



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2016

No. 43

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 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.

Eternal God, You are the shepherd of our souls. Because of You, blessings overtake us. Thank You for inscribing each of us on the palms of Your hands. Great is Your faithfulness.

Bless our Senators and those who labor with them. Give them strength to meet today's challenges with a peace that comes from total trust in You. Remind them that the way to find life is to lose it in service for others.

Surround us all with Your favor, as You complete the work You have started in each of us.

We pray in Your marvelous 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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The minority leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE CHIEF KIM DINE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend the Republican leader will be here shortly. I have something to do downtown, so I will have to leave. I certainly do not want to get ahead of him. I know he is going to say something because we have talked about Chief of Police Kim Dine, who has retired.

I want to join with the Republican leader in recognizing the work of the U.S. Capitol Police Chief, Kim Dine. He spent his life in law enforcement. He spent his entire professional life serving and protecting the people of Washington, DC, and the entire metro area. He started as a young officer here in Washington 41 years ago and over the course of three decades has moved up the ranks of the Metropolitan Police Department, becoming assistant chief of police.

In 2002, he was selected to serve as chief of police of Frederick, MD. He served the people of Maryland with distinction for 10 years.

In 2012, our Sergeant at Arms asked Chief Dine to come back to Washington, this time as Chief of the U.S. Capitol Police Department. We are very fortunate that took place.

Chief Dine helped oversee President Obama's 2013 inauguration, and since then it has been event after big event: four State of the Union Addresses, Memorial Day and Fourth of July concerts, and, of course, Pope Francis's historic visit here last year. During all of those proceedings, it was his obligation to protect the people who are visiting and to protect the people who work within this beautiful Capitol Complex. At every one of those events, Chief Dine and his department did a superb job protecting 30,000 people—Senators, Congressmen, and staff—who are in the Capitol Complex virtually every day. And that doesn't include the visitors who come here.

So now, as the Chief embarks upon a well-deserved retirement, we thank him for his service. We thank his wife Robin and their two daughters for sharing their husband and father with us the past few years. I am sure this man was as taken care of at home as he has taken care of all of us in the metropolitan area. I hope his family takes satisfaction in the outstanding work he has rendered to the American people.

I thank you very much, Chief. We wish you nothing but the best.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE CHIEF KIM DINE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this weekend U.S. Capitol Police Chief Kim Dine will retire his badge and say goodbye to the Senate after several decades of law enforcement service, including more than three right here in the Capitol.

Chief Dine was police chief in a nearby Maryland suburb when he first came to this position in December of 2012. You could say the appointment was a bit of a homecoming for him given that Chief Dine began his more than 40 years in law enforcement with the DC Metropolitan Police Department. He served there for 27 years and rose through the ranks, eventually becoming assistant chief of police.

I know it is never easy to leave the Capitol, but you have to imagine Chief Dine has a lot to look forward to in retirement. After all, this is a guy who has been known to get into the office before the sun rises and leave after it sets. Most would need some rest after so many years of that kind of schedule.

So here is what we would like to say: The Senate appreciates Chief Dine's willingness to serve our country. And after nearly four decades in law enforcement, we wish him all the best in his retirement.

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



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S1553

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY AND SUBPOENA ENFORCEMENT RESOLUTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, let me state an obvious point. When it comes to filling the current Supreme Court vacancy—which could fundamentally alter the direction of the Court for a generation—Republicans and Democrats simply disagree. We simply disagree. Republicans think the people deserve a voice in this critical decision; the President does not. So we disagree in this instance, and as a result, we logically act as a check-and-balance.

There is no reason one area of disagreement should stop us from looking for other areas of agreement, though. We will continue our work in the Senate as the American people make their voices heard in this important national conversation. For instance, we will address another very important issue today, which I would like to talk about now.

Senator PORTMAN and Senator MCCASKILL are the top Republican and top Democrat on the Homeland Security Committee's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Over the past year, they have worked together in a bipartisan way to examine human trafficking. Their probe has revealed how trafficking has flourished in the age of the Internet. It has also revealed how many cases of sex trafficking, including cases involving children, have been linked to one Web site in particular: backpage.com.

One national group who tracks the issue has told the subcommittee this: Nearly three-quarters of all suspected child sex trafficking reports it receives from the public through its tip line have a connection to backpage.

Chairman PORTMAN and Ranking Member MCCASKILL have wanted to do something about this. They know they have to keep investigating. So they issued a subpoena to backpage. They wanted documents about the company's business practices. They wanted to know how it screens advertisements for warning signs of trafficking. As the leaders of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, they had every right to make these requests in the course of their investigation, but backpage has refused to comply. Does that mean Senators PORTMAN and MCCASKILL give up? Of course not. And we shouldn't, either. They jointly submitted a Senate resolution that would hold the company in civil contempt and force it to turn over this required information. This resolution passed through the committee with unanimous bipartisan support 15 to 0, and today it can be adopted by the full Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support too. We will have that opportunity this afternoon. If we do, it will allow the Senate's legal counsel to bring a civil suit in court and ask the court to order compliance with the subpoena. That is critical for allowing this bipartisan investigation to move forward.

I thank Ranking Member MCCASKILL for all she has done. I thank Chairman PORTMAN for all he has done.

We saw Senator PORTMAN's great work last week in passing bipartisan legislation to help address America's heroin and opioid crisis, and again today we will see Senator PORTMAN's great work in leading on another important issue and doing so once more in a bipartisan manner.

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

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

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 12:45 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I rise today to address what I believe is the urgency of the moment, really the test of the time. We have a Constitution that was designed for three coequal branches of government. We know the importance of each of those branches of government and the roles they have are spelled out in the Constitution.

A fully functioning Supreme Court—one of the coequal branches—is of the utmost importance to the proper function of our democracy. Justices decide cases that shape the daily lives of all Americans. Even one Justice can deeply affect the rights and liberties of the American people for generations to come.

Yesterday, the President nominated Chief Judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court of the United States.

A clear and plain reading of the text of the Constitution says explicitly in article II, section 2, that it is the duty of the Senate to provide "advice and consent" to the President on key nominations, particularly Justices to the Supreme Court.

I, along with my 99 colleagues, took an oath of office. We swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and to faithfully discharge the duties of the offices we hold. There was no addendum to that oath that excused us from our responsibil-

ities during a Presidential election year. The people of New Jersey elected me to serve a full 6-year term. That means my duties and obligations as a Senator—or the duties and obligations of each of the 100 Senators in this body—should not be interrupted by a Presidential year. That is especially true when those duties are explicitly laid out in the Constitution and when the duties impact a coequal branch of government, such as the Supreme Court.

I have only served in the Senate since October of 2013. This is my first Supreme Court nominee to consider, and I look forward to thoroughly reviewing Chief Judge Garland's record, to meeting with him face to face, and hopefully, I believe rightfully, taking an up-or-down vote on his confirmation.

That is what all of us swore an oath and signed up to do when a vacancy occurs on the Supreme Court. That is the duty the American people expect of us—to abide by the Constitution and provide our advice and consent regarding a Presidential nomination of this significance—a lifetime appointment—to the Supreme Court, a coequal branch of government.

We may not ultimately agree on whether Chief Judge Garland should be confirmed. The Senate can vote no. Senators have that independent choice. It happens almost every day here where we disagree on issues. There is no guarantee in the Constitution that the President's nominee should get confirmed. But we should agree at least to do the job we were elected to do and to allow the confirmation process to move forward. That is bigger than any one party.

Now, as I understand it, Chief Judge Garland is highly respected, experienced, and is considered by many to be a deliberate jurist whom the Senate overwhelmingly confirmed in 1997 to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which is known as the second highest court in the land. His nomination to be an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court is certainly deserving of our consideration.

Chief Judge Garland, in fact, has more Federal judiciary experience than any other Supreme Court nominee in history.

He currently serves as Chief Judge of the D.C. Circuit Court, a court where he has served for almost 19 years. Previously, he has served under both Democratic and Republican Presidents at the U.S. Department of Justice. He first worked as Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division of DOJ and later served as the Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General. In those posts, he supervised high-profile cases at the Department of Justice such as the prosecution of the Oklahoma City bomber, which ultimately brought Timothy McVeigh to justice.

To call his qualifications impressive is an understatement. Chief Judge Garland has dedicated his life to public

service, and his lengthy career reflects his commitment to the high ideals etched on the Supreme Courts itself, "Equal justice under law."

He has said, "The role of the court is to apply the law to the facts of the case before it—not to legislate, not to arrogate to itself the executive power, not to hand down advisory opinions on the issues of the day." No wonder he is known in legal circles and around Capitol Hill for his careful opinions and lack of overt ideological bias.

Chief Judge Garland is so well admired, so highly regarded, and so accomplished that his appeal transcends the typical partisan divisions that we too often see in Washington.

There is no possible justification—based on this nominee's reputation, his experience, his dedication, his service, and his work—to ignore, blockade, or stonewall Chief Judge Garland's nomination or to deny him a hearing and a vote. There is no reason for that.

There is certainly no historical or constitutional precedent behind such a blockade. Since committee hearings began in 1916, every pending Supreme Court nominee has received a hearing, except for nine nominees who were confirmed within 11 days. So what is being suggested—to not even meet with this nominee or to not even give this nominee a hearing in committee—is unprecedented in our Nation's history.

The Senate has previously confirmed Supreme Court nominees during a Presidential election year. History shows us that the Senate has previously confirmed a Supreme Court nominee at least 17 separate times during the Presidencies of liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats, alike. We have even held confirmation hearings of Supreme Court nominees at least five times in Presidential election years since the hearing process began in 1916.

Thus, the excuse that we should not move forward with the confirmation process for Chief Judge Garland because this is a political election season simply falls flat in the face of our history. In fact, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and, more recently, President Ronald Reagan saw their Supreme Court nominees confirmed in a Presidential election year. Since 1975, it has taken, on average, a little over 2 months for the full Senate to consider a nomination before voting.

It is only March, so there is plenty of time to consider and confirm a nominee. There is no reason why Chief Judge Garland cannot be confirmed by even the end of May, given the average time of recent Supreme Court confirmations, which is more than ample time for the next Justice to be on the Court before the next Supreme Court term begins in October.

When the Supreme Court, that coequal branch of government, has a body of work to do, for the Senate to deny this nominee a hearing and a vote we would also deny that coequal branch of government its full, func-

tioning complement of members. This is a historic time and a critical test for this distinguished body. It is a time that will test how dignified our confirmation process will be for future Supreme Court nominees.

It provides us an opportunity, amidst all of the partisanship, amidst all of the delays that are going on, amidst all of the partisan rhetoric, for this body to rise above the fray. We can show that the Senate, at its best, treats nominees to our highest court with a level of dignity, honor, and respect. Indeed, we can show a greater fidelity to the Constitution than to party, and show that we are not susceptible to the partisan winds of the time.

I believe Chief Judge Merrick Garland deserves a dignified confirmation process. It is up to each and every Senator to decide whether he should be a Supreme Court Justice. For me, this moment in time is not just about the individual; it is also about how we as a body, the Senate, will do business and whether we will do our jobs even in Presidential election years.

I have heard some of my colleagues say simply: Let the people decide.

That sentiment appears to resonate at first, especially since a first principle of any democracy is to let the voters decide important issues. But in reality the people have already decided. They decided when they voted for each of the 100 Members of this distinguished body, which tells us that we should do our duty. The people decided when they voted for President Barack Obama for a second consecutive 4-year term. The people did not decide that the President should be a 1-year President or a 2-year President, but that he should serve a full 4-year term and conduct his duties—his sworn duties—accordingly.

No Senator nor the President should shirk from fulfilling their Constitutional obligations. The people in this democracy decided when they elected us. We should do our job and give Chief Judge Garland a hearing and a vote.

Our country has a deep history of fights, which have taken place not only in this body but in our larger democracy. There have been divisions and factions in this country. The Federalist Papers literally acknowledged that there would be divisions and fights, but the Constitution was designed to call us to a higher purpose, to overcome our petty divisions, and to unite us.

Our Nation is mighty and strong, and I am so proud of that because, as much as our differences matter, we always seem to understand that our country matters more. The people who founded our Nation understood that we would have differences of opinion and ideology. They understood that our differences and diversity of thought would make our country great, but they also understood that, in order for our Nation to succeed and endure, we must be loyal to our ideals and principles. Those ideals and principles are enshrined in the Constitution itself and

reflected in our democracy, and that is what brings us together. In fact, it harkens to the very hallmark ideal of our country: "E Pluribus Unum," out of many, one. It is written into the culture of our country. There is an old African saying: If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.

When our Founders drafted the Declaration of Independence, they enshrined for all time the ideal that we are individuals endowed by our creator with inalienable rights. The Founders ended that national charter by pledging their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to each other.

There has been no greater honor in my life than when I stood in this well before the Vice President and swore my oath to uphold the Constitution. In fact, if I ever have to, I will sacrifice myself for my country. These are the ideals and this is the honor that I believe has helped our great country persevere.

Now we are faced with a test where two conflicting ideals have been put forth: whether a President and a Senate should fulfill their obligations all the way to the end of their sworn terms or whether we should begin to truncate the powers of a Presidency and the powers of individual Senators and suspend our constitutional obligations because it is an election year. To me, that undermines the purpose and the spirit of our constitutional institution.

As I said, the nomination of Chief Judge Garland to the Supreme Court will be a greater test for the Senate and the constitutional values we hold dear. I worry we will fail this test and descend deeper into the kind of divisiveness that undermines our Constitution.

I believe this is a time that calls for an honorable stance. We have an extremely competent Supreme Court Justice nominee before us. I am not going to blockade his nomination. I am not going to avoid meeting with this distinguished nominee. I hope we will hold hearings and a vote so that Senators may decide whether this nominee is worthy of sitting on the Nation's highest Court. I hope that each individual Senator will honor the precedent that has been continuous for years and years and then allow this nominee an up-or-down vote. The purpose of our sacred Constitution, as spelled out and written in article II, section 2, is to allow the President to put forward a nominee and the Senate to give its "advice and consent," which I believe means an up-or-down vote on a nomination.

Again, we are here because greater Americans made a pledge to each other. As different as they were, they came together and wrote a Constitution and a Declaration of Independence. We are here because people greater than we are pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

Let us harken back to that honor. Let us put forth our sacred honor now

and not allow this country to lurch even deeper into divisiveness. Let us unify and show that, yes, there are differences; yes, there are divisions; yes, there is partisanship, but in the end, we will unite around those bonds that hold this Nation together and ensure that our democracy functions for years, decades, and generations to come.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Ms. HIRONO pertaining to the introduction of S. 2710 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VETERANS' ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I want to take a moment or two to speak about our Nation's veterans. The Presiding Officer and I have the honor of serving together on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. I take that responsibility—as does the Presiding Officer—very seriously. There is no other group of people that we should hold in higher regard than those who served our country. Today I want to talk about some of the challenges they are facing as a result of our failure to do that.

Who would we expect to get the very best health care in our country? We want everyone to have good quality, affordable health care. But of all the people we would want to make certain received the health care services they were promised, clearly, it would be those who served our country—the men and women of our military who are now veterans. They deserve timely, high-quality health care. That is true whether they live in an urban or suburban setting or a rural place like your State and mine. There are more than 221,000 veterans who call Kansas home, and the vast majority of them live in very rural parts of our State.

Before being elected to the Senate, before the honor that Kansans allowed me to serve them here in the Senate, I served in the U.S. House of Representatives. I represented the First District of Kansas, generally known in our

State as the Big First. That is a congressional district larger than the State of Illinois, and there isn't a VA hospital in that congressional district. Veterans in this part of Kansas drive hours on end to get care, or they simply go without it all together.

Over the past year, Congress has repeatedly passed legislation designed to ease the burden for veterans who are struggling to get health care from VA facilities in my State and yours and across the country. In the wake of the scandal, we learned across the country about the false waiting list for veterans. The VA put people on a waiting list that didn't really exist. The scandal across our country allowed us, as Members of the Congress and the Senate, to come together—Republicans and Democrats—and we passed legislation called the Choice Act. This legislation allows veterans who can't get timely service to access that service with a provider outside of the VA.

Importantly—and what I want to talk about today—the Choice Act says that if you are a veteran who lives more than 40 miles from a VA facility, then at your request you can have those services provided by a local hometown physician, be admitted to your hometown hospital, see your local optometrist, and be treated by your local physical therapist or chiropractor. All of those things make a lot of sense for the veterans who live in the places where I come from.

In the process of doing that, part of the goal was to ease the burden, in addition to providing quality and timely services, for those who live in rural places. Part of the theory—and I think rightly so—in passage of the Choice Act was to lift a bit of the burden on the VA off of the VA. It has been difficult for them to have the necessary health care providers to meet the needs of veterans. So we began providing services in the community. And we are also speeding up the process by which a veteran who still goes to a VA hospital or still goes to a VA clinic gets services in a more timely and effective way.

This past July Congress passed legislation to amend the Choice Act. We did so because of the number of problems we were encountering as a result of the stories that I heard from my veterans across our State—and I know it is true of many Senators, if not all—about problems with the way the Choice Act was being implemented by the Department of Veterans Affairs. We amended that legislation to try to make it work better. In my view, that shouldn't have been necessary. The VA could have solved this challenge on their own but didn't.

What it says is that it is not a facility. I have used this example on the Senate floor before. My hometown is a town of about 1,900 people. It is about 23 miles from the community of Hays—about 20,000 people—where there is an outpatient clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA was saying that you cannot access the Choice Act

if you live within 40 miles of a facility, and the problem was that they were saying even if that facility doesn't provide the service the veteran needs. So by law, we changed the definition of what a VA facility is, and it said that it is not a VA facility if it is not open full time and doesn't have a full-time physician—a pretty commonsense kind of thing that we needed to apparently put in the law to get the Department of Veterans Affairs to implement and to interpret the Choice Act in a commonsense way that was designed to meet the needs of veterans.

Unfortunately, many of our veterans remain unaware of their options. I talk to lots of veterans, some who have given up on Choice, some who don't know it is an option, and some who tried and are caught up in a bureaucratic system and are trying to get an answer about whether they qualify, and even if they do, where they can go and how their bill will get paid.

Examples in my State: One of the Kansas VA community-based outpatient clinics—known as a CBOC—is only open 2 days a month, and it shouldn't be counted as part of the Choice Act, a facility of the Choice Act. There are 9 out of 14 CBOCs in Kansas that do not have a full-time medical doctor. Those nine community-based outpatient clinics should not be counted under Choice. I want to highlight that for veterans from Kansas and across the country who might happen to hear what I have to say today so they know there are more options than they may realize.

Many Kansas veterans choose to live in rural communities. Many of us often choose to live in rural communities and raise our families, see our grandkids, and more often than not, those communities don't have a VA hospital or a clinic to serve those veterans' needs.

In townhall meeting after townhall meeting and up and down Main Streets of communities in my State, the most common conversation I now have is with veterans who are expressing how the system is failing them, the frustration they are encountering, and that they are not seeing the improvements and changes for the betterment of the care they are entitled to.

As I said earlier, many veterans are so frustrated with the back-and-forth they have with the VA and the redtape, they simply give up and either go without health care or end up trying to pay for it out of their own pocket. That is exactly what occurred to Mr. Lamoine Guinn, who is a rural Kansan. Mr. Guinn shared his story with me not to try to get me to solve the problem, but he wanted others to know how this program needed to change so that other veterans would benefit. After a year of dealing with the VA, he decided to simply give up on Choice. I don't want to let that happen. I don't want veterans to give up on Choice. I don't want the Department of Veterans Affairs to have the excuse to say Choice is not a viable

program, veterans don't like it, and come back to Congress and tell us that it is no longer needed.

If I were home in Kansas, I would explain it this way: Again, my hometown, Plainville—population now 1,900—used to have rail service, and over time the rail service diminished and became less effective. The rates went up, and fewer people used the rail service, the railroad, to haul grain in particular. Then the railroad could go to the regulators and say: Nobody is using the railroad; can we just abandon it?

I worry that that kind of attitude and approach could happen with this issue if we don't make certain our veterans see the benefit and actually receive the benefits that come from the Choice Act. I don't want to give anybody—the Department of Veterans Affairs or other Members of Congress—the opportunity to say “The Choice Act doesn't matter. People don't like it. It is not popular. Let's do something different” when the reality is that it would be popular if it were working effectively and in a timely way and veterans were being cared for.

Mr. Guinn lives in Oberlin, a small town, a county seat town in Decatur County, almost in Nebraska. It is one of those typical Kansas small farming communities. The closest VA facility to him is actually in Grand Island, NE. Although he is a Kansas resident, he is part of the Nebraska VA network because of its proximity to Grand Island. He is eligible under the Choice Program, and he needed to schedule spinal surgery with the community provider. That is what he wanted to do. So the VA referred him to HealthNet. HealthNet is the organization that manages this program for the Department of Veterans Affairs. HealthNet then referred him to TriWest because he is a Kansas resident. TriWest covers Kansas while HealthNet covers Nebraska. The health care providers were arguing about who is responsible for his care because he lives one place and his VA provider is in an adjoining State.

My complaint is that it shouldn't matter where he lives. He is stuck in a bureaucracy. The burden ought not fall to him to solve all of his problems. The VA ought to step in and solve the problem for him and tell him what it is that ought to be done and get him out of the back-and-forth between the Nebraska and Kansas networks.

He has now gone a year without the surgery. He is going to now drive to another VA medical center in Omaha—300 miles one way—so he can get the surgery he is entitled to have by his hometown provider or a regional hospital in his area.

Many of our veterans—I don't know the age of this particular veteran, Mr. Guinn, but many of the veterans who live in those communities are World War II veterans and now more likely Vietnam veterans. The opportunity for them to have family around them, the

ability for them to get long distances is a complete challenge. To have to go 300 miles, when the law says that he is a veteran and he, who served our country, is entitled to services at home, is a terrible mistake, and it ought to be something that can be sorted out, but every time he has attempted to do that, the burden still rests with him. We want the Department of Veterans Affairs to step in and figure this out and get it done and get it done quickly.

Another veteran who reached out to my office for assistance was Mr. Francis Wierman, a 92-year-old veteran. He lives in La Crosse. It is a county seat town of a couple thousand folks. Because of his age, it is difficult for him to travel for his annual physical appointments.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak until I conclude my remarks.

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

Mr. MORAN. I thank the Chair.

Because of his age—Mr. Wierman needs to travel. It is difficult for him to do it. What he needs is an annual physical. So Mr. Wierman has attempted to utilize the Choice Program, and he was told there was no flexibility to be seen in La Crosse by a hometown doctor or go to a hometown hospital due to his proximity, his location next to an outpatient clinic.

Mr. Wierman sacrificed for our country, and he deserves to be able to receive his care in his own community given the burden and strain traveling imposes upon him, a veteran of 92 years of age. We need to make certain he receives the care he is entitled to, and we need to make sure the VA is doing what needs to be done to accomplish that.

My final example today is Mr. Dabney, who suffers from post-traumatic stress. He was also told he was eligible for Choice, so he set up an appointment with the local care provider. Despite the OK from the VA practitioner about getting care outside of the VA, the handoff got lost in the shuffle, and somehow the VA determined that it was Mr. Dabney's fault that the paperwork didn't follow him, leaving him with the bill for the services provided by the outside-the-VA practitioner.

I shared this case with Secretary McDonald at a hearing the Presiding Officer and I attended several months ago. The conclusion months later by the VA was that Mr. Dabney simply didn't understand the Choice Act and he should have tried harder to get an official authorization before setting up the appointment; therefore, the bill still rests with him. Thankfully, the provider, the network TriWest, disagreed, and they are now elevating his case to try to make certain he doesn't have to pay the bill for the services the VA originally authorized him to receive outside of the VA.

The Choice Act was designed specifically to help these veterans. They gave of themselves to serve our country and

fought on our behalf, and they deserve the care and respect they should be receiving today from our country and its Department of Veterans Affairs. Our country must fulfill its commitments to these individuals and to others who provide for those who sacrificed for our Nation, regardless of the community they call home.

Last week I joined my Senate colleagues in sponsoring the Veterans Choice Improvement Act of 2016. This legislation is designed to fix problems with the original Choice Act that the VA has been unable to resolve on their own to make sure these veterans receive what they are entitled to. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I look forward to working with the Presiding Officer and other members and with our chairman, JOHNNY ISAKSON from Georgia, as well as the ranking member, Senator BLUMENTHAL, for purposes of making sure that we get this right and that we make certain the VA does its job in caring for these men and women who served our country.

I will continue to make certain that happens, and I continue to express my gratitude to those who served our country and renew my willingness and my desire to make sure they receive the health care they are entitled to.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

(The remarks of Mr. COTTON pertaining to the introduction of S. 2708 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Mr. COTTON. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I come to this Chamber for the 131st time to urge this body to break free and wake up to what carbon pollution is doing to our atmosphere and our oceans.

Last week, scientists at NOAA reported that carbon dioxide levels at their Mauna Loa Observatory jumped in 2015 by the largest year-to-year increase in 56 years of research.

Pieter Tans, lead scientist at NOAA, said:

Carbon dioxide levels are increasing faster than they have in hundreds of thousands of years. It's explosive compared to natural processes.

We see the effects of this runaway carbon pollution everywhere, in ever-climbing temperatures, in ever-changing weather patterns, and in ever-rising, warming, and acidifying seas. But the Republican-controlled Congress refuses to take responsible action. They put their climate effort elsewhere, such as attacking former Vice President Al Gore for raising awareness of the real and looming climate crisis.

One Republican colleague has railed against Mr. Gore, calling him “the

world's first climate billionaire," claiming that he is "drowning in a sea of his own global warming illusions" and faulting him for "desperately trying to keep global warming alarmism alive today."

Another prominent Republican, this one running for President, suggested "the Nobel committee should take the Nobel Prize back from Al Gore."

Others claim that cold or snowy weather proves Mr. Gore wrong. After one snow in DC a few years ago, a prominent Republican TV personality claimed the storm "would seem to contradict Al Gore's hysterical global warming theories." A Senator gloated after that storm, "Where's Al Gore now?"

Another Senate colleague said while campaigning for President in Iowa:

I have to admit, I was really confused. Al Gore told us this wasn't going to happen, but it was cold there.

These are all profoundly ignorant comments if you know anything about climate change, but they cannot resist. They inhabit what Politico's Daniel Lippman and Mike Allen this week called "a political reality indifferent to the exigencies of climate change."

So let's catch up on what Al Gore is up to on climate change. He has a TED talk on the ted.com Web site, and I highly recommend it. Mr. Gore's presentation opens with the fact that our atmosphere is not as big as most people think. He shows this picture taken from the International Space Station to remind us that the atmosphere surrounding our planet is really just a thin shell. It is into this thin shell that we continue to spew megatons of heat-trapping carbon pollution day in and day out. Mr. Gore explains that this thin atmosphere "right now is the open sewer for our industrial civilization as it's currently organized."

Here is how he shows our carbon dioxide emission rates through time. You can see the amount of carbon emissions really started to increase here after World War II. Vice President Gore explains: "[T]he accumulated amount of man-made, global warming pollution that is up in the atmosphere now traps as much extra heat energy as would be released by 400,000 Hiroshima-class atomic bombs exploding every 24 hours, 365 days a year."

He continues:

[T]hat is a lot of energy. . . . And all that extra heat energy is heating up . . . the whole earth system.

The Vice President didn't mention it, but the Associated Press has used a similar analogy about the heat from climate change that is going into our oceans, a piece that said: "Since 1997, Earth's oceans have absorbed man-made heat energy equivalent to a Hiroshima-style bomb being exploded every second for 75 straight years."

Mr. Gore showed this depiction of average temperatures between 1951 and 1980. The blue is cooler-than-average days, the white is average days, and the red is warmer-than-average days.

Now we are going to look at what happened in the next three decades after this 1951 to 1980 period. What is going to stay the same is this green line. That will be the constant against which you can see the change. Let's go to the next chart.

This is 1983 to 1993. You will notice that everything has moved against the constant. You will also notice down here that a new category has emerged. This category is extremely hot days.

The next chart is 1994 to 2004. Again, the average continues to move against this green line which is a constant, and now you see that new category of extremely hot days growing even more.

Here is our last decade, 2005 to 2015. What we experience in this last decade has moved completely away from the historic norm indicated by that green line, and this extreme temperature, the extremely hot days category, is now bigger than the cooler-than-average category. Remember, 1950 to 1980, this category didn't even exist. Now it is bigger. Well, it might have existed, but it wasn't visible on the graphs; let me put it that way. Now it is bigger than the cooler-than-average category. Mr. Gore points out that these extremely hot days in the last 10 years "are 150 times more common on the surface of the earth than they were just 30 years ago." By the way, we measure this stuff. This is not a theory.

Worldwide, 2015 was the hottest year since we began keeping records in 1880, according to NOAA and NASA. That Republican colleague who went to Iowa and thought that the cold disproved climate change dismissed that finding as "pseudo-scientific theory." You know what. NASA is driving a rover around on the surface of Mars right now, so I will go with them knowing what they are talking about.

The last 5 years have been the warmest 5-year period on record, according to the World Meteorological Organization, and 14 of the 15 hottest years ever measured have been in this young century. We are a terrestrial species. We live on the land, so naturally we pay more attention to the land and not so much to what is happening in our warming and acidifying oceans. This chart shows the oceans absorbing over 90 percent of the excess heat trapped in the atmosphere by greenhouse gas emissions. This is the effect of those Hiroshima bomb equivalents warming up the oceans that the Associated Press used as their example.

What does all that extra heat mean for the oceans? Well, unless you are going to dispute the law of thermal expansion, it means that warming things expand.

Last month, a study of tidal flood days along my east coast came out. The author's conclusion? I will quote him:

It's not the tide. It's not the wind. It's us.

There is one industry, the insurance industry, that pays serious attention to climate change as their losses have been mounting. This is insurance com-

pany data from the Insurance Information Institute in January of 2006 showing the climate rate of worldwide extreme weather catastrophes. Why? Well, Dr. Kevin Trenberth works at the National Center for Atmospheric Research. He says:

All storms are different now.

Do you hear that?

All storms are different now. There's so much extra energy in the atmosphere, there's so much extra water vapor. Every storm is different now.

Well, the challenge of climate change is urgent, but Mr. Gore points out that we have the understanding and engineering prowess to generate energy from new sources, and we are doing unexpectedly well. Vice President Gore says:

The best projections in the world 16 years ago were that by 2010, the world would be able to install 30 gigawatts of wind capacity. We beat that mark by 14 and a half times over.

It is the same story for solar capacity, which is taking off even more quickly than wind. Again quoting Vice President Gore: "The best projections 14 years ago were that we would install one gigawatt [of solar] per year by 2010."

The Vice President continues:

When 2010 came around, we beat that mark by 17 times over. Last year, we beat it by 58 times over. This year, we're on track to beat it 68 times over.

Look at that curve. These innovations helped renewable energy costs become comparable with fossil fuel power even though, as Vice President Gore points out, "fossil energy is now still subsidized at a rate 40 times larger than renewables."

If you look at what the International Monetary Fund has said about the "effective subsidy" of fossil fuel, the subsidy for fossil is actually way bigger than that.

Most importantly, society is moving. More than 150 major U.S. companies signed onto the American Business Act on Climate Pledge, supporting a strong outcome in the Paris climate negotiations. Fifty-three percent of young Republican voters—that is, young Republican voters under the age of 35—have said they would describe a climate change denier as "ignorant," "out-of-touch" or "crazy." Those are not my words; these are the words in the poll that the young Republicans chose.

Despite the recent stay of the administration's Clean Power Plan, 19 States are continuing with EPA to develop compliance strategies for their economies and their energy sectors. Roughly 6 in 10 Republicans and GOP-leaning Independents under age 50 think the government should limit greenhouse gases even if it causes a \$20 increase in their monthly bill. So people are moving.

Mr. Gore uses a line from the great American poet Wallace Stevens: "After the final no, there comes a yes, and on that yes the future world depends."

Well, Al Gore has faced a lot of "no." The fossil fuel industry and its minions

have mocked and derided him. The climate denial machine keeps working its poison. In fact, we just learned that Arch Coal's bankruptcy filing shows they were funding an extremist group dedicated to harassing and threatening scientists.

As the evidence comes in, as every major science agency and organization lines up with all our National Labs and military services and our home State universities across the country, it turns out the mockers and the deniers were wrong. In fact, in all decency, Al Gore deserves an apology, as do the countless men and women who scrutinize these data, who labor in the real science, and who call us to action. If we continue sleepwalking in Congress, we will need to apologize not just to Al Gore but to future generations. We will need to apologize to our own grandchildren for our negligence when we knew better.

So let us wake up from our fossil fuel-funded make-believe and meet our moral obligation.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BACKPAGE.COM

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, this afternoon the Senate will proceed to a vote on S. Res. 377, a resolution that would hold backpage.com in contempt of Congress for not complying with an investigation being conducted by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Unfortunately, concerns have been raised that the Web site has connections to sex trafficking. Backpage has refused to comply with the subpoena request from the subcommittee. We all know that sex trafficking is a heinous, evil practice, and we should not and we will not tolerate it.

In 2012 I sponsored an amendment to the Violence Against Women Act that included a sense of Congress demanding that the owners of backpage.com remove the adult services section of their Web site.

Last year this Chamber passed the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, and it was signed into law by President Obama in the spring. This law contains language offered by Senator KIRK from Illinois which gives law enforcement officials additional tools to prosecute individuals such as those behind backpage.com who knowingly facilitate the sale or advertisement of human trafficking victims online.

Today's resolution is another opportunity for the Senate to stand up for the victims of human trafficking.

As a reminder, when we debated the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act,

we talked about the profile of a typical victim of human trafficking—not that any of them are typical, but on average it is a girl between the ages of 12 and 14. This is a horrific business and sordid business, and I encourage every Member to support this resolution.

I thank the chairman of the subcommittee, Senator PORTMAN from Ohio, who has been working tirelessly to highlight this issue and bring it to the Senate's full attention. I am grateful for his bipartisan efforts and strong leadership and look forward to voting yes on the resolution later today.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, on another matter, we all know that yesterday President Obama exercised his authority under the U.S. Constitution to suggest to the Senate a nominee for the Supreme Court of the United States. During the announcement, President Obama spent time talking about the serious task of selecting a Supreme Court nominee, particularly one to succeed a legal lion such as Justice Scalia, whom the President appropriately called one of the most influential jurists of our time. His point was that the Supreme Court of the United States—the highest Court in the land—is an institution of unparalleled importance. What happens at the Supreme Court affects the lives of every American. So lifetime appointments to this most powerful Court in the land should not be taken lightly. As the President put it, our Supreme Court Justices have been given the role as the “final arbiters of American law” for more than 200 years. Of course, today they consider and answer some of the most pressing and challenging controversies and questions of our time. I agree with what the President said to that point.

We all know the Supreme Court is critical to our form of self-government and our democracy, and the role it serves is an essential one. When it plays a role our Founders did not intend, it really undermines respect for the rule of law and for the Court as an institution. So the selection of the next Supreme Court Justice should be handled thoroughly and thoughtfully.

I understand the President is taking his authority seriously, but under the same Constitution—the same Constitution that gives the President the authority to nominate a person to fill this vacancy—that same Constitution has a separate responsibility for the U.S. Senate either to grant or to withhold consent to that nomination.

With the passing of Justice Scalia, the Senate must exercise its constitutional authority as well. Regardless of how we come down on the controversy of the day with regard to when this vacancy should be filled, we all take this responsibility seriously, and because of that, I believe we should follow the examples set by the minority leader, Senator REID; the senior Senator from New

York, Mr. SCHUMER; and Vice President BIDEN when he was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee—their admonitions made over the years when they were in the majority—and not move forward with the President's nominee at this time.

I think it is only a matter of fundamental fairness to apply the same rules to the same situation no matter who is in the majority and who is in the minority. When they were in the majority, they argued that these vacancies should not be filled the last year of the President's term of office. JOE BIDEN did that in 1992 during the Presidency of George Herbert Walker Bush. Senator REID made that same argument when George W. Bush was President of the United States. And in 2007, 18 months before George W. Bush left office, Senator SCHUMER, the heir apparent to the Democratic leader, said there should be a presumption against confirmation. So it is only fair to play by the same set of rules which they themselves advocated.

Based on the conduct, based on the behavior of our Democratic colleagues when they were in the majority—well, first when they were in the minority, when they filibustered judges for the first time, and later when they were in the majority, before they saw the majority flip to Republicans, the Democratic leader packed the DC Circuit Court of Appeals by invoking the so-called nuclear option, breaking the Senate rules in a raw display of political power in order to pack a court that many people call the second most important court in the land. So this lifetime appointment to the Court is a critical check on the executive branch—a check this administration has proved over and over again we need desperately.

As others and I pointed out long before the President announced this nominee, this nomination will change the ideological balance of the Supreme Court for a generation. Justice Scalia served for 30 years. Because of that, because of all of this, I believe the American people should have their voices heard in the selection of the next Supreme Court nominee. We have already undertaken the process here of the Democrats choosing their nominee for President, and Republicans are doing the same. There is simply too much at stake to leave this decision in the hands of a President who is headed out the door—a decision that will have dramatic consequences on the balance of the Court and the direction of the country for a generation to come.

I believe we should listen to the voices of the American people and allow them to cast their vote and to raise their voice and determine who will make that selection.

I know there have been some members of the press who have asked: Well, if not now, how about in a lameduck session of the Congress; that is, after the election and before the new President is confirmed?

I think that is a terrible idea. If you believe in the principle that the American peoples' voice ought to be heard, it makes no sense to have an election and then to do it and not honor their selection.

So I know some have expressed some concern about that. I, for one, believe we ought to be consistent. That consistent position and the consistent principle are that the American people deserve to be heard and their voice heeded on who makes that selection to something as important as filling this vacancy on the Supreme Court.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, yesterday President Obama nominated Federal appeals court judge Merrick Garland to fill the vacancy left by the death of Associate Justice Scalia. The President has done his job. Now it is time for the Senate to do ours, to use advice and consent on this nominee, not to treat that as an option but as an obligation.

It is my sincere hope that in the coming days and weeks, all of my Senate colleagues will join me in meeting the nominee and evaluating him based on his merits and on his record and that Republican objections about this individual be laid aside so that at least they can look at his qualifications, his judicial temperament, and his record.

Chief Judge Garland has served the U.S. Court of Appeals since 1997. Let me stress that he has served on this important court for almost 20 years. He was previously at a law firm as a partner. He served as U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia and as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. Finally, he served as a U.S. circuit judge earlier in his career.

He is highly qualified as a nominee. America deserves to have a fully functioning court, and they deserve to have Senators who will do their job in reviewing this nominee. The Supreme Court cases that impact our fundamental rights and our operations of government—including the extent of property rights, privacy rights, the balance between civil liberty and national security, how to ensure equal protection under the law, and how to guarantee adequate and due process—are all things that deserve to have a full Supreme Court.

We need a fully functioning Court to keep the balance that we have in our system—the checks and balances

throughout our government. We cannot delay the consideration of this Supreme Court nominee.

President Obama had an obligation to fill this vacancy on the Court. He did so by making this nomination. His duty does not end just because this is an election year.

The Senate has a constitutional obligation now to provide the advice and consent to the President on this nominee. That is a job that we should all take very seriously. The American people deserve no less. In fact, the Supreme Court Justice who grew up in the State of Washington, William O. Douglas, was nominated and confirmed within 16 days. That is right—16 days.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt nominated Justice Douglas on March 20, 1939, to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court on a seat vacated by Justice Brandeis. Justice Douglas was confirmed by the Senate on April 4, 1939. He went on to serve on the Supreme Court for 36 years.

So it can be done. While I am not saying it has to be done in the short amount of time that took—16 days—I do believe that we can get this nominee done in an efficient time. If you look at the record of most of the Supreme Court nominees, it has been, on average, 70 days. So we have plenty of time to make this consideration and make this decision. Yet Senate Republicans have manufactured their own artificial barrier to this debate of the Supreme Court nominee, basically saying that they don't believe we have to take up consideration of this issue.

