across the United States conduct important research projects involving cerebral palsy; and

Whereas the Senate can raise awareness of cerebral palsy in the public and the medical community: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 25, 2016, as ''National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Day'';

(2) encourages each individual in the United States to become better informed about and aware of cerebral palsy; and

(3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Executive Director of Reaching for the Stars: A Foundation of Hope for Children with Cerebral Palsy.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3451. Mr. MCCONNELL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3450 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. ROBERTS) to the bill S. 764, to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3452. Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. LEAHY) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 337, to improve the Freedom of Information Act.

SA 3453. Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3450 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. ROBERTS) to the bill S. 764, to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3454. Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3450 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. ROBERTS) to the bill S. 764, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 3451. Mr. MCCONNELL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3450 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. ROBERTS) to the bill S. 764, to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end add the following.

''This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment.''

SA 3452. Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. LEAHY) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 337, to improve the Freedom of Information Act; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''FOIA Improvement Act of 2016''.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO FOIA.

Section 552 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking ''for public inspection and copying'' and inserting ''for public inspection in an electronic format'';

(ii) by striking subparagraph (D) and inserting the following:

''(D) copies of all records, regardless of form or format—

''(i) that have been released to any person under paragraph (3); and

''(ii)(I) that because of the nature of their subject matter, the agency determines have become or are likely to become the subject of subsequent requests for substantially the same records; or

''(II) that have been requested 3 or more times; and''; and

(iii) in the undesignated matter following subparagraph (E), by striking ''public inspection and copying current'' and inserting

''public inspection in an electronic format current'';

(B) in paragraph (4)(A), by striking clause (viii) and inserting the following:

''(viii)(I) Except as provided in subclause (II), an agency shall not assess any search fees (or in the case of a requester described under clause (ii)(II) of this subparagraph, duplication fees) under this subparagraph if the agency has failed to comply with any time limit under paragraph (6).

''(II)(aa) If an agency has determined that unusual circumstances apply (as the term is defined in paragraph (6)(B)) and the agency provided a timely written notice to the requester in accordance with paragraph (6)(B), a failure described in subclause (I) is excused for an additional 10 days. If the agency fails to comply with the extended time limit, the agency may not assess any search fees (or in the case of a requester described under clause (ii)(II) of this subparagraph, duplication fees).

''(bb) If an agency has determined that unusual circumstances apply and more than 5,000 pages are necessary to respond to the request, an agency may charge search fees (or in the case of a requester described under clause (ii)(II) of this subparagraph, duplication fees) if the agency has provided a timely written notice to the requester in accordance with paragraph (6)(B) and the agency has discussed with the requester via written mail, electronic mail, or telephone (or made not less than 3 good-faith attempts to do so) how the requester could effectively limit the scope of the request in accordance with paragraph (6)(B)(ii).

''(cc) If a court has determined that exceptional circumstances exist (as that term is defined in paragraph (6)(C)), a failure described in subclause (I) shall be excused for the length of time provided by the court order.'';

(C) in paragraph (6)—

(i) in subparagraph (A)(i), by striking ''making such request'' and all that follows through ''determination; and'' and inserting the following: ''making such request of—

''(I) such determination and the reasons therefor;

''(II) the right of such person to seek assistance from the FOIA Public Liaison of the agency; and

''(III) in the case of an adverse determination—

''(aa) the right of such person to appeal to the head of the agency, within a period determined by the head of the agency that is not less than 90 days after the date of such adverse determination; and

''(bb) the right of such person to seek dispute resolution services from the FOIA Public Liaison of the agency or the Office of Government Information Services; and''; and

(ii) in subparagraph (B)(ii), by striking ''the agency.'' and inserting ''the agency, and notify the requester of the right of the requester to seek dispute resolution services from the Office of Government Information Services.''; and

(D) by adding at the end the following:

''(8)(A) An agency shall—

''(i) withhold information under this section only if—

''(I) the agency reasonably foresees that disclosure would harm an interest protected by an exemption described in subsection (b); or

''(II) disclosure is prohibited by law; and

''(ii)(I) consider whether partial disclosure of information is possible whenever the agency determines that a full disclosure of a requested record is not possible; and

''(II) take reasonable steps necessary to segregate and release nonexempt information; and

''(B) Nothing in this paragraph requires disclosure of information that is otherwise prohibited from disclosure by law, or otherwise exempted from disclosure under subsection (b)(3).'';

(2) in subsection (b), by amending paragraph (5) to read as follows:

''(5) inter-agency or intra-agency memorandums or letters that would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency, provided that the deliberative process privilege shall not apply to records created 25 years or more before the date on which the records were requested;''; and

(3) in subsection (e)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting ''and to the Director of the Office of Government Information Services'' after ''United States'';

(ii) in subparagraph (N), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(iii) in subparagraph (O), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(iv) by adding at the end the following:

''(P) the number of times the agency denied a request for records under subsection (c); and

''(Q) the number of records that were made available for public inspection in an electronic format under subsection (a)(2).'';

(B) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

''(3) Each agency shall make each such report available for public inspection in an electronic format. In addition, each agency shall make the raw statistical data used in each report available in a timely manner for public inspection in an electronic format, which shall be made available—

''(A) without charge, license, or registration requirement;

''(B) in an aggregated, searchable format; and

''(C) in a format that may be downloaded in bulk.'';

(C) in paragraph (4)—

(i) by striking ''Government Reform and Oversight'' and inserting ''Oversight and Government Reform'';

(ii) by inserting ''Homeland Security and'' before ''Governmental Affairs''; and

(iii) by striking ''April'' and inserting ''March''; and

(D) by striking paragraph (6) and inserting the following:

''(6)(A) The Attorney General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives, the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate, and the President a report on or before March 1 of each calendar year, which shall include for the prior calendar year—

''(i) a listing of the number of cases arising under this section;

''(ii) a listing of—

''(I) each subsection, and any exemption, if applicable, involved in each case arising under this section;

''(II) the disposition of each case arising under this section; and

''(III) the cost, fees, and penalties assessed under subparagraphs (E), (F), and (G) of subsection (a)(4); and

''(iii) a description of the efforts undertaken by the Department of Justice to encourage agency compliance with this section.

