

and independent inspector general to be our partner in that effort. Delaying this nomination also delays improvements to the services that our veterans receive.

Permanent leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General is long overdue and will go a long way toward providing stable leadership and oversight of the agency. I urge my colleagues to quickly confirm Mr. Missal so he can go to work on behalf of our veterans and the American people—not in a couple of months or later this year; we can do it now, as soon as we come back from the recess that begins tomorrow.

#### ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I wish to take this opportunity to talk about an issue that is both concerning and tragic; that is, the rapid spread of the Zika virus in Central and South America in recent months. This is a virus we have known about ever since I was born, and that has been about 69 years. I think the first time somebody detected this was maybe on an island in the South Pacific. It has ebbed and flowed over the years, and now it is flowing big time.

Every day researchers are discovering more about this virus and its potential impact, particularly on pregnant woman and their unborn children. The findings are not good. In fact, they are deeply troubling. There are strong indications that the virus is connected to a developmental birth defect that can lead to underdeveloped brains. We have seen the photographs of smaller heads in too many children.

Additional studies are also examining a potential connection between the Zika virus and other health concerns. With the World Health Organization estimating that as many as 4 million people could be infected in the region this year, it is clear that we must act swiftly to combat this threat. That is why I was pleased to see President Obama and his administration take an early and proactive role in addressing the Zika virus. For example, a coordinated Federal response led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is working with State, local, and international public health partners to step up mosquito control efforts and to ensure that health officials have the equipment they need to test people for this disease.

To further these efforts, President Obama has recently submitted a supplemental funding request to Congress. These funds would go toward developing vaccines, mosquito control efforts, and diagnostic testing, among other things. The Senate should take a long, hard look at the President's request in the coming days and weeks and consider what measures we need to take to ensure we are ready for Zika and for other future outbreaks.

#### TRIBUTE TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, in closing, I want to do something I think the Presiding Officer has heard me do before. I try to come to the floor once a month and talk about some of the employees who work at the Department of Homeland Security. They work for us across this country and really around the world.

This is the youngest Department, if you will, that we have in the Federal Government. It is about 12 years old. It sort of formed on the heels of 9/11. Twenty-two agencies that have some commonality in their focus or the way they touch the security of our homeland and the people who live in it kind of glommed together.

The morale in the Department has not been good. There has been a great, sustained effort—and certainly we are trying to support it in our Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs—to turn a corner and let people know that not only is the work they do important, but we appreciate their efforts.

I wish to say a few words today about some of the men and women who work tirelessly to keep us safe and secure, often without a lot of recognition and thanks. I am talking about the good people at the Transportation Security Administration, now led by retired Coast Guard Admiral Neffenger, Peter Neffenger, a very able and impressive leader.

As the Easter holidays approach, many Americans will be traveling to spend time with their families around the country and even around the world. If you head to an airport, as many of my colleagues, their colleagues, and their constituents will be doing very soon, chances are you will interact with some of the hard-working men and women of the TSA who keep our skies safe. Nearly 59,000 people work at TSA. Many are focused on securing our aviation system, while others work to protect our service transportation networks, such as the train I took to work this morning and will be jumping on later today to go home.

TSA's work is not only carried out by frontline employees whom we see at the airports as we check in and go through security, have our bags checked, our bodies checked, there are also many dedicated people who are hard at work behind the scenes. We never actually see them, but they are there keeping us safe too. These men and women perform the critical work of gathering and analyzing intelligence in order to identify potential threats to our transportation system and to mitigate them in real time.

I would like to use the remainder of my time to highlight the outstanding efforts of some of these individuals. I learned about them yesterday while meeting with Admiral Neffenger, who happened to be in a meeting that we had in my office and was with me again today for a secure briefing in the SCIF.

He shared with me something I was very happy to learn about. He told me of six members of the current intelligence team within TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis and how they recently received the 2015 Intelligence Community Counterterrorism Award for Education and Training from the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center. That is a mouthful, but it is quite an award, quite a recognition. These six individuals—three men, three women—developed a counterterrorism threat briefing for all frontline employees who man our checkpoints and transit systems so they can better understand the connection between intelligence and TSA security operations.

In essence, these individuals are helping TSA frontline officers understand the “why,” if you will, behind their work. According to the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, these six or seven men and women “exemplified the essential attributes of the counter-terrorism community: expertise, integration, collaboration, and information sharing.”

While I cannot state their names here, maybe for obvious reasons, I do wish to say to all of you out there—you know who I am talking about—thank you for the work you do every day to ensure that your fellow Americans, people who work here and the people we represent, can travel safely and that our transit systems are secure. Thank you for the work you have done to ensure that your fellow TSA employees have the tools they need to carry out the critical work they do. Your dedication and your invaluable service are appreciated by me, by all of our colleagues in the Senate, our staffs, and by millions of Americans who travel throughout our country every single day.

With that, I have probably said enough. I will say to the Presiding Officer, the staff, and everybody who might be tuned in, happy St. Patrick's Day. We hope good fortune shines on all of us and on our country, not just over this holiday and upcoming recess and a special day today but for a long time after that.

Some of the people we have talked about today—their job is to make sure we are not just lucky, but that we are safe, secure, and successful going forward. There is an old saying: The harder I work, the luckier I get. I am talking about some people who work very hard so we can be fortunate and blessed in this country. I bid you a happy St. Patrick's Day.

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

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