I am asking them: Please, take Judge Garland's phone calls. Please make your schedule available to meet with him. When we return, please schedule a hearing to consider his nomination. Then, do what the American people want us to do; that is, do our job and actually vote on consideration of Judge Garland. This is in the interest of the American people. I know that Senate Republicans want to say they want to wait. But we cannot wait a full year to get another nominee on the Court.

The Senate has confirmed Supreme Court Justices in the final year of a Presidency more than a dozen times. During the last year of President Reagan's final term, Justice Kennedy was unanimously confirmed by a Democratic-controlled Senate. So the Republicans on the other side of the aisle, and many out there in the party, are saying they want to just allow a minority to drive the interests of the party and delay, delay, delay.

Well, in my opinion, you are delaying justice. In fact, you are taking some of the gridlock that has existed in this building and are just moving it across the street to the Supreme Court. We cannot have delays and gridlock in our judicial system. We need to do our job and move through this process. Today, I am urging my colleagues to have a hearing, ask the tough questions, and finally hold a vote.

Let's show the American people that we can do our job and that we can vote

for or against this nominee. But you have to first meet with him, take his phone calls, and schedule a hearing.

The Seattle Times recently wrote: "The hyperpartisan milieu of Congress this election year must not thwart the framers' intent."

The Olympian newspaper in our State wrote:

The Republican Party's intransigence in Congress is legendary. But the new refusal to consider any appointment of a new justice to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Obama is an outright abuse of power.

So, if the other side continues to refuse a nominee until a new President is sworn in, it would mark the longest period in the history of the Senate, since the Civil War, to fill a vacancy. All the positions on the Supreme Court are essential. My constituents and people all across America expect the Senate to do its job, regardless of whether it is an election year or not.

So I hope that, as our forefathers and Framers of our Constitution put together a government that works, those here in the Senate will take the phone calls of Judge Garland, take the meetings, schedule a hearing, and make sure that we vote on this nominee this year.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AIRPORT AND AIRWAY EXTENSION ACT OF 2016

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4721, which was received from the House.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4721) 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.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Thune-Hatch-Nelson-Wyden 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. 3457) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2016”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—AIRPORT AND AIRWAY PROGRAMS

Sec. 101. Extension of airport improvement program.

Sec. 102. Extension of expiring authorities.

Sec. 103. Federal Aviation Administration operations.

Sec. 104. Air navigation facilities and equipment.

Sec. 105. Research, engineering, and development.

Sec. 106. Compliance with aviation funding requirement.

Sec. 107. Essential air service.

TITLE II—REVENUE PROVISIONS

Sec. 201. Expenditure authority from Airport and Airway Trust Fund.

Sec. 202. Extension of taxes funding Airport and Airway Trust Fund.

TITLE I—AIRPORT AND AIRWAY PROGRAMS

SEC. 101. EXTENSION OF AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.

(a) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 48103(a) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking “\$1,675,000,000 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on March 31, 2016” and inserting “\$2,652,083,333 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016.”

(2) **OBLIGATION OF AMOUNTS.**—Subject to limitations specified in advance in appropriation Acts, sums made available pursuant to the amendment made by paragraph (1) may be obligated at any time through September 30, 2016, and shall remain available until expended.

(3) **PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.**—For purposes of calculating funding apportionments and meeting other requirements under sections 47114, 47115, 47116, and 47117 of title 49, United States Code, for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall—

(A) first calculate such funding apportionments on an annualized basis as if the total amount available under section 48103 of such title for fiscal year 2016 were \$3,350,000,000; and

(B) then reduce by 20.83 percent—

(i) all funding apportionments calculated under subparagraph (A); and

(ii) amounts available pursuant to sections 47117(b) and 47117(f)(2) of such title.

(b) **PROJECT GRANT AUTHORITY.**—Section 47104(c) of title 49, United States Code, is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “March 31, 2016,” and inserting “July 15, 2016.”

SEC. 102. EXTENSION OF EXPIRING AUTHORITIES.

(a) Section 47107(r)(3) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking “April 1, 2016” and inserting “July 16, 2016”.

(b) Section 47115(j) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

(c) Section 47124(b)(3)(E) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking “\$5,175,000 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on March 31, 2016,” and inserting “\$8,193,750 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016.”

(d) Section 47141(f) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

(e) Section 186(d) of the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act (117 Stat. 2518) is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

(f) Section 409(d) of the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act (49 U.S.C. 41731 note) is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

(g) Section 411(h) of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (49 U.S.C. 42301 prec. note) is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

(h) Section 822(k) of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (49 U.S.C. 47141 note) is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

SEC. 103. FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION OPERATIONS.

Section 106(k) of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by amending subparagraph (E) to read as follows:

“(E) \$7,711,387,500 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016.”; and

(2) in paragraph (3) by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

SEC. 104. AIR NAVIGATION FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT.

Section 48101(a)(5) of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(5) \$2,058,333,333 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016.”

SEC. 105. RESEARCH, ENGINEERING, AND DEVELOPMENT.

Section 48102(a)(9) of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(9) \$124,093,750 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016.”

SEC. 106. COMPLIANCE WITH AVIATION FUNDING REQUIREMENT.

The budget authority authorized in this Act, including the amendments made by this Act, shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of subsections (a)(1)(B) and (a)(2) of section 48114 of title 49, United States Code, for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016.

SEC. 107. ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE.

Section 41742(a)(2) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking “\$77,500,000 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on March 31, 2016,” and inserting “\$122,708,333 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016.”

TITLE II—REVENUE PROVISIONS

SEC. 201. EXPENDITURE AUTHORITY FROM AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 9502(d)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “April 1, 2016” and inserting “July 16, 2016”; and

(2) in subparagraph (A), by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting “or the Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2016;”.

(b) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—Section 9502(e)(2) of such Code is amended by striking “April 1, 2016” and inserting “July 16, 2016”.

SEC. 202. EXTENSION OF TAXES FUNDING AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND.

(a) **FUEL TAXES.**—Section 4081(d)(2)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

(b) **TICKET TAXES.**—

(1) **PERSONS.**—Section 4261(k)(1)(A)(ii) of such Code is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

(2) **PROPERTY.**—Section 4271(d)(1)(A)(ii) of such Code is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

(c) **FRACTIONAL OWNERSHIP PROGRAMS.**—

(1) **TREATMENT AS NON-COMMERCIAL AVIATION.**—Section 4083(b) of such Code is amend-

ed by striking “April 1, 2016” and inserting “July 16, 2016”.

(2) **EXEMPTION FROM TICKET TAXES.**—Section 4261(j) of such Code is amended by striking “March 31, 2016” and inserting “July 15, 2016”.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed, and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The bill (H.R. 4721), as amended, was passed.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DIRECTING SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL TO BRING A CIVIL ACTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 377, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 377) directing the Senate Legal Counsel to bring a civil action to enforce a subpoena of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 1 hour of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I rise today in support of S. Res. 377, which is a resolution to enforce a subpoena of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which I chair. I will be joined shortly by my colleague Senator CLAIRE MCCASKILL of Missouri, who is the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee and whom I worked with as a partner on this issue over the past year.

This is a subpoena that we issued to a group called backpage—backpage.com. This resolution is intended to enforce that subpoena. Backpage and its chief executive officer, Carl Ferrer, have not been willing to cooperate with the committee. Unfortunately, we are at the point where we have to seek the enforcement of our subpoena.

For nearly a year now, Senator MCCASKILL and I conducted a bipartisan investigation into the scourge of human trafficking on the Internet with a focus on sex trafficking involving children. In the past 5 years, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children reported an over 800-percent increase in reports of suspected child sex trafficking, an increase the organization has found to be “directly correlated to the increased use of the internet to sell children for sex.” They testified before our subcommittee about this. They are the experts. They see this huge increase being related to the Internet. In other words, the destructive crime of sex slavery has moved from the street corner to the smartphone.

An adult can now shop for underaged trafficking victims from their computer screen. Sex traffickers are well aware that backpage.com, the biggest one by far, offers them a quick and easy-to-use marketplace to sell children and coerce adults.

Here is how the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children spells it out, describing this growing problem at a hearing I chaired late last year:

Online classified ad sites such as backpage.com . . . allow [sex traffickers] to remain anonymous, test out new markets, attempt to evade public or law enforcement detection, and easily locate customers to consummate their sale of children for sex. Online sex trafficking also enables traffickers to easily update an existing ad with a new location and quickly move the child to another geographic location where there are more customers seeking to purchase a child for rape or sexual abuse.

This is from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. As co-chair of the Senate Caucus to End Human Trafficking, I have spent many hours with those dedicated to fighting this crime and those who are victimized by it. For victims, the toll of sex trafficking is measured in stolen childhoods and painful trauma. For traffickers, it is measured in dollars—often a lot of dollars. It is a problem, I believe, that should command more attention around our country and certainly here in the U.S. Congress.

The aim of our investigation is very straightforward. We want to understand how lawmakers, law enforcement, and even private businesses can more effectively combat this serious crime that thrives on the online black market.

Traffickers have found refuge in new customers through Web sites that specialize in advertising “ordinary” prostitution and lawful escort services. A business called backpage.com is the market leader in that industry, with annual revenues in excess of \$130 million last year. Backpage has a special niche: According to one industry analysis in 2013, \$8 out of every \$10 spent on online commercial sex advertising in the United States goes to backpage.com. The public record indicates that backpage sits at the center of the online black market for sex trafficking.

Again, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has reported that of the suspected child trafficking reports it receives from the public, 71 percent involve backpage. Again, they have said that of the suspected child trafficking reports they receive from the public—and they have a 1-800 number; they get reports from the public—71 percent involve backpage.com.

According to a leading anti-trafficking organization called Shared Hope International, “Service providers working with child sex trafficking victims have reported between 80 percent and 100 percent of their clients have been bought and sold on backpage.com.” In fact, this organization has documented more than 400

cases in 47 States of children being sex trafficked on backpage.com.

Despite all this, backpage executives said they are committed to combatting sex trafficking. The company claims that its internal procedures for reviewing and screening the advertisements “lead the industry.” That claim led us to ask a very simple question: What are those industry-leading procedures? If they are so effective in the fight against human trafficking, Congress and other lawmakers ought to know about it. That is why Senator MCCASKILL and I asked backpage for documents about their ad-screening practices—a process backpage calls “moderation.” We also asked for other information about their business practices—fair questions, targeted questions, relevant questions. The company has refused to answer them and refused to cooperate.

We then took the next step and issued a subpoena to backpage’s CEO, Carl Ferrer, inquiring him to produce documents about backpage’s moderation practices, efforts to combat human trafficking, and financial information. The company essentially told us no. Wrapping itself in a privileged First Amendment argument, backpage refuses to produce documents about its business practices and told us that the company refuses to even look for documents—not just that they don’t have the documents, but they refuse to even look for them, a clear sign of willful contempt for the Senate’s process.

That is why we are here today on the floor. Senator MCCASKILL and I gave backpage every opportunity to cooperate in good faith with our investigation. We carefully considered its objections to the subpoena. We actually issued a 19-page opinion, thoughtfully overruling their objections and directing backpage to comply. They continued to stonewall.

In the meantime, our investigation has not stopped. Our investigators and lawyers found a number of third parties and other witnesses who had information about backpage’s practices and procedures. Along the way, we discovered that from 2010 to 2012, backpage outsourced much of its screening and, again, this moderation; meaning, looking at these ads coming in, the screening and moderation they outsourced to others, including to workers in India.

We obtained emails from the California company that managed those India-based moderators, including emails with backpage’s CEO and other executives. These emails are deeply troubling. Our investigation showed that backpage edits advertisements before posting them by removing certain words, certain phrases, certain images. For instance, they might remove a word or image that makes it clear that the sexual services are being offered for money. Then they might post this sanitized version of an ad. While this editing changes nothing about the underlying transaction, it tends to conceal the evidence of illegality. In other

words, backpage’s editing procedures—far from being an effective anti-trafficking measure—serve to sanitize the ads of the illegal content to the outside viewer.

We still don’t know the full extent of backpage’s editing practices. How much of the illegal conduct—or even the fact that they were selling minors online—was being concealed? Why? Backpage will not tell us.

Then there is this email. It tells the moderators what to do if they have doubts about whether a girl advertised on backpage is underage. I am going to quote from this email. It says:

If in doubt about underage: The process should for now be to accept the ad . . . however, if you ever find anything that you feel is underage and is more than just suspicious, you can delete the ad . . . Only delete if you [are] really very sure person is underage.

To be clear, we didn’t get this information from backpage itself because it refuses to provide it. This came from the contractor. Backpage claims emails like this are protected by the First Amendment, which is not accurate.

In November, Senator MCCASKILL and I released a bipartisan staff report about our investigation and held a hearing to consider what to do about backpage’s noncompliance. I encourage Members to take a look at this staff report. It is online. You can find it.

By the way, despite being under subpoena, backpage’s CEO refused to show up for the hearing we held. Shortly before the hearing date, he simply informed us that he wasn’t going to show up. This is something Senator MCCASKILL and I will continue to focus on. But others did show up for our hearing. We heard testimony from law enforcement, prosecutors, and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children confirming what we had come to suspect: Backpage is not really an ally in the fight against human trafficking; they said it profits from it.

The general counsel of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children told us that it had dozens of meetings with backpage about improving the company’s anti-trafficking measures, but those meetings ended because the national center concluded that backpage was “not engaging in good faith efforts to deter the selling and buying of children for sex on its Web site.”

The national center told us that “[d]espite backpage’s assertions, it was adopting and publicizing only carefully selected sound practices, while resisting recommended substantive measures that would protect more children from being sold for sex . . . on backpage.com.” For example, the national center noted that backpage did not “hash” its photos—a very low-cost technique for comparing digital images that could help identify missing children.

The national center also noted that backpage has more stringent rules to post an ad to sell a pet, a motorcycle,

or a boat than it does to sell a person. A user is required to submit a verified phone number for selling a hamster but not in placing ads that could involve the sale of a child for sex. Think about that.

The human toll of all this is staggering. It is hard to overstate the traumatic effect of a minor being advertised on a daily basis on a site like backpage.com.

In a recent lawsuit brought against backpage in Boston, the plaintiff was a 15-year-old girl who had been raped over 1,000 times as a result of being advertised on backpage.com—1,000 times. In the course of our investigation, we also heard some similarly heart-wrenching stories. For example, backpage receives reports from families pleading with it to take down ads of their children. Here is one such email sent to backpage that the national center shared with us. Remember, this is an email from a parent about a child being sent to backpage. It said this:

Your Web site has ads featuring our 16-year-old daughter [], posing as an escort. She is being pimped out by her old [boy-friend], and she is underage. I have emailed the ad multiple times using your website, but have gotten no response. . . . For God's sake, she's only 16. . . . Stuff like this shouldn't be allowed to happen.

This is from a parent pleading.

Even after receiving such reports, the national center tells us backpage often does not remove the ad. Instead, the ad remains live on the Web site, which allows the abuse of that child to continue. Imagine as a parent or a grandparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister feeling helpless in the face of backpage not even being willing to take down an ad of a family member.

It is sometimes hard to square backpage's public statements about its business practices with the reality on the ground. For example, the national center recently was searching for a child who was missing—and by the way, still is missing—and found she appeared in a sex advertisement on backpage. Sadly, that is pretty common. What made this case even more incredible was that backpage ad actually contained a missing-child poster of that same child. So the ad advertising sex actually used the missing-child poster of that child. That poster had the child's real name on it, real age, real picture, and the date she went missing. The other pictures in the ad included topless photos. We certainly would like to know what supposedly market-leading screening and moderation procedures missed that one. And that, Madam President, is exactly why we need the documents we have asked for from backpage, documents we have subpoenaed from backpage. Without them, we can't really evaluate how sex trafficking is proliferated in these online marketplaces. We can't really evaluate how Congress can do a better job fighting against this crime. We can't help the many prosecutors at the

local level who are trying to stop this practice or the attorneys general around the United States of America who are trying to stop this practice. We can't really help to stop this from happening.

To be clear, our purpose is absolutely not to shut down any particular company or to deter protected advertising for lawful services. This is not an attempt to shut down something that is lawful on the Internet, it is an attempt to stop something that is unlawful, and nor are we even looking for information about individual advertisers. In fact, Senator MCCASKILL and I have made clear that backpage should redact from any documents they send us any of the personally identifying information about its users. We don't need that. That is not what we are about. What we are interested in are facts that will enable smart legislation on a critical issue of public concern. We hope our investigation will help to combat this process directly but also will help to generate legislation here in the Congress.

This civil contempt resolution before us today—S. Res. 377—will enable us to get those facts. It was reported out of the full committee unanimously. I wish to thank Senator RON JOHNSON, the chairman of the committee, and Senator TOM CARPER, the ranking member of the committee, and all of our colleagues on the committee for their unwavering support for this investigation.

This will be the first time in more than 20 years that the Senate has had to enforce a subpoena in court. I can't think of a time when it has been more justified. To my colleagues who are wondering about this, again, I hope they will look at our report and see why it is so important that we move forward with enforcing this subpoena.

The Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations has a long history of investigating crime that infiltrates interstate commerce and affects our Nation's health and safety. In our era, the crime of human trafficking has become a scourge, and Congress needs to know everything it can to be able to better fight it. No investigation of that subject could omit backpage.com. Again, as we have heard from these outside groups, the vast majority of this sex trafficking that is going on online is through this very site. The National Association of Attorneys General has described backpage as a "hub" of "human trafficking, especially the trafficking of minors." That is the attorneys general around the country.

Unfortunately, this is an issue that affects all of our communities. It knows no ZIP Code.

Madam President, before I yield the floor, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a number of statements in support of the resolution from the Nation's leading anti-trafficking organizations, including the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

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

"Rights4Girls applauds the Senate's passage of this important resolution that will provide much needed accountability and insight into Backpage.com's business practices—practices that have led to the trafficking and exploitation of children all across this country. We are especially grateful to Senators Portman and McCaskill for their leadership in advancing this resolution and for their dedication to protecting our nation's most vulnerable children."—Yasmin Vafa, Executive Director and Co-Founder, Rights4Girls

"I commend the Senate, particularly Senators Rob Portman and Claire McCaskill, for their leadership on the investigation into Backpage and their dedication to assisting victims of child sex trafficking and their families. I am outraged at the business practices Backpage continues to engage in and that they are not being held accountable for facilitating and profiting from child sex trafficking on their website. Backpage is a shopping mall for people who want to exploit children and they shouldn't be able to continue profiting on the rape of children without repercussions. These creeps keep hiding behind the veil of the First Amendment while knowingly allowing children to be trafficked for sex on their website. This isn't about prostitution or sex between consenting adults, this is about children being purchased for rape and sexual abuse.—John Walsh, human and victim rights advocate and creator of America's Most Wanted

"The Subcommittee's efforts to investigate the practices of Backpage.com and demand answers in an effort to prevent the sex trafficking of children on that website and others like it is critical to our work to end sex trafficking. Shared Hope proudly supports the resolution and the Subcommittee's important work. We are grateful to you for your bravery and diligence."—Shared Hope International

SHARED HOPE INTERNATIONAL,
Vancouver, WA, March 16, 2016.

Hon. ROB PORTMAN,
Chair, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington, DC.

Hon. CLAIRE MCCASKILL,
Ranking Member, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington, DC.,

DEAR CHAIRMAN PORTMAN AND RANKING MEMBER MCCASKILL: Shared Hope International is writing to strongly support the resolution directing the Senate Legal Counsel to bring a civil action to enforce a subpoena issued by the Subcommittee to the Chief Executive Officer of Backpage.com, Carl Ferrer (S. Res. 377). We thank you for your brave leadership on this investigation and dedication to assisting the victims of online commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Shared Hope International was founded and exists to end sex trafficking of women and children and assist the victims through restoration and access to justice. Since 1998, we have implemented programs and advocated for laws and policies that would ensure victims of sex trafficking are protected, served and honored as victims. Increasingly, the victims we serve have been sold for sex on the internet, and most often the website named is Backpage.com. In fact, NCMEC reports that 71% of all child sex trafficking reports to the CyberTipline relate to Backpage ads. Shared Hope documented 495 cases representing at least 548 child victims who were sold for sex on Backpage.com in nearly every

state in the U.S. These are cases we identified through media coverage, which means they represent only a fraction of the total number of cases. Our partners indicate most of the youth they serve in recovery programs were sold on the site. A study by YouthSpark in Atlanta, Georgia, found 53% of children receiving care from service providers across the country were bought and sold for sex on Backpage.com.

The Subcommittees efforts to investigate the practices of Backpage.com and demand answers in an effort to prevent the sex trafficking of children on that website and others like it is critical to our work to end sex trafficking. Shared Hope proudly supports the resolution and the Subcommittee's important work. We are grateful to you for your bravery and diligence.

Sincerely,

LINDA SMITH,
(U.S. Congress 1995–99,
Washington State
Senate/House 1983–
94), Founder and
President, Shared
Hope International.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN,
Alexandria, VA, March 15, 2016.

Hon. ROB PORTMAN,
Chairman, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington, DC.,

Hon. CLAIRE MCCASKILL,
Ranking Member, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN PORTMAN AND RANKING MEMBER MCCASKILL: On behalf of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the families and children we serve, I am writing to express our strong support for your resolution directing the Senate Legal Counsel to bring a civil action to enforce a subpoena issued by your Subcommittee to the Chief Executive Officer of Backpage (S. Res. 377). We commend you for your leadership on this investigation and your dedication to assisting victims of child sex trafficking and their families.

NCMEC is a private, non-profit organization that for over 31 years has been designated by Congress to serve as the national clearinghouse on issues related to missing and exploited children. In this role, NCMEC has learned a great deal about child sex trafficking, including its pervasive growth online and the devastating impact this crime has on children and their families. We know that sex trafficking is a crime that takes place in nearly every community in the United States and increasingly children are sold for sex online on websites like Backpage.com.

NCMEC receives reports of child sex trafficking through intakes of missing child cases, requests for analytical assistance, and reports to the CyberTipline, the reporting mechanism for child sexual exploitation crimes. In recent years, NCMEC has witnessed an increase in missing and exploited child cases involving the online trafficking of children for sex. In 2015, NCMEC assisted with approximately 10,000 reports regarding possible child sex trafficking, but we know this is only a small fraction of suspected child sex trafficking victims in this country.

Even more concerning is that a majority of child sex trafficking cases reported to NCMEC involve ads posted on Backpage.com. More than seventy-one percent (71%) of all child sex trafficking reports submitted by members of the public to NCMEC relate to Backpage ads. We also have seen a disturbing

trend of runaway children trafficked on Backpage.com. Today, when we are looking for a runaway child who we have reason to believe might be trafficked, Backpage.com is the first place we look for the child.

We have long been alarmed about Backpage's business practices that fail to prevent children from being sold for sex on its website. The work of your Subcommittee to investigate these practices and to demand answers is to be widely commended.

NCMEC is proud to lend our support to this important resolution, and we hope the Senate's work can uncover more information regarding the use of online websites, such as Backpage.com, to traffic children. We are grateful for your dedication to the safety of our nation's children and look forward to continuing to work with you and others who are working tirelessly to halt the terrible tragedy of online child sex trafficking.

Sincerely,

JOHN F. CLARK,
President and CEO.

POLARIS,

Washington, DC, March 16, 2016.

Hon. ROB PORTMAN,
Chairman, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington, DC.

Hon. CLAIRE MCCASKILL,
Ranking Member, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN PORTMAN AND RANKING MEMBER MCCASKILL: On behalf of Polaris, a non-profit organization working to end human trafficking and restore freedom to victims and survivors, I am writing to express my strong support for S. Res. 377, which directs the Senate Legal Counsel to bring a civil action to enforce a subpoena issued by your Subcommittee to the Chief Executive Officer of Backpage. I appreciate your tremendous work on this investigation and your leadership in the fight to ensure victims of child sex trafficking and their families receive justice.

Since 2007, Polaris has operated the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC), a 24-hour, national, confidential anti-trafficking hotline and resource center created and overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services. Additionally, in March 2013, Polaris launched our BeFree textline, allowing trafficking victims and concerned citizens to use text message to contact us for help.

In 2015, the NHTRC received 1,383 cases involving sex trafficking of a minor, and Polaris received 22 cases through our BeFree textline involving sex trafficking of a minor. In these two sets, Backpage was specifically referenced in 222 cases. In total, the NHTRC has received 5,810 minor sex trafficking cases since 2007, BeFree has received 66 cases since 2013, and Backpage has been referenced in 595 cases.

Backpage's business practices have long been a major source of concern for Polaris and the anti-trafficking community as a whole. We wholeheartedly support your Subcommittee's investigation into Backpage, and we think that S. Res. 377 is critical to ensuring Backpage is held accountable for its shocking, blatant disregard for your investigation. We are proud to stand with your Subcommittee in this fight to stop child sex trafficking, and we hope the Senate will unanimously pass S. Res. 377.

Sincerely,

BRAD MYLES,
CEO.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I urge my colleagues to vote yes on this

resolution and vindicate the authority of Congress to obtain information necessary for sound legislation to protect the most vulnerable among us.

We are going to hear shortly from Senator CLAIRE MCCASKILL, who has been a partner of mine in this effort from the beginning. This investigation has taken about a year. We have done it thoughtfully and carefully. Again, I wish to express my gratitude to her for her support for the legislation. We wanted to wait until she was back in Congress—she was home taking care of some important health matters—in order to take up this vote today. I know she will express her own strongly held views on this.

I just want to say I hope all of my colleagues—Republicans and Democrats alike—will look at this issue and realize this is an opportunity for us to go on record supporting an investigation that could lead to legislation that can actually help to protect those most vulnerable among us.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, today the Senate will vote on S. Res. 377, a resolution directing Senate legal counsel to bring a civil action to enforce a subpoena of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, PSI, against Carl Ferrer, chief executive officer of backpage.com LLC, "backpage". I support this resolution in furtherance of PSI's bipartisan investigation into businesses that directly or indirectly facilitate sex trafficking.

Backpage officials have publicly acknowledged that their website may have been used by criminals to engage in sex trafficking, including the trafficking of children. Identifying and shutting down the tools that help criminals engage in such illegality is critical to preventing these crimes. We must do all we can to stop these criminals and to support the survivors. That is why I support this resolution and why I have worked tirelessly to enact legislation to prevent human trafficking in the first place and to provide resources for trafficking victims so that they can begin to rebuild their lives.

Last year the chairman and ranking member of PSI jointly launched a bipartisan investigation to examine businesses that directly or indirectly facilitate sex trafficking. Backpage is one of the companies that PSI has been investigating, but it is not the only one. PSI aims to learn as much as possible about these businesses so that the Senate can craft appropriate legislative and policy responses to combat sex trafficking and child exploitation.

On October 1, 2015, and in accordance with subcommittee rules, PSI voted on a bipartisan basis to issue a subpoena to backpage's CEO, Carl Ferrer. This subpoena was issued only after backpage failed to comply with a subpoena issued earlier in the year and after several backpage employees refused to testify. The subpoena required,

among other things, the production of backpage's policies and practices with respect to reviewing advertisements for potential criminal activity, information on how backpage cooperates with law enforcement, data on how many advertisements backpage denies or deletes, and information relating to revenue earned through adult advertisements. To date, backpage has refused to comply with the subpoena.

On November 19, 2015, PSI held a hearing about backpage.com. At this hearing, the senior vice president of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children testified that 71 percent of reports of suspected child trafficking it receives involve backpage. The hearing also raised significant concerns about backpage's willingness to cooperate with law enforcement. PSI issued a subpoena compelling the testimony of Carl Ferrer at the hearing, but he refused to appear.

The refusal of backpage to comply with the subpoena compelled the full Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to vote unanimously in favor of the resolution now before us. The resolution authorizes Senate legal counsel to begin to take action to enforce the subpoena in Federal court. PSI's investigation is exactly the type of oversight the Senate should be conducting. The subject matter is one of utmost importance, and PSI's efforts have been jointly conducted by the chairman and ranking member of PSI since the investigation began. Most importantly, the requested documents are critical to understanding how online sex trafficking is effectuated and to finding ways to stop it.

Authorizing Senate legal counsel to enforce a Senate subpoena is a very serious matter that should not be taken lightly. This action should be taken only in the most limited of circumstances and should never be pursued for partisan or political motives. Given the serious nature of this investigation and the unanimous support by all members of the committee and subcommittee throughout the process, I support this resolution.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I wish to express my strong support for the resolution to enforce the subpoena against backpage's CEO Carl Ferrer.

From my work as chairman and now ranking member of the Select Committee on Intelligence, I know how important congressional investigations can be to ensure that we have all the facts, and that is the type of issue before us today.

In this case, the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations is conducting a bipartisan investigation into the use of the Internet to facilitate sex trafficking, particularly sex trafficking of minors. As my colleagues know, this has been an area I have worked to address legislatively, including in an amendment to the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act that passed 97-2 that makes it a Federal crime to knowingly

advertise minors for commercial sex. I believe the Investigations Subcommittee's work can inform the work of the Congress as a whole to better protect vulnerable children trafficked over the Internet.

Backpage is a Web site that allows for the advertisement of commercial sex online. In 2013, it was estimated that \$8 out of every \$10 spent on online sex advertising in the U.S. goes to backpage. Moreover, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has itself determined that backpage is linked to 71 percent of all suspected child sex trafficking reports that it receives from the public through its "CyberTipline." Thus, this bipartisan investigation naturally involves questions about the specifics of how backpage operates.

As I understand it, the subcommittee's subpoena seeks documents to help explain backpage's current policies and practices. These questions involve, among other things, whether backpage edits the content of ads before they are published, whether backpage might be more helpful to law enforcement with the data it collects, and whether backpage has resources sufficient to further prevent trafficking on its site. But backpage has refused to comply with this subpoena.

Where an investigative subcommittee is conducting a bipartisan investigation into the most horrific crimes committed against young people, it is the right thing to do for the Senate to enforce this subpoena through the legal process.

I would like to also share about a case that arose in my State very recently. Last week, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department arrested three individuals charged with abducting a 20-year-old woman and transporting her to the Bay Area to sexually exploit her. The victim was initially kidnapped in Palmdale, where she was viciously assaulted and then moved 6 hours north to Oakland, where her pictures were taken and posted to backpage.com. She was then driven back down to Orange County and had a gun pointed at her by one of her attackers. The victim was fortunately able to make some panicked calls to her mother while taken captive, and the L.A. Sheriff's office was able to find her in a motel and rescue her. The suspects were then captured and now face a litany of charges. This all occurred just weeks ago.

The point is sex trafficking, facilitated by the Internet, continues to plague communities all over the country.

I recently met with John Clark, the new president and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. The National Center reported that over the last 5 years, there has been an 846 percent increase in reports of suspected child sex trafficking and that this increase is "directly correlated to the increased use of the Internet to sell children for sex." That is sobering.

Every day in America, vulnerable victims are advertised over the Internet and exploited by traffickers. I believe the Congress must get to the bottom of it, try to understand how it is happening, and do all that we can to stop it. So I fully support enforcement of this subpoena and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. PORTMAN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to support S. Res. 377, a resolution to enforce a subpoena of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations against backpage.com and Carl Ferrer, the company's chief executive officer. This action comes as part of the subcommittee's ongoing investigation into the sex trafficking of minors and the unfortunate and increasing role of the Internet in facilitating this horrific crime.

Before I go much further, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the chairman. Senator PORTMAN has been tenacious. He is committed. He is forcing us as a body to address an issue that is so unpleasant that many times we shy away from it because we would rather talk about more pleasant subjects and issues that are less emotional. But it is what is happening in America and in the world, and thanks to the leadership of Senator PORTMAN, it is being addressed in a forthright manner that alerts all of us and, indeed, alerts the world. I very much appreciate the great work he has done on this issue. I know he remains committed for as long as he is a Member of this body, and we are incredibly grateful for his friendship and his leadership.

This marks the first time in 20 years that the Senate has been required to enforce a subpoena in court. I have been in Congress for a long time, and I have never seen anything quite like it. As part of the subcommittee's fair and deliberative investigation into human trafficking and child exploitation on the Internet, we have encountered a company that, instead of doing everything in its power to assist in protecting the most vulnerable in our society, has decided to focus its energies on stonewalling congressional efforts to do so.

Let me be clear. As is always the case in this unsavory underside of society, it is about money. Backpage.com is the market leader in commercial sex advertising. It was valued at over \$600 million in 2015, with over \$130 million in annual revenue, and their business model is dependent on the revenue generated from this part of its Web site.

Backpage claims to be a leading partner in the fight to combat child sex trafficking by screening advertisements for evidence of trafficking and taking deliberate steps from preventing illegal activity from appearing on its Web site. But the company has refused to produce documents that could verify this claim, and the facts gathered by the subcommittee from other sources indicate this is not the case.

As Senator PORTMAN has indicated, backpage has been linked to hundreds of human trafficking cases, including those of children. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has gathered data that indicates that the vast majority of suspected child trafficking reports it receives from the public include postings made on backpage. Identifying what screening procedures are in place and the effectiveness of these efforts in curbing trafficking are an important part of this investigation.

Thanks to the leadership from the Senator from Ohio, it is hard to think of a more worthy use of the Senate's investigative authority than examining the methods used to facilitate the buying and selling of children for sexual exploitation. This investigation is designed to guide Congress as we consider ways to combat human trafficking and identify what can be done to protect children and eliminate this crime. Enforcement of this subpoena is necessary to accomplish that goal and to protect the prerogative of the Senate to investigate matters of consequence to our national interest. I appreciate Senators PORTMAN and MCCASKILL's truly bipartisan efforts to investigate matters of consequence to our national interest. I appreciate their efforts to shed light on this difficult issue, and I appreciate their commitment to defending the Senate's role in addressing it.

I hope and believe that vote will be 100 to 0, as we strongly support Chairman PORTMAN's right to obtain the information he believes is necessary to the subcommittee's investigation concerning human trafficking. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this important resolution.

I know that my friend and colleague Senator PORTMAN knows that one of the areas where human trafficking is most intense are those States that are on the border, and our southern border is obviously penetrated regularly by these human traffickers. I would like, as a representative of the people of my State of Arizona, where this issue is of particular importance, to thank Senator PORTMAN and Senator MCCASKILL for their unending worthy and important efforts on this issue.

By passing this legislation, we will send a message to others. We will send a message to others, I say to my colleague from Ohio, that they can run but they can't hide.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Arizona. He has been a leader on this issue for many years. For people who don't know, Cindy McCain, the wife of the Senator from Arizona, is an international leader on this issue dealing with human trafficking all over the world and also sex trafficking here at home. I appreciate his passion and his commitment to it. As a former chair and a ranking member of this committee, I look to him for counsel and advice on how we conduct ourselves. He has been very helpful in this specific issue, and I thank him.

I yield to the Senator from Minnesota for such time as she may consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator MCCAIN for his work. I started to work on some of these backpage issues in conjunction with Senator MCCAIN's wife Cindy McCain, as well as with Senator HEITKAMP. We took a trip to Mexico focusing on the trafficking going on across the border with that country.

I want to thank Senators PORTMAN and MCCASKILL for leadership on this really important resolution. Just last year, five St. Paul residents were charged with running a multistate sex trafficking ring. One of the alleged victims was 16. Those underage girls were being advertised on backpage, and the ads were placed in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Georgia, Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois.

In Southwest Minnesota, an operation involving backpage resulted in charges against 48 men around the towns of New Ulm and Mankato, the town my husband grew up in. These cases prove that sex trafficking isn't just happening in some faraway place. It is happening right now in the United States of America. It is happening in our own neighborhoods. It is happening in oil patches in North Dakota. It is happening in Cleveland, and it is happening in St. Paul. These are real stories with real people.

In 2014 I spoke to the trafficking advocacy group Polaris when they released their State-by-State rankings of efforts to fight human trafficking. They said then:

The scope and scale of human trafficking within the United States presents a daunting challenge to policymakers, service providers, law enforcement, and advocates. Originally, human trafficking was thought to be more of a problem in other countries, but now it is known to be happening in our backyards. It is estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of victims of sex and labor trafficking inside our borders.

We have learned more about human trafficking through the advocacy and dedication, as I mentioned, of our friend Cindy McCain and her work at the McCain Institute. Their 2014 report actually focuses specifically on this advertising.

When I was a prosecutor for 8 years, yes, we had trafficking—of course, we

did—and, yes, we had child pornography, but I would say we didn't see this tsunami of advertising that we see now. Why? The Internet has made it easier. We love the Internet. It has allowed us to communicate in ways, but it has expanded demand for sex trafficking victims because of the fact that it is easier to do than it used to be.

What the McCain report shows is that the availability of potential victims of domestic minor sex trafficking exceeded researcher expectations, with no less than 38 different Web sites advertising victims who showed indications of being juvenile sex trafficking victims, with at least 4 Web sites providing customer feedback and soliciting recommendations of victims of sex trafficking.

The McCain report went on to say: "In Phoenix, during 10 days of ad screening, 34 ads were identified as possibly depicting minor victims with duplicate ads resulting in 81 distinct tips of domestic minor sex trafficking."

Last year we successfully passed the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act that Senator CORNYN and I led. We are making good progress in implementing this bill. Senator CORNYN and I met recently with Attorney General Lynch. They are working hard. Ongoing work not only includes this resolution and is the focus on the advertising of illegal sex trafficking but also partnering with the private sector.

Senator WARNER and I have introduced the Stop Trafficking on Planes Act or the STOP Act, which is built on the work of the industry to train flight attendants and train people on the planes to find the victims. I note this investigation led by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations is a bipartisan attempt to address a serious issue. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting S. Res. 377. This is just one element of this fight against sex trafficking, but it is an important one because people should not be allowed to violate the Senate rules, they shouldn't be allowed to skirt hearings, and they shouldn't be allowed to get away with this kind of behavior. Backpage and others of its ilk are not just a vehicle for advertising this crime, they are actually a vehicle for expanding this crime and hurting more people.

I appreciate the work of Senator PORTMAN and Senator MCCASKILL.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Minnesota for her strong support of this resolution today, which again is just enforcing a subpoena that is targeted and focused on information that can help us to be able to legislate in this matter. I hope all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join us in this effort. I also thank her for broader work on this issue, specifically the leadership role she has played as a former prosecutor in trying to get at this problem of sex trafficking online.

Senator KLOBUCHAR is absolutely right. The Internet has provided so many wonderful things for our economy and for our society. Yet there is a dark side, isn't there. That dark side is shown as clearly as anywhere with regard to backpage; the fact that this sex trafficking has been made more efficient through the Internet and specifically through this one Web site that contains the vast majority of sex trafficking and commercial sex.

Again, I refer you to my comments I made earlier. We talked about the fact that there is a girl who is currently missing. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has been trying to find her. They put up posters about her, and recently she appeared on a sex advertisement on backpage. Again, this is more common than you would expect.

What made this case even more incredible to me was the backpage actually contained a missing child poster of that same child. So the missing child poster that the national center had put out there for all of us to help find her shows up on backpage.com as an advertisement for this young girl. This poster had the child's real name, real age, real picture, and the date she went missing. Other photos in that ad included topless photos of this girl. She is 16 years old.

This is another example of where there is a problem that must be addressed. Our investigation is to create the information for us to be able to legislate wisely on this issue.

I see my colleague from New Hampshire has joined us. We wish to hear from her. She is another former attorney general of a State and has been involved in this issue for many years and is an active member of the caucus we talked about earlier to try to combat trafficking.

I yield to my colleague, the Senator from New Hampshire, such time as she may need.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I thank Senator PORTMAN and Senator MCCASKILL for their strong leadership on the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, of which they are the chair and ranking member, on such an important issue because enforcing the subpoena—the resolution we have before us to enforce the subpoena is critical.

As you heard today, I was attorney general of New Hampshire. I had the opportunity to work with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children reports that of suspected child trafficking reports it receives from the public, 71 percent involve backpage.com.

What is the resolution about? It is about the fact that Senator PORTMAN, Senator MCCASKILL, and the committee they lead has asked legitimate questions and asked for documents from backpage.com.

We have heard the horrific stories of things that have happened and have been reported. Senator PORTMAN referenced a recent report in Boston about a 15-year-old girl who had been raped over 1,000 times as a result of being advertised on backpage.com.