''(B) The Attorney General of the United States shall make—

''(i) each report submitted under subparagraph (A) available for public inspection in an electronic format; and

''(ii) the raw statistical data used in each report submitted under subparagraph (A) available for public inspection in an electronic format, which shall be made available—

''(I) without charge, license, or registration requirement;

''(II) in an aggregated, searchable format; and

''(III) in a format that may be downloaded in bulk.'';

(4) in subsection (g), in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking ''publicly available upon request'' and inserting ''available for public inspection in an electronic format'';

(5) in subsection (h)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by adding at the end the following: ''The head of the Office shall be the Director of the Office of Government Information Services.'';

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following:

''(C) identify procedures and methods for improving compliance under this section.'';

(C) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

''(3) The Office of Government Information Services shall offer mediation services to resolve disputes between persons making requests under this section and administrative agencies as a nonexclusive alternative to litigation and may issue advisory opinions at the discretion of the Office or upon request of any party to a dispute.''; and

(D) by adding at the end the following:

''(4)(A) Not less frequently than annually, the Director of the Office of Government Information Services shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives, the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate, and the President—

''(i) a report on the findings of the information reviewed and identified under paragraph (2);

''(ii) a summary of the activities of the Office of Government Information Services under paragraph (3), including—

''(I) any advisory opinions issued; and

''(II) the number of times each agency engaged in dispute resolution with the assistance of the Office of Government Information Services or the FOIA Public Liaison; and

''(iii) legislative and regulatory recommendations, if any, to improve the administration of this section.

''(B) The Director of the Office of Government Information Services shall make each report submitted under subparagraph (A) available for public inspection in an electronic format.

''(C) The Director of the Office of Government Information Services shall not be required to obtain the prior approval, comment, or review of any officer or agency of the United States, including the Department of Justice, the Archivist of the United States, or the Office of Management and Budget before submitting to Congress, or any committee or subcommittee thereof, any reports, recommendations, testimony, or comments, if such submissions include a statement indicating that the views expressed therein are those of the Director and do not necessarily represent the views of the President.

''(5) The Director of the Office of Government Information Services may directly submit additional information to Congress and the President as the Director determines to be appropriate.

''(6) Not less frequently than annually, the Office of Government Information Services shall conduct a meeting that is open to the public on the review and reports by the Office and shall allow interested persons to appear and present oral or written statements at the meeting.'';

(6) by striking subsections (j) and (k), and inserting the following:

''(j)(1) Each agency shall designate a Chief FOIA Officer who shall be a senior official of such agency (at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level).

''(2) The Chief FOIA Officer of each agency shall, subject to the authority of the head of the agency—

''(A) have agency-wide responsibility for efficient and appropriate compliance with this section;

''(B) monitor implementation of this section throughout the agency and keep the head of the agency, the chief legal officer of the agency, and the Attorney General appropriately informed of the agency's performance in implementing this section;

''(C) recommend to the head of the agency such adjustments to agency practices, policies, personnel, and funding as may be necessary to improve its implementation of this section;

''(D) review and report to the Attorney General, through the head of the agency, at such times and in such formats as the Attorney General may direct, on the agency's performance in implementing this section;

''(E) facilitate public understanding of the purposes of the statutory exemptions of this section by including concise descriptions of the exemptions in both the agency's handbook issued under subsection (g), and the agency's annual report on this section, and by providing an overview, where appropriate, of certain general categories of agency records to which those exemptions apply;

''(F) offer training to agency staff regarding their responsibilities under this section;

''(G) serve as the primary agency liaison with the Office of Government Information Services and the Office of Information Policy; and

''(H) designate 1 or more FOIA Public Liaisons.

''(3) The Chief FOIA Officer of each agency shall review, not less frequently than annually, all aspects of the administration of this section by the agency to ensure compliance with the requirements of this section, including—

''(A) agency regulations;

''(B) disclosure of records required under paragraphs (2) and (8) of subsection (a);

''(C) assessment of fees and determination of eligibility for fee waivers;

''(D) the timely processing of requests for information under this section;

''(E) the use of exemptions under subsection (b); and

''(F) dispute resolution services with the assistance of the Office of Government Information Services or the FOIA Public Liaison.

''(k)(1) There is established in the executive branch the Chief FOIA Officers Council (referred to in this subsection as the 'Council').

''(2) The Council shall be comprised of the following members:

''(A) The Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget.

''(B) The Director of the Office of Information Policy at the Department of Justice.

''(C) The Director of the Office of Government Information Services.

''(D) The Chief FOIA Officer of each agency.

''(E) Any other officer or employee of the United States as designated by the Co-Chairs.

''(3) The Director of the Office of Information Policy at the Department of Justice and the Director of the Office of Government Information Services shall be the Co-Chairs of the Council.

''(4) The Administrator of General Services shall provide administrative and other support for the Council.

''(5)(A) The duties of the Council shall include the following:

''(i) Develop recommendations for increasing compliance and efficiency under this section.

''(ii) Disseminate information about agency experiences, ideas, best practices, and innovative approaches related to this section.

''(iii) Identify, develop, and coordinate initiatives to increase transparency and compliance with this section.