Of course, we have heard horrific stories about children. In one Pennsylvania case, a defendant forced a minor to have sex with approximately 15 different men in one encounter where she was threatened with a weapon—advertised on backpage.com, so it is pretty straightforward.

In a Florida case, a trafficker drugged and threatened to kill a 14-year-old girl so he could sell her for sexual services online—backpage.com.

In a California case, a trafficker forced two women to work as prostitutes through beating and threatening them with sexual violence—backpage.com.

These are very legitimate questions that have been asked to inform our policy decisions of backpage.com. Yet they will not produce the documents that have been asked of them, to ask how they were screening to ensure they aren't taking illegal actions when it comes to child sex trafficking and trafficking of women and men and boys and girls. Yet they will not answer that. The CEO of backpage.com was subpoenaed to testify, and he refused to appear here.

If backpage.com is not doing the things in some of these reports that have come forward and is not acting illegally, then they will come and talk to us about this. The CEO of backpage would not try to hide behind the First Amendment, making arguments that don't bear out under the First Amendment because we are talking about illegality, the trafficking of children in horrific ways—then this is a legitimate inquiry for this committee.

I again commend Senator PORTMAN and Senator MCCASKILL.

I urge the Members of the Senate to support this resolution to enforce this subpoena so we can ensure that we get the information this committee needs to inform our policy decisions to address a very important issue that is putting children at risk, that is harming families, that is harming men and women who are being trafficked, and we need to get to the bottom of it.

I yield the floor back to Senator PORTMAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. I thank my colleague from New Hampshire.

Let me just say I already talked about Senator MCCASKILL in my remarks, but she has been a terrific partner on this issue and many others. She has a passion for it as a former prosecutor, someone who understands this issue well.

I yield all remaining time to Senator MCCASKILL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, last year a 15-year-old girl wandered into an emergency room in St. Louis, told a horrific tale, asking for help. She had been trafficked across truckstops throughout the Midwest, taken from truckstop to truckstop, and sold to truckers for sex—all through backpage. As we debate this today, it is important we stay focused on that 15-year-old girl and don't get lost in the process of the Senate.

This is a valid investigation. This is an important investigation. What we are doing today is making sure the Senate can do its work under the Constitution. Backpage has refused to cooperate. It has refused to willingly cooperate. It has refused two legitimate and duly authorized subpoenas concerning backpage asking for information at the heart of the investigation.

Under any circumstances, I find it shocking that a company would refuse a lawful subpoena of the U.S. Senate, would ignore a lawful subpoena of the U.S. Senate. It is particularly outrageous given that backpage has already admitted that serious criminal activity, including sex trafficking of children, occurs on its site. Backpage simply has no excuse for not complying with these legal subpoenas.

During our November 19 hearing, I promised that while the subcommittee would move forward carefully and cautiously, we would not go quietly into the night, and on some day in the near future we would use the Senate's enforcement measures to compel cooperation from backpage. Today is that day. While we stay focused on that 15-year-old girl, I know I speak for the chairman—and I wish to give the chairman great accolades for our working relationship. It is not always easy to reconcile differences in positions, differences in policy, and staffs working together, but he didn't give up. We both stay at it, and we are both determined to work on this committee in a bipartisan fashion. I am very grateful to him for his effort in that regard.

As we think of that 15-year-old girl and the information we need, we also need to think that a bigger principle is at stake; that is, if we ignore backpage's refusal, what does that say to companies in the future when we need information in order to do our job? That you can give the back of your hand to the U.S. Senate and there will be no consequences? Obviously, that is a slippery slope I don't think we should go down. I don't think the Founding Fathers would want us to go down that slippery slope.

That is why today is the day we say enough. We go with this vote to the courts and we get enforcement of these legal subpoenas so we can truly find out what, if any, role backpage has had in the highly illegal and immoral practice of trafficking children for sex.

I yield the floor.

I yield back all remaining time for the Democrats.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question occurs on adoption of the resolution.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 38 Leg.]

YEAS—96

Alexander	Flake	Murphy
Ayotte	Franken	Murray
Baldwin	Gardner	Nelson
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Paul
Bennet	Graham	Perdue
Blumenthal	Grassley	Peters
Blunt	Hatch	Portman
Booker	Heinrich	Reed
Boozman	Heitkamp	Reid
Brown	Heller	Risch
Burr	Hirono	Roberts
Cantwell	Hoeven	Rounds
Capito	Inhofe	Rubio
Cardin	Isakson	Sasse
Carper	Johnson	Schatz
Casey	Kaine	Schumer
Cassidy	King	Scott
Coats	Kirk	Sessions
Cochran	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Collins	Lankford	Shelby
Coons	Leahy	Stabenow
Corker	Lee	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cotton	Markey	Thune
Crapo	McCain	Tillis
Daines	McCaskill	Toomey
Donnelly	McConnell	Udall
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Enzi	Merkley	Warren
Ernst	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Boxer
Cruz
Sanders
Vitter

The resolution (S. Res. 377) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the preamble is agreed to and the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of February 29, 2016, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCAIN. 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.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from South Carolina and I be permitted to engage in a colloquy.

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

PRESIDENT'S SYRIAN POLICY AND RUSSIA

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, briefly, the Senator from South Carolina and I discussed this announcement that Russia will begin withdrawing some military forces from Syria. It obviously signals Vladimir Putin's belief that he has bombed and killed enough of the opponents of the murderous Assad regime to assure Assad's survival.

For 4 years, this administration—this President—stood by as the Assad regime slaughtered nearly half a million people in Syria. Then, when Assad appeared weak, it watched as Putin intervened militarily and protected his brutal regime, in a move that the President described as Putin going into a "quagmire." Well, apparently now Vladimir Putin is leaving that "quagmire," and he is leaving a solid Bashar Assad in a position of strength. He is leaving thousands of dead moderate opposition that he has indiscriminately bombed, and the United States has their begging bowl out, asking and pleading that they somehow reach some agreement again in Geneva.

It is really embarrassing to watch this President and this Secretary of State as they continue to beg Vladimir Putin and his stooge Lavrov as they continue to place Russia in a position of influence they have not had since Anwar Sadat threw them out of Egypt in 1973.

They now have a major role to play in the Middle East. They have a military base. They have a naval base. They have upgraded airfields, and they have now solidified Bashar Assad's position in power.

Is there anybody who believes that Russia will agree to an arrangement that Bashar Assad or his stooge doesn't remain in power? Of course not. Aren't we tired of begging Vladimir Putin? Aren't we tired of watching the United States and the young men we trained and equipped being bombed by Vladimir Putin and killed and murdered? Don't we sometimes grow a little tired of that? It is no wonder that the United States of America has no standing and no influence in the region.

I don't often quote from the New York Times. I would ask my colleague if he has seen this:

The Russian move may . . . be a reflection that Mr. Putin is now supremely confident in Mr. Assad's renewed stability and can afford to step back a bit and play statesman. Mr. Putin has achieved many of his main goals: bringing Russia back to center stage as a global power; preventing, on principle, regime change by outside powers, particularly Western ones; gaining a stronger foothold in Syria; picking off Russian jihadists on the Syrian battlefield; and strengthening Mr. Assad.

I wish to ask my friend from South Carolina: Isn't it obvious what is going to happen next; and that is, an increase in fighting in eastern Ukraine, more Ukrainians slaughtered while we refuse to give them defensive weapons, but just sufficient amount of violence and killing to prevent the United States of America or the Europeans from taking any significant action? Indeed, won't there now be pressure on the part of the special interests and the industrialists, particularly in Germany, to lift the sanctions on Vladimir Putin?

Mr. GRAHAM. I think you are right, I say to Senator MCCAIN.

Let's look at what our military leaders say rather than just look at what political people think. General Dunford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a hearing you chaired today was asked: What is Putin up to? What do you think he is trying to do here?

He said: Well, all I can tell you is the reason he came into Syria was to destroy ISIL and help fight ISIL. He has proven that he did not do that. He didn't try to do that.

So what General Dunford said was that basically Putin lied about why he came to Syria. If he is leaving Syria, the job against ISIL is far from done. But I think you nailed it, I say to Senator MCCAIN. The job of propping up Assad has been accomplished.

So what General Dunford said is that the reason that Putin came into Syria was not to destroy ISIL but to help his stooge, his puppet Assad. He believes he achieved such military superiority on behalf of Assad by bombing the people we trained that he can now leave.

So at the end of the day, he is not leaving. A naval base and an air force base will be in Syria. He said: We are withdrawing our forces, but, of course, we will have a naval presence and an air base.

Here is what I would say. If he needs to help Assad in the future, he will. Geneva has become a joke. There is no way you are going to negotiate a successful agreement when Assad is backed by Russia and Iran. The opposition has been abandoned by the United States and the free world. The Russian President has bombed the people the American President trained to take Assad out.

Mr. MCCAIN. What does the Senator from South Carolina think that does to our reputation when we arm, train, and equip young men, send them in to fight, ostensibly against ISIS or Bashar Assad—although, in this case ISIS—and we stand by and watch the Russians slaughter them from the air?

Mr. GRAHAM. I think it sends a signal that you can't rely upon us. You have two training programs—one by the CIA and one by the Department of Defense. The people trained outside the Department of Defense have been wholesale slaughtered by the Russian air attacks, and we have done nothing about it.

What does the region say? We have two enemies—Assad and ISIL. Our unwillingness to confront Assad has created a sense of abandonment in the entire region. Assad is a puppet of Iran. Iran is the mortal enemy of the Sunni Arab states.

So what has the President accomplished here? He said Assad must go. He trained people to help take him down. Russia came in and said Assad will not go. They have attacked the people we have trained, and we basically have abandoned the free Syrian opposition.

Now we are in Geneva talking about a peace agreement where the whole balance now is in Assad's favor. Does anybody really believe there is military jeopardy for Assad? And without his being in jeopardy, how do you get an agreement the Syrian people can live with? If Assad or his henchmen stay in power, how do you ever end the war in Syria?

So what we have accomplished is that we have given the Russians more influence in the Mideast than at any time since 1973. We have allowed Iran basically to dictate the terms in Damascus. We have jeopardized our relationship with our Arab partners. We have put in question Americans' reliability in terms of the people inside of Syria.

The Syrian policy of Barack Obama has done enormous damage. Without Russia being involved, none of this would have happened.

Mr. MCCAIN. The tragedy of all of this, I would say to my friend, is that when the United States of America was required to stand up because of the commitment of the President of the United States if the Bashar Assad regime had used chemical weapons and slaughtered—it is the gruesome pictures that you and I have seen—and then backed off, that was one of the seminal moments that American credibility disappeared. Here we are now still refusing to arm, train, and equip young men to fight against Bashar Assad and, in fact, making them pledge that they would only fight against ISIS. It is not ISIS that is barrel-bombing them. It is not ISIS that is dropping chemical weapons. It is not ISIS that has brought in thousands and tortured and beaten and killed. ISIS is our enemy. ISIS is evil. But to somehow excuse the behavior of Bashar Assad with the Russians' indiscriminate bombing is one of the most disgraceful chapters in American history in my view.

Mr. GRAHAM. To build on this, several years ago Russia took by force Crimea. This was not a fair election. It is pretty hard to have a fair election when there is a Russian tank parked in front of your yard. Good luck saying you don't want to go to Russia.

We have done nothing other than sanction Russia. Russia is still engaged in provocative behavior. We told him not to go into Crimea. We told him not to dismember Ukraine. He did. He is

stronger, not weaker. We told him not to use military force to help Assad, who is the Butcher of Damascus. He did. We pleaded with him not to attack non-ISIL targets. He did. He destroyed the opposition to Assad. Russia is in league with Iran. So the biggest winner of Russia's involvement on the ground in Syria has been the Iranians, which is the most destabilizing group of people in the entire Mideast. The biggest loser has been the free Syrian opposition, the Syrian people themselves, and close behind is the American reputation in the region.

I want the administration to know that your handling of Syria has been a disaster on multiple levels. It has emboldened Iran. It has made Russia stronger. We are losing credibility in the region at a time when the region needs leadership. If you go to Geneva and you close out a peace deal that is a joke that allows Assad or somebody—Bob Assad, not Bashar Assad—to stay in power, if you allow a peace agreement where the Iranians control Damascus and Russia has a naval and air force base and more influence than we do, what have you accomplished?

I hope and pray the administration will stop this insane desire to bring Syria to a conclusion where the conclusion is going to make the whole region subject to blowing up. A successful conclusion is not having Iran being the dominant force inside of Syria, Russia having more influence, an air base and a naval base, and the Syrian people losing the ability to replace their tormenter, and ISIL having a magnet for future recruitment, which is an Iranian-backed Assad. That is not a successful outcome.

What do you think, I ask Senator MCCAIN?

Mr. MCCAIN. For the last 5 years, we have been writing a shameful chapter in American history. To sum all of this up, leading from behind doesn't work. If America leads from behind, somebody else is going to be in front. If the United States leaves conflicts and creates vacuums, then bad things happen.

Look at a map of the Middle East in January of 2009, when this President came to the Presidency of the United States, and look at that map now—the way ISIS has metastasized, the way hundreds of thousands have been murdered and millions are on the march as refugees. We still have apologists for this leading from behind, a policy which is described as “Don't do stupid stuff.” This is the result of leadership that has left the scene in a way that we have not seen since the 1930s, in the days of Neville Chamberlain and “peace in our time.”

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

IRAN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, last week the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC—the hard-line military force that answers only to Iran's Supreme Leader and is committed to the preservation of Iran's revolutionary regime—launched a number of ballistic missiles, in clear violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. These missile launches are profoundly disturbing and suggest a regime that is content on continuing to destabilize the region and threaten our vital allies and its neighbors. They don't technically violate the terms of last summer's nuclear agreement, but they do serve as a vital reminder that Iran remains a revolutionary regime that does not respect world opinion and does not share our values or interests.

America and our allies must seek every opportunity to push back on Iran's aggressive behavior—especially behavior such as this that is outside the parameters of the nuclear deal—by enforcing existing sanctions on Iran's illegal ballistic missile tests, its ongoing human rights abuses, and its support for terrorism across the Middle East and the world.

Another critical way the international community can demonstrate we are serious about holding Iran accountable is by aggressively enforcing the terms of the nuclear deal. Today I will discuss a key element of enforcing that deal: fully funding the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, the world's nuclear watchdog, which is responsible for monitoring Iran's compliance with the deal. The case for providing robust, sustainable funding for the IAEA is further strengthened by a second topic I will discuss, which is Iran's continued human rights abuses.

Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal so far does not mean that its government intends to embrace the international community or heed the call of the Iranian people for greater democracy. In fact, I believe the actions of the IRGC and Iran's hard-line conservative leaders indicate that the Iranian regime intends to continue to repress dissent, block democratic reforms, incite anti-Semitism, and violate basic human rights.

Mr. President, in a speech to the United Nations in December of 1953, President Eisenhower proclaimed American support for a new international organization tasked with putting nuclear technology “into the hands of those who will know how to strip its military casing and adapt it to the arts of peace.”

Since its founding in 1957, the IAEA has undertaken a broad array of responsibilities—from promoting international nonproliferation efforts to supporting peaceful nuclear power—but none more vital than maintaining its safeguards program, which provides

credible assurances that countries are honoring their international obligations to use nuclear technology and material only for peaceful purposes.

The IAEA could not do its job without the ongoing full support of the United States. The United States develops the inspections technology on which the IAEA depends. We train and support the IAEA inspectors, scientists, and staff, particularly through our system of National Laboratories. Since 1980, every single IAEA inspector has been trained at least once at the Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico. At any given time, roughly 20 percent of all the inspectors who work for the IAEA are undergoing training or retraining at the vital National Labs of the United States.

The commitment made by American scientists and taxpayers to the IAEA is even more important now in light of the agreement reached by world powers last summer to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. This agreement, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action, or JCPOA, gives the IAEA unprecedented access to monitor Iran's nuclear efforts through highly intrusive physical inspections and 24-7 remote monitoring technology. Unlike previous nuclear agreements, the JCPOA requires Iran to allow the IAEA to monitor Iran's entire nuclear fuel cycle, which includes all the steps required to go from mining and milling raw uranium to producing centrifuges that enrich uranium, to the actual enrichment sites.

The IAEA's regular inspections and continuous monitoring and oversight mean that the international community will know if Iran tries to cheat on the terms of the JCPOA before it can dash to a nuclear weapon or build a bomb in secret. But access alone is not enough. The IAEA must have the resources to actually inspect, monitor, and verify Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal by confirming that Iran's nuclear declarations are accurate and comprehensive, by monitoring their declared sites to ensure Iran's behavior actually complies with the terms of the JCPOA, and by tracking all nuclear-related material leaving every facility to make sure Iran doesn't divert and pursue illicit nuclear activities elsewhere in their country.

Given Iran's long record of cheating and of pursuing nuclear weapons illicitly over the decades past, investing resources in ensuring that the IAEA can take advantage of this unprecedented opportunity is a wise investment not just for the American people but for the world. To fulfill these responsibilities in addition to its regular and ongoing mission of ensuring nonproliferation in every other country in the world, the IAEA must have the resources to turn access into oversight.

Back in January, I traveled with seven other Senators to the IAEA's headquarters in Vienna, Austria, and there we heard directly from Director General Yukiya Amano about the chal-

lenges the agency faces in fulfilling its new responsibilities under the JCPOA. At the top of that list of challenges is securing a reliable, long-term source of funding. A recent report by our own nonpartisan Government Accountability Office here in the United States echoes those very same concerns, stating that "the IAEA faces potential budgetary and human resource management challenges stemming from the JCPOA-related workload."

Effectively enforcing the terms of the JCPOA will require more than just additional inspectors, while inspectors are vital; the IAEA will also be required to train a new generation of nuclear scientists and to continue to develop more and more innovative nuclear detection and monitoring technologies as well—an undertaking as complex as it is important. That is why I urge Congress to increase America's voluntary contribution to the IAEA to a level at least \$10.6 million above the President's fiscal year 2017 request and commit to a sustained and long-term investment so that we can be confident that the IAEA has the resources to recruit, to train, and to place the very best inspectors the world can produce. The increase of \$10.6 million that I am urging will provide reliable funding for the IAEA—the funding they need to monitor the Iran nuclear program while continuing to work for safe, secure, and peaceful use of nuclear technology throughout the rest of the world.

An additional \$10 million would not crowd out contributions from other states. American representatives at the U.N. offices in Vienna could direct extra funding to specific projects or withhold it from others, allowing us to address unanticipated needs by the IAEA without discouraging other donors from fulfilling their obligations as they should.

We also need to continue to insist on full transparency so that reports received by the IAEA, things they might learn, are shared with the United States—with our intelligence community, with our lawmakers, with our executive branch—and to ensure, frankly, that we know if there are additional classified or secret agreements, side agreements between the IAEA and Iran.

Look, whether my colleagues supported the JCPOA or opposed it, surely we can agree that it is in America's interest to see the IAEA succeed in monitoring Iran's behavior and attracting the best and brightest young scientists from around the world for years to come. As Brent Scowcroft—who served ably as National Security Advisor to both President Gerald Ford and later President George H.W. Bush—wrote in an August 21 Washington Post op-ed, Congress "should ensure that the International Atomic Energy Agency and other relevant bodies and U.S. intelligence agencies have all the resources necessary to facilitate inspection and monitor compliance" with the nuclear deal with Iran.

To fully and sustainably fund the IAEA is to make a sound investment in a highly technical organization that directly contributes to international peace and our security. But why exactly is it so important that we fund the IAEA, enforce the JCPOA, and push back on Iran at every opportunity? A brief review of Iran's dismal human rights record might reinforce why it is crystal clear that this is a priority for our Nation and must remain so.

Iran's Government continues to preach anti-Semitism, to incite hatred against Israel, and to call for the destruction of the Jewish State of Israel, and it uses state-run media to blame the Jewish people for the instability and violence that currently dominates the Middle East. Just last week, one of the ballistic missiles Iran illegally launched supposedly had a message printed on the side in Hebrew saying, "Israel must be wiped off the earth."

In January, as the international community marked Holocaust Remembrance Day, Iran's Supreme Leader published a video on his official Web site in which the narrator condemns the world for supporting Israel and questions the legitimacy and magnitude of the Holocaust. These statements should deeply concern and outrage the world community, but they are simply another reflection of the Iranian regime's longstanding disregard for international values and human rights.

Earlier this month, the United Nations issued a report showing that the number of people executed by the Iranian Government skyrocketed to nearly 1,000 last year—twice as many as in 2010 and 10 times as many as in 2005. Most of these executions were allegedly for drug-related offenses. According to some reports, last year one village in Iran saw every single adult male—every single one in the entire village—executed for so-called drug crimes.

These alarming statistics follow a January report from Amnesty International that documented Iran's execution of over 70 juveniles in the decade from 2005 to 2015, with another 160 young juvenile offenders still on death row. No country in the world uses capital punishment for minors more than Iran. And despite Iran's ratification of an international treaty banning capital punishment for minors, Iranian law still allows the death penalty for girls as young as 9 and boys as young as 15.

In addition, Iran's unelected Guardian Council suppressed democracy in its most recent elections, preventing the vast majority of either female or reform-minded candidates from even appearing on ballots.

Iran has illegally and inappropriately detained American citizens, including retired FBI agent Robert Levinson and Iranian American energy executive Siamak Namazi—both of whom we believe remain detained in Iran. The Committee to Protect Journalists estimates that at least 19 reporters are

today still being held unjustly by the Iranian Government.

These are just a few examples among countless many of Iran's unwillingness to respect even the most basic norms of international human rights. Effectively pushing back on these egregious human rights abuses and enforcing the JCPOA demands international collaboration, but increasing our voluntary contribution to the IAEA makes a direct impact without requiring approval or action by any other country.

There are two other additional unilateral steps this Congress can take today.

First, we could increase Federal investment in our National Laboratories, which train the IAEA inspectors I spoke about, develop technologies that nuclear inspectors depend on, and undertake research that improves the lives of people around the world.

Second, and more promptly, the Senate could and should confirm Laura Holgate, a nonproliferation expert who was nominated more than 5 months ago to serve as America's Ambassador to the U.N. agencies of Vienna, which includes the IAEA. After months of delays for purely political reasons, her nomination was finally approved by the Foreign Relations Committee on January 28. The full Senate should not delay any further to ensure that our government is represented at the very organization the world relies upon to prevent Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon.

Later this month, the President will convene heads of state from around the world for a fourth Nuclear Security Summit, a conference dedicated to preventing nuclear terrorism and securing stockpiles of nuclear material from around the world. The IAEA is at the very forefront of this vital mission, and we need to work together to make sure it has the tools it needs to take on these serious tasks.

These goals demand involvement from every actor on the international stage, but by increasing America's voluntary contribution to the IAEA by an additional \$10 million, Congress can send a strong signal that we intend to hold Iran to the terms of the JCPOA, to support the international cause of nonproliferation, and to provide a vital incentive for our international partners to dedicate more of their resources to this important agency.

Iran remains today a revolutionary regime fundamentally opposed to America's values and interests. Iran's ballistic missile tests just last week serve as another reminder that the Iranian Government is neither America's friend nor ally. We must be relentless in our efforts to push back on these missile tests, on Iran's destabilizing support for terrorism, and on its human rights abuses. We must continue to enforce the existing sanctions in American law and be willing to consider imposing new ones when Iran's behavior warrants it.

Let me be clear about one thing in closing. The Persian culture, the cul-

ture of the people of Iran, is one of great richness and complexity. I have had the blessing of knowing many Persian Americans in my life and have known them to be people of great intellect and inventiveness and capability and to be the products of an ancient and respectable culture. We in the United States do not wish the people of Iran ill, but the Iranian regime and those who support it deserve international condemnation for a decades-long pattern of human rights abuses, support for terrorism, and other bad behavior. But we can and should make a distinction between the Iranian regime and the Persian people.

The people of Iran—those who turn out at polls to vote even in elections that are neither free nor fair and who have repeatedly demonstrated in the streets for democracy and engagement, risking life and limb to do so in the decade past—must know that the American people support the struggle of those who hope for real democracy someday in Iran and those who hope for an Iranian regime that someday respects international values and human rights.

So today, just a few days before Monday's Iranian New Year of Nowruz, we wish the people of Iran a happy, healthy, and peaceful new year, while continuing to stand firm against the values and actions of the Iranian regime.

Thank you.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PUERTO RICO

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I am trying to assess the financial and economic challenges facing Puerto Rico, an issue I have been speaking about since last summer. In fact, it was July of last year when I first wrote to Treasury Secretary Lew, expressing my concern about the fiscal situation in Puerto Rico and inquiring about the Obama administration's plans to address this predicament. While I did eventually get a response from the Treasury Secretary, numerous questions that I asked in that initial letter to this day remain unanswered.

Over the ensuing months, I made other inquiries to Health and Human Services Secretary Burwell because, for some time now, we have been told that funding—or to be more specific, a decline in funding—for Federal health care programs was a factor contributing to Puerto Rico's debt crisis. So as the chairman of the Senate committee of jurisdiction over most of

those programs, I wanted to know what HHS thought needed to be done.

Not surprisingly, I am still waiting for a substantive response to those inquiries.

Instead of detailed proposals, I was initially told simply that health funding issues surrounding Puerto Rico are difficult and that the administration expected Congress to address these issues in a fiscally responsive way—and to do it quickly.

Eventually, last month, with the release of the President's budget proposal, we learned that the administration wants to provide \$30 billion—that is with a "b"—in additional Medicaid funds for Puerto Rico. When asked how the administration thought we should pay for this, Secretary Burwell suggested we simply adopt the President's budget. However, given that there are more surviving members of The Beatles than there are Senators willing to vote in favor of an Obama budget, I don't know if anyone can take that suggestion very seriously.

That is the sum total of the input we have gotten from the administration on dealing with Puerto Rico's health funding issues—a proposal for dramatically increased spending with no credible way to pay for it and a demand that we provide that funding as quickly as possible. That is all they are willing to say publicly on this matter, even though administration officials have labeled this a humanitarian crisis.

By the way, buried in all of the details is the fact that this proposal for increased Medicaid funds is meant to shore up an inequity created by the so-called Affordable Care Act. Apparently, the Democrats' partisan health law provided billions in additional Medicaid funding for Puerto Rico, but also included a cliff—or a point in time when that funding would drop off quickly and dramatically—and that cliff is fast approaching.

Let's be clear: The Democrats constructed that cliff, presumably knowing what they were doing at that time. The Democrats in Congress voted for it, and the Democrat in the White House signed it into law. No Republican in Congress supported that cliff.

Yet, now we are told that we must act quickly to eliminate the cliff that they have created and add even more funds without a realistic way to pay for them. And, on top of that, Democrats in Congress have labeled any hesitation on the part of Republicans to fix a problem they created and to fix it in the exact way they prescribe as callous indifference toward the plight of the American citizens living in Puerto Rico.

I have been as clear as I can be on this issue. I have said repeatedly that I want to work with my colleagues to find a solution, but we need to do so in a manner that is fiscally responsible with an eye toward righting the irresponsible course taken by the Government of Puerto Rico.

Toward that end, I, along with a number of my colleagues, have repeatedly requested audited financial statements from the Government of Puerto Rico. One would think that is a reasonable request. These requests date back to last September with the first hearing I held on these issues in the Finance Committee. That was six months ago, yet we still don't have that information from fiscal year 2014, let alone 2015.

In addition, last month I wrote a 9-page letter to the Governor of Puerto Rico, asking a number of questions about Puerto Rico's finances, and I asked that they be answered by the first of this month. I have received no answers to these questions.

In the face of a humanitarian crisis, it seems to be too much to ask of the Government of Puerto Rico that they provide some verifiable financial information so that Congress can make an informed decision about how to handle this very difficult situation. And, apparently, some of my friends on the other side of the aisle are ready and willing to spend tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer funds without all the relevant information and to publicly attack anyone who questions that strategy.

So far, my friends on the Democratic side, including Members of Congress and the administration, have been generally unwilling to provide even the most basic information about how much their various proposals for Puerto Rico would cost the Federal Government or whether they intend to offset those undisclosed costs. And none of them show an interest in even discussing ways to help Puerto Rico return to a more sustainable fiscal and economic course. Yet they repeatedly have the audacity to accuse Republicans of indifference to the struggles faced by the residents of Puerto Rico. Sometimes I feel as though I am all alone, trying to solve this problem without any help from the other side, and there are even difficult times on our side.

The absurdity of this debate, if that is what we want to call it, is compounded by the fact that the only practical and fiscally responsible legislation introduced in Congress to address these issues has come from Republicans.

As most of my colleagues should know, even with the severely incomplete information we have, Senators GRASSLEY and MURKOWSKI, who chair the Judiciary and Natural Resources Committees, and I have introduced a bill that would provide some tax relief and fully offset funds to Puerto Rico for transition assistance as well as an oversight authority to help ensure that Puerto Rico establishes credible budgets and future fiscal plans. Our bill provides the platform needed for sustained economic growth and a return of access to credit markets.

However, neither the administration nor any of my friends on the other side

of the aisle have shown much interest in discussing the substance of our bill. One would think they would want me to bring it up, and if they wanted to amend it, they could amend it. We have to do this. We can't just play around with this. Instead, we have seen the aforementioned proposals to send tens of billions of dollars in health funds to Puerto Rico, no questions asked, and a proposed bankruptcy scheme that my colleagues have misleadingly claimed would simply give Puerto Rico access to chapter 9 debt relief—the same access we give to every municipality in the country.

Of course, as I have made clear on a number of occasions, the so-called chapter 9 access they are seeking for Puerto Rico doesn't really resemble the actual chapter 9 of the current Bankruptcy Code. In reality, their proposal would create, for lack of a better word, a super chapter 9 specifically for Puerto Rico and grant the territory unprecedented authority to restructure its debt. And that is the territory not having a special supervisory board to make sure they do restructure its debt.

Before I say more about the super chapter 9 proposal, I just want to make clear that I and others have been working for quite some time now to find an agreeable solution to these problems. We have done so even while the Government of Puerto Rico refuses to provide anything resembling a complete picture of its finances, which, it seems to this Senator, ought to be the first thing that is done.

I have been working with colleagues in both the House and the Senate to explore legislative options. And while I don't want to speak for anyone else at the moment, I will say we have been willing to consider various debt restructuring mechanisms for Puerto Rico, balancing the need for fairness and equal treatment for similarly situated parties.

However, as we consider various approaches, I want to make three things perfectly clear.

First, the Government of Puerto Rico must negotiate in good faith with its creditors, and creditors must do the same with Puerto Rico. It would be a mistake for officials in Puerto Rico to hold out or drag their feet on good-faith bargaining efforts in an anticipatory of congressional action.

Second, contrary to claims made by some of my colleagues, none of us have any interest in helping out the "vultures" or "speculators" looking to profit out of the misery created in Puerto Rico. If anyone uncovers illegal actions taken by investors in Puerto Rico, then by all means they should be prosecuted. If anyone can identify any investors whose actions are clearly predatory and unethical, we should all rain shame upon them. And, if former Federal Government officials who travel through the revolving door of the administration are found to be unduly enriching themselves off of Puerto Rico's plight, their actions should be brought

to light. I have no qualms with any of that because my goal and the goal of my Republican colleagues is to provide sensible and reasonable solutions to help the people living in Puerto Rico.

However, this does bring me to my third point. Innocent and ethical investors from Utah, New York, New Jersey, and every other State in the Union, as well as good-faith investors in Puerto Rico, should not be casually labeled as "vultures" or "speculators" and should be treated as any other similarly situated investor. A retiree or near-retiree in Sandy, UT, who invested part of her retirement savings in Puerto Rican debt instruments, which carry Federal tax preferences, is no less deserving of repayment than any other similarly situated claimant. It is easy to make exaggerated claims that the bondholders are all rich people; they are not. Thousands and thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, are average people who have trusted the bonds.

Teresa and Julio Garcia, who are residents of Puerto Rico, along with other middle-class Puerto Ricans who own a significant share of Puerto Rico's debt, are certainly not vultures and don't deserve unequal treatment. Residents of Puerto Rico who are retired or near retirement and who are numbered among Puerto Rico's bondholders, but don't happen to receive public pensions, do not deserve to see their savings depleted in order to favor certain public pension benefits in Puerto Rico. To some, that last example may seem oddly specific; however, if you look at the super chapter 9 proposals put forward by Democrats, the intent to favor public pensions over private bondholders—even those whose retirement savings are invested in those bonds—is explicit. What is wrong with worrying about private bondholders who are like Julio and his wife?

Regarding those public pensions, it is true that Puerto Rico tried to reform the retirement systems for its government employees and did end up making some lasting changes from one of its programs. Nonetheless, the territory has not followed through on some aspects of the reforms it did make, and even in the face of dire fiscal conditions, some of Puerto Rico's major public pension systems remain unchanged. And for my friends on the other side, it appears that any effort to encourage Puerto Rico to substantially improve its public pension systems as the island restructures some of its debt would be out of the question. That just can't be.

Madam President, as we see increasingly large municipal bankruptcies and States with mounting fiscal pressures, severely underfunded public pensions almost always seem to be lurking in the background. Until now, Detroit was probably the biggest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history, with a debt of around \$18 billion. Now Puerto Rico is coming to Congress for help to deal with \$73 billion of debt and \$43 billion of shockingly unfunded public pension obligations, bringing the total to more than \$115 billion.

It would be beyond irresponsible to offer aid to Puerto Rico without taking at least some action to improve public pension reporting and transparency. Given the growing crisis of underfunded public pensions around the country, which I have been warning my colleagues about for years now, taking no action will ensure that States and municipalities that have been responsible with their pensions and their fiscal planning will see their costs go up as a result of the bad and imprudent actors. On this point, officials of the Securities and Exchange Commission and municipal market analysts overwhelmingly agree: Increased transparency on public pension liabilities is clearly necessary.

Earlier this week, while our bicameral work to produce passable legislation to address the problems in Puerto Rico has progressed, some of my friends on the other side of the aisle decided to chime in once again with another round of implausible policy proposals and fresh political attacks. The latest group of bills introduced by Democrats includes a number of repackaged ideas from last year, including unscored and unsound proposals to allocate funds and direct aid as well as a renewed effort to grant unprecedented debt resolution authority for Puerto Rico. The only real difference between the ideas we have seen already and those that were included in the bills this week is that Democrats are apparently now willing to be upfront about the fact that the debt resolution authority they are seeking isn't just the same chapter 9 everyone else has, but an entirely new animal altogether.

Last year, my friends on the other side had a bill to provide Puerto Rico with an ability to apply chapter 9 debt resolution authority on a retroactive basis. The reasoning and rhetoric behind the bill was that municipalities in every State have access, and so should Puerto Rico—never mind the retroactivity.

Now, however, the goalposts are being moved. My friends have now introduced their super chapter 9 bankruptcy scheme devised by administration officials. Of course, this new super chapter 9 is not something available to other municipalities or States. It is, in fact, without precedent. It includes virtually all government debt in Puerto Rico and blows right through a payout protection afforded to general obligation debt that is in Puerto Rico's Constitution. This not only steps directly on Puerto Rico's autonomy, but it also sends dangerous signals by telling municipal bond markets to no longer regard general obligation debt issued by States as being safe, as previously expected. That, of course, means higher costs to States for funding things like infrastructure projects, and it is something that many State Governors have said they worry about and do not support. Needless to say, this freshly constructed bankruptcy scheme is ex-

tremely risky. Though my friends are now being transparent about the relief they want, it doesn't make their proposals any more palatable.

The bills introduced this week include proposals beyond the super chapter 9 proposal. While these ideas are not at all new, it is worth taking a few minutes to go through them individually.

First, we have provisions, as poorly constructed this year as they were last year, calling for additional Medicare and Medicaid funds for Puerto Rico.

Second, we have proposals to extend parts of the U.S. personal income tax system that provide direct aid to U.S. taxpayers to people in Puerto Rico, excluding any part that requires positive tax payment. Residents of Puerto Rico do not file Federal income tax returns or pay any personal Federal income tax, yet my colleagues want the earned-income tax credit and child tax credits to be paid out to residents of Puerto Rico. Of course, the Joint Committee on Taxation—the nonpartisan scorekeeper and adviser when it comes to tax policy—has already indicated that such a scheme would be rife with administrative difficulties and fraud. It is, at the very least, difficult and counterintuitive to expect the IRS to properly operate an income tax program for people that are not subject to the income system to start with. However, that doesn't seem to faze my friends on the other side.

Third, we have a control board to oversee the restructuring of Puerto Rico's debt that under the bill would be populated by Puerto Rican political appointees. That is one of the problems—the political appointees in Puerto Rico. Why don't they start thinking about all the taxpayers in America? Clearly, the structure of this proposed control board would subject any financial decisionmaking in Puerto Rico to the same political wrangling that got the territory into this mess in the first place. Yet the obviousness of these problems seems to have escaped my colleagues.

As with last year, we do not know the precise cost of the health funding and refundable tax credit proposals because my friends have not been interested in getting them scored or in disclosing how much they cost. Essentially, my colleagues want to have a debate about their proposals without any real discussion of what they will cost the American taxpayers.

I have been here only about 39 years—actually, 40—but I think that is long enough to know that anyone who puts forward legislation designed specifically to throw taxpayer funds at a problem without disclosing how much they actually want to spend isn't all that interested in passing the legislation. Instead, what people tend to want in those situations is to send a political message that they care about a problem while the other side does not.

Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps my friends on the other side do want to see their proposals become law. If that is

the case, they would be glad to know that I have worked with JCT and the Congressional Budget Office to get a ballpark figure on the cost of their proposals. All told, the provisions put forward in the bill Senator MENENDEZ and some of his colleagues introduced this week would cost Federal taxpayers more than \$45 billion, and probably closer to \$50 billion, at least from what we can tell from the legislative language, which is not the clearest I have ever seen.

I can only assume that the administration does not support these bills, given that, in what little communication we have had with them on these issues, they have consistently admonished us to address the Puerto Rico problem in a "fiscally responsible way." I have a hard time imagining any argument that the approaches proffered by my friends this week would satisfy even the loosest definition of fiscal responsibility, at least not until they come up with a semireasonable way to offset the \$50 billion cost.

Once again, given all these ominous realities, I have to assume that these bills are more about politics than solutions. As I said, people who are serious about solving a problem typically don't propose tens of billions of dollars in spending without actually disclosing the costs and talking about offsets. No, people who put out big ideas without a plausible path to get them enacted are usually more interested in talking about a problem than they are in solving it and more interested in political posturing than actually helping people.

Let me say that again. People who put out big ideas without a plausible path to get them enacted are usually more interested in talking about a problem than they are in solving it and more interested in political posturing than in actually helping people.

This Senator is not interested in the politics surrounding the crisis in Puerto Rico nor in what the polls say on this issue. I have been working for some time now to craft a legislative solution that can actually pass because I am more interested in enhancing the lives and opportunities of our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico than I am on the political impact this debate could have between now and November. Since last summer, well before almost anyone in Congress really began thinking about the challenges facing Puerto Rico and long before we sought any outlandish legislative proposal from our friends on the other side, I have been calling on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work with me to find serious and credible solutions to help the people, not the politicians, in Puerto Rico.

I repeat that call today. If there is anyone who wants to put people far out in front of politics and frankly address these problems instead of merely talking about them, my door remains open—wide open—and I hope some will walk through to help us get this done.

I want to get this done. I believe the people of Puerto Rico deserve having it done, but it has to be done right, and it can't be done by gouging everybody else in America for profligacy and improper conduct in Puerto Rico.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FLINT, MICHIGAN, WATER CRISIS

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I wish to talk about an issue my colleague Senator DEBBIE STABENOW of Michigan and I have been working on for 2 months. It is an issue that is sad and has been absolutely catastrophic for people who live in our State, in the city of Flint.

In fact, today we had hundreds of folks from Flint come to Washington, DC, to attend a House hearing that was held to talk about what had happened in Flint and to get answers from the EPA Administrator, as well as the Governor of Michigan. The folks came to make sure their voices were heard in this tragedy, to make sure people would see them as human beings who are being afflicted by this horrible tragedy. They are in a situation where they can't turn on their tapwater and have clean water, water free from lead.

I think many folks are aware of what happened. We had a situation where an unelected emergency manager was appointed by the Governor to save dollars, to save money, and in the process contaminated a water system.

The decision was made to move away from clean Detroit water from the Detroit water system—water that comes from Lake Huron in the Great Lakes—and move on a temporary basis until a new system could be put up and running that drew water from the Flint River. The Flint River was known to be water that was very corrosive. In fact, General Motors had an engine plant along the Flint River and used Flint River water in their manufacturing process but found that the water was so corrosive that it was damaging engine blocks. So they stopped using this water because of the damage it was doing to the manufacturing process, but, unfortunately, the unelected emergency manager and the State government decided to use that water for the people of Flint as a source of drinking water, and they did not put in the proper corrosion control chemicals that may have mitigated this disaster. As a result, this highly corrosive water was going through the pipes, damaging the pipes, and released very large amounts of lead that has led to the contamination of an entire water system.

This should have never happened. This is a disaster that was clearly man-made. It was a result of negligence on the part of those folks who were given the trust to run the system properly. Now we are left with an absolute catastrophe in the city.

Although every resident is hurt, there is no question that it is primarily the children of Flint who have been impacted as a result. That is what is so insidious about lead poisoning. Even though it will eventually be flushed out of your body, if you are ingesting this when you are young while your brain is still developing, it can have permanent brain damage. That damage can be mitigated, but it is going to require the use of wraparound education services. It is going to make sure those children have proper nutrition and make sure they have health coverage, but certainly this is every resident in Flint, not just children but also the elderly and everybody who is a resident of that city.

What has been so frustrating about this effort is that certainly we know this is the State's responsibility. The State broke it. They need to fix it. The State needs to put substantial resources in place. The Governor was here today talking about some of those efforts. He needs to do a whole lot more. Everybody agrees the State has to do a whole lot more, and taking responsibility means making sure the resources are there to provide the services that are going to be necessary—not just now but for what will likely be many decades in the future.

What I am concerned about, what the residents of the city of Flint are concerned about, is that although right now this issue has received national attention and the eyes of the country are focused on Flint, they know that sooner or later the TV cameras will go, that the lights will not be shining on Flint, and people may forget what happened in Flint. However, the people of Flint will be left dealing with this problem for decades to come. We cannot let that happen. These people cannot be forgotten. Certainly Senator STABENOW and I have been working aggressively to hopefully force the Governor to create a future fund that will provide resources for years to come for the people who have been impacted by this horrible crisis.

Even though this is a State responsibility and the State needs to step up and do more, there is also a role for the Federal Government. Wherever there has been a disaster anywhere in the country, the Federal Government has stepped up and helped those folks who have been the victims of disaster. Some argue this is a manmade disaster, the Federal Government shouldn't be involved in it, and we only deal with natural disasters, but I would just say ask the people of Flint: Does it matter who actually caused this problem? Can we be there to help folks? They don't care. They don't really care where it came from. They just know

their children have been poisoned. They have ingested lead. They know they can't use the water. Even now, although they have filters, a lot of them can't use the water. They are living on bottled water.

Today I had a woman named Gladys who came up to me. She traveled to Washington to tell her story. She brought a bag with hair in it. She is losing her hair as a result of using some of this water. She can't use her home. She was in tears as she talked about the lost value of her home, her entire life's savings in this house. Now she doesn't know what that house is worth because she is not sure whether the water is safe to drink.

Folks in Flint don't care who caused this problem, they just need help. In the past, the Federal Government and this body, the Senate, have always stepped up to help those in need. That is the right thing to do. That is what the American people expect us to do. The American people look to make sure that they are always in a position to help those in need. It is our values. It is who we are as a country. It is who we are as a people. Yet it has been extremely difficult to get that help out of this body.

I am pleased to say that in the last 2 months we have made some progress. Senator MURKOWSKI of Alaska and Senator INHOFE of Oklahoma have been great in working with Senator STABENOW and me. We have been able to build a list of cosponsors who are also helping us in this effort: Senator BURR, Senator CAPITO, Senator KIRK, and Senator PORTMAN. A number of Senators have come together on both sides of the aisle to say: Here is a solution we can get behind.

The proposal Senator STABENOW and I have worked on will provide money through the Safe Drinking Water Fund. It will provide grants for any community that has an emergency. Any community, not just Flint, that finds itself in an emergency of this kind could re-access these resources. Although Flint is the only community right now that would qualify, we believe there are other communities that will likely qualify in the future. In fact, there may be some in a relatively short period of time.

It also creates a loan fund of potentially up to \$700 million—perhaps even more—that every single community can access. This is an issue every community in our country may potentially face. With aging infrastructure, we know there are incredible infrastructure needs that have to be met, and the legislation we have worked on helps every community of every single State deal with this very important issue.

It also addresses some of the health issues I mentioned earlier in my talk—issues that help the children and the residents who have been poisoned by lead—by plussing up public health programs for lead abatement and helping the CDC do its great work to help folks.

This is a commonsense proposal that addresses some of the pressing needs in the city of Flint, while also addressing some of the pressing needs we face as a country to make sure we are investing in water infrastructure so that a citizen, no matter where they live or who they are, can turn on their tap and have clean drinking water come out of it.

We have also worked hard to address some of the concerns we heard from the other side of the aisle, in addition to the fact that this is open to all communities, not just Flint. We also heard that folks wanted it paid for, and certainly Senator STABENOW and I believe that as well. So we are fiscally responsible. We found a pay-for in a program that deals with vehicle technology but one we thought was important to use to help the people of Flint and help water infrastructure projects across the country.

The important thing about this, in addition to dealing with the problem and in addition to its being completely paid for, is that it also reduces the deficit. It will actually generate more money than is necessary to pay for this bill and will reduce the deficit.

In the past, when we have had a national disaster such as the one we have seen in Flint, normally we see emergency funds being used, as we have done with bridge collapses and oil refinery fires and water main breaks. Even though that is probably the best source to fund this—if you treat the people of Flint like we treat other folks all around the country, we would use emergency funds—we went the extra distance to take a fund and make sure it would completely pay for this program, while at the same time reducing the deficit.

We have done backflips and have worked with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle and have built support, and I believe if this bill went to the floor, it would pass. I think it would pass by a good margin. We believe we have very strong support for it. Yet here we are today, about ready to break for 2 weeks, and we are going to break without addressing this issue that has such strong bipartisan support. This has been a work in progress for over 2 months. It is ready to be voted on, yet we are going to leave without that vote.

We are going to leave because there is basically one Senator out there who doesn't want to see it move forward—one Senator who doesn't really like this proposal. I am not going to speak for that individual, but they have their issues and they continually want more and more. The folks who are suffering right now are the people of Flint. I wish that one Senator who has the hold would have met with the people I met with this morning and that Senator STABENOW and some of our other colleagues met with this morning. I wish that Senator would have heard their stories, heard their anguish, and saw the tears in their eyes as they talked

about what they are dealing with. Yet this Senator continues to have a hold.

Now, I understand the Senator may have a problem with a particular piece of legislation. That happens. We are not going to agree on everything. I would just ask that we allow this legislation to come to the floor and the one Senator who has the hold—if he doesn't like the legislation, that is fine—can vote no if he likes. That is certainly his prerogative as an elected Member of this body—to vote no. But please let the other 99 Senators in this body have a say. That is all we are asking for. Put it on the floor and let this body make the final decision as to whether or not this is an appropriate response to an absolutely catastrophic disaster that has hit a community in this country of ours. I don't think that is asking a lot.

Now, I am a new Member here. I am new, but I cannot imagine that folks here in the Senate will not allow legislation that is so important for people who have been impacted in such an extreme way to come to the Senate Floor. What would our Founding Fathers think if they were to look upon the Senate? They were concerned about factions and political parties and a body that would be paralyzed to really work on the tough issues that our country was going to face. I can't imagine looking in the eyes of our Founders and saying: The Senate—the deliberative body, the body that is supposed to take up the really tough issues facing us as a country—refuses to act and refuses to even put it on the floor so it can be debated and voted upon.

So I will close and pass this on to my colleague, the senior Senator from Michigan, Ms. STABENOW, and let her continue. I am certainly disappointed, and I would ask all of my colleagues to please join with us to work to get this to the floor so we can have a vote. The people of Flint cannot wait any longer. The rest of the country is looking at the Senate and they are shaking their heads wondering why the Senate is incapable of putting this issue on the floor and having a simple up-or-down vote.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, first I want to thank my partner and colleague, Senator PETERS, for his wonderful friendship and commitment to the people of Flint. We both share this. This has really become a second full-time job for us, given what has happened in Flint, in reaching out on behalf of the 9,000 children who are under the age of 6 who have been exposed and the homes that have exposure of lead that is higher than a toxic waste dump.

As a mom and now as a grandmother, I can't imagine what that must feel like for the moms and dads and the grandpas and grandmas and the fear and horror they feel, as well as for the adults and the seniors who are exposed and everyone who is paying a price.

Certainly, the business community is concerned now about people coming and doing business and going to restaurants in the city of Flint, despite the fact that there is wonderful work going on downtown in rebuilding this community. There are wonderful, exciting things happening, and now they have really been knocked off their feet because of what has happened.

Across the way in the other Chamber today, there are hearings going on. There is a lot of effort back and forth in talking about who is to blame for what happened. We certainly understand what happened, coming from Michigan, but I have to tell you that we are laser-focused on the folks who had nothing to do with what happened—nothing to do with what happened. These are the people of Flint, who assumed, like each one of us does, that when you get up in the morning and turn on the faucet, when you take a shower or you feed your children, clean water is going to come out of the pipes. We all assume that. That is pretty much a basic human right, certainly in America. It may not be in other countries, but it certainly is in America, where we assume that is the case.

In America, when a community is struck by this kind of catastrophe—a catastrophe they did not cause—we come together as Americans. That is what we do. We pitch in. We do what we can to help. That is what Senator PETERS and I have been hoping to accomplish on behalf of the people of Flint.

Since we have started debating these issues, we have found other communities as well that have challenges—none to the extent we are seeing in Flint, where 100,000 people and the entire city have been exposed to lead poisoning and the whole water system is in shambles. But there are other communities that have challenges, and we believe it is important to help them as well. So we have come up with something, as Senator PETERS said.

We have been working hard for the last 8 weeks to find a bipartisan plan—a compromise—that is not only fully paid for but out of something that I authored in the 2007 Energy bill, by the way. Because of the importance of this to the people of Flint, I said: OK, we will give something we care about here. We will restructure it. We will shorten the time of the program, and we will pay for it out of that.

Senator PETERS, when he was in the House, was the champion for this particular advanced manufacturing loan program. We are saying: OK, we are willing to have that end in order to be able to pay for what is happening in Flint. On top of a fully paid-for program out of a program that Republican colleagues don't like—so we are going to be ending something that folks would like to end—tens of millions of dollars in deficit reduction come along with this for the score. So it doesn't get any better than this.

We were told to find something that is a pay-for that is not going to infringe with what other people care about. We did that. We were told no earmarks. We did that. We were told no new programs built on current programs. We did that. And we added deficit reduction. Yet the children of Flint are still waiting. The children of Flint—for the last 8 weeks—and their families are still waiting.

As Senator PETERS said, we met some of these people this morning, and it just breaks your heart. People are looking at us and saying: OK, you have been working on this and you have this bipartisan group; isn't that great. But what is happening? The children of Flint are waiting.

So we are at a point where this has to stop. We need a vote. We need a vote. We have a bipartisan bill, and we need a vote. We are at a point where we need to have a vote and stop this ability of one person to just hold things up.

First, I want to thank our Republican colleagues as well as Democratic colleagues who have been working with us. First of all, our main Republican sponsor, the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator INHOFE, has been a true champion for supporting water infrastructure investments nationally. I am so grateful he came forward and offered the idea of not only being able to support Flint but to activate a financing program set up in the last water resources bill that would address communities across the country as well. That is terrific. If we can help other communities, along with what we need to do to support the families of Flint, that is great. So we thank him for his diligence. He has really stepped up, and we are so grateful.

I want to thank the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the ranking member, Senator MURKOWSKI and Senator CANTWELL, who have been stellar. I can't count how many hours we have talked on the phone, we have had meetings, and we have talked on the floor, and the lengths to which both of them have been willing to go to support us in solving this problem. They have been wonderful—even as late as a couple of hours ago in talking to us to figure out how we could move forward both to address this water infrastructure bill to help Flint and other communities and also to move forward on the Energy bill. So we need to be doing both, and we are at a point where that needs to get done.

We have 10 cosponsors of the bill, and I want to thank Senator PORTMAN and Senator BROWN, Senator KIRK, Senator REED of Rhode Island, Senator BURR, Senator DURBIN, Senator BOXER, Senator MIKULSKI, Senator CAPITO, and Senator BALDWIN. People from both parties have come together to do something that will make things better for the families and the communities that we represent. There are a number of other Members and staff who have been

working behind the scenes. We are so grateful for their kind words and encouragement and for the people who have offered their support for what we are doing.

I particularly want to thank our appropriations leaders, Senator COCHRAN and Senator MIKULSKI, for going the extra mile to figure out some strategy that would satisfy the Senator from Utah to get beyond this hold and to come together.

Unfortunately, despite strong bipartisan support and our best efforts, we find ourselves still in a spot, even though we have had conversations today—and I appreciate that, and folks say they still want to work together, but it seems like we go round and round and round and round. We need to stop and have a vote at this point in time. At one point, we thought we had agreement. As I said, we met again today. It would make sense in moving forward to offer the Senator the opportunity to have a second-degree amendment to our proposal. He has a different idea on structuring that. We are willing to make the case, let him make the case, and decide. That is what the Senate is about—have a vote, decide.

The children of Flint need our help. Somehow this procedural stuff—talking to folks about holds and cloture and all this—is not going to turn on the water in Flint. It is not going to help the children who have already been exposed and their families. We need the sense of urgency they have.

When we look around the country—and, believe me, our focus is on Flint. Even though there are certainly other communities in Michigan with water issues, others around the country, we are laser-focused on the place where the water has been destroyed and the people have been poisoned because of a whole range of what happened, and people have not been able to take a bath or cook with water out of a tap or to be able to care for their children or themselves for almost 2 years.

It is also true that when we talk to colleagues in putting together this bill, there are drinking water infrastructure needs around the country to be addressed. Utah will require \$3.7 billion in drinking water infrastructure over the next 20 years to meet minimum human health and safety requirements. In Jackson, MS, last month—after random samples showed lead levels above Federal action levels—the mayor issued a warning to pregnant women and children 5 years of age and younger to stay away from tapwater. The mayor also said: This is not Flint because we are telling people about it and we are taking action, which, unfortunately, did not happen to protect the health and safety of the people in Flint.

Last month in Crystal City, TX, there was black sludge water coming out of the faucet, and residents were warned to boil tapwater before drinking it—in Texas. According to a recent survey by EPA, Texas will require

nearly \$34 billion in upgrades to its drinking water infrastructure over the next 20 years to comply with minimum safety standards.

Last month in Ohio, 13 water systems were under lead advisories. In Sebring, OH, lab tests last August found unsafe levels of lead in drinking water—and it took 5 months before the city told pregnant women and children not to drink the water and to shut down the taps and fountains in schools.

Just today, the USA TODAY network published a report that identified nearly 2,000 water systems where excessive lead levels have been detected in the last 4 years, and they serve 6 million people.

Virginia Tech professor Marc Edwards recently again sounded the alarm about lead pipes in Washington. In Cleveland, children have high levels due to exposure to lead in household paints. We could go on and on. Pennsylvania, high lead levels.

The reason I am saying this is because while the catastrophe has happened in Flint—for many reasons beyond the control of anybody in Flint—there are other communities now that need help as well, which is why the proposal we have is one that has broad bipartisan support to be able to activate a wider infrastructure-financing mechanism that allows communities around the country to be able to solve problems before they get to what happened in Flint on the early end to solve the problems so people don't get lead poisoning. That is in this bill. We step up, because these are Americans in Flint, MI, and say: We hear you. We see you. We care about you, and because you have a Federal emergency declaration we will provide the opportunity to get some help. In addition to accountability and responsibility of the State, the Federal Government, because of the EPA's role in this, will be a part of the solution in fixing these pipes.

We also address public health issues: the Centers for Disease Control Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund, HUD's Healthy Homes Program for lead both in water and in paint, and we address the opportunity to reach out and deal with the public health issues for children.

Needless to say, we are extremely disappointed—putting it mildly—in how we feel about coming to a point today, despite best efforts on many people's parts, frankly, despite our patience working with people, accepting them at their word, working, trying to get things done, looking at various alternatives to get beyond the roadblocks, despite a lot of effort. Again, we are grateful for those who have stood with us and worked so hard on our behalf. It is incredibly disappointing and frustrating and, frankly, maddening that we are here as the Senate is leaving for the next 2 weeks and we do not have action on Flint and on water systems across this country.

Again, I can tell you that for the people of Flint who have not gotten help

for so long, for the people of Flint who were told the water was OK and it wasn't—and I have now been watching coverups and slow-walking for going on 2 years—this is just one more time when they are watching inaction and we could be stepping up and doing something to help.

So that is what we are asking for; that when we come back, the children of Flint be a priority for action; that we work together, as we have done across the aisle, to put forward something that will address water infrastructures to help the people of Flint, to help people around the country so they don't find themselves in a situation like the people of Flint; and that we do that together; that we pass that bill; that we pass an energy bill; and that we move forward after weeks and weeks and weeks of good-faith efforts to get something done.

All we are asking for is a vote. That is all we are asking for, after all this effort, is the opportunity to vote. If someone believes it is not the right thing to do, they have the opportunity that we all have, to vote no, but the children of Flint deserve a vote. The children in Jackson, MS, and the people around the country are worried they might become the crisis, the catastrophe in Flint, and are asking us simply to vote.

Lead poisoning is a frightening thing. It gets in your body and never leaves. It goes from your blood to your bones. When a woman gets pregnant, it goes into the fetus. It is a frightening form of poison. If that is not a national emergency worthy of action by the Senate and the House—the Congress of this country—I don't know what is.

Frankly, there are a whole lot of people who have lost faith in the government right now of Flint, who are asking us to see them, to care about them, and to help.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. PERDUE. Madam President, regarding the vacancy on the Supreme Court, many of our colleagues in the minority party have said the same things we are saying today. Let's stop kidding each other. This kind of political showmanship—and, yes, indeed, hypocrisy—is exactly what makes everyone in my home State absolutely apoplectic with Washington.

The last time I addressed the Supreme Court vacancy on the Senate floor, I urged my colleagues on the other side of the aisle not to let the nominations process get bogged down in partisan politics—that is not what this should be about—not to let this process turn into political theater because that is exactly what has happened far too often in this body ever since the Bork nomination way back in 1987.

The organized campaign of vilification and character attacks surrounding Judge Bork's nomination was so unprecedented and so extreme that it took the creation of a new word, "to Bork," to describe what had happened.

The process for nominating Justices to the Supreme Court has been thoroughly politicized ever since. That politicization has done great damage not only to the Court but to this body, the U.S. Senate. It has expanded beyond just Supreme Court nominees and now affects so many of our nominees for circuit judgeships as well. That is what happened in 2013, when then-Majority Leader REID broke a tradition almost as old as the Senate itself by invoking the nuclear option and breaking the Senate's filibuster rule to stack various circuit courts.

I don't think I need to remind any of my colleagues that when the Democrats were in the minority, there was no shortage of protests heard in this room about how sacred an institution the filibuster was. Keep in mind that the nuclear option was invoked after the Senate confirmed the President's first nominee to the DC Circuit by a unanimous 97-to-0 vote. It was an act of raw political power, the nuclear option.

We heard yesterday that the President has named his nominee to the Supreme Court, but let's be clear, any previous confirmation or record as a judge or professional qualifications are not the issue for any nominee. What is at stake is the integrity of the process, not the person. It is the principle, not the individual, because our judicial nominees to the Supreme Court, the circuits, and the district courts deserve better than to be used as pawns in any political fight, and that is exactly what would happen if the Senate were to consider any nominee in the middle of this political season.

I am a new Member to this institution, but this has been the view of my colleagues in both parties who have served in the Senate far longer than I have. This was their view no matter who the nominee was. This was their view even when there wasn't a vacancy to fill.

The former chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Vice President BIDEN, recognized this in 1992, when he said:

Once the political season is underway, and it is, action on a Supreme Court nomination must be—I want to emphasize that "must"—must be put off until after the election campaign is over. That is what is fair to the nominee and is central to the process. Otherwise, it seems to me, we will be in deep trouble as an institution.

I agree. The Vice President correctly saw that when we inject a nomination into a contentious election-year atmosphere, we do a disservice not only to the nominee but to the institution of the United States Senate itself. It is my view that enough institutional damage has already been done to the Senate through these politicized nominations.

I wish to say a little about the text of the Constitution. We hear both sides talk about this, but let's see it in detail.

I have heard so many of my Democratic colleagues claim that the Senate has an obligation to schedule hearings and hold a vote on this nominee. We have all read article II, section 2, of the Constitution. Every Member of this body knows the Constitution says nothing about hearings or votes on judicial nominees. It is simply not there.

Senators of both parties have always understood this and have said so for years, regardless of who was in the majority. In 2005, Minority Leader REID said: "Nowhere in the Constitution does it say the Senate has a duty to give Presidential appointees a vote." Before that, in 2002, the former chief judge of the DC Circuit, Abner Mikva, who was a Carter appointee, said: "The Senate should not act on any Supreme Court vacancies that might occur until after the next presidential election." The senior Senator from Nevada and Judge Mikva were right then, and Chairman GRASSLEY and my Republican colleagues are right now.

Despite many of them previously making the exact same points we are today, my Democratic colleagues are continuing this diatribe of telling us to do our job. I would respectfully say to my Democratic colleagues today, we are doing our job. Our job as Senators is to decide how to responsibly exercise the powers of advice and consent delegated to us under our Constitution.

The responsible course of action here—a course of action endorsed by both Democrats and Republicans for decades—is to refrain from initiating the nomination process in the midst of an election-year political fight. The responsible course of action is to avoid the political theater this nomination would become.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HONORING NEBRASKA'S SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN COMBAT

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise today to continue my tribute to Nebraska's heroes and the current generation of men and women who lost their lives defending our freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of these Nebraskans has a special story to tell. Throughout this year and beyond, I will continue to honor their memory here on the Senate floor.

FIRST LIEUTENANT JACOB FRITZ

Today, I wish to highlight the life of 1LT Jacob Fritz of Verdon, NE. Jake,

as he was known to his friends and loved ones, grew up on his family's farm near Verdon, NE, a town with fewer than 200 people. While attending Dawson-Verdon High School, Jake thrived and stood out as a model student. He was an all-around athlete and played the baritone in the honor band. He was also passionate about helping others in need and regularly devoted his time to organizations that combat substance abuse in Verdon and around the State.

Jake's former principal, John Eickhoff, described him as "a great kid, student and athlete." Principal Eickhoff recalls, "If I had a school full of Jacob Fritzes, I wouldn't have had anything to do."

When Jake entered his senior year in high school, his focus remained on his commitment to helping others, and he began pursuing a career in the U.S. military. His mother Noala recalls Jake's dream of serving his country, which was inspired by his grandfather, a retired Air Force officer. Karen Mezger, a family friend, recalls that Jake wanted to have a career in the Army and more than anything come back to Verdon and live the life of a gentleman farmer.

With the support of his family and the nomination from then-Senator Chuck Hagel, Jake left Nebraska in June of 2000 to begin his first year at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. As soon as he arrived, Jake earned the reputation among his fellow cadets as a warm and supportive person. His friend, 1LT Travis Reinhold, recalls Jake's midwestern values. "I called him 'Jolly Jake,'" Lieutenant Reinhold remembers, "because no matter who you were, he always gave you a warm country smile." Lieutenant Reinhold also noted Jake's superb voice as a member of the West Point Glee Club. His voice was always filled with conviction and beauty, particularly when singing the hymn "Mansions of the Lord."

After 4 years, Jake graduated from West Point with a bachelor's degree in systems engineering. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army on May 28, 2005. Following speciality training, Jake was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, at Fort Richardson, AK.

Not long after Jake's arrival at Fort Richardson, the 2nd Battalion was deployed to Iraq. It was 2006, and the war was escalating. The insurgency was in full force and threatening to erase the progress made by American troops. By the end of that year, President Bush announced a counterassault known as the "surge" and deployed an additional 30,000 troops to the region. Lieutenant Fritz joined this effort and routinely volunteered at Forward Operating Base Karbala to assist Iraqi soldiers. Jake had a natural instinct to step up and take charge. He felt an obligation and a commitment to the mission, which often required volunteering for these types of assignments.

But shortly after Jake arrived at Karbala, all hell broke loose. On January 20, 2007, enemy militants disguised as friendly soldiers entered the base and attacked. In a matter of minutes, Lieutenant Fritz and three other American soldiers were captured. The militants rushed Jake and the other hostages east towards Mahawil. American troops quickly located their trail and they followed in hot pursuit. Shortly after crossing the Euphrates River and with American forces gaining, the militants attempted to hasten their escape by executing the four captives. The American soldiers were stripped of their identification and shot as the militants fled the scene, and Jake was mortally wounded. As his heartless murderers fled into the abyss, Jake realized his body might not be identified, and so in a final act of bravery, he managed to scrawl a few letters in the dust of an abandoned vehicle. So when the American troops arrived at the scene, they saw his body and the word "Fritz."

Back in Verdon, NE, it was a snowy day in late January of 2007. Jake's mother Noala arrived home to find two strange cars in the driveway. Men dressed in uniform approached her as she walked to the back door. She instinctively knew why they were there, and she refused to listen to the words no mother should ever hear. It was clear that her son would not be coming home.

First Lieutenant Jacob Fritz was laid to rest on January 31, 2007. He received full military honors, and he was buried in a church ceremony just 4 miles from his home. Family and friends paid their final respects in a moving service that honored the courage, commitment, and sacrifice of this local hero. Jake was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Prisoner of War Medal, and the Combat Action Badge.

His two younger brothers later followed in his footsteps, and they earned commissions in the Army. They serve to this day with the same distinction and the honor they learned from their big brother.

Jake's mother retired from teaching and spends much of her time helping Gold Star families throughout Nebraska.

Meanwhile, Jake's memory lives on in the hearts and minds of the State he served. Nebraskans are forever indebted to his sacrifice.

First Lieutenant Jacob Fritz is a hero, and I am honored to tell his story.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATIONS OF BETH COBERT AND MICHAEL MISSAL

Mr. CARPER. Thank you, Mr. President. It is good to see the Presiding Officer on this St. Patrick's Day, and I am pleased to have a chance to rise and to urge my colleagues to confirm two very important nominees. Some of my colleagues have scattered across the country to go home for a 2-week recess, but the Presiding Officer is here. Hopefully, the words that I am saying here today will find their way to our colleagues wherever they are or wherever they are headed.

One of the nominees is a woman named Beth Cobert, who has been nominated to be the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, and the other is Michael Missal, who has been nominated to be the inspector general of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Like many of my colleagues, I have grown frustrated over the years as, too often, senior positions in the Federal Government have been left vacant or filled by someone serving in an acting capacity for far too long. A lack of critical leadership at agencies can—and oftentimes does—undermine the effectiveness of Federal programs. I know all of us want Federal agencies to work more efficiently to provide the most value to American taxpayers, and having strong leadership in place is key to that effort. I hope we can move to quickly confirm both of these nominees when the Senate returns after the recess.

Let me start with a few words about Beth Cobert. I don't know if the Presiding Officer has had a chance to meet with her. She is one of the most impressive leaders of this administration or any administration whom I have had the privilege to know. She is an excellent nominee to head OPM. Right from the start, I have been very impressed with her work, with her leadership, with her work ethic, and with her ability to get people to work together at OMB and now during her time at OPM in this acting capacity. Before that, she was Deputy Director for Management within the Office of Management and Budget. I just think we are really lucky in this country that she is willing to continue to serve in this capacity as well as serving in her previous capacity. She comes out of the private sector, from McKinsey & Company, a brand new California operation. She did that and had a number of senior positions within that company and a great career.

The Office of Personnel Management performs critical functions affecting the entire Federal workforce. What they do every day has a direct impact on the quality of work at all executive branch departments and agencies. As my colleagues know, Ms. Cobert's time at OPM began in the aftermath of one of the worst cyber attacks committed against our government last year. One result of that incident has been a major effort to overhaul the information technology infrastructure, which

requires great levels of management attention and expertise.

Even before she came to OPM, Ms. Cobert was deeply involved in the OPM response to the breach from her Senate-confirmed role at OMB. If you look at her management and technology experience in the private sector, her experience at OMB, and the time she has already spent leading the Office of Personnel Management, she is the ideal candidate to lead OPM at such a critical time. I am only one of many who have been impressed by Ms. Cobert. In addition to receiving a unanimous vote from the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on her nomination to lead OPM, she has the support of Chairman JASON CHAFFETZ at the House and of Ranking Member ELIJAH CUMMINGS, who lead the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Representatives CHAFFETZ and CUMMINGS sent a letter to Majority Leader MCCONNELL and Minority Leader REID supporting Ms. Cobert's confirmation.

Here is a taste of what they had to say about her: "[Ms. Cobert] is a qualified and competent choice to lead OPM, which is in need of strong leadership, and we urge the Senate to approve her nomination swiftly."

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the full letter.

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,

Washington, DC, March 3, 2016.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL AND MINORITY LEADER REID: We write in support of President Obama's nomination of Beth Cobert to serve as Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). She is a qualified and competent choice to manage OPM, which is in need of strong leadership, and we urge the Senate to approve her nomination swiftly.

On February 1, 2016, the Inspector General of OPM, on his departure from federal service, sent a letter to President Obama praising Ms. Cobert's leadership:

"I am also comforted by the fact that Acting OPM Director Beth Cobert appears to have wrapped her arms around the multitude of challenges currently facing OPM. Further, she seems to be arduously striving to institute high standards of professionalism as she works to reinvigorate this great agency."

We further expect that as Director, Ms. Cobert will continue to assist the Committee's ongoing investigation of the data breach that OPM announced in 2015, which resulted in the loss of personally identifiable information for over 21.5 million individuals. On February 3, 2016, the Committee issued a subpoena to Ms. Cobert—who has served as OPM's Acting Director since July 10, 2015—for documents related to the data breach investigation. The agency produced some responsive documents by the February 16, 2016, deadline and has agreed to produce outstanding documents on a rolling basis; how-

ever, there are still outstanding documents that have not been produced to the Committee. We expect the agency to fully comply with the subpoena and produce all outstanding documents.

Please contact Katie Bailey of the Chairman's staff or Tim Lynch of the Ranking Member's staff with any questions. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

JASON CHAFFETZ,
Chairman.

ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS,
Ranking Member.

Mr. CARPER. Ms. Cobert is a highly qualified nominee. We are fortunate indeed that she is willing to serve in this capacity and take on the many challenges that are currently facing OPM.

I urge my colleagues to quickly confirm her so she can continue to do the good work that she is doing at OPM.

I have known people who are show horses and folks who are workhorses. This woman is a workhorse—I like to think people look at us as workhorses as well—but she is focused on getting the job done. She is especially good at surrounding herself with terrific people. She did that at OMB, she did that at OPM, and she did that before when she was in her very significant position at McKinsey & Company.

Let me just turn the page and talk about Michael Missal. I want to talk about him and thank him for his willingness to step up and serve as the inspector general for the Department of Veterans Affairs. He served 5 years of Active Duty in a hot war as a naval flight officer in Southeast Asia and another 18 years as a P-3 aircraft mission commander in the Navy right up to the end of the Cold War.

As Governor for 8 years in Delaware and commander in chief of the Delaware National Guard, we send people from Delaware. Right now we have people in Afghanistan. We have sent people over the years to any number of places where they are in harm's way.

I care a lot about veterans. My dad was a veteran. A bunch of my uncles were veterans. One of them got killed in World War II, the victim of a kamikaze attack on his aircraft carrier in the western Pacific. So veterans' concerns run deep in my family.

As we all know, our inspectors general play an extremely important role in our government. Their work helps us to save money while also revealing and prosecuting wrongdoing, promoting the integrity and efficiency of our government, and hopefully increasing the confidence and faith that the American people have in their government. I believe the work of inspectors general, along with that of GAO, is invaluable with respect to the work of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, in which I am privileged to serve, and the whole Senate as we look for ways to get better results for less money and further reduce our Federal deficit down from \$1.4 trillion a half dozen years ago to about close to a quarter of that—which is still too much. We are making progress, but we

need to make more. The IG is a big part of helping us to meet that goal. I think it is critical that we have qualified, experienced people in place to serve these important roles. This is tough work. We are blessed by the many IGs we have.

We have seen far too many IG positions, including the one Mr. Missal has been nominated to fill, sit vacant or be filled by someone serving in an acting capacity for far too long. In fact, the VA, of all agencies, given the concern we have heard and seen across the country in recent years—the IG vacancy at the VA—has been without a permanent, Senate confirmed inspector general for more than 2 years. In the past several years, I have joined all the members of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee in sending letters to the President, urging him to nominate people to fill all the IG vacancies, including one letter that specifically pointed out the importance of the one I am talking about today, the inspector general position at the VA.

Our committee held a hearing last year on IG vacancies and pointed out the importance of having permanent IGs in place to ensure the independence of this office.

I want to thank the President for responding to our committee's letters. He has done this by sending the Senate a number of well-qualified nominees, including Mr. Missal, for our consideration. These words have been heard in the last couple of weeks. He is doing his job, and now it is time for us to do our job with respect to these nominations.

I was pleased that both the Veterans Affairs' Committee and our committee, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, were able to move quickly to consider Mr. Missal's nomination. I want to thank my colleagues on our committee for making it a priority.

However, since early this year, there has been no action by the Senate on Mr. Missal's nomination. This is an inspector general vacancy in Veterans Affairs, where we know there have been hospitals and facilities across the country that are troubled, and we need the best leadership we can find at the VA in this position. Again, I think the President has given us a very good person. He is willing to do the job. We need to get him confirmed.

As we know, the VA has been facing significant challenges over the last couple of years. I believe that confirming a permanent IG at the VA will help provide much needed oversight, while helping to point out and resolve some of the problems at the VA that are negatively impacting the lives of our veterans every day.

Leaving this position vacant impedes much needed progress on identifying and addressing serious issues at the VA that impact our veterans. If we want to do more to fix the VA, we need a strong

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.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE DUNCAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to a distinguished Kentuckian, a man who knows the meaning of public service, who I am proud to call a friend. Robert M. "Mike" Duncan will be celebrating his 65th birthday next month, and I want to wish him great happiness and every success on such a special occasion.

Mike is well known in Kentucky and nationally for wearing many hats. Currently he serves as the president and CEO of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, a national nonprofit organization that advocates for coal miners in Kentucky and elsewhere and for the use of coal as an affordable and reliable resource in our Nation's energy mix.

Mike has served the Republican Party in many roles, most notably as the 60th Chairman of the Republican National Committee, RNC, from 2007 to 2009. He came to that role having previously served as treasurer and general counsel of the RNC before his election as chairman.

During his career, Mike's served on the campaigns of five Presidents. He worked in the White House as the assistant director of the Office of Public Liaison. He was appointed to the President's Commission on White House Fellows in 2001, and later served as the chairman and a board member of the Tennessee Valley Authority. He served in various roles with the U.S.-China High Level Political Party Leaders Dialogue and the Center for Rural Development.

Mike is also active politically in Kentucky at every level. He has served as a precinct captain to a county chairman to the State chairman to the national chairman. In 1998, he chaired Jim Bunning's successful U.S. Senate race. Mike's involvement with Kentucky politics dates back to his time interning for the Kentucky General Assembly, when he got the chance to serve as President Richard Nixon's driver when the President was campaigning for reelection in the Bluegrass State.

Mike is also active with numerous nonprofit organizations. He is a trustee of the Christian Appalachian Project and runs a student mentoring program. He has been recognized with honorary degrees from several schools, including the College of the Ozarks, Cumberland College, and Morehead State University.

In his professional life, Mike is the principal owner, along with his wife, Joanne, of two community banks with five offices in eastern Kentucky. He has served as the president of the Kentucky Bankers Association and as a director of the Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank Cincinnati Branch.

Mike holds degrees from Cumberland College and the University of Kentucky College of Law. He and Joanne call Inez, KY, their home; and they have a son, Rob, who is an assistant U.S. attorney.

Mike was 8 years old when his uncle ran for superintendent of schools. It was volunteering for his uncle's campaign that sparked his love of politics, and we are glad that it did. He has been of great service to the people of Kentucky and to the people of this Nation for many years, and we owe him our gratitude.

I want to wish Mike a very happy birthday, and I know my colleagues join me in recognizing his achievements and wishing him many happy returns.

Thank you, Mike, for your service to the Party and to our country.

 THIRD ANNUAL CESAR CHAVEZ
DAY-LAS VEGAS FESTIVAL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the third annual Cesar Chavez Day-Las Vegas Festival. Since 2013, the Las Vegas City Council, the Cesar Chavez Committee, and Councilmember Bob Coffin have organized this community festival in Las Vegas to honor the lasting legacy of civil rights activist and labor leader, Cesar Chavez.

Cesar Chavez led a courageous and humble life. He was born on March 31, 1927, in a small farm outside of Yuma, AZ. His experiences as a laborer and migrant worker in the fields of the southwest United States encouraged his pilgrimage from Delano to Sacramento, CA. He brought attention to the workplace inequities experienced by those who tilled America's soil and harvested America's crops. Alongside Dolores Huerta, Larry Itliong, and United Farm Workers, Cesar Chavez fought tirelessly to raise salaries and improve the working conditions of farm workers. He organized migrant workers to raise awareness for the humane and fair treatment of all workers. Today Mr. Chavez's legacy inspires hope, action, and prosperity for those who are often burdened by marginalization and discrimination. His contributions will forever be embedded in the fabric of our country, and we owe gratitude to the indelible mark that Cesar Chavez has left on our Nation.

Cesar Chavez dedicated his time to a life of purpose in bringing social justice and dignity to the workplace. As we commemorate his meaningful work and contributions, it is vital that we continue his legacy by fighting for higher wages, worker rights, and the fair treatment of all workers. I commend the Las Vegas City Council, the Cesar Chavez Committee, and Councilmember Bob Coffin for commemorating Cesar Chavez, and I join in honoring Mr. Chavez's visionary leadership.

 NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY
MONTH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 29 years ago, March was designated National Women's History Month. It is hard to

imagine, but as recently as the 1970s, history books largely left out the contributions of women in America. This began to change in 1978, when a small group set out to revise the school curriculum in their community—Sonoma County, CA. The idea was to create a Women's History Week, and its goal was to write women back into history books. It was an idea that was long overdue. And Women's History Week took off around the county . . . around the State . . . and across the Nation. It didn't take long before organizers lobbied Congress and even the White House. And on February 28, 1980, it paid off.

President Jimmy Carter announced for the first time that March 2-8, 1980, would be designated as National Women's History Week. He urged libraries, schools, and community organizations to focus on leaders who struggled for equality: Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cody Stanton, Harriet Tubman, and Alice Paul. In 1981, the cause gained further momentum when an unlikely partnership between then-Representative BARBARA MIKULSKI and Senator ORRIN HATCH cosponsored a congressional resolution for National Women's History Week. And 6 short years later, National Women's History Week became National Women's History Month. And last November, Senator MIKULSKI was awarded the Nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, in part for her work on equal pay for women—what an honor.

Throughout history, women have achieved significant progress in the face of discrimination and, time and time again, blazed new trails. So it is appropriate that Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI would play such an integral role in creating National Women's History Month. After all, she understands the role of a trailblazer better than many. And during her last year in the U.S. Senate, it is fitting we honor some of her accomplishments. Senator MIKULSKI was the first woman elevated to a leadership post in the U.S. Senate and the only current Member of Congress in the National Women's Hall of Fame. She is also the first woman elected to Congress in her own right, not because of a husband or a father or someone who served before her in higher office. Senator MIKULSKI embodies what National Women's History Month is all about, particularly this year, when its theme is "Working to Form a More Perfect Union: Honoring Women in Public Service and Government."