''(iv) Promote the development and use of common performance measures for agency compliance with this section.

''(B) In performing the duties described in subparagraph (A), the Council shall consult on a regular basis with members of the public who make requests under this section.

''(6)(A) The Council shall meet regularly and such meetings shall be open to the public unless the Council determines to close the meeting for reasons of national security or to discuss information exempt under subsection (b).

''(B) Not less frequently than annually, the Council shall hold a meeting that shall be open to the public and permit interested persons to appear and present oral and written statements to the Council.

''(C) Not later than 10 business days before a meeting of the Council, notice of such meeting shall be published in the Federal Register.

''(D) Except as provided in subsection (b), the records, reports, transcripts, minutes, appendices, working papers, drafts, studies, agenda, or other documents that were made available to or prepared for or by the Council shall be made publicly available.

''(E) Detailed minutes of each meeting of the Council shall be kept and shall contain a record of the persons present, a complete and accurate description of matters discussed and conclusions reached, and copies of all reports received, issued, or approved by the Council. The minutes shall be redacted as necessary and made publicly available.''; and

(7) by adding at the end the following:

''(m)(1) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with the Attorney General, shall ensure the operation of a consolidated online request portal that allows a member of the public to submit a request for records under subsection (a) to any agency from a single website. The portal may include any additional tools the Director of the Office of Management and Budget finds will improve the implementation of this section.

''(2) This subsection shall not be construed to alter the power of any other agency to create or maintain an independent online portal for the submission of a request for records under this section. The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall establish standards for interoperability between the portal required under paragraph (1) and other request processing software used by agencies subject to this section.''.

SEC. 3. REVIEW AND ISSUANCE OF REGULATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the head of each agency (as defined in section 551 of title 5, United States Code) shall review the regulations of such agency and shall issue regulations on procedures for the disclosure of records under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, in accordance with the amendments made by section 2.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—The regulations of each agency shall include procedures for engaging in dispute resolution through the FOIA Public Liaison and the Office of Government Information Services.

SEC. 4. PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE THROUGH RECORDS MANAGEMENT.

Section 3102 of title 44, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (3) and (4); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

''(2) procedures for identifying records of general interest or use to the public that are appropriate for public disclosure, and for posting such records in a publicly accessible electronic format;''.

SEC. 5. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act or the amendments made by this Act. The requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized or appropriated.

SEC. 6. APPLICABILITY.

This Act, and the amendments made by this Act, shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act and shall apply to any request for records under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, made after the date of enactment of this Act.

SA 3453. Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3450 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. ROBERTS) to the bill S. 764, to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

SEC. _____. REPEAL OF DUPLICATIVE MANDATORY INSPECTION PROGRAM.

(a) FOOD, CONSERVATION, AND ENERGY ACT OF 2008.—Effective June 18, 2008, section 11016 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–246; 122 Stat. 2130) is repealed.

(b) AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 2014.—Effective February 7, 2014, section 12106 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–79; 128 Stat. 981) is repealed.

(c) APPLICATION.—The Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) and the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq.) shall be applied and administered as if the provisions of law struck by this section had not been enacted.

SA 3454. Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3450 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. ROBERTS) to the bill S. 764, to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

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(c) APPLICATION.—The Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) and the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq.) shall be applied and administered as if the provisions of law struck by this section had not been enacted.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 2:30 p.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 10 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 2:30 p.m., in room SR–253 of the Russell Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled ''Hands Off: The Future of Self-Driving Cars.''

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

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''Ukrainian Reforms Two Years after the Maidan Revolution and the Russian Invasion.''

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''The Security of U.S. Visa Programs.''

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Late-Term Abortion: Protecting Babies Born Alive and Capable of Feeling Pain.''

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

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 2:15 p.m., in room SR–418 of the Russell Senate Office Building.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 2:30 p.m., in room SH–219 of the Hart Senate Office Building.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2016, at 10 a.m.

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

NATIONAL CEREBRAL PALSY AWARENESS DAY

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 400, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 400) designating March 25, 2016, as ''National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Day.''

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent 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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 400) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 2686

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2686) to clarify the treatment of two or more employers as joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I now ask for a second reading and, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10:15 a.m., Wednesday, March 16; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate then resume consideration of the message to accompany S. 764; further, that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the cloture vote on the motion to concur with further amendment occur at 11:45 a.m.; finally, that the time following leader remarks until 11:45 a.m. be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator BLUMENTHAL.

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

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

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

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD LABELING BILL

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, an important consumer right is under attack, under siege today in the United States Senate. It is the right to know what is in your food. A lot of consumers take for granted that they will read the ingredients on a package and they will know what is in their food. The right to know what you are putting in your body is a basic right, especially what your children are putting in their bodies.

I understand that the Agriculture Committee has reported—and the majority leader has indicated that he will bring to the floor—a misguided anti-consumer measure that will not only dilute but decimate an essential aspect of that right to know. It is not the name of the bill its proponents are using, but I agree with Members of the House and this body who have called this bill the DARK Act. Why? Because it denies Americans the right to know. Unfortunately, that is essentially what the bill does. It denies Americans the right to know.

I hold a pretty simple belief that labels on the food we buy should accurately reflect what is in the food. Whether it is the nutritional content, the ingredients—whether something is organic or not—consumers should know what they are paying for and what they are putting in their bodies. That is how we keep the large corporations that make most of our food from using ingredients that are unhealthful—unhealthful and, essentially, potentially deceptive.