So with that in mind, I would like to tell you a story about Senator MIKULSKI, also known in this chamber as the Dean of Women. Following the election of a number of esteemed women into the Senate, a lot of reporters deemed 1992, the Year of the Woman, but Senator MIKULSKI didn't like the sound of that.

She said: "Calling 1992 the Year of the Woman makes it sound like the

Year of the Caribou or the Year of the Asparagus. We're not a fad, fancy or a year."

That is classic for Senator MIKULSKI. Today there are a record 20 female Members in the Senate, but BARBARA would be the first to point out that is still a minority, and we can do better. Well, after 40 years in Congress, Senator MIKULSKI will be sorely missed. Without the leadership and determination of Senator MIKULSKI, the fight gets a little harder, and there is plenty of work to do.

Women still receive an average of 78 cents for every dollar earned by men, and it is even greater for women of color. African-American women make 64 cents for every dollar earned by men, and Hispanic women only make 56 cents. It is not right, and it is long past time that Congress pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to provide women with the necessary tools to fight wage discrimination. It is also time to guarantee paid family and medical leave for all. Making this a reality will mean that when major life events happen, birth of a new child or caring for an aging parent, hard-working Americans will not have to choose between their family and debt, bankruptcy, or losing their job. But America can overcome these challenges. We have done it before. Just look how far we have come.

Here are just a few of the problems women faced and overcame since the 1970s: women could be fired from the workplace for being pregnant; sexual harassment wasn't recognized in the workplace; women couldn't get a credit card; and marital rape wasn't considered a crime in most States. But we solved these discriminatory and heinous practices. You see, America's democracy has indeed been imperfect, but throughout our history, we have sought to address our Nation's imperfections. Because the story of the United States is not a story of a perfect union, it is a story about the pursuit to create "a more perfect union."

Let me close with this. Years ago, in my home State of Illinois, then First Lady Hillary Clinton said: "If you go to the poorest places on Earth struggling from social problems of poverty, disease, and hunger and all that comes with it, and you can only ask one question to determine if they have a chance, the question you should ask is this: How do you treat your women?"

If you give women an equal playing field, status, education, and opportunity, you are giving them and your country a chance to thrive.

This March, as we pay tribute to all the brave women who have moved this country forward and in doing so inspired each and every one of us, let's challenge ourselves to build on their legacies and make our country a more equal society for our mothers, sisters, and daughters.

TRIBUTE TO DON HOOPER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to recognize Don Hooper,

a great Vermonter who is soon to retire from the National Wildlife Federation.

Don is a great environmental conservationist whose advice I have sought for at least 20 years on issues affecting Vermont, the United States, and indeed the planet. For 17 years, Don has helped lead the National Wildlife Federation, NWF, in Vermont and the region. He helped to bring the peregrine falcon back from the brink of extinction in Vermont and to restore our State's breeding population of bald eagles. Beyond Vermont, he advocated for piping plovers, wolves, Atlantic salmon, and more. Don helped the NWF become one of the first organizations to sound the alarm about the accelerating impacts of climate change and to pull together coalitions of environmental advocates, conservationists, and sportsmen and sportswomen to push for solutions.

Don's public service extends beyond his conservation leadership. He worked hard in the mid-1990s as Vermont's Secretary of State to reduce barriers to the ballot box and to make government more open and accessible, priorities both he and I share.

Many Vermonters also celebrate Don's 8 years representing the towns of Randolph, Brookfield, and Braintree in Vermont's General Assembly, when Don led efforts to divest pension funds from South African investments, helped to craft significant environmental and planning legislation, and achieved what would be unthinkable in most States—a political redistricting map that was adopted by near consensus.

And as is the story with any great Vermonter, Don's foundation has been his family. Since 1974, the Hooper's Brookfield farm, worked by Don, his wife, Allison, and sons, Sam, Jay, and Miles, has been a mainstay of the community. They have sold hay, vegetables, goat's milk, and meat from the farm to friends and neighbors. Don helped found the Montpelier Farmers Market that Marcelle and I visit whenever we are home in the summer. With Allison in the lead and Don doing much heavy lifting and dishwashing, the Hoopers became cheesemakers and founded the Vermont Butter and Cheese Company, which has thrived for 32 years, employs 77 people directly, supports many more Vermont farmers, and has Vermont's specialty cheese industry on the international culinary map.

On top of all of this, Don is a volunteer for the fire department and a member of the local Farm Bureau. It is hard to think of a more dedicated member of the community.

These are just some of the layers of Don's life in Vermont. He has also done great work as a Peace Corps volunteer in Botswana and in the leadership of national organizations. Don Hooper stands as tall as ever in retirement, and while this might conclude his leadership of the NWF in Vermont, I know

it will not be the last we hear and see of this great Vermonter.

RECOGNIZING THE "USS MONTPELIER"

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as a native of Montpelier and as one who attended the christening of the USS *Montpelier*, I was so happy to see an article in the Times Argus regarding its return to the United States after a 6-month deployment last month. Steve Martin and Debra Smith have both been involved for years and supported the crew of the USS *Montpelier*. Marcelle and I had a memorable time at a picnic they held for the crew in Middlesex. As a Vermonter, they both make me proud, and I wanted my fellow Senators to see what they have done.

I ask unanimous consent that the Times Argus article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Times Argus, Feb. 8, 2016]

USS MONTPELIER RETURNS TO STATES

(By Josh O'Gorman)

NORFOLK, Va.—The USS *Montpelier* has returned home to the United States following a six-month deployment.

Friday afternoon, the submarine—the third naval vessel to share the name of Vermont's capital—docked at Naval Station Norfolk after logging more than 38,000 nautical miles during its most recent deployment.

The crew of the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine, which includes 15 officers and 129 enlisted crew, spent the recent deployment supporting national security interests in Europe and the Middle East, with stops in Bahrain, France, Greece and the United Arab Emirates.

"I have been connected with this amazing group of men for 14 or 15 years now," said Debra Smith, of Middlesex, who chairs the Veterans and Family Support Committee for the Montpelier VFW.

Smith's support for the sailors of the USS *Montpelier* began with her efforts to keep them entertained while at sea. Smith, who used to operate Capital Video in Montpelier before it closed, would send the sailors movies to watch during their down time.

Most recently, Smith organized an effort in which students from Hardwick Elementary School are making "Welcome Home" and Valentine's Day cards, which are expected to go out in the mail to the crew this week.

Both Smith and Steve Martin, also of Middlesex, have been passengers of the 360-foot submarine, which was commissioned in 1993 and which launched the first Tomahawk cruise missiles during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

"It was pretty awesome," Martin said. "It's pretty tight in there. We spent the day out at sea and when they surfaced we were able to go up on the bridge with the captain."

He also described the steepness with which the submarine dives and surfaces.

"You're keeping your balance and your face is a few feet from the floor," Martin said.

Next month, Smith and Martin will take a road trip that will include a stop in Norfolk to visit the boat and its crew.

REMOVAL OF NOMINATION
OBJECTION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on December 18, 2015, I placed a hold on the nomination of Dr. Janine Ann Davidson to be Under Secretary of the Navy. As I made clear in my statement at that time, my action was not directed at Dr. Davidson; rather, it was directed at the pending promotion by the Navy of RDML Brian Losey and concerns I had related to findings by the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General concerning Rear Admiral Losey's retaliation against whistleblowers. I have been informed by the Navy that Rear Admiral Losey will not be promoted. Consequently, I am removing my hold on Dr. Davidson's nomination and will support her confirmation.

To quickly review why I took this action, the DOD OIG conducted several extensive investigations into allegations of retaliation by Rear Admiral Losey against senior members of his joint command. In three of those investigations, the DOD IG concluded that he wrongfully retaliated against his staff even after he was advised not to do so. The DOD IG also concluded that his immediate subordinates carried out retaliatory actions at his behest in two of those cases.

I found the OIG findings compelling. In a January 14, 2016, letter to Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, Senator McCAIN and Senator REED, in their capacity as chairman and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, also cited the OIG findings in support of their request to Secretary Mabus that Losey not be promoted.

Notwithstanding Rear Admiral Losey's long service to our country, the Navy would have been wrong to dismiss the OIG findings and promote him. Doing so would have sent exactly the wrong message, namely that retaliation against whistleblowers is acceptable.

One of the pillars of our system of government is the rule of law; a principle that applies no less to our military and to the vital principle of civilian control over the military. It is illegal to retaliate against whistleblowers, whether civilian or military, and I commend the DOD inspector general and his staff for their diligence in these investigations.

I commend Secretary Mabus and the Navy for taking what I believe is the right course of action in this situation, but my concern with the protection of whistleblowers did not begin with the Losey case, and it will not end with the Losey case. I will continue to work here in the Senate to ensure that those who come forward to expose waste, fraud, or abuse are protected.

In the meantime, I encourage the nominee, Dr. Janine Ann Davidson, to focus on the hard work she has before her in addressing whistleblower retaliation issues in the military.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation approved legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration. I applaud the work of my colleagues Senators THUNE and NELSON. Their leadership on this important legislation was critical. I would like to make clear that, while we took important steps forward with this legislation, more work remains to be done to ensure the United States remains a global leader in aviation, safety, and innovation.

Going into this year, many on the Commerce Committee, along with Department of Transportation Secretary Foxx and FAA Administrator Huerta and key stakeholders, aimed high on FAA reauthorization. We aimed high because there are big ideas we need to address when it comes to aviation in this country.

From the current state and financing of our airport infrastructure, to completing NextGen implementation, to accelerating commercial use of UAS technology, to new proposals about our Air Traffic Control system, there were a lot of innovative ideas on the table, and while we made strides on some, more work remains to be done. There is widespread agreement that the status quo is not acceptable, and I was pleased to join my colleagues in taking this initial step forward to reauthorize the FAA for the upcoming 18 months.

Furthermore, I am pleased that I was able to put forth amendments that were included in this bill to ensure adequate staffing levels at the Newark air traffic control tower. In addition, we were able to secure a much-needed study of the New York and New Jersey airports, which cover the busiest airspace in the country. Findings from this study will enable us to make informed decisions about how best to address this staffing problem in the future.

I am also concerned about staffing levels at the Transportation Security Administration, TSA. There have been incredibly long delays at Newark airport because of inadequate staffing of TSA agents at our airport. Safety is absolutely paramount in our airports. It is my hope that we can achieve both topnotch security and an efficient, reliable process for travelers using our airports. Increased staffing should help us achieve that goal.

In this reauthorization, I was pleased to work with Senator CANTWELL to increase competition in the Newark airport with the hope that increased competition and opening up more flight slots at the airport may yield more options and price points for consumers. But I must stress that these changes cannot move forward without ensuring the airport is equipped to handle more traffic and passengers. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on this issue and am excited by the opportunities this could bring for my constituents.

We also made progress on furthering the integration of unmanned aerial systems, UAS, or drones into our airspace in our legislation. This technology is literally taking off around the world. It has the power to enhance search and rescue, deliver humanitarian aid, improve agriculture practices, and newsgathering. I introduced the Commercial UAS Modernization Act to help advance this technology and was pleased to see many of our ideas incorporated in this legislation. I worked with committee leadership to further advance a microUAS rule, which would allow U.S. businesses to fly micro-drones under 4.4 pounds responsibly and safely.

Advancing microUAS use will bring tremendous innovations and new efficiencies across the country and will keep the United States on par with other developed nations who have been making great strides ahead of us in utilizing this technology. From improving research to providing unmanned bridge inspections, the benefits of this technology are truly limitless. UAS has the power to save lives and create new efficiencies across industries. I am excited to see what the innovators and entrepreneurs come up with as a result of our rule which sets forth clear safety guidelines for responsible operation.

Finally, I want to address a couple of amendments that I put forth that were not included in this legislation and express my sincere hope that the chairman and ranking member will work with me before this bill gets to floor. I introduced two amendments to the bill that would address disadvantaged business enterprise, or DBE, projects. The goal of this program, of course, is to promote equity and inclusion in federally financed transportation projects. While neither of these amendments were incorporated into this legislation as of yet, I am confident that we can work together to advance this important policy goal. One amendment would ensure conformance of the DOT size standard for small businesses to the metric defined by the Small Business Administration.

This update will enable more minority and women-owned businesses to compete for infrastructure work. The second amendment sets goals for minority and women-owned businesses on projects financed only by passenger facility charges, or PFCs. I ask the chairman and ranking member to continue to work with me as this bill goes to the floor to advance these two important goals.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE ENZI

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, on March 29 in Laramie, the University of Wyoming will recognize the work of Senator MIKE ENZI with an official dedication of the Michael B. Enzi STEM Facility. It is a well-deserved honor and one that I would like to share with my fellow Senators.

The state of the art facility opened in January of 2016. With more than 107,000 square feet and over 30 labs, the University of Wyoming Michael B. Enzi STEM Facility will allow 900 students from multiple disciplines to be actively engaged in lab studies at the same time. The design of the facility allows students to enjoy an active learning environment that encourages continuous interaction between instructors and students. Classrooms are laid out in such a way that instructors have the flexibility to adjust their lessons to accommodate the needs and interests of the students, ensuring that they are always in an environment most conducive to learning.

There is no better way to honor the lifetime work of Senator ENZI than to name this facility in his honor. Throughout his years as an accountant and in elected office, MIKE has been a solid leader who is willing to take on tough challenges. From his time as mayor in Gillette, a town that truly represents the definition of an American boomtown, to his work in the U.S. Senate, MIKE studies and works through an issue and always approaches the problem with an "I will solve this and make it better" attitude. This approach to problem solving has helped MIKE succeed as chairman of both the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the Senate Budget Committee.

Senator ENZI recognizes that if you provide people the tools to succeed, many will. MIKE understands human nature and recognizes that a one size fits all approach to serious problems is not always the best way to fix things. Senator ENZI believes in the ability of people to learn, whether in the classroom, on the job, or through personal experiences, and to take that knowledge and use it in a way to better themselves and others.

The Michael B. Enzi STEM Facility is a perfect reflection of the man: give people an opportunity to learn, to interact, to share, and in an environment that works for them, and they will achieve great things.

In praising his effort to improve education in Wyoming, Chris Boswell, University of Wyoming's vice president for governmental and community affairs, said the following about MIKE ENZI: "He has been very influential in crafting legislation that garners bipartisan support in the Senate. These have been bills that moved significant education initiatives forward. Whether as chairman or ranking member, Senator ENZI knows how to move bills through to become law, and Wyoming and the country are the better for it."

I agree completely, and I congratulate Senator ENZI on this honor.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC TIES BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, on March 15, we commemorated the 25th anniversary of the reestablishment of diplomatic ties between the United States and the Republic of Albania. Over 25 years ago, Albania emerged from nearly five decades of isolation and Communist rule to establish a multiparty democracy and forge closer ties with the free world. A quarter century later, Albania has made significant progress. Albania's economy grew and its people participated in elections judged as largely free and fair. Albanians enjoy freedom of religion, movement, unrestricted Internet access, and academic freedom. Today Albania is a NATO ally and a candidate for accession into the European Union, EU.

Since its emergence from isolation, Albania has been an active and contributing member of the international community. Over the course of two decades, Albania deployed more than 6,500 military personnel in support of operations lead by NATO, the EU, and the United Nations. In 2003, Albanian troops deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Between 2002 and 2014, Albania deployed over 3,000 personnel to support U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan. Albanian personnel continue to serve in Afghanistan.

Despite a quarter century of notable strides, pervasive corruption, high unemployment, organized crime, and underrepresentation of women in business and politics, among other issues, prevent Albania from realizing its full potential. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, I have consistently voted to support assistance to Albania to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, promote sustainable economic growth, and assist with its regional and international integration. As co-chair of the Senate Albania Caucus, I will continue to work with my colleagues on to strengthen the U.S.-Albania relationship and support Albania's ongoing efforts to become a prosperous, democratic state and pillar of stability in the Balkans.

HONORING OFFICER JACAI COLSON

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the tragic death of a Marylander. Officer Jacai Colson of the Prince George's Police Department was killed in the line of duty, on Sunday, March 13, 2016. Officer Colson was an upstanding law enforcement officer whose death shocked and saddened so many in Maryland and the national law enforcement community. America is the great Nation it is in no small part because of our respect for the rule of law. Officer Colson and his fellow

Prince George's County police officers put their lives on the line every day to uphold the rule of law.

Officer Colson was only 28 years of age. Today, March 17, 2016, would have been his 29th birthday.

On Sunday, March 13, 2016, the district III station in Prince George's County came under fire in what was a deliberate attack on law enforcement and on the rule of law itself. Officer Colson arrived on the scene. After finding himself in the middle of a firefight, Officer Colson had the composure to return fire. During the firefight, Officer Colson was shot and killed.

Every member of the U.S. Senate, every Marylander, and every American should be inspired by the life of Officer Jacai Colson. Officer Colson was an undercover narcotics agent. He had a dangerous job with zero margin for error. Officer Colson did not make errors. He was a 4-year veteran of the Prince George's Police Department. The commander of the Prince George's County Police Department's narcotic enforcement division said of Officer Colson: "Not only is he good at his job, he's that guy that you wanted on your team." The president of the Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 89, described Officer Colson as ". . . always the first person here in the morning, ready to work and put in a full day's work."

Officer Colson was a native of Boothwyn, PA. He came from a law enforcement family. His grandfather, Sergeant James G. Colson, Jr., retired from the Delaware County, PA, police department after more than 40 years of service. Officer Colson was the quarterback of his high school football team. He attended Randolph Macon University, where he also played football. He sang in the Ujima Gospel Choir and worked in the admissions office and in the marketing and communications department. Officer Colson gave of himself to improve his community while he was in college. He was a member of Brothers 4 Change, a student organization devoted to community service, and he also volunteered with Habitat for Humanity.

I am thankful to the Colson family for sharing such a promising young man with the people of Prince George's County. The pain they are going through right now is a pain no family should have to endure. Most tragically, they are not alone. So far in 2016, 23 law enforcement officers have died in the line of duty. In February, two of Officer Colson's Maryland colleagues from the Harford County Sheriff's office, Senior Deputy Mark Logsdon and Senior Deputy Patrick Dailey were killed responding to a call.

The loss of Officer Colson represents the loss of one of the best and brightest among us. He could have done anything with his life, and he chose to protect his fellow Americans. I am thankful that Officer Colson was able to enrich and save the lives of so many people during his life. On behalf of the people of Maryland and my fellow U.S. Senators, I offer my deepest condolences to

the family and friends of Officer Colson. I hope they are able to find solace in the fact that Jacai Colson was a true hero.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH 2016

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to join the American people in celebrating Women's History Month. It is clear that 1 month is hardly enough time to recognize all that women have done, what they are doing, and what they have yet to accomplish. Despite the persistence of dogmatic opposition, women have played a major role in advancing every society on earth.

I am a proud husband, father, and grandfather. In my time representing the people of Maryland, in the U.S. Senate, I have traversed the State many times. As a member and now ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I have had the chance to travel and meet with people from very diverse backgrounds.

At home and abroad, I have found it difficult and often imprudent to make generalizations with regard to policy. One common truth, however, that easily crosses national borders, ethnic lines, political divides, and religious devotions is this: the way a nation treats its women is very much a barometer as to how well that nation is doing.

And so this March we will celebrate women on the forefront of industry and innovation, science and social justice, policy and patriotism, and so much more. We must also remember that Women's History Month is not just about celebrations. Women's History Month should be a time when all Americans come together for a frank conversation about the well-being of women at home and abroad. That conversation must lead to concrete action because, if we want to improve any aspect of our society, starting with empowering and lifting up women is an investment that will return the greatest dividends.

Throughout American history, we have made progress in so many arenas because women had the bravery to break the proverbial glass ceiling. One such woman who I think deserves accolades during this Women's History Month, and every month for that matter, is a Member of this very body. This Congress boasts the most female representatives in history. I suspect that number would be larger if we gave the people of Washington, DC, full statehood and a voting Senator, but I will discuss that another time.

The record number of women in Congress is not an accident; it took hard work and grit. The living embodiment of that grit and know-how is the senior Senator from Maryland, my colleague Senator MIKULSKI. There is a wonderful sense of symmetry in the fact that in 1981, then-Congresswoman MIKULSKI co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution proclaiming a Women's History Week, and today she is being celebrated as a role model during Women's History Month.

Senator BARB has been more than a dedicated champion for the State of Maryland. She has fought tirelessly for the welfare of all Americans across the country. In the Halls of the Senate, she opened doors that had previously been closed to women. Sometimes she used gentle politicking, and sometimes she knocked the doors off the hinges. No matter how she did it, Senator BARB refused to accept second-class treatment because of her gender and fought to be recognized as an equal. To take that one step further, Senator BARB refused to let other women be treated like second-class citizens by the rule of law or antiquated social norms. I don't have the time to list all that she has done for Marylanders and working families across the country in her long and distinguished career, but I will share a list of hard-fought firsts: first Democratic woman elected to the U.S. Senate in her own right; first Democratic woman to serve in both Houses of Congress; first woman to be elected to statewide office in Maryland; first Democratic woman Senator elected to a leadership position; first Democratic woman to serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee; first woman to chair an Appropriations Subcommittee—the Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee; first woman to serve on the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee; first woman to serve on the Senate Small Business Committee; first woman to serve on the House Interstate & Foreign Commerce, now known as the Energy & Commerce Committee—first woman on the Health Subcommittee; most senior woman in the Senate on January 3, 1997; longest serving woman Senator in U.S. history on January 5, 2011; and longest serving woman in Congress in U.S. history on March 17, 2012.

Senator BARB will be leaving the Senate when her term ends next January. That does not mean that she will stop doing what she does best, fighting for what is right. Generations of young women who choose to participate in public life or who dream of joining the U.S. Senate have benefited from Senator BARB's trailblazing legacy.

As we begin to fathom life in the U.S. Senate without Senator BARB, we should take a minute to analyze the current state of politics and policy as it relates to women in America.

Regardless of any Member's political support of anyone running to replace President Obama, it is worth noting that there is a chance that a woman, a former U.S. Senator, a former Secretary of State, and Former First Lady could potentially be the next President of the United States.

The 2016 election should serve as a chance to audit how our political system is working on behalf of women, including in terms of health care.

The Affordable Care Act, ACA, has played a role in creating greater gender equality in this country. Under the ACA, being a woman is no longer a "preexisting condition." What does that mean? It means insurance companies can no longer force women to pay more based on their gender.

The ACA also provides more preventive services for women at no cost. Lifesaving preventive services like mammograms, cervical cancer screenings, and prenatal care are now covered at no additional cost for roughly 48.5 million American women with private insurance. Access to these services means that fewer women will be sidelined from the job market, unable to support families because of preventable illnesses. There is no question that we are making progress in women's health care, in terms of cost, equity, and in providing much-needed services.

We have further to go. Gender-based disparities in medical research still remain. Some medical trials today do not consider the impact of gender in their research, and diseases like heart disease, which is the leading cause of death for American women, are often misdiagnosed or overlooked.

That is why I have continuously fought for robust funding for the National Institutes of Health, NIH, which pioneers much of our Nation's groundbreaking medical research and clinical trials. I was very encouraged to see the NIH receive a \$2 billion increase in the fiscal year 2016 Omnibus spending bill—thanks in large part to Senator MIKULSKI. That is the largest increase NIH has received since 2003. By ensuring that NIH has all of the tools it needs to continue such urgent work, we can address persistent disparities and continue to build on the gains in our health care system made under the ACA. One thing is certainly clear: we only stand to gain from increased resources for our medical community to improve the health of women.

Improving health care is only one part of the equation involved in empowering and uplifting women in the United States.

I have previously spoken about the need to close the gender pay gap, the need to pass meaningful legislation to reduce the number of women killed by guns during instances of domestic violence, and the need to ensure women can continue to make choices concerning their own reproductive health. All of these are critically important to the well-being of women in America.

America was built on the promise of equal rights. Our history is defined by groups struggling to achieve full equality under the law. I think many Americans would be shocked to find out that the Constitution still lacks a provision ensuring gender equality. Think about that: women still lack the same constitutional protections as men. I think this is wrong and have introduced legislation to remove the deadline for States to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, which 35 States have ratified already—just three more to go.

The Equal Rights Amendment is slightly longer than two tweets, but

would finally give women full and equal protection under the Constitution. It reads as follows:

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

It is that simple. When Congress passed the ERA in 1972, it provided that the measure had to be ratified by three-fourths of the States, 38 States, within 7 years. This deadline was later extended to 10 years by a joint resolution enacted by Congress, but ultimately only 35 out of 38 States had ratified the ERA when the deadline expired in 1982. To put that in context, in 1992, the 27th Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting immediate Congressional pay raises was ratified after 203 years.

Article V of the Constitution contains no time limits for ratification of constitutional amendments, and the ERA time limit was contained in a joint resolution, not the actual text of the amendment. The Senate could pass my legislation removing the 10-year deadline right now. I hope that the majority leader will bring this legislation up for a vote because American women deserve to know that their most fundamental rights are explicitly protected by our Nation's most venerated document.

I would like to take a moment to discuss some issues that apply more to women outside of the United States but still affect every American.

I serve as the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In that position, I have seen firsthand how the relatively small amount of money allocated for foreign assistance saves both lives and American tax dollars over time. At less than 1 percent of the Federal budget, foreign assistance helps us rely less on costly military operations and prevent international catastrophes before they happen.

As I previously stated, the way a nation treats its women is very much a barometer as to how well that nation is doing. And just as in the United States, giving women outside United States the tools they need to succeed uplifts families, communities and nations. The millennium development goals, MDGs, were some of the most aggressive and successful attempts to combat global poverty and improve the quality of life for millions of women and families in the developing world.

The millennium development goals, first established in 2000, brought together nations, businesses, international organizations, and foundations in a focused and coordinated effort to reduce poverty and disease by 2015. Over the last two decades, the number of people worldwide living in extreme poverty has been cut in half, from about one in every six people in 1990 to 836 million in 2015. We have made progress in global education, with a 20 percent increase in primary school enrollment in sub-Saharan Afri-

ca and a nearly 50 percent decrease in the number of out-of-school children of primary school age.

In terms of gender equality, we still have a long way to go, but today we can cheer the fact that women have gained more parliamentary representation in ninety percent of the countries of the world than twenty years ago. The rate of maternal mortality has declined by forty-five percent worldwide, including by sixty-four percent in Southern Asia and forty-nine percent in sub-Saharan Africa.

When it comes to combating HIV/AIDS, we have made truly incredible strides over the past fifteen years. New HIV infections dropped by forty percent between 2000 and 2013, and the number of people living with HIV that were receiving anti-retroviral therapy increased seventeenfold from 2003 to 2014.

Behind these impressive numbers are countless women who are alive and strengthening their families and communities because of the millennium development goals, but there are still many areas where we need to make more progress.

In September 2015, more than 150 world leaders gathered at the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 sustainable development goals, SDGs. The SDGs aim to build on the successes of the millennium development goals and catalyze further progress.

One area where there is still much work to be done concerns child marriages. I am pleased the sustainable development goal 5 includes a target to eliminate child, early and forced marriages.

According to the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, each year, 14.2 million girls are married before their 18th birthday. Some of these girls are as young as 9 years old. Childhood marriage robs girls of their adolescence, denies them an education, greatly increases the risk of maternal mortality, and decreases their chance of becoming economically independent. Pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death for young girls in low- to middle-income countries. And children of young mothers have higher rates of infant mortality and malnutrition compared to children of mothers older than 18.

Terrorist groups often use forced marriages to sustain their efforts. Last April, for instance, Boko Haram kidnapped over 250 girls in Nigeria. Some of those girls were later forced to marry their kidnappers. The so-called Islamic State is also notorious for forcing local women and girls to marry its fighters. Forced marriage is deplorable for many reasons, not the least of which is that it is used as a weapon of war.

The women and girls being forced into these marriages are the very same women and girls who could be leaders, business owners, teachers, and doctors if given the chance. It is in the best in-

terest of these girls and of the United States that the international community speak with a united voice against this practice. As ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I invite all members of Congress to work together to find a way to address this pressing human rights issue.

I am an original co-sponsor of S. Res. 97, a bipartisan resolution supporting the goals of International Women's Day. After seeing the impacts that the MDGs have had on vulnerable populations around the world, I have no doubt that the goals contained in this resolution can be accomplished if the United States is willing to take the lead in organizing the international community.

I have mentioned only a small portion of legislative priorities the Senate could act on right now.

As we move through Women's History Month, let us remember that strong and empowered women have gotten us to this point in history and will help lead us to a brighter future.

BLACK WOMEN'S HISTORY WEEK

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I wish to request that, for the second year in a row, the U.S. Government officially recognize the last week in March as Black Women's History Week. During the week of March 28, 2016, as part of Women's History Month and in honor of the second year of the United Nation's International Decade for People of African Descent, several leading social justice organizations will be holding their second annual week of events to honor Black women and recognize their current struggles in American society. This week will shed light on the reality that Black women confront many intersectional challenges in American society, yet their concerns are often pushed to the margins of public attention and intervention. This week marks the perfect occasion to attend to the often hidden experiences of Black women and to generate attention to address the challenges they face.

Black women have traditionally gone above and beyond the call of duty in their contributions to American society. Black women have been inspirational symbols of strength and perseverance through their high voter turnout and historic leadership of racial justice movements. Even in the face of grave oppression throughout our Nation's history, Black women have continued to stand strong and contribute to the well-being of their families, their communities, and our country as a whole; yet at the same time, Black women continue to face undue burdens and obstacles to their own well-being. Acknowledging both the centrality of Black women in our history and social fabric as well as the unique inequalities they face is critical in our efforts

to build a society that ensures equality and justice for all.

In conjunction with the congressional declaration, a coalition of organizations advocating for the well-being of women and communities of color will partner to elevate the stories, histories, and realities of Black women's lives, building off the momentum generated by Black Women's History Week in 2015. Our charge is to ensure that the lives of Black women and girls are not overlooked and that efforts to generate information about their well-being is widely shared across public agencies and partner institutions.

Thank you.

BLEEDING DISORDERS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, today is St. Patrick's Day. It is a great day for those of us in this country whose ancestors came here to find a better life. And today, like many of us here, I got up and put on a green tie, but I switched it out for this one, a red one, to highlight support for those who suffer from serious conditions that many Americans don't speak much about or know much about.

This March is the first Bleeding Disorders Awareness Month. It also marks the 30th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan's one-time declaration of March as Hemophilia Awareness Month.

Tens of thousands of Americans have been diagnosed with bleeding disorders, including more than 100 Alaskan families. These families are spread all across my State, in Anchorage and Fairbanks, but also in rural communities like Chevak, Elim, Tuntutuliak, Kodiak, and Klawock. These Alaskans face serious health challenges with strength and grace and form a vibrant tight-knit community, and I want to thank those communities for supporting their fellow Alaskans.

Hemophilia is the most expensive chronic condition to treat. There are Alaskan children whose daily dose of medication exceeds \$1,800 per day. The good news is there is treatment that continues to improve.

I want to highlight the work done by the Alaska Hemophilia Association, a chapter of the National Hemophilia Foundation, which provides services and support for the Alaskan bleeding disorder community. They work to provide access to care and insurance and support our youth by hosting an annual summer camp for Alaskan children with bleeding disorders and their siblings. Camp Frozen Chosen allows these youth to interact with others with similar bleeding disorders. They are also able to learn to manage and take ownership of their condition and their lives, enabling them to be leaders of their generation.

The Alaska Hemophilia Association and the Alaska bleeding disorder community are the epitome of Alaskan grit and determination and are part of what makes Alaska such a wonderful place.

I would ask that we think of those this month who are suffering from

these disorders and that we continue to work together to find solutions and to offer support.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING TAMARA D. GRIGSBY

• Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life and legacy of Tamara D. Grigsby, whose untimely passing at the age of 41 has left Wisconsin without one of its greatest champions for equality and justice. Tamara committed her life to public service and making a difference in the lives of others. She was known for her honesty, dedication, and ability to see beyond partisan posturing to become a voice for those too often forgotten.

Growing up in Madison, WI, Tamara's path in life was shaped by her experiences confronting economic disparity and racial bias as a student in what is considered Wisconsin's most liberal city. When asked about the apparent dichotomy of this circumstance, she simply responded: "I'm a liberal. But liberal doesn't mean enlightened, and it doesn't mean informed." That statement embodies the essence of who Tamara was.

After earning a bachelor's degree at Howard University and a master's degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Tamara put her energy and skills to work as a social worker in the Milwaukee office of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. Upon seeing the impact she could have on individual lives, she became convinced of the need for effective advocacy on a larger scale.

In 2004, she successfully ran for the Wisconsin Legislature. Her drive and passion to change the world around her led to her success in a three-way primary and an unopposed general election to represent the 18th Assembly District in Milwaukee. During her tenure in the assembly, Tamara was a strong advocate for disadvantaged families and at-risk children, who were too often overlooked and marginalized.

Tamara quickly gained the respect of her colleagues as a passionate, strong voice for equity, fairness, and the expansion of opportunity. She immersed herself in the legislative process as a member of the joint finance committee and as chair of the assembly committee on children and families. She was an outspoken and effective advocate on critical issues such as access to scientifically based sex education and birth control, expansion of transitional jobs to connect unemployed individuals with work, examination of the State's disproportionate Black incarceration rate, and the collection of racial data in police traffic stops. She stood fast against opposition to low-income tax credits and quality health care for low-income Wisconsin residents.

Although an unexpected illness ended her 8 years as a State representative in 2012, her public service continued. She worked in the Milwaukee Public School system and was tapped to lead

Dane County's Department of Equity and Inclusion. It is in this role that Tamara's life came full circle. She was once again in Madison challenging the status quo on the issues that inspired her to become a fierce advocate for the poor and underrepresented.

Although Tamara's time with us was too short, she leaves behind a legacy for future leaders to emulate. She will always be remembered for having the courage to speak for those who didn't have a voice.●

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE ELLEN M. HELLER

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to honor the career of Judge Ellen M. Heller. Judge Heller has served the people of Baltimore and Maryland in several capacities for many decades. She is well known and well respected in the legal and nonprofit and communities across our State. In 2010, Judge Heller brought her considerable talents to the Weinberg Foundation, one of Baltimore's most effective nonprofit organizations. After 6 years, Judge Heller will be concluding her role as chair of the board on March 1, 2016, and she will come to the end of her current term as a trustee of the Weinberg Foundation on May 16, 2016.

Judge Heller has helped change lives while she has served at the Weinberg Foundation. Her commitment to service and her steadfastness have made her an incredibly effective chairwoman. For my colleagues who may be unfamiliar with the Weinberg Foundation, the organization does incredible work on behalf of low-income and vulnerable people from Maryland to Hawaii and from the former Soviet Union to Israel and beyond. The responsibility of chairing the board at the Weinberg Foundation is significant; we are fortunate Judge Heller's personal and professional experiences helped make her uniquely suited for the job.

Judge Heller is no stranger to hard work. She graduated from the Johns Hopkins University, cum laude. She also graduated from my alma mater, the University of Maryland School of Law, cum laude. She earned both degrees while raising two sons. Judge Heller's accomplished legal career began as an assistant attorney general. She soon became an associate judge in the Baltimore City Circuit Court, the eighth judicial circuit, and would spend 6 years as the judge in charge of the civil docket.

In 1999, Judge Heller became the first woman to serve as a circuit administrative judge on the eighth circuit. She championed numerous reforms, including the practice of alternative dispute resolution, ADR, in circuit court cases and the introduction of court-ordered mediation in certain civil cases. She also directed the establishment of a new pretrial discovery process, including the appointment of two felony discovery judges. Her dedication not only

to justice as a concept, but to improving the process by which justice is administered, would serve her well at the Weinberg Foundation.

Judges are the public face of the rule of law. I am thankful that so many people will associate justice with such a capable and revered judge. In 2003, Judge Heller retired from the bench and began to lend more of her time and talent to various worthy causes around Maryland and around the world. For instance, Judge Heller served as president of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, gaining experience in international aid missions. In her long and illustrious career, Judge Heller has worked with many other distinguished groups: the Maryland School for the Blind, the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene & Public Health, the Task Force on Women in Prison, Girl Scouts of Central Maryland, the Greater Baltimore Medical Center, the Public Trust and Confidence Implementation Committee, the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, and the World Jewish Restitution Organization. I have omitted many more organizations, but the underlying point here is that Judge Heller brought a wealth of experience and talent to the Weinberg Foundation.

The Weinberg Foundation has a long track record of tackling issues head on. The foundation has been a national leader on addressing the basic human needs of healthcare, housing, economic stability, and food security. The Weinberg Foundation has also established itself as an effective advocate for people living with disabilities, the elderly, and our veterans.

Judge Heller has helped the Weinberg Foundation accomplish extraordinary feats during her time on the board. She oversaw the Baltimore Library Project which seeks to design, build, equip, and staff new or renovated libraries in selected schools where existing public funds can be leveraged. The Weinberg Foundation, with the help of 40 partners, will create as many as 24 of these inspirational spaces. The Weinberg Foundation has committed a total of \$10 million for what is expected to be a legacy project.

Judge Heller doubled the amount of funding provided under the employee giving program. The Weinberg Foundation's employee giving program awards grants to their deeply committed staff to fund direct outreach programs.

Judge Heller and the Weinberg Foundation have done immeasurable good for people across the State of Maryland and around the world. As Judge Heller prepares to step down from the foundation, I would like to thank her for her dedication to lifting up all people. I would also like to thank her husband, Shale D. Stiller, and the rest of her loving family for sharing such an incredible woman with humanity. Judge Heller has placed the Weinberg Foundation on solid footing to continue to carry out its important missions. I

know I join my colleagues in congratulating Judge Heller on everything she has accomplished and wishing her all the best in her future endeavors.●

RECOGNIZING THE EIGHTH GRADE CLASS AT BIG TIMBER GRADE SCHOOL

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the eighth grade class at Big Timber Grade School. The class recently took over the writing for the Big Timber Pioneer Newspaper.

The Big Timber Pioneer participated in Newspapers in Education Week, and the lucky new young writers were the eighth graders of the Big Timber Grade School. This very special edition of the newspaper was compiled of stories written by the individuals of the class. There are 38 students in the class and they all wrote an article.

Big Timber is located in southern Montana. It is a small town of roughly 1,600 people. I am sure this was a huge honor for the eighth grade class, their parents, and the whole town.

Thank you to Lindsey Kroskob, the managing editor of the Big Timber Pioneer, for making this a goal of hers since 2015 and for making it happen this year. It is people like you that can help shape the minds of our young Montanans to realize that anything is possible.

Congratulations to the eighth grade class for getting the opportunity to write for the newspaper. I look forward to reading your very special edition and learning about the students of Big Timber Grade School. Maybe I will see your names someday in national publications across our country.●

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT LOUGH

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Robert Lough for his tireless effort in helping Nevada's brave servicemembers after they have returned home from the battlefield. Mr. Lough has been a volunteer with the Henderson Municipal Court's Veterans Treatment Court program since its opening in 2011, going above and beyond to help fellow veterans in need.

The Henderson Municipal Court's Veterans Treatment Court program is an invaluable resource to the southern Nevada community, providing our veterans with vital services that range from job placement to suicide prevention. This program assists our nation's servicemembers as they return home and readjust to life in their communities. The court program includes representatives from the legal system and volunteers who work to rehabilitate veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or drug or alcohol issues. Although there is no way to adequately thank the men and women who lay down their lives for our freedoms, the Henderson Municipal Court's Veterans Treatment Court program acts as a one-stop solution for veterans who find themselves in a posi-

tion of need. The State of Nevada is fortunate to have someone like Mr. Lough, who demonstrates unwavering loyalty to Nevada veterans, working in support of this important program.

Mr. Lough, a veteran himself, served in the U.S. Navy from 1967 to 1973. No words can properly thank him for his service to our country, but I offer my deepest gratitude for his sacrifices in defending our freedoms. In addition, he is a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America in Henderson and Boulder City Chapter 1076. In February, Mr. Lough was recognized as Veteran of the Month by Governor Brian Sandoval for his efforts in the Henderson Municipal Court's Veterans Treatment Court program, an accolade that is well deserved. Mr. Lough is truly a role model to all not only for his service to our country, but also for his ambitions in caring for our Nation's heroes. For the last 5 years, Mr. Lough has served as a mentor to struggling veterans who have lost their way. His charisma, caring character, and dedication to helping others are truly admirable.

As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I know the struggles that our veterans face after returning to civilian life after service. Congress has a responsibility to honor these brave individuals and ensure they receive the quality care they have earned and deserve. I remain committed to upholding this promise for our veterans and servicemembers in Nevada and throughout the Nation. I am grateful to have someone like Mr. Lough working as an ally to ensure the needs of our veterans are being met.

Today I ask my colleagues and all Nevadans to join me in recognizing Mr. Lough for his work at the Henderson Municipal Court's Veterans Treatment Court, a program with a mission that is both noble and necessary. I am honored to acknowledge Mr. Lough for his efforts, and I wish him the best of luck in all of his future endeavors.●

RECOGNIZING SANFORD CENTER GERIATRIC SPECIALTY CLINIC

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the opening of the Sanford Center Geriatric Specialty Clinic, the first of its kind in the Silver State. This facility's innovative and unique health care offerings will contribute greatly to Nevadans' quality of life and help improve the quality of medical care offered to seniors across northern Nevada.

The geriatric specialty clinic offers screenings and assessments on the University of Nevada, Reno campus inside the Center for Molecular Medicine. The facility provides geriatric assessment and care management to our elderly population, addressing a wide range of medical concerns, including arthritis, dementia, depression, high blood pressure, frailty, and more. The clinic takes on a comprehensive approach, allowing social workers, primary care physicians, nurses, and psychologists

to collaborate in order to make a comprehensive patient assessment. Effective communication within the facility connects both the physical and mental health of patients, creating a better understanding of the patient's needs. The facility also supports patients with multiple chronic conditions, coordinating home and clinical services. In addition, the Sanford Center for Aging is spearheading the start of a telemedicine program to support our rural communities. Those leading the way at this center stand as role models to our local community, demonstrating a genuine concern in improving the health and well-being of Nevadans. The State of Nevada is fortunate to have a facility like this available to our growing senior population.

The Silver State has one of the fastest growing elderly populations in the country, which is why I am pleased to see the clinic is dedicated to caring for Nevada's seniors throughout the aging process. As a member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, I am committed to ensuring the needs of this community are met. The opening of the Sanford Center Geriatric Specialty Clinic is another step in providing Nevada's seniors with the support they need and deserve. The groundbreaking care that this facility will provide is invaluable to northern Nevada.

Those serving at this clinic have gone above and beyond to address the needs of our senior community. Today I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the opening of the Sanford Center Geriatric Specialty Clinic.●

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN S. WALDEN

● Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to LTC John Walden for his 29 years of exemplary dedication to duty while serving as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve. I am grateful that he will continue to serve his family and the local community of Oxford after concluding his career with the Army. We wish him well in his retirement.

A native of Georgia, LTC John Walden was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Corps from Georgia Military College in 1988. He completed a bachelor of science in criminal justice from Georgia State University in 1995 and his masters of arts in leadership from Luther Rice University in 2013. His military education includes the Military Intelligence Officer Basic Course; Military Intelligence Officer Advance Course; Psychological Operations Officer Course; Counterintelligence Officer Course; Combined Arms Exercise; Command and General Staff College, Intermediate Level Education; and airborne school.

As an Army Reserve officer, Lieutenant Colonel Walden has served with military intelligence, psychological operations, and special operations units at the platoon, detachment, company,

battalion, group, and major command level. Assignments have included: tactical intelligence officer, counterintelligence officer, HUMINT team chief, counter terrorism analyst, Iraq Threat Finance Cell OIC, deputy chief, counter terrorism analyst, intelligence training officer, and deputy commander.

As with all our citizen soldiers, it is important that we acknowledge his service in the civilian sector. Lieutenant Colonel Walden has extensive law enforcement experience, serving as both a deputy sheriff in the Rockdale County sheriff's office and as a detective and special investigator with the Valdosta Police Department. As an ordained minister, he was able to continue serving the community and provide mentorship to those in need. He has also worked at Ford Motor Company and the Maxell Corporation. It is because of all of their cooperation and understanding during his many tours of duty that he was able to make such a positive impact on the Army Reserve.

Considering his many positions and service in both the Army and civilian sector, we must acknowledge the tireless support of John's wife, Shelley, and his children, Johnathon, Lucy, and Samuel. I thank them for their sacrifices and wish them all the best for continued success in the future.

Throughout his 29-year career, LTC John Walden has made positive impacts on the careers and lives of his soldiers, peers, and superiors. I am grateful for his service to our country, his community, and that he chose to serve as an Army leader. I join my colleagues today in honoring his dedication to the United States of America.●

REMEMBERING GARY BRAASCH

● Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, Gary Braasch, a gifted photographer of the natural world, died on March 7, 2016. Gary dedicated his career to capturing visually striking portrayals of the devastating effects of climate change. His work has been published in *Time*, *LIFE*, the *New York Times*, *National Geographic*, and *Discover* and featured in the Boston Museum of Science, the Chicago Field Museum, and the California Academy of Sciences. Some of Gary's most well-known photos depict the retreat of glaciers. The juxtaposition of old photos from the turn of the 20th century with Gary's modern photos dramatically demonstrated large amounts of glacial melting. Some of these photos were featured in Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth."

Gary also documented the environmental effects of the fossil fuel industry. He famously captured the first images of Shell's ill-fated Kulluk oil rig, as it prepared to drill an exploratory oil well in the Arctic Ocean. The Kulluk is now regarded as a symbol of the recklessness and dangers of Arctic oil drilling and has become a powerful image of our need to transition to low-carbon, renewable energy.

Gary's photographs were also influential in the scientific and policy com-

munities. He worked with scientists to determine how to use photography to accurately portray the science of climate change. He also visited Capitol Hill on numerous occasions, providing visual evidence of our changing environment to me and my colleagues in the House and Senate. His 2007 book "Earth Under Fire" graced my office for many years.

Gary died capturing breathtaking photos on Australia's Great Barrier Reef, a region particular vulnerable to the effects of climate change. His images resonated in a way words and data could never do alone and will stand on as a key component of our planet's record of climate change. Gary may no longer be with us but his work will continue to inspire the next generation of photographers and all of us who want to protect our planet and its people.●

REMEMBERING BARRY LYNN COATES

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, today I wish to honor one of South Carolina's veterans, Barry Lynn Coates. Mr. Coates recently passed away at the age of 46 on January 23, 2016, after a long battle with cancer. He became the voice for veterans across the nation as he fought hard to improve the Veterans Affairs medical system. He fought not for himself, but to improve the lives of all veterans suffering from delays in their medical care.

About a year after first complaining to his doctors of pain, he was finally able to get a colonoscopy. Doctors discovered a cancerous tumor the size of a baseball. At that point he had stage 4 cancer, and it was only a matter of time before he was overtaken by the illness. He suffered for months. A simple medical procedure might have saved his life, but he found himself on a growing list of veterans waiting for appointments and procedures. Barry Lynn Coates was courageous in his fight against cancer and in his fight for other veterans to receive the care they deserve.

Lynn is survived by his wife, their five children, five grandchildren, and a community that loved his bubbly personality and passion for pawn shops and for fixing things. He loved the beach, nature, his family above everything, and he lived for the service of his country.

It is with pride and honor we recognize Barry Lynn Coates and his family today and add their legacy to our March 17, 2016, CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. We will never forget his sacrifice.●

TRIBUTE TO BETSY FLEMING

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, today I wish to honor one of South Carolina's great college presidents, Ms. Betsy Fleming. Ms. Fleming is the sitting president for Converse College. Converse College is a private master's university in Spartanburg, SC, providing a

distinctive undergraduate liberal arts education for women and innovative programs for co-ed graduate study. President Fleming has decided to step down at the end of the semester after 11 years of leadership at the College.

Through her leadership, Converse College has seen unprecedented growth and extraordinary success. Ms. Fleming has used her passion for the arts to make great strides at Converse, in Spartanburg and statewide. She is leaving quite a legacy in the endowment growth of the school, her decision to cut tuition by 43 percent, and the restructuring of the college to make it more financially sound.

President Fleming's love and understanding of the arts community has also brought value to the students and faculty at Converse College, and she has personified what it means to lead. Her vigorous involvement in the college as well as at the local and State level are second to none, and she truly represents what it means to be an outstanding leader, president, and trailblazer.

It is with pride and honor we recognize Ms. Betsy Fleming and her outstanding achievements today and add her legacy to our March 17, 2016, CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. We will always remember her admiration for the arts, for Spartanburg, and above all for Converse College.●

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF THE JENKINS INSTITUTE

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I would like to honor and congratulate the Daniel Joseph Jenkins Institute for Children in North Charleston on their 125th anniversary.

In 1891, the Jenkins Institute was founded as Jenkins Orphanage. In 1892, the institute was chartered by the State of South Carolina with the mission of providing a loving and secure home to many children, specifically orphans, in the community.

The Jenkins Institute is an example of an organization that remains committed to the well-being of our community. For 125 years, they have opened their door to orphan children, regardless of their race or socioeconomic backgrounds.

Today the institute continues to welcome those in need of a safe place to call home. They have shown tremendous faith through works of charity, and their honorable legacy will forever be appreciated. I acknowledge with pleasure the Jenkins Institute's influence in North Charleston and therefore recognize their service, dedication, and 125 years rooted in love and faith. Because of places like the Daniel Joseph Jenkins Institute, our children will have a brighter future ahead of them.●

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 and a treaty which were referred to the appropriate committees.

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

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 9:57 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 4416. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 4434. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 4596. An act to ensure that small business providers of broadband Internet access service can devote resources to broadband deployment rather than compliance with cumbersome regulatory requirements.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 10:59 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

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 enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

At 2:16 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House agrees to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1831) to establish the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 4416. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 4434. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 4596. An act to ensure that small business providers of broadband Internet access service can devote resources to broadband deployment rather than compliance with cumbersome regulatory requirements; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, March 17, 2016, she had presented to the President of the

United States the following enrolled bill:

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.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

Report to accompany S. 1177, An original bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to ensure that every child achieves (Rept. No. 114-231).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. MCCAIN for the Committee on Armed Services.

*Jennifer M. O'Connor, of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the Department of Defense.

*Todd A. Weiler, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

*Army nomination of Gen. Joseph L. Votel, to be General.

*Army nomination of Lt. Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, to be General.

Army nominations beginning with Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Sargent and ending with Brig. Gen. Robert D. Tenhet, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Army nominations beginning with Col. Jeffrey J. Johnson and ending with Col. Ronald T. Stephens, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Army nominations beginning with Col. Dennis P. LeMaster and ending with Col. Michael J. Talley, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Michael K. Nagata, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, to be Lieutenant General.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Col. Bradley S. James and ending with Col. Kurt W. Stein, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 25, 2016.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Austin S. Miller, to be Lieutenant General.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed Services I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORDS on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

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

Air Force nominations beginning with James B. Anderson and ending with Hyral B. Walker, Jr., which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Air Force nominations beginning with Jeremy V. Bastian and ending with Christopher A. Watson, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Air Force nominations beginning with Christopher F. Abbott and ending with Devin Lee Zufelt, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Air Force nomination of Christopher T. Stein, to be Major.

Army nomination of Gregory L. Boylan, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Derek G. Bean, to be Colonel.

Army nominations beginning with Adrian R. Algarra and ending with Gregory B. Williams, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Army nominations beginning with Philip O. Adams and ending with Benjamin M. Wunderlich, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Army nominations beginning with Julia N. Alvarez and ending with April D. Williams, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Army nominations beginning with Wendy M. Adamian and ending with D012433, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Army nomination of Vernita M. Corbett, to be Major.

Army nominations beginning with Matthew H. Adams and ending with D012453, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Army nomination of William D. Rose, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Mark W. Manoso, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Eric F. Sabety, to be Colonel.

Army nominations beginning with Andrew R. Mciver and ending with Gerard C. Philip, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 3, 2016.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Aaron R. Craig and ending with Christopher T. Steinhilber, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 28, 2016.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Jimmy W. Darsey and ending with Gerald E. Pirk, Jr., which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 28, 2016.

Navy nominations beginning with Matthew T. Allen and ending with Joshua F. Zimmer, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Navy nominations beginning with Richard W. Lang and ending with Bradley E. Shemluck, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 22, 2016.

Navy nomination of Michael L. Hipp, to be Captain.

Navy nomination of Ronald H. Nellen, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nomination of Ashley A. Hockycko, to be Lieutenant Commander.

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

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

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 Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 2700. A bill to update the authorizing provisions relating to the workforces of the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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

S. 2701. A bill to require consideration of the impact on beneficiary access to care and to enhance due process protections in procedures for suspending payments to Medicaid providers; to the Committee on Finance.

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

S. 2702. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow individuals with disabilities to save additional amounts in their ABLE accounts above the current annual maximum contribution if they work and earn income; to the Committee on Finance.

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

S. 2703. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow rollovers between 529 programs and ABLE accounts; to the Committee on Finance.

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

S. 2704. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the age requirement with respect to eligibility for qualified ABLE programs; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. CARPER, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 2705. A bill to authorize Federal agencies to establish prize competitions for innovation or adaptation management development relating to coral reef ecosystems and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 2706. A bill to promote innovative approaches to outdoor recreation on Federal land and to open up opportunities for collaboration with non-Federal partners, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. SCOTT (for himself and Mr. ALEXANDER):

S. 2707. A bill to require the Secretary of Labor to nullify the proposed rule regarding defining and delimiting the exemptions for executive, administrative, professional, outside sales, and computer employees, to require the Secretary of Labor to conduct a full and complete economic analysis with improved economic data on small businesses, nonprofit employers, Medicare or Medicaid dependent health care providers, and small governmental jurisdictions, and all other employers, and minimize the impact on such employers, before promulgating any substantially similar rule, and to provide a rule of construction regarding the salary threshold exemption under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. COTTON:

S. 2708. A bill to provide for the admission to the United States of up to 10,000 Syrian religious minorities as refugees of special humanitarian concern in each of the fiscal years 2016 through 2020; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. MCCASKILL:

S. 2709. A bill to require the posting online of certain government contracts; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 2710. A bill to increase the participation of historically underrepresented demographic groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and industry; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MCCAIN:

S. 2711. A bill to expand opportunity for Native American children through additional options in education, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 2712. A bill to restore amounts improperly withheld for tax purposes from severance payments to individuals who retired or separated from service in the Armed Forces for combat-related injuries, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ALEXANDER:

S. 2713. A bill to provide for the implementation of a Precision Medicine Initiative; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. MCCASKILL:

S. 2714. A bill to vest responsibility for inspector general duties for the National Background Investigations Bureau of the Office of Personnel Management in the Inspector General of the Department of Defense; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mrs. MCCASKILL:

S. 2715. A bill to amend section 2302 of title 5, United States Code, to include the suspension or revocation of access to classified information as a personnel action, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 2716. A bill to update the oil and gas and mining industry guides of the Securities and Exchange Commission; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN):

S. 2717. A bill to improve the safety and address the deferred maintenance needs of Indian dams to prevent flooding on Indian reservations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. KAIN (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. PORTMAN, Mrs. CAPITO, and Ms. AYOTTE):

S. 2718. A bill to amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 to support innovative approaches to career and technical education and redesign the high school experience for students by providing students with equitable access to rigorous, engaging, and relevant real world education through partnerships with business and industry and higher education that prepare students to graduate from high school and enroll into postsecondary education without the need for remediation and with the ability to use knowledge to solve complex problems, think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and develop academic mindsets; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. DURBIN, and Ms. WARREN):

S. 2719. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to improve

the protections provided to members of the uniformed services and their families, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. SANDERS, and Ms. WARREN):

S. 2720. A bill to require the Securities and Exchange Commission to amend certain regulations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. MURPHY (for himself and Mr. SANDERS):

S. 2721. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to credit individuals serving as caregivers of dependent relatives with deemed wages for up to five years of such service; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. HEITKAMP (for herself and Mr. MORAN):

S. 2722. A bill to amend the Home Owners' Loan Act to allow Federal savings associations to elect to operate as national banks, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 2723. A bill to amend the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 to apply whistleblower protections available to certain executive branch employees to legislative branch employees, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. LEE, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. SASSE, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. INHOFE, and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2724. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, with respect to the judicial review of agency interpretations of statutory and regulatory provisions; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. AYOTTE (for herself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. KIRK, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. RISCH, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. PORTMAN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 2725. A bill to impose sanctions with respect to the ballistic missile program of Iran, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. KIRK (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. COATS, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. SASSE, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. MORAN, Mr. ISAKSON, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2726. A bill to hold Iran accountable for its state sponsorship of terrorism and other threatening activities and for its human rights abuses, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2727. A bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to allow preservation leasing as a form of compensatory mitigation for discharges of dredged or fill material affecting State or Indian land, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. SULLIVAN:

S. 2728. A bill to facilitate the import of marine mammal products into the United States by Alaska Natives; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 2729. A bill to require full spending of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, provide for expanded uses of the Fund, and prevent cargo diversion, and for other purposes; to

the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Ms. WARREN):

S. 2730. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, known as the "Ghost Army", collectively, in recognition of its unique and incredible service during World War II; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. MARKEY:

S. 2731. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to carry out a land exchange involving land within the boundary of the Cape Cod National Seashore, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2732. A bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to exempt Indian tribes from compensatory mitigation requirements in connection with certain discharges of dredged or fill material, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Mr. GARDNER, and Mr. LEE):

S. 2733. A bill to ensure that venue in patents cases is fair and proper, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MURPHY:

S. 2734. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the exclusion of gain or loss from the sale or exchange of certain brownfield sites from unrelated business taxable income, and to extend expensing of environmental remediation costs; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SCHUMER:

S. 2735. A bill to strengthen the enforcement of explosive materials prohibitions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. ROUNDS, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. MACHIN, Mr. DAINES, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BENNET, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. KING, and Mr. TESTER):

S. 2736. A bill to improve access to durable medical equipment for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

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

S. 2737. A bill to improve medical device innovation; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. GRASSLEY:

S. 2738. A bill to amend the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 to require the disclosure of political intelligence activities, to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide for restrictions on former officers, employees, and elected officials of the executive and legislative branches regarding political intelligence contacts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 2739. A bill to provide for equitable compensation to the Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation for the use of tribal land for the production of hydropower by the Grand Coulee Dam, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. COONS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BENNET, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. DONNELLY, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. PORTMAN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. CARPER, Mr. GARDNER, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. TOOMEY):

S. Res. 403. A resolution designating the week beginning April 24, 2016 as "National Industrial Assessment Center Week" in celebration of the 40th anniversary of Industrial Assessment Centers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

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

S. Res. 404. A resolution designating March 2016 as "National Middle Level Education Month"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CASEY:

S. Res. 405. A resolution designating Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as the site of the centennial commemoration of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, in coordination with Vision 2020; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. MIKULSKI (for herself, Ms. COLLINS, Mrs. MURRAY, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. AYOTTE, and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. Res. 406. A resolution recognizing the Girl Scouts of the United States of America on the 100th Anniversary of the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award in the Girl Scouts, which has stood for excellence and leadership for girls everywhere since 1916; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ENZI (for himself and Mr. BARRASSO):

S. Res. 407. A resolution congratulating the University of Wyoming men's Nordic ski team for winning the 38th annual United States Collegiate Ski and Snowboard Association national championship; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. SESSIONS (for himself and Mr. CARDIN):

S. Res. 408. A resolution designating April 2016 as "National Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia Awareness Month"; considered and agreed to.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. HEITKAMP, Ms. MIKULSKI, Ms. AYOTTE, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mrs. BOXER, Mrs. CAPITO, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. REED, Ms. WARREN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. FISCHER, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. CARPER, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. BROWN):

S. Res. 409. A resolution recognizing March 2016 as "National Women's History Month"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. MCCONNELL:

S. Con. Res. 34. A concurrent resolution providing for an adjournment of the House of Representatives; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 453

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 453, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide grants to States to streamline State requirements and procedures for veterans with military emergency medical training to become civilian emergency medical technicians.

S. 491

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from New York

(Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 491, a bill to lift the trade embargo on Cuba.

S. 774

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) were added as cosponsors of S. 774, a bill to amend the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council Act of 1978 to improve the examination of depository institutions, and for other purposes.

S. 1082

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1082, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, and for other purposes.

S. 1208

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1208, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to require gas pipeline facilities to accelerate the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of high-risk pipelines used in commerce, and for other purposes.

S. 1209

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1209, a bill to establish State revolving loan funds to repair or replace natural gas distribution pipelines.

S. 1333

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1333, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to exclude cannabidiol and cannabidiol-rich plants from the definition of marijuana, and for other purposes.

S. 1383

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1383, a bill to amend the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 to subject the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection to the regular appropriations process, and for other purposes.

S. 1631

At the request of Mrs. MCCASKILL, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1631, a bill to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify certain provisions relating to multiemployer pensions, and for other purposes.

S. 1890

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor 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. 2085

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE) were added as cosponsors of S. 2085, a bill to clarify that nonprofit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity may accept donated mortgage appraisals, and for other purposes.

S. 2102

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2102, a bill to amend the Clayton Act and the Federal Trade Commission Act to provide that the Federal Trade Commission shall exercise authority with respect to mergers only under the Clayton Act and only in the same procedural manner as the Attorney General exercises such authority.

S. 2125

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2125, a bill to make the Community Advantage Pilot Program of the Small Business Administration permanent, and for other purposes.

S. 2216

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) 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. 2377

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2377, a bill to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and protect and secure the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 2390

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2390, a bill to provide adequate protections for whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

S. 2437

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) 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. 2494

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2494, a bill 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.

S. 2502

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from South Da-

kota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2502, a bill to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to ensure that retirement investors receive advice in their best interests, and for other purposes.

S. 2505

At the request of Mr. KIRK, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2505, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that retirement investors receive advice in their best interests, and for other purposes.

S. 2531

At the request of Mr. NELSON, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2531, a bill to authorize State and local governments to divest from entities that engage in commerce-related or investment-related boycott, divestment, or sanctions activities targeting Israel, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. KIRK, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2531, supra.

S. 2603

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2603, a bill to deny corporate average fuel economy credits obtained through a violation of law, establish an Air Quality Restoration Trust Fund within the Department of the Treasury, and for other purposes.

S. 2613

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2613, a bill to reauthorize certain programs established by the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.

S. 2630

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) 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. 2632

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2632, a bill to promote freedom, human rights, and the rule of law as part of United States-Vietnam relations and for other purposes.

S. 2633

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2633, a bill to improve the ability of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide health care to veterans through non-Department health care providers, and for other purposes.

S. 2646

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr.

BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor 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. 2693

At the request of Mr. ALEXANDER, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2693, a bill to ensure the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission allocates its resources appropriately by prioritizing complaints of discrimination before implementing the proposed revision of the employer information report EEO-1, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 383

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 383, a resolution recognizing the importance of the United States-Israel economic relationship and encouraging new areas of cooperation.

S. RES. 391

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 391, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate to oppose the transfer of foreign enemy combatants from the detention facilities at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to the United States homeland.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 2706. A bill to promote innovative approaches to outdoor recreation on Federal land and to open up opportunities for collaboration with non-Federal partners, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, last summer, I set out on a tour of Oregon's Seven Wonders to hear from Oregonians in every corner of the State about how to improve access to outdoor recreation. Recreation is a big economic multiplier for my State, and Oregonians are the true experts on—outdoor recreation—it is in our DNA.

Oregon's recreation and tourism economy generates an estimated \$10 billion a year in direct economic impact for the state and supports more than 101,000 jobs—enough people essentially to fill every seat in Autzen and Reser stadiums, home to the University of Oregon Ducks and Oregon State Beavers. Recreation supports communities and businesses large and small throughout urban and rural Oregon and can have astounding benefits on veterans, youth, and seniors.

Not only do you have outfitters and the crafts people who produce recre-

ation products, like canoes, kayaks, bikes, and fishing poles, recreation supports the broader travel and tourism industry including equipment retailers and gear shops. But the benefit doesn't stop when the sun goes down. Then visitors go to the brewpubs and restaurants, and they stay overnight at the hotels and the motels. So what we need to do is ensure that recreation is a higher priority for the future so it can continue to boost economies large and small.

Yet on my tour of Oregon's Seven Wonders, I consistently heard one troubling theme that's yanking our recreation economy's potential back down to earth. Simply put, red tape is tying down the opportunities for Oregon recreation and tourism to lift off to even greater heights. Outfitters and guides must navigate confusing permit processes only to wait months or years for their permits to get approved, and outdoor enthusiasts searching for outdoor recreation opportunities often get lost in the paperwork before they ever hit the trails.

That is why today I am introducing the Recreation Not Red-Tape, RNR, Act to ensure that recreation is a priority for Federal agencies and to cut the bureaucratic red tape in the recreation permitting process to make accessing outdoor recreation opportunities easier and much more fun. I gathered input from Oregonians who enjoy public lands, entrepreneurs in the outdoor travel and tourism industry, and community leaders from Oregon and across the Nation. The bill focuses on making sure everyone has easier access to the outdoors, recognizing and building on recreation as an economic driver, and making the repair and management of our recreational public lands easier. Additionally, the bill supports improving access to outdoor recreation for veterans, seniors, and youth.

My friend and colleague, Representative EARL BLUMENAUER, is today introducing the House companion of the Recreation Not Red-Tape Act. The bill is supported by over 50 Oregon and national organizations, from American Alpine Club to Vet Voice.

By Mr. COTTON:

S. 2708. A bill to provide for the admission to the United States of up to 10,000 Syrian religious minorities as refugees of special humanitarian concern in each of the fiscal years 2016 through 2020; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, 6 months ago, a 12-year-old boy stood before a crowd in a Syrian village not far from Aleppo. This boy was Christian and standing above him were Islamic State terrorists holding knives. In the crowd was the boy's father, a Christian minister. Methodically, the terrorists began cutting off the young boy's fingers. Amidst his screams, they turned to the minister, his father. If he renounced his faith and in their terms returned to Islam, his son's suffering

would stop. In the end, however, these ISIS terrorists killed the boy, killed his father, and killed two other Christians solely over the faith they professed. They did so by crucifixion.

In the time of Christ, the cross was not just a means of execution but a brutal and public warning to all. Because of Christ's suffering, the cross was transformed into a revered symbol of His sacrifice and promise of salvation, but today it is clear ISIS seeks to turn the cross once again into a message of dread.

Eight other Christians in the village that day were also killed. They were executed by public beheading, but not before ISIS barbarians raped the two women among the victims and forced the crowd to witness the atrocity.

Today was the deadline set by law for Secretary of State Kerry to present Congress with an evaluation of the persecution of Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities in Syria and Iraq. I am heartened Secretary Kerry this morning took the needed step of declaring the systemic murder of religious minorities by ISIS what it plainly is: genocide.

The nature of these horrific crimes of ISIS has not been a secret. It is no secret that the story of the torture and death of that 12-year-old Syrian boy, his minister father, and 10 other Christians is repeated many times over in different villages, with different victims of different religions throughout the region. It is no secret that hundreds of thousands of religious minorities in Syria and Iraq have been driven by war and violence from homes and lands they have held for generations. It is no secret ISIS terrorists have destroyed Christian churches, desecrated holy ancient shrines, and dug up Christian graves and smashed their tombstones. It is no secret bishops, priests, and other clerical leaders are being abducted and murdered. It is no secret ISIS terrorists capture Yazidi women and girls and lock them into a life of sexual slavery and repeated rape. Many of these victims choose to take their own lives, seeing suicide as their only escape amidst hopelessness and unimaginable suffering. It is no secret that thousands of Christians and other religious minorities have been systematically raped and tortured, beheaded, crucified, burned alive, and buried in mass graves, if buried at all. It is no secret the word we should use to describe the whole of these atrocities—the word we must use—is “genocide.”

The plain reality is that the Islamic State is seeking to eradicate Christians, Yazidis, Sabeen-Mandean, Jews, and other religious groups it sees as apostates and infidels. This is part of its fanatical focus on establishing a caliphate first in the Middle East and eventually across the rest of the world.

Christians, Yazidis, and others who have managed to find refuge have seen ISIS's genocidal campaign firsthand. They can list name after name of missing family members—wives and daughters kidnapped into sexual slavery,

sons and brothers killed, and others spirited away to unknown fates. These victims know the truth of the genocide occurring in Syria and Iraq, and now that truth is recognized officially by the United States of America.

There are those who wavered on whether this was genocide. They feared that uttering this truth would compel U.S. action to stop the genocide. My answer is—and? A mortal enemy who wishes to commit mass terrorist atrocities against the United States is also systematically persecuting and exterminating Christians and other religious minorities. When will our national security interests ever overlap more perfectly with our moral sentiment than now? We can and we ought to stop ISIS dead, stop them before they kill more Americans, stop them before they eliminate Christian communities that have existed since the days of Christ himself.

Still others argue that while a genocide may be occurring, recognizing it may somehow play into ISIS's propaganda that it is fighting a righteous jihad against a supposed new Crusade. I never understood this argument. To stay silent in the face of ISIS's propaganda is to accommodate that propaganda. To cede any power to ISIS's narrative is to bend the light of truth to the hard darkness of a lie. Standing up for the practitioners of religions born in the Middle East and calling the region home since the beginning of recorded history is not a new Crusade. It is a defense of world order demonstrated through the periods of peaceful coexistence of the many religions in those ancient lands—an existence that today is threatened with extinction by ISIS's barbarism.

Today the United States rightly recognizes this genocide, but we must also take action to relieve it. ISIS is a threat to the United States, our allies, and to the stability of the whole Middle East. Destroying ISIS and stopping its malignant expansion is a core national security interest of the United States, but stopping ISIS and the depraved ideology that enables it is also a pursuit that aligns with our highest ideals and humanitarian principles.

I and many of my colleagues in the Senate have deep disagreements with the President's policy to defeat ISIS. For 2 years his policy of confusion, delay, and paralysis has failed to stop these terrorists. An entirely new approach that has the United States in the lead of a determined coalition is badly needed, but it is not only President Obama's strategic approach that is ill-considered. His policy on Syrian refugee resettlement is as well. Because the United States unwisely relies on the United Nations for all referrals of refugees seeking resettlement in the United States, Christians and other religious minorities fleeing persecution are the victims of unintentional discrimination when seeking asylum and protection in the United States.

Last year, of the 1,790 Syrian refugees resettled in the United States,

only 41 were religious minorities. Of that 41, 29 were Christian. That means that while 13 percent of Syria's prewar population consisted of religious minorities, only 2.3 percent of the refugees who make it to the United States are religious minorities. Without doubt, Syrians of all confessions are being victimized by this savage war and are facing unimaginable suffering, but only Christians and other religious minorities are the deliberate targets of systemic persecution and genocide. Their ancient communities are at risk of extermination. Their ancestral homes and religious sites are being erased from the Middle Eastern map. Christians and other minorities should not be shut out from the small number of refugees who find shelter in the United States. We ought to help ensure that these faith communities survive, but why are Christians underrepresented among the refugees? There are a number of factors. Perhaps chief among them is that the United States, for all intents and purposes, relies exclusively on the U.N. refugee agency to identify candidates for resettlement. According to the State Department, less than 1 percent of the thousands of Syrian refugees referred by the U.N. to the United States are religious minorities.

Let me stress that this underrepresentation is not the result of intentional discrimination. The U.N. does praiseworthy and hard work in relieving the suffering of refugees around the world and, as a result, improving the security and stability of nations in and near conflict and disaster zones, but it is well established that many religious minorities in Syria are very reluctant to register as refugees with the United Nations because they fear facing even more persecution. The U.N. itself has reported that minority communities "fear that registration might bring retribution from other refugees" in camps or other areas in which they sought safe haven. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has reported that Christians refrain from registering with the U.N. because they fear being marked for revenge by forces loyal to Bashar al-Assad should he remain in power in Syria.

Whether these fears are well-founded or not, the reality is, they exist and they deter Christians from seeking U.N. protection. While the U.N. has sought to educate minority populations on the safety of the registration system, the fact remains that only 1 percent of the millions of Syrian refugees who registered with the U.N. are non-Muslim.

The United States ought not to depend solely on the U.N. for refugee resettlement referrals. If we are to do our part in saving ancient faith communities from genocide, we must find alternate ways to identify persecuted people to whom we can grant safe haven.

Today I am introducing legislation to create that alternate way. The Reli-

gious Persecution Relief Act would grant religious minorities fleeing persecution from groups like ISIS and other groups in Syria priority status so they can apply directly to the U.S. resettlement program, without going through the U.N. first. It will set aside 10,000 resettlement slots annually that must be devoted to religious minorities.

The priority status, known as P-2 status, will allow religious minorities to skip the U.N. referral process, and it will fast track the process by which we confirm that they are in fact targets of persecution and genocide. To answer in advance a most urgent and understandable question, those who apply for P-2 status will be subject to the exact same security vetting process as all other refugee applicants. It is my strong position that the United States must work with known religious leaders in the region and pursue other proven vetting methods to ensure that those who enter this country are not threats to the security of the American people.

Extending a hand to help persecuted people in this manner is not a new idea. In 1989, the late Senator from New Jersey, Frank Lautenberg, crafted what has been called the Lautenberg amendment, which granted P-2 priority status to Soviet Jewry, Vietnamese nationals, and other religious minorities seeking refuge. In 2004, the late Senator from Pennsylvania, Arlen Specter, expanded the Lautenberg amendment to cover religious minorities fleeing oppression from the Ayatollahs in Iran. In 2007 the late Senator from Massachusetts, Ted Kennedy, passed a bill that granted priority status to certain Iraqi religious minority members.

The bill I am introducing today follows this bipartisan tradition of the Senate and our country. Among the first Americans were Pilgrims from religious persecution in the Old World. That is one reason we have a long tradition of defending religious minorities here and around the world.

In the coming weeks, I will discuss this bill with my fellow Senators. My hope is, it will pass and pass soon because each day will bring another Christian child who is tortured, another minister crucified, and another girl raped. Faith communities in the Middle East are slowly being strangled out of existence.

We are coming upon Easter, the day of Christ's resurrection. The message of Easter is one for all of humanity; that in times of pain and suffering, trial and tribulation, there can ultimately be salvation, there can ultimately be triumph over death.

I try to keep this message in mind, particularly amidst these times when religious conflict and oppression do not seem to be waning but waxing. Today Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world. Other religions are not far behind in the scope and depth of the oppression they face. While the United States cannot save all those

who are suffering from religious persecution, when the persecutors are rabid terrorists who want to kill Americans and we have the means not only to defeat those terrorists but to also protect the innocent, we ought to act. Certainly we have an obligation to stop the unintentional discrimination in our own refugee process that unfairly blocks Christians and other religious minorities from seeking safety in the United States.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 2710. A bill to increase the participation of historically underrepresented demographic groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and industry; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, March is Women's History Month. So this morning I would like to highlight the progress women have made in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math—or the STEM fields—challenges that persist, and legislation that I will be introducing to help overcome these challenges.

Today we rely on computers for much of our modern life. For that, we thank pioneer RDML Grace Hopper, who was one of the first computer programmers. Space travel is one of the most technologically challenging endeavors that humankind has undertaken. The road to becoming an astronaut requires intelligence and toughness, not to mention fortitude. Astronauts like Sally Ride, the first American woman in space, have shown that women belong in every endeavor.

Hawaii is home to women leaders in STEM fields. Dr. Isabella Aiona Abbott was raised in rural Hana on the island of Maui. She became the first Native Hawaiian woman to receive a Ph.D. in science and went on to discover over 200 species of algae. She remains a leading expert on Pacific algae. These women persevered and rose to great heights of success in the STEM fields. However, we must do better to make sure that many more women have the opportunity to pursue STEM careers. While girls and boys express a similar level of interest in STEM at an early age, studies have found that women start to lose interest in STEM as early as in middle school. This loss of women and minorities continues at nearly every stage of the STEM career trajectory. For example, women are more likely to switch from a STEM to non-STEM major in their first year of college than their male counterparts.

Girls and women report many reasons for losing interest in STEM. These include negative stereotypes about women in STEM, perceived gender barriers, feelings of isolation, and a lack of female role models and mentors. Gender bias and institutional barriers

still slow the advancement of girls and women. Research shows that issues of bias can hinder interest in STEM, influence academic performance, and influence whether faculty encourages female students to pursue STEM careers. Furthermore, bias—whether conscious or unconscious—can harm the hiring, promotion, and career advancement of women in STEM. Bias can even hurt female researchers' chances of winning competitive science grants. Approximately half of the U.S. population and workforce is made up of women. But women make up just over a quarter of the STEM workforce.

As our economy becomes more global, our entire population—men and women—must be engaged in fields that will keep America competitive on the world stage. Expanding the number of women and minorities in STEM fields is essential to meeting that challenge. The importance of growing the U.S. STEM workforce is acknowledged by leaders and businesses in all fields at all levels. For example, this recognition was very evident in the Senate's immigration reform debate. When I served on the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2013, increasing our STEM workforce through immigration policy drove major sections of the bipartisan immigration reform bill passed by the Senate.

In Hawaii and elsewhere, there are programs that expose students to STEM careers through mentoring and interactive activities such as robotics. I want to focus on one school in Hawaii that created these opportunities for their students—Molokai Middle School. This is a school that struggled with science and math scores, but when their teachers established a robotics programs, students from all backgrounds got interested in science. The year the program started, the Molokai Middle School robotics team overcame all odds to represent Hawaii in a national robotics tournament. This year, they will compete in an international robotics competition in Kentucky. Molokai is an island of only about 7,000 people. Their students have thrived and succeeded through their STEM experience. While programs like these have a positive impact on encouraging students to stay excited about STEM fields, there are not enough of such programs.

That is why today I am proud to be joined by Senators GILLIBRAND, MURRAY, FEINSTEIN, HEINRICH, BALDWIN, STABENOW, and BROWN to introduce the Women and Minorities in STEM Booster ACT to improve the recruitment, retention, and success of women and minorities at all stages of the STEM pipeline. This bill authorizes the National Science Foundation to award competitive grants for outreach, mentoring, and professional development programs.

The STEM booster act also authorizes funding for STEM education outreach programs at the elementary and secondary school levels, funding for

mentoring programs, and programs to increase the recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty.

I am also working on another bill to address some of the cultural and institutional barriers that I mentioned today, which impede women's and minorities' advancement in STEM fields. In addition to increasing mentoring and outreach programs, the second bill will improve guidance, training, and coordination among Federal STEM agencies and universities to proactively combat bias and discrimination.

We are on the right track to grow our STEM workforce in the United States, but we still need to move forward faster. We must act now to speed this process. My bill will help expose more girls, women, and minorities to opportunities in STEM fields and accelerate their participation.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting women and minorities in STEM now.

By Mr. MCCAIN:

S. 2711. A bill to expand opportunity for Native American children through additional options in education, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation to help tackle the challenging problem of fixing our broken education system on Indian reservations. The bill, known as the Native American Education Opportunity Act, would expand the education opportunities of Native American student living on reservations by allowing their parents to take full advantage of Education Savings Account which would be funded by the Bureau of Indian Education, BIE.

Under this bill, eligible students could apply for up to 90 percent of the per pupil expenditure that BIE would spend on them at a BIE school and use those funds to pay for private school tuition, tutors, online curriculum courses, special needs services, and other K–12 education needs. This funding would be provided through the use of Education Savings Accounts, or ESA's, which are established State-administered programs in the States of Arizona, Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, and Nevada.

Across the Nation, there is a growing interest in State legislatures in enacting ESA's because of the freedom and opportunity they give to families, but in particular low-income students. My home State of Arizona is at the forefront of this revolutionary approach of empowering parents-To customize their child's education. I believe that families living on Indian reservations in my state and elsewhere should reap the benefits of ESA's too.

As my colleagues know, the need to improve Indian County is a crisis issue. I'm of course referring to the broken Bureau of Indian Education system which consists of 185 schools and 41,000 students. By some estimates, the BIE's

average per pupil spending is \$15,000—higher than the national average. Less than 7 percent of all Native American students attend a BIE school, but the performance disparity between BIE students and Native American students attending non-BIB schools is staggering. Almost half of BIE students do not graduate from high school. Their test scores trail by double digits compared to their peers. Some BIB schools have facilities that are unsuitable as a learning environment. A series of recent reports by the Government Accountability Office, GAO, have focused on the disrepair of schools and bureaucratic mismanagement. Some schools desks, school supplies, and even heat.