Like the overwhelming majority of people in this country—and by the way, a poll released in December said it was about 90 percent—I support mandatory on-package labeling of food containing genetically modified organisms, GMOs. This support cuts across geographic lines and party lines because it is such a commonsense position. Leave it up to consumers—you and me—to decide when we buy food products and when we consume them. If they want to buy a particular product, let them do so, but make sure they know what they are getting. This issue is of particular importance to my constituents.

I am proud that Connecticut was the first State to enact legislation that would require mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods. And as attorney general of Connecticut, I championed this measure, and it is a consummate example of consumer protection and consumer education.

The DARK Act, by contrast, would strip my State of its ability to protect our own people. It would prevent States, including Connecticut, Maine, and Vermont, which have already done so, from enacting laws requiring the labeling of GMO foods. It would take away from States their right to pass laws to ensure their citizens have access to basic information about their food, and it would preempt longstanding State consumer protection laws in all 50 States. These laws pertain to false advertising, consumer protection, fraud, breach of warranty, or unfair trade practices.

This measure is a sweeping and draconian proposal, and that would be bad enough, but the DARK Act actually goes further. It would also bar States and local communities from enacting any kind of law overseeing genetically modified crops. Several counties in California and Oregon, as well as the States of Washington and Hawaii, have restricted planting of GMO crops, citing the health effects of the seeds and economic effects of megacompanies that produce these seeds on local farmers and the unknown long-term environmental consequences. But this bill would stop all of those efforts, State and local efforts. It would stop them dead in their tracks.

In addition to keeping information from consumers, the DARK Act would affect hard-working farmers who will have no way of knowing if the seed they purchased is genetically engineered, and that is true even if the seeds are altered in any way that prevents crops from reproducing, forcing farmers to buy new seeds every season from the GMO company.

I don't mean to cast aspersions on the biotechnology industry. There is enormous potential in research on this front, and scientists have made many, many contributions to our food supply. There may be scientific efforts under way in this area that have healthful and economically beneficial results, but keeping consumers in the dark is harmful, and the rule ought to be first do no harm.

If there is scientific support for the health or environmental benefits, why not let consumers know? Let consumers make knowledgeable and informed choices. Consumers are capable of those kinds of choices, and I am shocked that this deliberative body is considering a measure that is crafted so purposefully and intentionally to, in effect, deceive the American public and actively deny them the accurate information they deserve.

There is no question that this bill is nothing more than a carve-out for big businesses and mega-GMO seed corporations. My view is that this body ought to facilitate transparency. The Federal legislation should promote information and education, not inhibit or prevent it. That is why I have endorsed a bill that Senator MERKLEY and others of us are proposing and advocating that in a very commonsense way allows manufacturers to choose from a menu of options to indicate to consumers whether a product includes genetically engineered ingredients.

I want to make clear and emphasize we are not calling for some kind of skull and crossbones logo or black box warning label. In fact, we are not talking about a warning; we are talking about information. The options on the menu that would be offered to food producers are nonjudgmental, clear, concise, and accurate. This information is impartial and objective, allowing consumers to make informed decisions.

Last month, the Secretary of Agriculture convened a series of meetings in an attempt to broker a compromise between industry and labeling advocates, and I want to take a moment to commend the unflagging leadership of a number of groups in my State and one of my constituents, Tara Cook-Littman, who by coincidence was the only woman at these meetings. She is the cofounder of Citizens for GMO Labeling. She led the grassroots effort in Connecticut to pass the first-in-the-Nation GMO labeling law. She is also the mother of three children whom I have met. Like most Americans, she cares deeply about what she and her family are eating.

As part of their innovation cycle, food companies often redesign and relaunch products, adding new attributes to existing products, such as flavors and new ingredients, so they can handle the normal course of relabeling and repackaging.

One of the most important points Tara has raised is that the industry's proposed solution to include QR codes on GMO products is really no solution at all. QR codes, which let customers use a smartphone to scan a product to be linked to a Web page with information, are no substitute for clear, explicit labels that all consumers can see with the transparency and objectivity they deserve and need. Relying on QR codes discriminates against people who are unable to afford a smartphone or a data plan. It threatens privacy by allowing industry to keep track of who is scanning what product—information that many of us might not want to be in the hands of companies and used to market to us—and, from a very practical standpoint, may not be usable where reception is weak or nonexistent.

As anyone who has ever shopped with a baby or a child knows, shopping is hard enough under some circumstances, and forcing consumers to try to get the right scan of a product when information could simply appear on the label is absurd. What is the reason for the QR code other than to make it more difficult for a consumer to know? What rationale could there be other than creating a hurdle for that consumer to learn that information?

So I urge my colleagues, do not be fooled or tricked by the DARK Act claims that food prices will rise with GMO labeling—not so. Food processors regularly make changes to these labels to meet changing consumer demands or for other marketing or regulatory reasons. In fact, Ben & Jerry's cofounder, Jerry Greenfield, confirmed: ''It's a normal course of business to be going through changes on your labels.'' And other responsible food companies have joined Ben & Jerry's, most prominently Campbell's Soup. I commend their leadership. My constituents and all consumers should be aware that there are companies like Campbell's that have stepped forward and want consumers to be more informed, not less.

We are on the brink of potentially passing legislation as early as tomorrow morning that would ban States such as Connecticut from requiring GMO labeling. That is a violation of the very essence of States' rights to protect their citizens. It may well be that some States would want to be stronger in protecting their citizens than others, and they should have the

right to do so. Preempting all State legislation in this area infringes on that fundamental sovereignty and right of States to protect their citizens.

As the American Association for Justice has stated, this legislation will unjustly preempt State consumer protection laws. I know the importance of that preemption doctrine as a former attorney general who has fought consistently to allow States to set standards for consumer protection and enforce those standards, both Federal and State.