I wholeheartedly agree that Congress must intervene and implement administrative reforms and maintenance improvements. But, let us consider that market competition could be a powerful tool for improving teacher retention, diversifying education options, and improving test scores and graduation rates in Indian Country more so than any 5-year BIB plan developed in Washington.

This bill is particularly useful for rural Indian reservations with large land bases where children living on the reservation have little choice but to attend a BIB school. Take for example the Navajo Nation where non-BIB public schools can be over 50 miles away, and private school options are few and far between. It is unconscionable to leave students stranded in failing schools when we can create the option of expanding their educational opportunities in even the most remote parts of Indian Country. We can and should do more to create a market that attracts private schools and other education services willing to open shop on remote Indian reservations.

School choice initiatives, while still relatively new, are building a track record of success. One example is a Federal program set up 12 years ago to address the beleaguered public school system in our Nation's capital, Washington, D.C. Congress established the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program which at one time provided up to \$20 million in scholarships to low income families to pull their children out of a failing DC public schools and place them in a private school. The DC program transformed the future of thousands of children in the District. In 2011, a U.S. Department of Education study found that graduation rates, particularly among minority students jumped by as much as 20 percent for the kids who participated in the program.

The situation in the BIE school system is failing, and it is a reflection of our failure in our solemn obligation to meet certain needs of Native Americans living on Indian reservations. I believe that opening up education opportunity beyond BIE schools for Native American families can prove to be one of the most effective agents for change for education in Indian Country. I en-

courage my colleagues to support this legislation.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 2716. A bill to update the oil and gas and mining industry guides of the Securities and Exchange Commission; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation to require the Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC, to update its industry guides for oil, gas, and mining companies.

In November 2015, Peabody Energy agreed to provide comprehensive SEC disclosures about climate change risks facing the company when it settled charges of misleading investors. The company executed this settlement with the New York Attorney General after an investigation discovered that Peabody Energy "repeatedly denied in public financial filings to the SEC that it had the ability to predict the impact that potential regulation of climate change pollution would have on its business, even though Peabody and its consultants actually made projections that such regulation would have severe impacts on the company."

Unfortunately, it appears that the SEC had no role in this settlement, in which Peabody Energy agreed to amend its SEC disclosures, admitting that "concerns about the environmental impacts of coal combustion . . . could significantly affect demand for our products or our securities."

It is clear that the SEC needs to do more when it comes to critically reviewing the disclosures being filed by publicly traded companies, but it is also clear that the SEC's industry guides for oil, gas, and mining companies should be updated to reflect the growing risk of climate change to these companies. By so doing, the investing public can access the material information necessary to make informed decisions when investing in these types of companies. Indeed, it is for this reason that the SEC has established industry guides for certain industries with complex financial and non-financial data.

These disclosures are important to investors, such as Allianz Global Investors, which is a global diversified active investment manager with nearly \$500 billion in assets under management. Allianz has specifically called for "achieving better disclosure of the effects of carbon costs on the Oil & Gas companies."

In updating the industry guides for oil, gas, and mining companies, my legislation would direct the SEC to work with the SEC's Investor Advisory Committee. This Committee was established by the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to advise and consult with the SEC on regulatory priorities, the regulation of securities products, trading strategies, fee structures, disclosure effectiveness, and on initiatives to promote investor con-

fidence and the integrity of the securities marketplace.

I thank Ceres for their support, and I also thank Representative CARTWRIGHT for introducing companion legislation in the House of Representatives today. I urge our colleagues to join us in supporting this legislation.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN):

S. 2717. A bill to improve the safety and address the deferred maintenance needs of Indian dams to prevent flooding on Indian reservations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Dam Repairs and Improvements for Tribes Act of 2016 or DRIFT Act. This important legislation is intended to address the flood prevention and dam safety needs in Indian Country. It would address the deferred maintenance needs of Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA, dams, as well as reform tribal programs within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The BIA has 137 high-hazard dams and over 700 low-hazard dams across the United States. Nearly all of the high-hazard dams are in Western United States, including two high-hazard dams on the Wind River Reservation in my home State of Wyoming—Washakie Dam and Ray Lake Dam. According to the BIA staff, on average these dams are 70 to 80 years old and have over \$500 million in deferred maintenance needs. Funding is simply not keeping up with the maintenance needs of these dams and the threat to public safety in and around Indian Country is very real. The United States has a trust obligation to maintain and operate these dams and prevent what could be a future dam failure.

The legislation I am introducing today would require the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of the Army, to address the maintenance backlog of BIA dams by establishing a High-Hazard Indian Dam Safety Deferred Maintenance Fund and a Low-Hazard Indian Dam Safety Deferred Maintenance Fund. The high-hazard fund would receive \$22,750,000 each year from fiscal years 2017 through 2037. The low-hazard fund would receive \$10,000,000 for the same time period. The bill funds low-hazard dams if their needs are critical as well and are not being addressed by available scarce resources. Neglecting the deferred maintenance needs of these dams may result in them becoming high hazard dams in the near future.

The DRIFT Act establishes criteria for how the money would be prioritized, looking at criteria such as threats to public safety, natural or cultural resources, and economic concerns. The criteria also looks at the ability of increasing water storage capacity of BIA dams to prevent flooding to downstream communities.

The legislation also seeks to make other important flood prevention and

dam safety policy reforms for both the BIA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Specifically, the DRIFT Act establishes a 4-year pilot program for a BIA flood mitigation program for tribes; establishes a Tribal Safety of Dams Committee within the Department of the Interior to make recommendations to Congress for modernizing the Indian Dam Safety Act; and mandates that tribes regularly report their dam inventory to BIA.

The bill requires the BIA to report annually on the safety status of their dams to Congress; makes reforms to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Tribal Partnership Program to allow the Corps to pay for any feasibility study of a project costing not more than \$10,000,000; allows in-kind contributions by tribes to count towards a cost-share of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' feasibility study; and allows tribes to not have a cost share for studies and projects that cost up to \$200,000. This is the same cost-sharing requirements the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers allows for U.S. territories.

It is time to make sure that we make the necessary changes to ensure that tribes and surrounding communities are protected, and that the Federal Government collaborates with and empowers Indian tribes to secure their communities."

By Mr. Kaine (for himself, Ms. Baldwin, Mr. Portman, Mrs. Capito, and Ms. Ayotte):

S. 2718. A bill to amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 to support innovative approaches to career and technical education and redesign the high school experience for students by providing students with equitable access to rigorous, engaging, and relevant real world education through partnerships with business and industry and higher education that prepare students to graduate from high school and enroll into postsecondary education without the need for remediation and with the ability to use knowledge to solve complex problems, think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and develop academic mindsets; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, the demands of today's competitive global market require that students have the right skills and knowledge to succeed in postsecondary education and enter the workforce. Providing students with an engaging experience that is relevant to the workforce and integrates partnerships with industry and higher education is critical to our Nation's future. Unfortunately, these opportunities are lacking in many of today's high schools, leaving students unprepared for 21st century careers.

Career and technical education, CTE, is often overlooked in discussions on increasing relevancy and rigor in our Nation's schools—despite the fact that a strong focus on academics is the cor-

nerstone of high-quality CTE. When the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education conducted a 4-year longitudinal study in three states, they found that students participating in CTE programs or career pathways outperformed their peers on the number of credits they earned in science, technology, engineering and math, STEM, and AP classes, while also earning higher grade point averages in their CTE classes.

That is why I am introducing with my colleagues, Senators Portman, Baldwin, and Capito, the CTE Excellence and Equity Act. This bipartisan legislation supports funding for innovation in career and technical education to help redesign the high school experience for historically underserved students. It would authorize grants to partnerships among school districts, employers, and institutions of higher education in Virginia and other states that help students earn industry recognized credentials or credit toward a postsecondary degree or certificate. The bill also places an emphasis on understanding the relevance of coursework in the context of a future career by placing an emphasis on teaching workplace skills through job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships.

CTE programs are critical components to every student's education. I am pleased to be introducing this bipartisan legislation to strengthen CTE programs in high school so that students are better prepared for postsecondary studies and the workforce. I hope that my colleagues consider this legislation as we move to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins CTE Act.

By Mrs. Murray (for herself, Mr. Sanders, Mr. Blumenthal, Mr. Durbin, and Ms. Warren):

S. 2719. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to improve the protections provided to members of the uniformed services and their families, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mrs. Murray. Mr. President, I have often said when our nation sends men and women to war we commit to taking care of them when they return home. We also promise them important legal protections to allow them to focus on their mission and in recognition that while they are deployed or away from home servicemembers often do not have the resources to respond to a range of financial and legal issues. Despite these protections, too many servicemembers have been cheated on their student loans, on their mortgages, and on their credit cards.

When our men and women in uniform are serving our country, they should not have to worry about whether our government is going to hold up its end of the bargain and fulfill its responsibilities to them.

So today I introduce the SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act of 2016, which will put an end to many of

these predatory practices and give servicemembers and the government the tools they need to fight back when banks and student loan servicers deny servicemembers their rights.

In 2014, I learned of allegations that at least one major student loan servicer had been overcharging men and women in uniform on their student loans while they were on active duty. That's unacceptable. One servicemember overcharged on their student loans is one too many.

That is why this bill will end the unfair and improper practices of student loan servicers by requiring them to automatically apply the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, SCRA, interest rate cap, respond within 14 days to any request for SCRA protections, and provide a full explanation any time they deny an SCRA protection, along with clear instructions on how to remedy the situation so the servicemember can receive that protection. It will also require student loan servicers to have a designated service representative or point of contact for servicemembers and ensure these individuals are properly trained on the needs of servicemembers, how the military operates, and the protections required by SCRA, the Higher Education Act, and other laws.

The bill will hold servicers accountable for their conduct and treatment of servicemembers by requiring them to retain all communications with servicemembers so we can conduct thorough oversight.

The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act will also hold the Department of Education accountable for enforcing standards and the law with its student loan servicers. Following numerous allegations of servicemembers being mistreated by student loan servicers who were not complying with the SCRA interest rate caps, and at least 69,000 servicemembers who were overcharged by one Federal contractor, I asked the Department to review how many servicemembers had been improperly denied their benefits under SCRA. Shockingly, the Department told us that the servicers were complying in the "vast majority of cases." This was inconsistent with what the Department of Justice and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau had found.

I wrote to the Department of Education's Inspector General and asked her to review the Department's findings. Two weeks ago the IG released their report, and it showed that instead of doing a thorough investigation to find out exactly how many servicemembers may have been overcharged on their student loans, the Department's review was riddled with errors and papered over mishandling of military borrowers' loans.

The bill I am introducing today will require sufficient notice to be given when a loan is transferred or sold, and that all benefits or protections for the servicemember are seamlessly transferred to the new loan servicer. It will

also forgive all Federal and private student loan debt in the event the servicemember dies in the line of duty.

The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act also expands protections beyond student loans. I was concerned when several years ago some of the nation's largest mortgage servicers improperly overcharged and foreclosed upon deployed servicemembers in violation of the SCRA. Thousands of servicemembers and veterans were wronged over several years. After those allegations came to light, and after the Department of Justice reached a settlement with those mortgage servicers, GAO released a report in 2014 looking at the importance of mortgage and foreclosure protections in the SCRA. The results were concerning, especially when they found at one mortgage servicer that 82 percent of loans that would have benefitted from the SCRA's interest rate cap still had rates in excess of 6 percent.

This bill would reduce the interest rate cap to three percent to provide meaningful protection to servicemembers, including a zero percent cap for servicemembers eligible for hostile fire or imminent danger pay. It would expand the SCRA interest rate protection to all of a servicemember's debt regardless of when it was incurred, in order to cover consolidation loans and in recognition that the same challenges exist for military borrowers regardless of when a debt was first incurred. It would also strengthen the protections that prevent judgements against a servicemember who cannot appear in court because of military service.

As the daughter of a World War II veteran, I know how much our military families sacrifice on behalf of their country. So I believe protecting our military men and women from predatory practices is an absolutely essential commitment we make to them. We will not allow our servicemembers to be taken advantage of.

Finally, as we have seen too often, these protections are only as good as our ability to enforce the law and hold people accountable. The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act will give servicemembers, the Department of Justice, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau the legal and oversight tools they need to hold entities accountable. It would clarify that servicemembers may bring a private right of action to enforce their rights and make arbitration clauses unenforceable unless all parties agree after a dispute arises. The bill will give the Attorney General the authority to issue civil investigative demands in SCRA investigations. It would double the fines against parties found to be violating the protections afforded by the SCRA.

With the number of Federal entities involved, it is essential the departments and agencies work collaboratively to protect servicemembers. The Defense Department must ensure

it is providing clear, useful information to servicemembers on their rights and how to invoke them, and that the training stays current. I especially commend the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for its dedicated work on behalf of our men and women in uniform.

Our servicemembers deserve better than what they have gotten over the last several years. The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act will go a long way to ensuring our servicemembers are protected, putting a stop to the predatory practices of banks and student loan servicers, and change the apathy that has characterized the Department of Education's oversight. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Ms. WARREN):

S. 2730. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, known as the "Ghost Army", collectively, in recognition of its unique and incredible service during World War II; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act to honor the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, called the "Ghost Army," which was a top-secret unit of the United States Army that served in the European Theater of Operations during World War II. The unit was actively engaged in battlefield operations from June of 1944 through March of 1945. The deceptive activities of the Ghost Army were essential to several Allied victories across Europe and are estimated to have saved thousands of lives.

I was inspired to introduce this bill after hearing the story of Jack McGlynn of Medford, MA. I have known Jack for decades going back to my time in the Massachusetts State Legislature, but I never knew that he was a member of the Ghost Army. Like many World War II Veterans, Jack returned home to Massachusetts after the War, started a family, and got involved in local politics. Jack was a city councilor, Mayor, and State Representative. He kept his service in the Ghost Army a secret from everyone, even his wife and 6 children. Finally in 2008, Jack read that it was declassified and he finally shared the story with his family and friends.

In evaluating the performance of the Ghost Army after the War, a U.S. Army analysis found that "Rarely, if ever, has there been a group of such a few men which had so great an influence on the outcome of a major military campaign.". Many Ghost Army soldiers were specially selected for their mission, and were recruited from art schools, advertising agencies, communications companies, and other creative and technical professions.

The first four members of the Ghost Army landed on D-day and two became

casualties while camouflaging early beach installations. The Ghost Army's secret deception operations commenced in France on June 14, 1944, when Task Force Mason landed at Omaha Beach to draw enemy fire and protect the 980th Artillery.

Task Force Mason was a prelude to full scale tactical deceptions completed by the Ghost Army. Often operating on or near the front lines, the Ghost Army used inflatable tanks, artillery, air planes and other vehicles, advanced engineered soundtracks, and skillfully crafted radio trickery to create the illusion of sizable American forces where there were none and to draw the enemy away from Allied troops.

Ghost Army soldiers impersonated other, larger Army units by sewing counterfeit patches onto their uniforms, painting false markings on their vehicles, and creating phony headquarters staffed by fake generals, all in an effort to feed false information to Axis spies. During the Battle of the Bulge, the Ghost Army created counterfeit radio traffic to mask the efforts of General George Patton's Third Army as it mobilized to break through to the 101st Airborne. It also provided assistance to elements of 10th Armored Division in the besieged Belgian town of Bastogne.

In its final mission, Operation Viersen, the Ghost Army deployed a tactical deception that drew German units down the Rhine River and away from the 9th Army, allowing the 9th Army to cross the Rhine into Germany. On this mission, the 1,100 men of the Ghost Army, with the assistance of other units, impersonated forty thousand men, or two complete divisions of American forces, by using fabricated radio networks, soundtracks of construction work and artillery fire, and more than 600 inflatable vehicles.

Three Ghost Army soldiers gave their lives and dozens were injured in carrying out their mission. Their activities remained classified for more than forty years after the war and I believe the extraordinary accomplishments of this unit are deserving of belated recognition. The United States will be eternally grateful to the Ghost Army for their proficient use of innovative tactics throughout World War II, which saved thousands of lives and were instrumental in the defeat of Nazi Germany.

I ask all my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation to give a Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Ghost Army.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 403—DESIGNATING THE WEEK BEGINNING APRIL 24, 2016 AS “NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL ASSESSMENT CENTER WEEK” IN CELEBRATION OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDUSTRIAL ASSESSMENT CENTERS

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. COONS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BENNET, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. DONNELLY, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. PORTMAN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. CARPER, Mr. GARDNER, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. TOOMEY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 403

Whereas Industrial Assessment Centers (IACs) are university-led programs funded by the Department of Energy that provide energy efficiency assessments to small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in the United States for improving energy efficiency and reducing water usage and waste;

Whereas IACs increase the energy efficiency, productivity, sustainability, and competitiveness of manufacturers in the United States;

Whereas, since the inception of the IAC program in 1976, IACs have conducted more than 16,000 assessments at manufacturing plants across the United States;

Whereas the assessments conducted by IACs have saved an estimated 76,000,000,000 British thermal units, a quantity equivalent to meeting the energy needs of almost 1,400,000 homes in the United States;

Whereas IACs have saved participating manufacturers more than \$1,000,000,000 in energy costs;

Whereas an estimated 6,000,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions have been avoided due to IAC assessments, a quantity equivalent to the emissions from more than 1,200,000 cars;

Whereas the IAC program equips undergraduate and graduate university students with the skills to conduct energy audits, improving workforce training and cultivating the next generation of energy engineers;

Whereas more than 3,000 students have graduated from the IAC program, with more than 60 percent continuing on to pursue careers in energy-related fields; and

Whereas 2016 marks the 40th anniversary of the IAC program: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week beginning April 24, 2016 as “National Industrial Assessment Center Week”; and

(2) calls on the people of the United States to observe National Industrial Assessment Center Week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 404—DESIGNATING MARCH 2016 AS “NATIONAL MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION MONTH”

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself and Mr. ISAKSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 404

Whereas the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Association

for Middle Level Education, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have declared March 2016 as “National Middle Level Education Month”;

Whereas schools that educate middle level students are responsible for educating nearly 24,000,000 young adolescents between the ages of 10 and 15, in grades 5 through 9, who are undergoing rapid and dramatic changes in their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development;

Whereas young adolescents deserve challenging and engaging instruction and knowledgeable teachers and administrators who are prepared to provide young adolescents with a safe, challenging, and supportive learning environment;

Whereas young adolescents deserve organizational structures that banish anonymity and promote personalization, collaboration, and social equity;

Whereas the habits and values established during early adolescence have a lifelong influence that directly affects the future health and welfare of the United States;

Whereas research indicates that the academic achievement of a student in grade 8 has a larger impact on the readiness of that student for an institution of higher education at the end of high school than any academic achievement of that student in high school; and

Whereas in order to improve graduation rates and prepare students to be lifelong learners who are ready for an institution of higher education or a career and civic participation, the people of the United States must have a deeper understanding of the distinctive mission of middle level education: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 2016 as “National Middle Level Education Month”;

(2) honors and recognizes the importance of middle level education and the contributions of the individuals who educate middle level students; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to observe National Middle Level Education Month by visiting and celebrating schools that are responsible for educating young adolescents in the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 405—DESIGNATING PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, AS THE SITE OF THE CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, IN COORDINATION WITH VISION 2020

Mr. CASEY submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 405

Whereas the 19th Amendment to Constitution of the United States was ratified on August 18, 1920, guaranteeing women in the United States the right to vote;

Whereas the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment will occur in 2020;

Whereas Vision 2020, developed by the Institute for Women’s Health and Leadership at Drexel University, has launched the Vision 2020 Campaign for Equality—

(1) to commemorate the centennial of women’s suffrage; and

(2) to advance and achieve economic, social, and political equality for women in the United States by 2020;

Whereas Vision 2020 is partnering with national associations and professional organi-

zations that represent more than 20,000,000 women and girls in the United States;

Whereas in 2020, celebratory events will take place in cities all across the United States, particularly in cities in which monumental historic events and people shaped the women’s suffrage movement;

Whereas Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which was home to historic women who played significant roles in the women’s rights movement, including Lucretia Mott, Alice Paul, Fanny Jackson Coppin, and Eliza Sprout Turner, should be designated as the headquarters and coordinating site to celebrate the centennial of women’s suffrage;

Whereas the women’s suffrage movement was closely tied to abolitionism and many suffragists gained previous experience in advocacy as antislavery activists;

Whereas the first major event in the women’s suffrage movement occurred on July 19, 1848, the date on which Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the first convention on women’s rights, the Seneca Falls Convention;

Whereas in 1850, Lucy Stone organized the National Women’s Rights Convention and gave a speech that inspired Susan B. Anthony and others to join the cause for women’s rights;

Whereas in 1851, Sojourner Truth gave her famous speech entitled “Ain’t I a Woman?” at a convention in Akron, Ohio;

Whereas in 1869, women suffragists formed the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association, which were national organizations established to work for the right of women to vote that united in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association;

Whereas in 1872, Susan B. Anthony and a group of women voted in the Presidential election and were arrested and fined for voting illegally;

Whereas in the late 19th century, the Senate voted on women’s suffrage for the first time;

Whereas during the early 20th century, a new generation of women joined the women’s suffrage movement and devoted time to marches and other active forms of protest, including the first picket lines in front of the White House;

Whereas women suffragists were often detained and sent to jail and some of those women who went on hunger strikes were aggressively force fed;

Whereas since the ratification of the 19th Amendment, the work begun by the suffragists continues to advance the equality of women in all political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of life in the United States, including shared leadership; and

Whereas the contributions of women suffragists who fought for and won, for women of the United States, the right to vote should be celebrated on the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the crucial role that the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution played in advancing the rights of women and promoting the democratic values at the core of the United States;

(2) designates Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as the site of the national centennial commemoration of the ratification of the 19th Amendment; and

(3) commends the efforts of Vision 2020—

(A) to orchestrate, lead, and coordinate that momentous occasion in Philadelphia; and

(B) to continue the fight for equality for women.

SENATE RESOLUTION 406—RECOGNIZING THE GIRL SCOUTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GIRL SCOUT GOLD AWARD, THE HIGHEST AWARD IN THE GIRL SCOUTS, WHICH HAS STOOD FOR EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP FOR GIRLS EVERYWHERE SINCE 1916

Ms. MIKULSKI (for herself, Ms. COLLINS, Mrs. MURRAY, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. AYOTTE, and Mr. SCHUMER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 406

Whereas each girl who pursues the Girl Scout Gold Award aspires to transform an original idea and vision for change into an actionable plan with far reaching and sustainable results;

Whereas for more than a century preceding the date of adoption of this resolution, the Girl Scouts of the United States of America (referred to in this preamble as the "Girl Scouts") has inspired girls to lead with courage, confidence, and character;

Whereas the Girl Scout Gold Award represents the highest form of the ideals of courage, confidence, and character;

Whereas the Girl Scout Gold Award calls on a Girl Scout in grades 9 through 12 to take on a project that has a measurable and sustainable impact on the community of the Girl Scout by—

- (1) assessing a need;
- (2) designing a solution to the need;
- (3) completing the project; and
- (4) inspiring others to sustain the project;

Whereas the highest award in Girl Scouting honors leadership in the tradition of the Girl Scouts;

Whereas the Girl Scout movement began on March 12, 1912, when Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low, a native of Savannah, Georgia, organized a group of 18 girls and provided the group of girls with an opportunity to develop physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually;

Whereas the goals of Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low were to bring girls of all backgrounds together to develop self-reliance and resourcefulness, and to prepare each girl for a future role as a professional woman and active citizen outside the home;

Whereas shortly after the inception of the Girl Scout movement, it was decided that there should be a special recognition for each girl who—

- (1) represents the very best of the Girl Scouts; and
- (2) through courage, tenacity, dedication, and skill, takes action in her community with an immediate and sustainable impact;

Whereas, in 1916, the Golden Eaglet was introduced as the highest award in Girl Scouting;

Whereas the highest award in Girl Scouting has been known as the Golden Eaglet, the Curved Bar Award, First Class, and, for the period of 35 years preceding the date of adoption of this resolution, the Girl Scout Gold Award;

Whereas although the name of the highest award in Girl Scouting has changed over the years, the conviction, dynamism, and idealism it takes to earn the award have not;

Whereas the Girl Scout Gold Award, like each girl who earns the award and the project the girl undertakes—

- (1) stands as an enduring symbol of the fortitude and personal strength of a Girl Scout; and

- (2) clearly demonstrates the tangible, real-world impact that participation in the Girl

Scouts can have on the life of a girl, and by extension, the community of the girl and the world;

Whereas earning the Girl Scout Gold Award is comparable to achieving the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America;

Whereas a girl who earns the Girl Scout Gold Award—

- (1) joins an elite group of less than 6 percent of Girl Scouts each year; and

(2) may be eligible for a higher grade when enlisting in the Armed Forces of the United States or for scholarships at certain institutions of higher education;

Whereas according to a study of the Girl Scout Research Institute entitled "The Power of the Girl Scout Gold Award: Excellence in Leadership and Life", recipients of the Girl Scout Gold Award, compared to non-recipient peers—

- (1) report a more positive sense of self;
- (2) are more engaged civically and in community service;
- (3) have more confidence in their leadership abilities; and
- (4) experience greater life satisfaction and success;

Whereas the Girl Scout Gold Award acknowledges the power and dedication of each young woman to better herself and to make the world a better place for other individuals;

Whereas during the century preceding the date of adoption of this resolution, millions of Girl Scout alumnae have positively impacted their communities and the world with creative, effective, and sustainable Take Action projects; and

Whereas in the centennial of the Girl Scout Gold Award, the Girl Scouts invites alumnae and supporters of the Girl Scouts everywhere to "Celebrate 100 Years of Changing the World": Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the remarkable impact that recipients of the Girl Scout Gold Award during the century preceding the date of adoption of this resolution have had on—

(A) the lives of individuals in the United States; and

(B) the world;

(2) recognizes the lasting impact of the projects of recipients of the Girl Scout Gold Award on the communities of the recipients;

(3) congratulates the Girl Scouts of the United States of America and Girl Scout Gold Award recipients everywhere on the centennial of the Girl Scout Gold Award; and

(4) joins the Girl Scouts of the United States of America in celebrating 100 years of the Girl Scout Gold Award.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today not only to recognize the 104th anniversary of the Girl Scouts, but also the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scout Gold Award. The Gold Award is the most prestigious award in Girl Scouting, only comparable to the Boy Scouts of America's Eagle Scout recognition.

Approximately one million Girl Scouts have earned this prestigious award. Girls who pursue their Gold Award aspire to transform an idea and vision for change into an actionable plan with measurable, sustainable, and far-reaching results. Since 1916, Girl Scouts have been planning and executing significant projects in response to pressing community needs. The Gold Award has inspired girls in Maryland and across the country to find greatness inside themselves and share their ideas and passions with their communities.

I love the Girl Scouts. I loved being a Girl Scout, especially when working on

my badges. Those badges I earned served as symbols for success, leadership, and service to my community. It was during my time as a Girl Scout that I learned about the values and attitudes that serve as good guides throughout life, like courage, confidence, and strong character to help make the world a better place.

I also loved the camaraderie of working with other girls on various challenges. It really is about friendship. I am so proud to be among the more than 59 million women in the United States who are alumnae of the Girl Scouts of America. I could not have done it without the support of Ms. Helen Nimick, my Girl Scout leader. In fact, I wanted to grow up and be just like Ms. Nimick. She seemed to know how to do 43 different things with oatmeal boxes.

The Girl Scouts is an organization that has meant so much to me, and to this country. What started out as a group of eighteen girls in Georgia organized by Juliette Gordon Low has grown into an organization of more than 2 million girls and women, with over 800,000 adult volunteers. When the Girl Scouts started, women were not allowed to vote or have property in their name, and only few ever made it to college.

The founding of the Girl Scouts started a revolutionary movement to train and educate girls. Now, it is working to bring gender balance to leadership roles, whether it is in business or politics. I believe in that mission, and I know we can do it. While we have a long ways to go, we certainly have made progress. When I came to the Senate almost 30 years ago, there were only two women—Senator Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas and myself. Today, there are 20 women in the Senate! Nearly 45 years ago, there was only one woman CEO of a Fortune 500 company; now there are 23.

I bring the lessons I learned from Girl Scouts with me to the United States Senate, every day and in every way. I love the Girl Scout promise: "To serve God and my country, to help people at all times, and to live by the Girl Scout law." To this day, I still carry the Girl Scout law in my wallet. I believe that if you follow the Girl Scout law, you're in pretty good shape—it has certainly worked for me. "I will do my best to be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and what I do, and to respect myself and others, to respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout, and a sister to every Boy Scout."

While I am in the Senate now, in many ways I am still working on my badges. But instead of working on my cookie badge, the badges I am working on now are called "ending gender discrimination in health care," "guaranteeing equal pay for equal work," and "promoting access to quality and affordable child care."

In today's hectic and increasingly uncertain world, Girl Scouts are more important than ever before. The Girl Scouts are an important contribution to American society—they prepare the leaders of tomorrow, and every day they inspire millions across this country to make the world a better place. Ladies, let us put on our badges, square our shoulders, suit up, and work together to make a change.

SENATE RESOLUTION 407—CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING MEN'S NORDIC SKI TEAM FOR WINNING THE 38TH ANNUAL UNITED STATES COLLEGIATE SKI AND SNOWBOARD ASSOCIATION NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. ENZI (for himself and Mr. BARASSO) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 407

Whereas, on March 12, 2016, the University of Wyoming men's Nordic ski team won the 2016 United States Collegiate Ski and Snowboard Association (referred to in this preamble as the "USCSA") national championship in Lake Placid, New York, by sweeping all 4 events;

Whereas the University of Wyoming men's Nordic ski team has won consecutive USCSA national titles;

Whereas as members on the University of Wyoming Nordic ski teams, Will Timmons won the 2016 USCSA men's individual title and Elise Sulser won the 2016 USCSA women's individual title;

Whereas the University of Wyoming men's Nordic ski team placed 3 men among the top 10 overall individual finishers at the 2016 USCSA national event;

Whereas co-head coaches Christi Boggs and Rachel Watson have successfully guided the University of Wyoming men's and women's Nordic ski teams to multiple USCSA national titles;

Whereas the University of Wyoming men's and women's Nordic ski teams have each won 6 team USCSA national titles between 2003 and 2016: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the University of Wyoming men's Nordic ski team as the winner of the 2016 United States Collegiate Ski and Snowboard Association national championship;

(2) commends the athletes, coaches, parents, and staff of the University of Wyoming Nordic ski teams for their hard work and dedication;

(3) recognizes the students, alumni, and loyal fans that supported the University of Wyoming men's Nordic ski team on the team's journey to win another national title; and

(4) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate prepare an official copy of this resolution for presentation to—

(A) the president of the University of Wyoming;

(B) the athletic director of the University of Wyoming; and

(C) the co-head coaches of the University of Wyoming Nordic ski teams.

SENATE RESOLUTION 408—DESIGNATING APRIL 2016 AS "NATIONAL CONGENITAL DIAPHRAGMATIC HERNIA AWARENESS MONTH"

Mr. SESSIONS (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 408

Whereas congenital diaphragmatic hernia (referred to in this preamble as "CDH") occurs in individuals in which the diaphragm fails to fully form, allowing abdominal organs to migrate into the chest cavity and preventing lung growth;

Whereas the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes CDH as a birth defect;

Whereas the majority of CDH patients suffer from underdeveloped lungs or poor pulmonary function;

Whereas babies born with CDH endure extended hospital stays in intensive care with multiple surgeries;

Whereas CDH patients often endure long-term complications, such as pulmonary hypertension, pulmonary hypoplasia, asthma, gastrointestinal reflux, feeding disorders, and developmental delays;

Whereas CDH survivors sometimes endure long-term mechanical ventilation dependency, skeletal malformations, supplemental oxygen dependency, enteral and parenteral nutrition, and hypoxic brain injury;

Whereas CDH is treated through mechanical ventilation, a heart and lung bypass (commonly known as "extracorporeal membrane oxygenation"), machines, and surgical repair;

Whereas surgical repair is often not a permanent solution for CDH and can lead to reherniation and require additional surgery;

Whereas CDH is diagnosed in utero in less than 50 percent of cases;

Whereas infants born with CDH have a high mortality rate, ranging from 20 to 60 percent, depending on the severity of the defect and interventions available at delivery;

Whereas CDH has a rate of occurrence of 1 in every 3,836 live births worldwide;

Whereas in the United States, CDH affects approximately 1,088 babies each year;

Whereas since 2000, CDH has affected more than 700,000 babies worldwide;

Whereas CDH does not discriminate based on race, gender, or socioeconomic status;

Whereas the cause of CDH is unknown;

Whereas the average CDH survivor will face postnatal care that totals not less than \$100,000; and

Whereas Federal support for CDH research at the National Institutes of Health for 2015 is estimated to be not more than \$3,300,000: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 2016 as "National Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia Awareness Month";

(2) encourages that steps should be taken—

(A) to raise awareness of and increase public knowledge about congenital diaphragmatic hernia (referred to in this resolving clause as "CDH");

(B) to inform all people of the United States about the dangers of CDH, especially groups of people that may be disproportionately affected by CDH or have lower survival rates;

(C) to disseminate information on the importance of quality neonatal care of CDH patients;

(D) to promote quality prenatal care and ultrasounds to detect CDH in utero; and

(E) to support research funding of CDH—

(i) to improve screening and treatment for CDH;

(ii) to discover the causes of CDH; and

(iii) to develop a cure for CDH; and

(3) calls on the people of the United States, interest groups, and affected persons—

(A) to promote awareness of CDH;

(B) to take an active role in the fight against this devastating birth defect; and

(C) to observe National Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia Awareness Month with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 409—RECOGNIZING MARCH 2016 AS "NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH"

Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. HEITKAMP, Ms. MIKULSKI, Ms. AYOTTE, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mrs. BOXER, Mrs. CAPITO, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. REED, Ms. WARREN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. FISCHER, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. CARPER, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. BROWN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 409

Whereas National Women's History Month recognizes and spreads awareness of the importance of women in the history of the United States;

Whereas, throughout the history of the United States, whether in the home, at the office, in school, in the courts, or in wartime, women have fought for themselves, their families, and all people of the United States and played an essential role in the history of the United States;

Whereas, even from the early days of the United States, Abigail Adams urged her husband to "Remember the Ladies" when representatives met for the Continental Congress in 1776;

Whereas women were particularly important in the establishment of early charitable, philanthropic, and cultural institutions in the United States;

Whereas women led the efforts to secure suffrage and equal opportunity for women and also served in the abolitionist movement, the emancipation movement, labor movements, civil rights movements, and other causes to create a more fair and just society for all people;

Whereas suffragists wrote, marched, were arrested, went on hunger strikes, and were force-fed in prison but were ultimately successful in achieving the enactment of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which provides, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.";

Whereas women have served and continue to serve as leaders in the forefront of social change efforts;

Whereas women of every race and background have played and continue to play a critical economic, cultural, and social role in every sphere of the life of the United States, including by constituting a significant portion of the labor force working inside and outside of the home;

Whereas women now represent approximately ¼ of the workforce in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics;

Whereas women once were routinely barred from attending medical schools in the

United States but now represent 47 percent of medical school students;

Whereas women previously were turned away from law schools but now represent 47 percent of law school graduates but only 20 percent of law school deans and 27 percent of State and Federal judges;

Whereas women have served in the United States Armed Forces in volunteer and enlisted positions, with 201,400 active-duty women currently serving and women comprising approximately 10 percent of veterans;

Whereas more than 9,900,000 women own small businesses in the United States;

Whereas women in the United States contribute significantly to the artistic and literary advancements of the United States;

Whereas the 2016 theme of National Women's History Month is "Working to Form a More Perfect Union: Honoring Women in Public Service and Government";

Whereas, in 1932, Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas was the first woman elected to the United States Senate;

Whereas Margaret Chase Smith of Maine was the first woman to serve in both houses of Congress;

Whereas, in the 114th Congress, 20 women serve as Senators and 84 women serve in the House of Representatives, both of which are records;

Whereas, in 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first proclamation designating March 2 through 8 as "National Women's History Week";

Whereas, in 1987, a bipartisan group of Senators introduced the first joint resolution to pass Congress designating "Women's History Month";

Whereas, in 1987, President Ronald Reagan issued the first Women's History Month proclamation; and

Whereas, despite the advancements of women in the United States, much remains to be done to ensure that women realize their full potential as equal members of the society of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 2016 as "National Women's History Month";

(2) recognizes the celebration of National Women's History Month as a time to reflect on the many notable contributions that women have made to the United States; and

(3) urges the people of the United States to observe National Women's History Month with appropriate programs and activities.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 34—PROVIDING FOR AN ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. McCONNELL submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That when the House adjourns on any legislative day from Wednesday, March 23, 2016, through Friday, April 8, 2016, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned until 3:30 p.m. on Monday, April 11, 2016, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first.

SEC. 2. (a) The Speaker or his designee, after consultation with the Minority Leader of the House, shall notify the Members of the House to reassemble at such place and time as he may designate if, in his opinion, the public interest shall warrant it.

(b) After reassembling pursuant to subsection (a), when the House adjourns on a

motion offered pursuant to this subsection by its Majority Leader or his designee, the House shall again stand adjourned pursuant to the first section of this concurrent resolution.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3457. Mr. McCONNELL (for Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. NELSON, and Mr. WYDEN)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 4721, 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.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 3457. Mr. McCONNELL (for Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. NELSON, and Mr. WYDEN)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 4721, 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; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the "Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2016".

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—AIRPORT AND AIRWAY PROGRAMS

Sec. 101. Extension of airport improvement program.

Sec. 102. Extension of expiring authorities.

Sec. 103. Federal Aviation Administration operations.

Sec. 104. Air navigation facilities and equipment.

Sec. 105. Research, engineering, and development.

Sec. 106. Compliance with aviation funding requirement.

Sec. 107. Essential air service.

TITLE II—REVENUE PROVISIONS

Sec. 201. Expenditure authority from Airport and Airway Trust Fund.

Sec. 202. Extension of taxes funding Airport and Airway Trust Fund.

TITLE I—AIRPORT AND AIRWAY PROGRAMS

SEC. 101. EXTENSION OF AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.

(a) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 48103(a) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking "\$1,675,000,000 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on March 31, 2016" and inserting "\$2,652,083,333 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016."

(2) **OBLIGATION OF AMOUNTS.**—Subject to limitations specified in advance in appropriation Acts, sums made available pursuant to the amendment made by paragraph (1) may be obligated at any time through September 30, 2016, and shall remain available until expended.

(3) **PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.**—For purposes of calculating funding apportionments and meeting other requirements under sec-

tions 47114, 47115, 47116, and 47117 of title 49, United States Code, for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall—

(A) first calculate such funding apportionments on an annualized basis as if the total amount available under section 48103 of such title for fiscal year 2016 were \$3,350,000,000; and

(B) then reduce by 20.83 percent—

(i) all funding apportionments calculated under subparagraph (A); and

(ii) amounts available pursuant to sections 47117(b) and 47117(f)(2) of such title.

(b) **PROJECT GRANT AUTHORITY.**—Section 47104(c) of title 49, United States Code, is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking "March 31, 2016," and inserting "July 15, 2016,".

SEC. 102. EXTENSION OF EXPIRING AUTHORITIES.

(a) Section 47107(r)(3) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking "April 1, 2016" and inserting "July 16, 2016".

(b) Section 47115(j) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

(c) Section 47124(b)(3)(E) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking "\$5,175,000 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on March 31, 2016," and inserting "\$8,193,750 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016,".

(d) Section 47141(f) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

(e) Section 186(d) of the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act (117 Stat. 2518) is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

(f) Section 409(d) of the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act (49 U.S.C. 41731 note) is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

(g) Section 411(h) of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (49 U.S.C. 42301 prec. note) is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

(h) Section 822(k) of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (49 U.S.C. 47141 note) is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

SEC. 103. FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION OPERATIONS.