I commend those manufacturers that have realized that now is the time to embrace GMO labeling, including Campbell's, Ben & Jerry's, Amy's Kitchen, and Nature's Path. I hope we can work together with food manufacturers to give American consumers, like consumers in 63 countries around the world—63 countries around the world—a more transparent food system by approving a mandatory on-packaging GMO labeling system and rejecting this anti-consumer effort.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10:15 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10:15 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:44 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, March 16, 2016, at 10:15 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

THE JUDICIARY

WALTER DAVID COUNTS, III, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, VICE ROBERT A. JUNELL, RETIRED .

E. SCOTT FROST, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, VICE SAM R. CUMMINGS, RETIRED.

REBECCA ROSS HAYWOOD, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE THIRD CIRCUIT, VICE MARJORIE O. RENDELL, RETIRED.

JAMES WESLEY HENDRIX, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, VICE JORGE A. SOLIS, RETIRING.

IRMA CARRILLO RAMIREZ, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, VICE TERRY R. MEANS, RETIRED.

UNITED STATES SENTENCING COMMISSION

DANNY C. REEVES, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES SENTENCING COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 31, 2019, VICE RICARDO H. HINOJOSA, TERM EXPIRED.

THE JUDICIARY

KAREN GREN SCHOLER, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, VICE RICHARD A. SCHELL, RETIRED.

KATHLEEN MARIE SWEET, OF NEW YORK, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, VICE WILLIAM M. SKRETNY, RETIRED.

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) PAUL J. VERRASTRO

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) WILLIAM J. GALINIS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) CHRISTIAN D. BECKER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) TIMOTHY J. WHITE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) BRUCE L. GILLINGHAM

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) KYLE J. COZAD
REAR ADM. (LH) LISA M. FRANCHETTI
REAR ADM. (LH) ROY J. KELLEY
REAR ADM. (LH) DAVID M. KRIETE
REAR ADM. (LH) BRUCE H. LINDSEY
REAR ADM. (LH) JAMES T. LOEBLEIN
REAR ADM. (LH) WILLIAM R. MERZ
REAR ADM. (LH) DEE L. MEWBOURNE
REAR ADM. (LH) MICHAEL T. MORAN
REAR ADM. (LH) STUART B. MUNSCH
REAR ADM. (LH) JOHN B. NOWELL, JR.
REAR ADM. (LH) TIMOTHY G. SZYMANSKI

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. TROY M. MCCLELLAND

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. PHILLIP E. LEE, JR.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. ALAN J. REYES

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. MARY C. RIGGS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. CAROL M. LYNCH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. MARK E. BIPES

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. BRIAN R. GULDBEK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. LOUIS C. TRIPOLI

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. ROBERT T. DURAND

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. JON C. KREITZ

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. SHAWN E. DUANE
CAPT. SCOTT D. JONES
CAPT. WILLIAM G. MAGER
CAPT. JOHN B. MUSTIN
CAPT. MATTHEW P. O'KEEFE
CAPT. JOHN A. SCHOMMER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) THOMAS W. LUSCHER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) BRIAN S. PECHA

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) DEBORAH P. HAVEN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) MARK J. FUNG

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) RUSSELL E. ALLEN
REAR ADM. (LH) WILLIAM M. CRANE
REAR ADM. (LH) MICHAEL J. DUMONT

FOREIGN SERVICE

THE FOLLOWING–NAMED CAREER MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR PROMOTION INTO THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, AS A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, CLASS OF COUNSELOR:

RIAN HARKER HARRIS, OF VIRGINIA
TIMOTHY MEADE RICHARDSON, OF MARYLAND

THE FOLLOWING–NAMED CAREER MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE FOR PROMOTION INTO THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, AS A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 18, 2016:

HUGO YUE YON, OF CALIFORNIA

THE FOLLOWING–NAMED CAREER MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE FOR PROMOTION INTO THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, AS A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, AND CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

GREG A. SHERMAN, OF VIRGINIA

THE FOLLOWING–NAMED PERSONS FOR APPOINTMENT AS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS FOUR, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

SUEMAYAH M. ABU–DOULEH, OF ILLINOIS
KATIE M. ADAMSON, OF COLORADO
ANI A. AKINBIYI, OF FLORIDA
HANNAH M. E. AKINBIYI, OF FLORIDA
KHARMIKA T. ALSTON, OF NORTH CAROLINA
JONATHAN R. ANDERSON, OF VIRGINIA
PAULINE W. ANDERSON, OF NEVADA
BENJAMIN D. ARTERBURN, OF TENNESSEE
JASON P. AZEVEDO, OF MASSACHUSETTS
OSCAR A. BAEZ, OF MASSACHUSETTS
DREW D. BAZIL, OF COLORADO
JAMES J. BOYDEN, OF WASHINGTON
COURTNEY J. BRASIER, OF FLORIDA
DIANA F. E. BRAUNSCHWEIG, OF CALIFORNIA
HECTOR RODRIGUEZ BROWN, OF TEXAS
KETURA D. BROWN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SHANNON S. BROWN, OF FLORIDA
ELISE B. BRUMBACH, OF PENNSYLVANIA
SEAN T. BUCKLEY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DAVID S. BURNSTEIN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PATRICIA A. BURROWS, OF MAINE
CAROLYN KRUMME CALDERON, OF TEXAS
HANNAH CHA, OF OHIO
LAP NGUYEN CHANG, OF WASHINGTON
PETER H. CHRISTIANSEN, OF ALASKA
ERIN E. CONCORS, OF ARIZONA
TAVON H. COOKE, OF NEW JERSEY
JAMES T. CORE, OF WYOMING
MERCEDES L. CROSBY, OF MASSACHUSETTS
THOMAS L. CZERWINSKI, OF TEXAS
RANYA M. DAHER, OF VIRGINIA
EION M. DANDO, OF MINNESOTA
QUAZI RUMMAN DASTGIR, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JOHN K. DE LANCIE, OF CALIFORNIA
ALEXANDER FAIRBANKS DOUGLAS, OF VIRGINIA
SAMUEL C. DOWNING, OF WASHINGTON
PATRICK R. ELLIOT, OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
LANCE C. ERICKSON, OF OHIO
CHRISTOPHER F. ESTOCH, OF FLORIDA
DOUGLAS SOMERVILLE EVANS, OF VIRGINIA
EVAN M. FRITZ, OF TEXAS
KATHERINE D. GARRY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CARRIE A. GIARDINO, OF FLORIDA
SARAH D. GLASSBURNER–MOEN, OF OREGON
GAYSHIEL F. GRANDISON, OF FLORIDA
THOMAS E. GRIFFITH, OF VIRGINIA
JULIA M. GROEBLACHER, OF KANSAS
MATHEW L. HAGENGRUBER, OF MONTANA
KATHERINE E. HALL, OF COLORADO
CHRISTINA E. D. HARDAWAY, OF GEORGIA
CAITLIN B. HARTFORD, OF WASHINGTON
JENNIFER A. HENGSTENBERG, OF GEORGIA
MARK J. HITCHCOCK, OF CALIFORNIA

KATHERINE L. HO, OF TEXAS
GREGORY HOLLIDAY, OF MINNESOTA
NINA E. HOROWITZ, OF VIRGINIA
PHILLIP C. HUGHEY, OF VIRGINIA
LAUREN N. HUOT, OF FLORIDA
IRINA ITKIN, OF INDIANA
ADAM J. JAGELSKI, OF WASHINGTON
SURIYA C. JAYANTI, OF CALIFORNIA
ANTON P. JONGENEEL, OF CALIFORNIA
HELENA U. JOYCE, OF CALIFORNIA
NATHAN D. KATO-WALLACE, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JEHAN M. KHALEELI, OF NEW YORK
DANIEL E. KIGHT, OF VIRGINIA
ERIN L. KIMSEY, OF NORTH CAROLINA
COURTNEY E. KLINE, OF PENNSYLVANIA
KRISTINE M. KNAPP, OF SOUTH DAKOTA
JOSEPH R. KNUPP, OF PENNSYLVANIA
SHEELA E. KRISHNAN, OF VIRGINIA
JENNIFER LANDAU-CARTER, OF OREGON
ADRIAN J. LANSPEARY, OF NEW YORK
JON R. LARSON, OF FLORIDA
YALE H. LAYTON, OF WYOMING
ANDREW L. LEAHY, OF OREGON
JUDITH K. LEPUSCHITZ, OF CALIFORNIA
KELLI S. LONG, OF SOUTH CAROLINA
MERIDETH S. MANELLA, OF NEW JERSEY
JAMES S. MANLOWE, OF NEW MEXICO
MICHAEL A. MARCOUS, OF FLORIDA
STEPHEN L. MARTELLI, OF DELAWARE
DWAYNE THOMAS MCDAVID, OF NEVADA
SHAUN M. MCGUIRE, OF LOUISIANA
SEAN P. MCKEATING, OF TEXAS
BENJAMIN W. MEDINA, OF TEXAS
LUKE E. MEINZEN, OF MISSOURI
PARINAZ KERMANI MENDEZ, OF FLORIDA
SCOTT E. MILGROOM, OF MASSACHUSETTS
ROLAND P. MINEZ, OF WASHINGTON
ANGELA C. MIZEUR, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ROBYN B. MOFSOWITZ, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
KEITH W. MURPHY, OF TEXAS
KHANH P. NGUYEN, OF MASSACHUSETTS
ADAM R. OLSZOWKA, OF ILLINOIS
KATIE A. OSTERLOH, OF FLORIDA
BENJAMIN J. PARISI, OF FLORIDA
STRADER PAYTON, OF MISSOURI
KIMBERLY A. PEASE, OF WISCONSIN
HILARY J. PETERS, OF WASHINGTON
DREW N. PETERSON, OF PENNSYLVANIA
ELLIOT M. REPKO, OF FLORIDA
RONALD S. RHINEHART, OF WASHINGTON
DANIEL C. RHODES, OF VIRGINIA
AMANDA S. ROBERSON, OF ARIZONA
GREGORY L. ROBINSON, OF VIRGINIA
JOHN A. ROWOLD, OF MISSOURI
SUJOYA S. ROY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CLAIRE E. RUFFING, OF NEW YORK
KATHLEEN M. RYAN, OF MASSACHUSETTS
MEGAN M. SALMON, OF ILLINOIS
STEPHEN V. SASS, OF NEW JERSEY
BRYAN SCOTT SCHILLER, OF FLORIDA
SHILOH A. SCHLUNG, OF ALASKA
LYNN MARIE SEGAS, OF CALIFORNIA
TAU N. SHANKLIN-ROBERTS, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DIVIYA SHARMA, OF FLORIDA
SHANA Y. SHERRY, OF CALIFORNIA
SHAN SHI, OF WISCONSIN
TAMARA R. SHIE, OF FLORIDA
COLLEEN E. SMITH, OF WASHINGTON
CARLA ELENA SNYDER, OF FLORIDA
JORGE E. SOLARES, OF TEXAS
JOIA A. STARKS, OF VIRGINIA
ADAM J. STECKLER, OF TEXAS
EMILY MARIE STOLL, OF VIRGINIA
ELIZABETH A. STREETT, OF WASHINGTON
BRUCE W. SULLIVAN, OF NEW JERSEY
CHRISTOPHER E. TEJIRIAN, OF NEW YORK
TRACI DENISE THIESSEN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BAXTER J. THOMASON, OF TENNESSEE
JERAD S. TIETZ, OF NEW YORK
VICKI S. TING, OF CALIFORNIA
THAO ANH N. TRAN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DANIEL R. TRIPP, OF FLORIDA
DAVID L. WAGNER, OF MASSACHUSETTS
LISA M. WILKINSON, OF VIRGINIA
BRIAN P. WILLIAMS, OF FLORIDA
JAMES S. WILSON, OF VIRGINIA
DUDEN YEGENOGLU, OF GEORGIA
SYLVIE YOUNG, OF CALIFORNIA