Section 106(k) of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by amending subparagraph (E) to read as follows:

"(E) \$7,711,387,500 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016."; and

(2) in paragraph (3) by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

SEC. 104. AIR NAVIGATION FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT.

Section 48101(a)(5) of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(5) \$2,058,333,333 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016."

SEC. 105. RESEARCH, ENGINEERING, AND DEVELOPMENT.

Section 48102(a)(9) of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(9) \$124,093,750 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016."

SEC. 106. COMPLIANCE WITH AVIATION FUNDING REQUIREMENT.

The budget authority authorized in this Act, including the amendments made by this Act, shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of subsections (a)(1)(B) and (a)(2) of section 48114 of title 49, United States Code, for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016.

SEC. 107. ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE.

Section 41742(a)(2) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking "\$77,500,000 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on March 31, 2016," and inserting "\$122,708,333 for the period beginning on October 1, 2015, and ending on July 15, 2016,".

TITLE II—REVENUE PROVISIONS**SEC. 201. EXPENDITURE AUTHORITY FROM AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 9502(d)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking "April 1, 2016" and inserting "July 16, 2016"; and

(2) in subparagraph (A), by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting "or the Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2016;".

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 9502(e)(2) of such Code is amended by striking "April 1, 2016" and inserting "July 16, 2016".

SEC. 202. EXTENSION OF TAXES FUNDING AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND.

(a) FUEL TAXES.—Section 4081(d)(2)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

(b) TICKET TAXES.—

(1) PERSONS.—Section 4261(k)(1)(A)(ii) of such Code is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

(2) PROPERTY.—Section 4271(d)(1)(A)(ii) of such Code is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

(c) FRACTIONAL OWNERSHIP PROGRAMS.—

(1) TREATMENT AS NON-COMMERCIAL AVIATION.—Section 4083(b) of such Code is amended by striking "April 1, 2016" and inserting "July 16, 2016".

(2) EXEMPTION FROM TICKET TAXES.—Section 4261(j) of such Code is amended by striking "March 31, 2016" and inserting "July 15, 2016".

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 17, 2016, at 9:30 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 17, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD-215 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "HealthCare.gov: A Review of Operations and Enrollment."

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 17, 2016, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Reviewing the Administration's Nuclear Agenda."

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 17, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen 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 17, 2016, at 2 p.m., in room SH-219 of the Hart Senate Office Building.

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

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 17, 2016, at 9:45 a.m., in room SD-562 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' Subcommittee on National Parks be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 17, 2016, at 3 p.m., in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON REGULATORY AFFAIRS AND FEDERAL MANAGEMENT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 17, 2016, at 9 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled, "Examining Agency use of Deference, Part II."

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Priyanka Hooghan, a fellow serving in my office, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of the 114th Congress.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION**EXECUTIVE CALENDAR**

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 439 and 488.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Janine Anne

Davidson, of Virginia, to be a under Secretary of the Navy; and Todd A. Weiler, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Davidson and Weiler nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 486, 489 through 494, 496, 497, and all nominations on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

IN THE COAST GUARD

The following named officer for appointment to a position of importance and responsibility in the United States Coast Guard and to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., Section 50:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Karl L. Schultz

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be general

Gen. Joseph L. Votel

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be general

Lt. Gen. Raymond A. Thomas, III

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Army Medical Service Corps to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 624 and 3064:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Sargent

Brig. Gen. Robert D. Tenhet

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Army Medical Corps to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 624 and 3064:

To be brigadier general

Col. Jeffrey J. Johnson
Col. Ronald T. Stephens

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Army Medical Service Corps to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 624 and 3064:

To be brigadier general

Col. Dennis P. LeMaster
Col. Michael J. Talley

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Michael K. Nagata

IN THE MARINE CORPS

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Marine Corps Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Bradley S. James
Col. Kurt W. Stein

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Austin S. Miller

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE AIR FORCE

PN1164 AIR FORCE nominations (16) beginning JAMES B. ANDERSON, and ending HYRAL B. WALKER, JR., which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1165 AIR FORCE nominations (14) beginning JEREMY V. BASTIAN, and ending CHRISTOPHER A. WATSON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1166 AIR FORCE nominations (2068) beginning CHRISTOPHER F. ABBOTT, and ending DEVIN LEE ZUFELT, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1167 AIR FORCE nomination of Christopher T. Stein, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

IN THE ARMY

PN1077 ARMY nomination of Gregory L. Boylan, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 11, 2016.

PN1107 ARMY nomination of Derek G. Bean, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 28, 2016.

PN1168 ARMY nominations (120) beginning ADRIAN R. ALGARRA, and ending GREGORY B. WILLIAMS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1169 ARMY nominations (50) beginning PHILIP O. ADAMS, and ending BENJAMIN M. WUNDERLICH, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1170 ARMY nominations (27) beginning JULIA N. ALVAREZ, and ending APRIL D. WILLIAMS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1171 ARMY nominations (178) beginning WENDY M. ADAMIAN, and ending D012433,

which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1172 ARMY nomination of Vernita M. Corbett, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1173 ARMY nominations (44) beginning MATTHEW H. ADAMS, and ending D012453, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1175 ARMY nomination of William D. Rose, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1176 ARMY nomination of Mark W. Manoso, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1177 ARMY nomination of Eric F. Sabety, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1197 ARMY nominations (2) beginning ANDREW R. MCIVER, and ending GERARD C. PHILIP, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 3, 2016.

IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

PN464 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (7) beginning Eric Del Valle, and ending Ryan Truxton, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 7, 2015.

PN952 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (11) beginning Cheryl L. Anderson, and ending Melissa A. Williams, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN953 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (37) beginning Jennifer M. Adams, and ending Sunil Sebastian Xavier, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN1086 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (4) beginning Daryl Arthur Brehm, and ending Melinda D. Sallyards, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 19, 2016.

PN1087 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (23) beginning Scott D. Hocklander, and ending Catherine Mary Trujillo, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 19, 2016.

PN1089 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of Holly S. Higgins, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 19, 2016.

PN1156 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of John McCaslin, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1157 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (11) beginning Laurie Farris, and ending James Rigasio, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

IN THE MARINE CORPS

PN1117 MARINE CORPS nominations (5) beginning AARON R. CRAIG, and ending CHRISTOPHER T. STEINHILBER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 28, 2016.

PN1130 MARINE CORPS nominations (2) beginning JIMMY W. DARSEY, and ending GERALD E. PIRK, JR., which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 28, 2016.

IN THE NAVY

PN1178 NAVY nominations (53) beginning MATTHEW T. ALLEN, and ending JOSHUA

F. ZIMMER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1179 NAVY nominations (4) beginning RICHARD W. LANG, and ending BRADLEY E. SHEMLUCK, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 22, 2016.

PN1198 NAVY nomination of Michael L. Hipp, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 3, 2016.

PN1200 NAVY nomination of Ronald H. Nellen, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 3, 2016.

PN1202 NAVY nomination of Ashley A. Hockycko, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 3, 2016.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

ENSURING PATIENT ACCESS AND EFFECTIVE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 368, S. 483.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 483) to improve enforcement efforts related to prescription drug diversion and abuse, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on the Judiciary, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Ensuring Patient Access and Effective Drug Enforcement Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. REGISTRATION PROCESS UNDER CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT.*(a) DEFINITIONS.—*

(1) FACTORS AS MAY BE RELEVANT TO AND CONSISTENT WITH THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY.—Section 303 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 823) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(j) In this section, the phrase 'factors as may be relevant to and consistent with the public health and safety' means factors that are relevant to and consistent with the findings contained in section 101."

(2) IMMINENT DANGER TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH OR SAFETY.—Section 304(d) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 824(d)) is amended—

(A) by striking "(d) The Attorney General" and inserting "(d)(1) The Attorney General"; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

"(2) In this subsection, the phrase 'imminent danger to the public health or safety' means that, due to the failure of the registrant to maintain effective controls against diversion or otherwise comply with the obligations of a registrant under this title or title III, there is a substantial likelihood of an immediate threat that death, serious bodily harm, or abuse of a controlled substance will occur in the absence of an immediate suspension of the registration."

(b) OPPORTUNITY TO SUBMIT CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN PRIOR TO REVOCATION OR SUSPENSION.—Subsection (c) of section 304 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 824) is amended—

(1) by striking the last three sentences;
 (2) by striking “(c) Before” and inserting “(c)(1) Before”; and
 (3) by adding at the end the following:
 “(2) An order to show cause under paragraph (1) shall—

“(A) contain a statement of the basis for the denial, revocation, or suspension, including specific citations to any laws or regulations alleged to be violated by the applicant or registrant;

“(B) direct the applicant or registrant to appear before the Attorney General at a time and place stated in the order, but not less than 30 days after the date of receipt of the order; and
 “(C) notify the applicant or registrant of the opportunity to submit a corrective action plan on or before the date of appearance.

“(3) Upon review of any corrective action plan submitted by an applicant or registrant pursuant to paragraph (2), the Attorney General shall determine whether denial, revocation, or suspension proceedings should be discontinued, or deferred for the purposes of modification, amendment, or clarification to such plan.

“(4) Proceedings to deny, revoke, or suspend shall be conducted pursuant to this section in accordance with subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 5, United States Code. Such proceedings shall be independent of, and not in lieu of, criminal prosecutions or other proceedings under this title or any other law of the United States.

“(5) The requirements of this subsection shall not apply to the issuance of an immediate suspension order under subsection (d).”

SEC. 3. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in coordination with the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration and in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, shall submit a report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives, the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate, and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate identifying—

(1) obstacles to legitimate patient access to controlled substances;

(2) issues with diversion of controlled substances;

(3) how collaboration between Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies and the pharmaceutical industry can benefit patients and prevent diversion and abuse of controlled substances;

(4) the availability of medical education, training opportunities, and comprehensive clinical guidance for pain management and opioid prescribing, and any gaps that should be addressed;

(5) beneficial enhancements to State prescription drug monitoring programs, including enhancements to require comprehensive prescriber input and to expand access to the programs for appropriate authorized users; and
 (6) steps to improve reporting requirements so that the public and Congress have more information regarding prescription opioids, such as the volume and formulation of prescription opioids prescribed annually, the dispensing of such prescription opioids, and outliers and trends within large data sets.

(b) CONSULTATION.—The report under subsection (a) shall incorporate feedback and recommendations from the following:

(1) Patient groups.

(2) Pharmacies.

(3) Drug manufacturers.

(4) Common or contract carriers and warehousemen.

(5) Hospitals, physicians, and other health care providers.

(6) State attorneys general.

(7) Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies.

(8) Health insurance providers and entities that provide pharmacy benefit management services on behalf of a health insurance provider.

(9) Wholesale drug distributors.

(10) Veterinarians.

(11) Professional medical societies and boards.

(12) State and local public health authorities.

(13) Health services research organizations.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 483), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

PROVIDING AUTHORITY TO MAINTAIN AND OPERATE A TOLL BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 374, S. 2143.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2143) to provide for the authority for the successors and assigns of the Starr-Camargo Bridge Company to maintain and operate a toll bridge across the Rio Grande near Rio Grande City, Texas, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 2143) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:
 S. 2143

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

SECTION 1. STARR-CAMARGO BRIDGE.

Public Law 87-532 (76 Stat. 153) is amended—

(1) in the first section, in subsection (a)(2)—

(A) by inserting “, and its successors and assigns,” after “State of Texas”;

(B) by inserting “consisting of not more than 14 lanes” after “approaches thereto”; and

(C) by striking “and for a period of sixty-six years from the date of completion of such bridge.”;

(2) in section 2, by inserting “and its successors and assigns,” after “companies”;

(3) by redesignating sections 3, 4, and 5 as sections 4, 5, and 6, respectively;

(4) by inserting after section 2 the following:

“SEC. 3. RIGHTS OF STARR-CAMARGO BRIDGE COMPANY AND SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Starr-Camargo Bridge Company and its successors and assigns shall have the rights and privileges granted to the B and P Bridge Company and its successors and assigns under section 2 of the Act of May 1, 1928 (45 Stat. 471, chapter 466).

“(b) REQUIREMENT.—In exercising the rights and privileges granted under subsection (a), the Starr-Camargo Bridge Company and its successors and assigns shall act in accordance with—

“(1) just compensation requirements;

“(2) public proceeding requirements; and

“(3) any other requirements applicable to the exercise of the rights referred to in subsection (a) under the laws of the State of Texas.”; and

(5) in section 4 (as redesignated by paragraph (3))—

(A) by inserting “and its successors and assigns,” after “such company”;

(B) by striking “or” after “public agency.”;

(C) by inserting “or to a corporation,” after “international bridge authority or commission.”; and

(D) by striking “authority, or commission” each place it appears and inserting “authority, commission, or corporation”.

ADDING ZIKA VIRUS TO THE FDA PRIORITY REVIEW VOUCHER PROGRAM ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 389, S. 2512.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

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

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Adding Zika Virus to the FDA Priority Review Voucher Program Act”.

SEC. 2. EXPANDING TROPICAL DISEASE PRODUCT PRIORITY REVIEW VOUCHER PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE TREATMENTS FOR ZIKA VIRUS DISEASE.

Section 524(a)(3) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 360n(a)(3)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraph (R) as subparagraph (S);

(2) in subparagraph (Q), by striking “Filoviruses” and inserting “Filovirus Diseases”; and

(3) by inserting after subparagraph (Q) the following:

“(R) Zika Virus Disease.”.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2512), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

AUTHORIZING USE OF EMANCIPATION HALL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H. Con. Res. 111, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 111) authorizing the use of Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center for a ceremony as part of the commemoration of the days of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 111) was agreed to.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING MEN'S NORDIC SKI TEAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 407, submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 407) congratulating the University of Wyoming men's Nordic ski team for winning the 38th annual United States Collegiate Ski and Snowboard Association national championship.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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. 407) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL CONGENITAL DIAPHRAGMATIC HERNIA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sen-

ate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 408, submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 408) designating April 2016 as "National Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia Awareness Month."

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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. 408) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 409, submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 409) recognizing March 2016 as "National Women's History Month."

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on the adoption of the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 409) was agreed to.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that 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 preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

PROVIDING FOR AN ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Con. Res. 34.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 34) providing for an adjournment of the House of Representatives.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion 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 concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 34) was agreed to.

(The concurrent resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

REMOVAL OF INJUNCTION OF SECRECY—TREATY DOCUMENT NO. 114-11

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the injunction of secrecy be removed from the following treaty transmitted to the Senate on March 17, 2016, by the President of the United States: Treaty with Kazakhstan on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, Treaty Document No. 114-11. I further ask that the treaty be considered as having been read the first time; that it be referred, with accompanying papers, to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed; and that the President's message be printed in the RECORD.

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

The message of the President is as follows:

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of Kazakhstan on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, signed at Washington on February 20, 2015. I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties negotiated by the United States to more effectively counter criminal activities. The Treaty should enhance our ability to investigate and prosecute a wide variety of crimes.

The Treaty provides for a broad range of cooperation in criminal matters. Under the Treaty, the Parties agree to assist each other by, among other things: producing evidence (such as testimony, documents, or items) obtained voluntarily or, where necessary, by compulsion; arranging for persons, including persons in custody, to travel to another country to provide evidence; serving documents; executing searches and seizures; locating and identifying persons or items; and freezing and forfeiting assets or property that may be

the proceeds or instrumentalities of crime.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty, and give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA,
THE WHITE HOUSE, March 17, 2016.

REPORTING AUTHORITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the Senate's adjournment, committees be authorized to report legislative and executive matters on Monday, March 28, from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

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

APPOINTMENTS AUTHORITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the upcoming adjournment of the Senate, the President of the Senate, the President pro tempore, and the majority and minority leaders be authorized to make appointments to commissions, committees, boards, conferences, or interparliamentary conferences authorized by law, by concurrent action of the two Houses, or by order of the Senate.

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

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2016, THROUGH MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2016

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn to then convene for pro forma sessions only, with no business being conducted, on the following dates and times, and that following each pro forma session, the Senate adjourn until the next pro forma session: Monday, March 21, at 10 a.m.; Thursday, March 24, at 11 a.m.; Monday, March 28, at 11:30 a.m.; and Thursday, March 31, at 6:30 p.m. I further ask that when the Senate adjourns on Thursday, March 31, it next convene at 3 p.m., Monday, April 4; 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, I ask that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2016, AT 10 A.M.

Mr. McCONNELL. 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.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:33 p.m., adjourned until Monday, March 21, 2016, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

UNITED STATES ADVISORY COMMISSION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

DOUGLAS BARRY WILSON, OF DELAWARE, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES ADVISORY COMMISSION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY FOR A TERM EXPIRING JULY 1, 2017, VICE ELIZABETH F. BAGLEY, TERM EXPIRED.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

HEIDI NEEL BIGGS, OF OREGON, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 6, 2017, VICE ERIC J. TANENBLATT, TERM EXPIRED.

WESTLEY WATENDE OMARI MOORE, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 6, 2016, VICE STAN Z. SOLOWAY, TERM EXPIRED.

WESTLEY WATENDE OMARI MOORE, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 6, 2021. (REAPPOINTMENT)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ANNE HALL, OF MAINE, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

JEFFREY A. ROSEN, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE A GOVERNOR OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE FOR A TERM EXPIRING DECEMBER 8, 2021, VICE LOUIS J. GIULIANO, TERM EXPIRED.

UNITED STATES PAROLE COMMISSION

ALMO J. CARTER, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE A COMMISSIONER OF THE UNITED STATES PAROLE COMMISSION FOR A TERM OF SIX YEARS, VICE PATRICIA CUSHWA, TERM EXPIRED.

LARRY T. GLENN, OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS, TO BE A COMMISSIONER OF THE UNITED STATES PAROLE COMMISSION FOR A TERM OF SIX YEARS, VICE ISAAC FULWOOD, JR., RETIRED.

THE JUDICIARY

LISABETH TABOR HUGHES, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT, VICE BOYCE F. MARTIN, JR., RETIRED.

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

LAURA S. BARCHICK
CHRISTOPHER A. BROWN
CHAD C. CARTER
W. SHANE COHEN
PAUL R. CONNOLLY
ERIK C. COYNE
PAUL E. CRONIN
DON D. DAVIS III
JOEL F. ENGLAND
JOHN E. GILLILAND
PAULA M. GRANT
JENNIFER C. HYZER
JUDY L. KING
CHRISTINE A. LAMONT
JEFFREY G. PALOMINO
TODD W. PENNINGTON
JULIE L. PITVOREC
JULIE L. RUTHERFORD
MICHAEL W. SAFKO
CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR SMITH
RONALD L. SPENCER, JR.
DAVID E. VERCELLONE
KEVIN J. WILKINSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

MICHELLE D. AASTROM
REGINA D. AGEZ CRUZ
JOHN F. BAER
BARBARA A. CAIN
RUSSELL D. CARTER
JULIET T. DEGUZMAN
KAREY M. DUFOUR
DONNA M. EGGERT
INGRID D. FORD
JEANETTE L. FRANTAL
RUSSELL L. FRANTZ, JR.

TRICIA ROCHELLE GARCIA
ERWIN N. GINES
LORRAINE S. GRAVLEY
LINDA A. HAGEMANN
GACQUETTE R. JENNINGS
KAREE M. JENSEN
DEBORAH K. JONES
JOHN L. MANSUY
GINGER S. MILLER
JOANN V. PALMER
PATRICK W. STILLLEY
PATRICIA A. B. TATE
JENNIFER L. TRINKLE
SHEELAH Z. WALKER
RICHARD E. WALLEN
JOHN J. WEATHERWAX
CYNTHIA J. WEIDMAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

LAIRD S. ABBOTT
PHILIP F. ACQUARO
KIRSTEN G. AGUILAR
JENNIFER J. ALLIE
MATTHEW S. ALLEN
MICHAEL P. ALLISON
JAMES JAY ALONZO
AARON D. ALTWIES
STEVEN J. ANDERSON
DAVID R. ANZALDUA
CHRISTOPHER E. AUSTIN
MAURICE C. AZAR
BRIAN J. BACARELLA
STEPHEN G. BAILEY
JEREMIAH W. BALDWIN
CHAD A. BALETTE
JENNIFER M. BARNARD
WILEY L. BARNES
JOHN R. BARNETT
JEROME A. BARRETT
WILLIAM A. BARRINGTON, JR.
BENITO J. BARRON
CHRISTIAN A. BARTHOLOMEW
ROBERT R. BASOM
JAMES EARL BASS
TODD A. BEAN
JASON L. BECK
ERIC J. BEERS
STEPHEN M. BEHM
STEVEN G. BEHMER
SCOTT J. BELANGER
ANTHONY P. BELLIONE
MATTHEW J. BIEWER
MICHAEL R. BLACK
STEVEN J. BLAIR
MICHAEL C. BOGER
RHETT CAMERON BOLDENOW
BARTHOLOMEW G. BONAR
CHAD B. BONDURANT
STEVEN P. BORDING
PHILLIP G. BORN
JOHN P. BOUDREAU
JOSHUA D. BOWMAN
BRIAN L. BRACY
SEAN A. BRADLEY
KENNETH B. BRATLAND
THEODORE A. BREUKER
ROBERT M. BRINKER
DOUGLAS F. BROCK
CHRISTOPHER J. BROMEN
KATHRYN A. BROWN
MICHAEL D. BOX
DAVID R. BUCHANAN
ROSS M. BULLOCK
PAUL C. BURGER
WILLIAM H. BURKS
PAUL K. CARLTON III
MICHELLE C. CARNES
PHILIP E. CARPENTER
JEFFREY F. CARTER
MICHAEL B. CASEY
RONALD E. CHEATHAM
STEVEN R. CHERRINGTON
ANDREW M. CLARK
TAD D. CLARK
ROBERT K. CLEMENT
SPENCER C. CANANOUR
SHAWN T. COCHRAN
JASON J. COCKRUM
STEVEN P. COLLEN
THOMAS R. COLVIN
JOSHUA W. CONINE
CEIR CORAL
ALFREDO CORBETT
JASON E. COROTHERS
CHARLES R. COSNOWSKI
LARRY T. COUNCELL
WILLIAM E. COURTEMANCHE
SEAN J. COVENEY
AARON S. COWLEY
DANE B. CRAWFORD
KEITH L. CRAWFORD
JEFFREY S. CRIDER
JAMES R. CULPEPPER
MICHAEL A. CURLEY
SARA A. CUSTER
CAMERON DADGAR
TODD D. DARRAH
CHAD J. DAVIS
GREGORY A. DAVIS
MICHAEL T. DAVIS
WILLIAM A. DAYTON
CHRISTOPHE J. DEGUELLE
ANTHONY M. DELUCA

JUSTIN D. DEMARCO
 WILLIAM S. DENHAM
 DAVID R. DETHLEFS
 DUANE JEFFREY DIESING
 MITCHELL K. DIXON
 MICHAEL W. DONAHUE II
 DAVID A. DOSS
 JESS W. DRAB
 CHARLES M. DROUILLARD
 CLIFTON M. DURHAM
 DEBORAH KAYE DUSEK
 SCOTT T. EKSTROM
 JOHN W. ELLER
 DAVID C. EPPERSON
 CHARLES B. ERICSON
 ROBERT T. EWERS III
 MICHELLE E. EWY
 WILLIAM B. FARLOW
 BRIAN J. FARMER
 PETER P. FENG
 DEREK R. FERLAND
 DERON L. FRAILIE
 JOHN C. FRAZIER
 LANCE R. FRENCH
 CHRISTOPHER K. FULLER
 DANIEL L. GABLE
 FRANKLIN D. GAILLARD II
 JACK P. GARDNER
 KRISTOFER W. GIFFORD
 RONALD E. GILBERT
 MARCUS K. GLENN
 JEFFREY L. GOGGIN
 JERRY GONZALEZ
 RICHARD A. GOODMAN
 CHRISTOPHER E. GOODYEAR
 BETH D. GRABORITZ
 JEFFREY H. GREENWOOD
 RICHARD GRESZLER, JR.
 G. JOHN GRIMM
 BRIAN J. GROSS
 SCOTT A. GRUNDHAHL
 PETER J. GRYZEN
 MICHAEL C. GUISSCHARD
 NICHOLAS O. GUTTMAN
 ROBERT F. HAAS
 JAMES R. HACKBARTH
 DAVID A. HAMMERSCHMIDT
 LINDA M. HAMPTON
 JON T. HANNAH
 ROBERT L. HANOVICH, JR.
 JOHN C. HANSEN
 TIMMY W. HARBOR
 MARK E. HARRIS
 MICHAEL C. HARVEY
 BRENT R. HATCH
 WALTER C. HATTEMER
 DAVID R. HAUCK
 JEREMIAH S. HEATHMAN
 DANIEL G. HENDRIX
 JOHN A. HENLEY
 SCOTT A. HERITTSCH
 CURTIS L. HERNANDEZ
 JOSHUA L. HETSKO
 RENAE M. HILTON
 GEORGE H. HOCK, JR.
 SCOTT A. HOFFMAN
 PHILIP A. HOLMES
 DEAN M. HOLTHAUS
 SCOTT M. HOPPER
 DOUGLAS W. HORNE
 THOMAS E. HOSKINS
 BRIAN C. HOYBACH
 KEVIN C. HUEBERT
 KEVIN P. HUMSTON
 WILLIAM H. HUNTER
 JOHN S. HUTCHESON
 ROBERT J. HUTT
 TRAVIS L. INGBER
 CHRISTOPHER P. INGLETON
 DARRYL L. INSLEY
 DOUGLAS D. JACKSON
 MICHAEL A. JACKSON
 TRAUANA L. JAMES
 AMY K. JARDON
 BRADLEY L. JOHNSON
 KEVIN S. JOHNSON
 MELISSA A. JOHNSON
 MICHAEL J. JOHNSON
 MICHELE ELAINE JOHNSON
 SAM C. JOHNSON
 OTIS C. JONES
 STEPHEN R. JONES
 SHANNON L. JUBY
 JAMES R. KAUFER
 CHRISTIAN D. KANE
 CHRISTOPHER P. KARNS
 KIERAN F. KEELTY
 BARTON D. KENERSON
 JOHN A. KENT IV
 HERBERT L. KEYSER
 ROBERT A. KIELTY
 JASON S. KING
 ROBERT F. KING
 GEORGE B. KINNEY III
 JASON T. KIRBY
 EILEEN M. W. KIRKLAND
 NIKI J. KISSIAR
 MICHAEL A. KLEPPE
 STEVEN W. KLINGMAN
 TIMOTHY A. KODAMA
 KURT A. KOENIGSFELD
 TERRY A. KOESTER
 TIMOTHY P. KUEHNE
 BRIAN S. LADLAW
 CHRISTOPHER L. LAMBERT
 BRIAN L. LAMIRANDE
 CHRISTOPHER A. LANE

LEO LAWSON, JR.
 EARL D. LAYNE
 MATTHEW A. LEARD
 CHRISTOPHER J. LEONARD
 DAVID D. LEROY
 SHERRI J. LEVAN
 HARMON S. LEWIS, JR.
 PAUL C. LIPS
 TONY S. LOMBARDO
 DAVID R. LOPEZ
 GABRIEL N. LOPEZ
 SHANE D. LOUIS
 DANIEL L. LUCE
 STEVEN E. MACEDA
 ROBERT H. MAKROS
 DANIEL R. MANNING
 FRANK MARCONI
 GAVIN P. MARKS
 LISA MARIE MARTINEZ
 ROBERT A. MASAITIS
 DAVIS H. MAULDING
 TIMOTHY P. MAXWELL
 KENNETH C. MCADAMS
 BRIAN A. MCCULLOUGH
 DAVID M. MCILLECE
 BRIDGET M. MCNAMARA
 ANDREW B. MCVICKER
 DAVID S. MENKE
 ERIES L. G. MENTZER
 ROGER R. MESSER
 JOSEPH R. MEYER
 WILLIAM B. MICKLEY
 JACOB MIDDLETON, JR.
 ANDREA C. MILLER
 CAROL J. MILLER
 CRAIG S. MILLER
 DAVID S. MILLER
 RAYMOND G. MILLERO, JR.
 JOHN F. MOESSNER IV
 JEREMIAH R. MONK
 SCOTT J. MONROE
 MATTHEW A. MORAND
 DAVID J. MORELAND
 STEVEN W. MORITZ
 TARA J. MUEHE
 ANTHONY B. MULHARE
 MARK J. MULLARKEY
 DOUGLAS A. MUSSSELMAN
 SCOTT J. NAHRGANG
 ROBERT L. NANCE
 CRAIG T. NARASAKI
 RICHARD J. NELSON
 JACK L. NEMCEFF II
 LISA A. NEMETH
 BRETT D. NEVILLE
 MICHAEL S. NEWSOM
 QUY H. NGUYEN
 JUSTIN W. NIEDERER
 CRAIG M. NIEMAN
 PHILLIP L. NOLTEMAYER, JR.
 JOHN D. NORTON
 DAVID M. NYIKOS
 RANDY P. OAKLAND
 BRADLEY R. OLIVER
 DAVID R. OMALLEY
 BRIAN P. ONEILL
 BRYAN C. OPPERMAN
 LOUIS E. ORNDORFF
 STEVEN G. OWEN
 NATHAN L. OWENDOFF
 JODY M. OWENS
 MARC L. PACKLER
 DARIAN J. PADILLA
 THOMAS S. PALMER
 SUKHT T. PANANON
 PHILLIP R. PARKER, JR.
 BRIAN L. PATTERSON
 TRACY W. PATTERSON
 ERIC C. PAULSON
 JOHN F. PEAK
 ROBERT J. PEDERSEN
 ROBERT K. PEKAREK
 JAY E. PEKKA
 JEAN PHILIPPE N. PELTIER
 DEVIN R. PEPPER
 WILLIAM D. PERCIVAL
 MANUEL P. PEREZ
 KIRK W. PETERSON
 MICHAEL J. PFINGSTEN
 MICHAEL E. PHILLIPS
 DOUGLAS E. PIERCE
 JASON D. PIPER
 MATTHEW G. POLLOCK
 PAUL H. PORTER
 CRAIG D. PRATHER
 CHRISTOPHER I. PRICE
 CAMERON S. PRINGLE
 NORMAN W. PRUE, JR.
 ANTHONY L. PUENTE
 DAVID M. PUGH
 ANDREW MICHAEL PURATH
 VARUN PURI
 CHRISTOPHER S. PUTMAN
 EDUARDO A. QUERO
 ERIK N. QUIGLEY
 SEAN A. RAESSEMANN
 GERALD I. RAY, JR.
 SAMANTHA D. RAY
 WILLIAM F. RAY
 NICHOLAS J. REED
 GREGORY T. REICH
 ADAM D. REIMAN
 MATTHEW W. RENBARGER
 LENDY G. RENEGAR
 STEPHEN G. RENY
 KEITH REPIK
 KYLE A. REYBITZ

JON M. RHONE
 GLYNN E. RICHARDS
 ROBERT B. RIEGEL
 ROBB N. RIGTRUP
 MICHAEL S. RIMSKY
 RAMIRO RIOJAS
 MARK A. RISELLI
 JOSE L. RIVERAHERNANDEZ
 JASON I. ROBERSON
 BRANDON J. ROBINSON
 MARK S. ROBINSON
 KEITH M. ROESSIG
 DAVID P. RONDEAU
 WILLIAM T. RONDEAU, JR.
 LEONARD T. ROSE
 MICHAEL S. ROWE
 JON K. RUCKER
 CHRISTOPHER J. RUSSELL
 CHRISTOPHER J. RUSSELL
 TIMOTHY H. RUSSELL
 ANDREW P. RUTH
 MATTHEW J. SANDELIER
 STEPHEN T. SANDERS
 GLENN V. SANTOS
 BRIAN M. SCHAFER
 GEORGE F. SCHERS, JR.
 JOCELYN J. SCHERMERHORN
 THOMAS M. SCHRAMMEL
 FRANK B. SCHREIBER
 JEFFREY T. SCHREINER
 JOHN D. SCHULIGER
 JOHN M. SCHUTTE
 GEORGE H. SEBREN, JR.
 KEVIN L. SELLERS
 JASON E. SEYER
 JEFFREY R. SGARLATA
 BRIAN R. SHAPPER
 DOUGLAS S. SHAHAN
 GENE S. SHERER
 THOMAS S. SHIELDS
 BRIAN D. SIDARI
 COREY A. SIMMONS
 TRAVOLIS A. SIMMONS
 COLIN J. SINDEL
 PAUL M. SKIPWORTH
 ERIC A. SMITH
 MICHAEL S. SMITH
 CHRISTOPHER J. SPINELLI
 ERIN M. STAINEPYNE
 MICHAEL R. STAPLES
 SHANE D. STEINKE
 KAYLE M. STEVENS
 BRITTANY D. STEWART
 TRACE B. STEYAERT
 MARC A. STUTZEL
 ADAM J. STONE
 DANIEL W. STONE
 MELISSA A. STONE
 KRISTOPHER W. STRUVE
 JEFFREY A. STYERS
 GERALD D. SULLIVAN, JR.
 DAVID E. SUMERA
 PATRICK J. SUTHERLAND
 JAMES A. SWEENEY
 RYAN S. SWEENEY
 PAUL E. SWENSON
 THOMAS K. SVOVELAND
 RICHARD C. TANNER
 BRYAN E. TASH
 MARK E. TATE
 BEVERLY L. H. TEMPLEMAN
 TIMOTHY W. THURSTON II
 MICHAEL D. TIEMANN
 DOUGLAS F. TIPPET
 STEVEN J. TITTEL
 RICARDO L. TRIMILLOS
 TIMOTHY W. TRIMMELL
 SCOTT A. TRINRUD
 KEITH R. TURNER
 BRIAN V. UCCIARDI
 WILLIAM K. UHRIG
 MICHELLE VANCOURT
 TRICIA A. VANDENTOP
 SERGIO J. VEGA, JR.
 DAVID G. VERNAL
 SCOTT A. VICKERY
 STEVEN E. VILPORS
 MARK J. VITANTONIO
 JASON D. VOORHEIS
 ROBERT J. WAARVIK
 SEAN C. WADE
 EUGENE M. WALL
 TREVOR A. WALL
 DAVID C. WALLIN
 DANIEL P. WALLS
 TERRENCE L. WALTER
 PATRICK A. WAMPLER
 JASON T. WARD
 TRACY T. WARD
 JESSE F. WARREN
 MAX C. WEEMS
 THERESA E. WEEMS
 CHRISTOPHER S. WELCH
 SEAN T. WELSH
 ROBERT D. WESTOVER
 JON S. WHEELER, JR.
 JEFFREY J. WHITE
 NATHAN A. WHITE
 STEPHEN D. WIER
 DAVID E. WILLIAMS, JR.
 KEVIN L. WILLIAMS
 DAVID A. WILLIAMSON
 ROCKIE K. WILSON
 LORI L. WINN
 PATRICK C. WINSTEAD
 STEPHANE LAINE WOLFGEHER
 PAUL J. YUSON

CHRISTOPHER J. ZUHLKE

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

GEOFFREY E. ANDERSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

FANY L. RIVERA

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be major

BRUCE H. ROBINSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C. SECTION 624:

*To be major*MATTHEW B. BOOTH
DONALD W. MOYER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

ROBERT L. CRONYN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

DARRELL W. COLLINS

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

DARREN J. DONLEY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant commander

STEPHANIE M. SIMONI

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant commander

JENNIFER L. SHAFER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

*To be lieutenant commander*JUSTIN K. CONROY
ANDREW G. MONTALVO
REBECCA L. YOUNG

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be captain

BRICE A. GOODWIN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant commander

BRIAN J. HAMER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant commander

SCOTT F. GRUWELL

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant commander

SHANNON D. LORIMER

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AS MEMBERS OF THE COAST GUARD PERMANENT COMMISSIONED TEACHING STAFF UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 188:

*To be lieutenant*JONATHAN P. TSCHUDY
MATTHEW B. WILLIAMSPRIVACY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES OVERSIGHT
BOARD

JAMES XAVIER DEMPSEY, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE PRIVACY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES OVER-

SIGHT BOARD FOR A TERM EXPIRING JANUARY 29, 2022.
(REAPPOINTMENT)

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by
the Senate March 17, 2016:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

JANINE ANNE DAVIDSON, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AND TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 50:

To be vice admiral

REAR ADM. KARL L. SCHULTZ

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TODD A. WEILER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be general

GEN. JOSEPH L. VOTEL

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be general

LT. GEN. RAYMOND A. THOMAS III

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE CORPS TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

*To be major general*BRIG. GEN. PATRICK D. SARGENT
BRIG. GEN. ROBERT D. TENHET

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

*To be brigadier general*COL. JEFFREY J. JOHNSON
COL. RONALD T. STEPHENS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE CORPS TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

*To be brigadier general*COL. DENNIS P. LEMASTER
COL. MICHAEL J. TALLEY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. MICHAEL K. NAGATA

IN THE MARINE CORPS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

*To be brigadier general*COL. BRADLEY S. JAMES
COL. KURT W. STEIN

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. AUSTIN S. MILLER

IN THE AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JAMES B. ANDERSON AND ENDING WITH HYRAL B. WALKER, JR., WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JEREMY V. BASILIAN AND ENDING WITH CHRISTOPHER A. WATSON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH CHRISTOPHER F. ABBOTT AND ENDING WITH DEVIN LEE ZUFELT, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

AIR FORCE NOMINATION OF CHRISTOPHER T. STEIN, TO BE MAJOR.

IN THE ARMY

ARMY NOMINATION OF GREGORY L. BOYLAN, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF DEREK G. BEAN, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ADRIAN R. ALGARRA AND ENDING WITH GREGORY B. WILLIAMS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH PHILIP O. ADAMS AND ENDING WITH BENJAMIN M. WUNDERLICH, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JULIA N. ALVA-REZ AND ENDING WITH APRIL D. WILLIAMS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH WENDY M. ADAMIAN AND ENDING WITH D012433, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

ARMY NOMINATION OF VERNITA M. CORBETT, TO BE MAJOR.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MATTHEW H. ADAMS AND ENDING WITH D012453, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

ARMY NOMINATION OF WILLIAM D. ROSE, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF MARK W. MANOSO, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF ERIC F. SABETY, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ANDREW R. MCIVER AND ENDING WITH GERARD C. PHILIP, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON MARCH 3, 2016.

IN THE MARINE CORPS

MARINE CORPS NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH AARON R. CRAIG AND ENDING WITH CHRISTOPHER T. STEINHILBER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 28, 2016.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JIMMY W. DARSEY AND ENDING WITH GERALD E. PIRK, JR., WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 28, 2016.

IN THE NAVY

NAVY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MATTHEW T. ALLEN AND ENDING WITH JOSHUA F. ZIMMER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

NAVY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH RICHARD W. LANG AND ENDING WITH BRADLEY E. SHEMLUCK, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

NAVY NOMINATION OF MICHAEL L. HIPPE, TO BE CAPTAIN.

NAVY NOMINATION OF RONALD H. NELLEN, TO BE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER.

NAVY NOMINATION OF ASHLEY A. HOCKYCKO, TO BE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER.

FOREIGN SERVICE

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ERIC DEL VALLE AND ENDING WITH RYAN TRUXTON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON MAY 7, 2015.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH CHERYL L. ANDERSON AND ENDING WITH MELISSA A. WILLIAMS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JENNIFER M. ADAMS AND ENDING WITH SUNIL SEBASTIAN XAVIER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH DARYL ARTHUR BREHM AND ENDING WITH MELINDA D. SALLYARDS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 19, 2016.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH SCOTT D. HOCKLANDER AND ENDING WITH CATHERINE MARY TRUJILLO, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 19, 2016.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATION OF HOLLY S. HIGGINS.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATION OF JOHN MCCASLIN.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH LAURIE FARRIS AND ENDING WITH JAMES RIGASSIO, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

WITHDRAWAL

Executive message transmitted by the President to the Senate on March

March 17, 2016

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

S1611

17, 2016 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

BRAD R. CARSON, OF OKLAHOMA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS, VICE JESSICA GARFOLA WRIGHT, RESIGNED, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON JULY 8, 2015.