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED PERSON FOR APPOINTMENT AS A MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE TO BE A CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, EFFECTIVE MAY 30, 2015:

JENNIFER MARIE SCHUETT, OF NEW MEXICO

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED PERSONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR APPOINTMENT AS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS ONE, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

MELINDA L. CROWLEY, OF MARYLAND
BOOTS POLIQUIN, OF MARYLAND

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED PERSON FOR APPOINTMENT AS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS THREE, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

SARAH E. EVANS, OF VIRGINIA

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED PERSONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR APPOINTMENT AS A MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE TO BE A CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

PAUL J. ANDERSEN, OF VIRGINIA
BERNIE SARFO ANNOR, OF VIRGINIA
KENDRA MICHELLE ARBAIZA-SUNDAL, OF WISCONSIN
KENT M. ARGANBRIGHT, OF VIRGINIA
RAINA T. ARMSTRONG, OF VIRGINIA
SARAH HART ASHBY, OF TEXAS
CLAIRE JUMANNA ASHCRAFT, OF CALIFORNIA
KATHERINE ANN AVONDET, OF VIRGINIA
JOHN THOMAS AVRETT II, OF VIRGINIA
JEFFERY C. BAMBERG, OF VIRGINIA
BENJAMIN BANFIELD, OF VIRGINIA
SARAH JANE BANNISTER, OF PENNSYLVANIA
SAPTARSHI BASU, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ADAM WADDELL BENTLEY, OF CALIFORNIA
CHELSEA ROSE BERGESEN, OF WASHINGTON
DANIEL MARK BINGHAM-PANKRATZ, OF WISCONSIN
CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH BODINGTON, OF OHIO
ANDREW MICHAEL BOLAND, OF VIRGINIA
MATTHEW CARL BOWLBY, OF MINNESOTA
SUSAN SILSBY BOYLE, OF MARYLAND
ALEX BRANIGAN, OF VIRGINIA
JOHN BRUNO, OF VIRGINIA
ANNE BURKETT, OF VIRGINIA
MARGARET J. CADENA, OF VIRGINIA
KENDALL MERLE CALKINS, OF VIRGINIA
MICHELE C. CALVERT, OF VIRGINIA
NORTH KEENEY CHARLES, OF KANSAS
GRACE CHENG, OF VIRGINIA
BRANDON D. CHIN, OF VIRGINIA
KEVIN CHING, OF ILLINOIS
AIMEE NICOLE CHIU, OF VIRGINIA
TASHINA ETTER COOPER, OF VIRGINIA
ALEXANDRE JULES COTTIN, OF NEW MEXICO
DAVID PATRICK COUGHRAN, JR., OF WASHINGTON
WILLIAM LYNWOOD COX, OF VIRGINIA
JENNIFER ANN CROOK, OF VIRGINIA
STEPHANIE CURTIS SCHMITT, OF VIRGINIA
DENNIS DAME, OF MARYLAND
DANIEL ALLAN DARBY, OF VIRGINIA
GREGORY DAVID, OF CALIFORNIA
CLAIRE YERKE DESJARDINS, OF OHIO
MICHAEL H. DING, OF MASSACHUSETTS
JEFFREY D. DIRKS, OF WASHINGTON
JOHN R. DOW, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
RAISA NICOLE ELLENBERG DUKAS, OF VIRGINIA
ERIC CONRAD EIKMEIER, OF VIRGINIA
ERIC SPENCER ELLIOTT, OF NEW MEXICO
JULIE ANN ESPINOSA, OF MARYLAND
PAUL ESTRADA, OF CALIFORNIA
GERALD EURICE, OF VIRGINIA
CRAIG LOUIS FINKELSTEIN, OF VIRGINIA
JOHN TIMOTHY FOJUT, OF NEW JERSEY
ROBERT S. FRANCIS, OF VIRGINIA
NATHANAEL LAWRENCE GIBSON, OF VIRGINIA
TIJR AIIRE GILLIAM, OF VIRGINIA
GLENN CHAPMAN GODBEY, OF FLORIDA
SAMUEL C. GOELLER, OF VIRGINIA
MICHAEL ANTHONY GONZALEZ, OF FLORIDA
LUIS L. GONZALEZ III, OF TEXAS
CARA BRICKWEG GREENO, OF MISSOURI
EMILY RAE HALL, OF VIRGINIA
TARYN KATHLEEN HANLEY, OF VIRGINIA
JORDAN T. HARDENBERGH, OF VIRGINIA
CHERYL ANN HARRIS, OF VIRGINIA
HOUSTON RANDALL HARRIS, OF TEXAS
RYAN D. HARVEY, OF VIRGINIA
FREDERICK HAWKINS, OF VIRGINIA
AARON MICHEAL HAYMAN, OF VIRGINIA
DAVID C. HONG, OF VIRGINIA
HYE JIK HONG, OF VIRGINIA
ILDIKO ANG HRUBOS, OF HAWAII
DARYL L. HUMES, OF VIRGINIA
JASON INSLEE, OF COLORADO
BARRY ALAN JOHNSON, OF MICHIGAN
DAVID HOWARD JOHNSON, OF WISCONSIN
LAUREN AMANDA JOHNSON, OF NORTH CAROLINA
ALBERT BERTRAND KAFKA, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SYDNEY KELLY, OF NEVADA
SENG JAE KIM, OF NEW YORK
PAUL KOPECKI, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
LAURI A. KRANIG, OF VIRGINIA
MICHAEL JAMIE KRIS, OF VIRGINIA
ERJON KRUJA, OF VIRGINIA
MAUREEN KUMAR, OF TEXAS
WILLIAM SETH LACY, OF VIRGINIA
NEAL BRIAN LARKINS, OF MASSACHUSETTS
JOHN DANIEL LATHERS II, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BRIGID A. LAUGHLIN, OF NEW JERSEY
DELLA P. LEACH, OF VIRGINIA
HYE RI LEE, OF VIRGINIA
STACY LEMERY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ERICA PAIGE LENGYEL, OF VIRGINIA
AVA G. LEONE, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JARED AMI LEVANT, OF VIRGINIA
LENECIA HELENA LEWIS–KIRKWOOD, OF NEW YORK
JAKOB KANE LOUKAS, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ANN R. MANGOLD, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JENNIFER D. MARSH, OF VIRGINIA
JUAN ERNESTO MAUNEZ, OF VIRGINIA
JAY R. MCCANN, OF MARYLAND
KATHLEEN M. MEILAHN, OF TEXAS
NICOLE E. MELLSTROM, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT DANIEL MERVINE, OF VIRGINIA
DAVID MESSENGER, OF VIRGINIA
JILL MARGARET MESSINGER, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
STEPHANIE E. C. MILLER, OF VIRGINIA
HENRI SCOTT MINION, OF VIRGINIA
BRIAN R. MIRANDA, OF VIRGINIA
BRANDICE P. MITHAIWALA, OF VIRGINIA
IAN LOUIS MORELLO, OF VIRGINIA
SEAN CHRISTIAN MURRAY, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT MUTCHLER, OF VIRGINIA
MAUREEN F. O'CONNELL, OF CALIFORNIA
CHELSEA DE VITA OPPENHEIM, OF VIRGINIA
DAVID DANIEL OSWALD, OF VIRGINIA
GEORGE OTTERBACHER, OF VIRGINIA
MATTHEW J. PAGETT, OF FLORIDA
DONALD R. PARRISH III, OF VIRGINIA
CAROLINE LAHEY PLATT, OF VIRGINIA
GORDON ALMA PLATT, OF OREGON
ZACHARY T. PONCHERI, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT ERLE POULSON–HOUSER, OF PENNSYLVANIA
SANJIN PRASTALO, OF VIRGINIA
RICHARD PRATT RALEY, OF VIRGINIA
BRIDGET ELIZABETH ROCHESTER, OF VIRGINIA
KARL ROGERS, OF NEW YORK
JASON RUBIN, OF FLORIDA
REBECCA SATTERFIELD, OF TEXAS
MIKEL LEWIS SAVIDES, OF CALIFORNIA
CECELIA A. SAVOY–CHASE, OF VIRGINIA
MATTHEW LOUIS SCHUMANN, OF VIRGINIA
COLIN M. SEALS, OF ILLINOIS
MICHELLE F. SEGAL, OF CALIFORNIA
JULIECLAIRE BOND SHEPPARD, OF CALIFORNIA
CHIMERE MELODY SHERROD, OF VIRGINIA
SHAHTAJ SIDDIQUI, OF CALIFORNIA
ASHLEY MARTINA SIMMONS, OF FLORIDA
HEATHER ANN SIZEMORE, OF VIRGINIA
JESSICA K. SLATTERY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SHANNON SMALL, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MELANIE JO SMITH, OF WASHINGTON
BRIAN E. SMYSER, OF NEW YORK
SUMIT K. SOOD, OF VIRGINIA
ROBYN JANELLE SOTOLOV, OF VIRGINIA
PHILLIP WESLEY STARKWEATHER, OF CONNECTICUT
CATHERINE SWANSON, OF TEXAS
ALLEN R. TACKETT, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
LUKE TATEOKA, OF HAWAII
ERIN K. THOMAS, OF VIRGINIA
LARRY ANTOINE THOMPSON, OF VIRGINIA
ANDREW STEPHEN THORNHILL, OF VIRGINIA
MARCUS WILLIAM THORNTON, OF MISSOURI
NATHANIEL GRAY TISHMAN, OF CALIFORNIA
PETER E. TRAVIA, OF VIRGINIA
LAURA JENNIFER TRUGLIO, OF VIRGINIA
MARY KAY TRUONG, OF VIRGINIA
RYAN H. USTICK, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
WILLIAM R. VAN DE BERG, OF NORTH CAROLINA
STAVROS VASILIADIS, OF VIRGINIA
NATHAN CORY VOELKER, OF WASHINGTON
JERRY WANG, OF TEXAS
KENNETH DAVID WILCOX, OF MARYLAND
KELLY MARIE WINCK, OF TENNESSEE
ALAN BRYCE WINDSOR, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MATTHEW D. WINSLOW, OF WYOMING
JOSHUA DAVID WODA, OF MASSACHUSETTS
MICHAEL TSENG WU, OF VIRGINIA
JOANNA CHRISTINE WULFSBERG, OF ARIZONA
TAO ZENG, OF PENNSYLVANIA
JULIE ELIZABETH ZINAMON, OF VIRGINIA