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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.

Almighty and eternal God, You are hidden from our sight, but we feel Your presence. Incline our spirits to seek You, our minds to know You, and our hearts to love You. Forgive us when we fail to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Bless our lawmakers. Join them in heart, mind, and soul to do their best for the common good. Keep them so dedicated to Your purposes that they will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You.

Lord, into Your hands we commit our Nation and world.

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 MAJORITY LEADER

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

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 96, H.R. 2028.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 96, H.R. 2028, a bill making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 96, H.R. 2028, an act making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Thad Cochran, Bill Cassidy, Roy Blunt, Mark Kirk, Thom Tillis, James Lankford, Cory Gardner, Orrin G. Hatch, John Thune, Johnny Isakson, Lisa Murkowski, James M. Inhofe, Susan M. Collins, Lamar Alexander, Shelley Moore Capito, Mitch McConnell.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate is closer to passing the most comprehensive aviation security reforms in years, and I hope we will do so today. This important legislation will bolster security for travelers and look out for consumers' interests.

Here is how it will help improve security: by improving vetting and inspections of airport employees to deter terrorist attacks; by expanding security measures and prescreening zones, which are often vulnerable; by shoring up security for international flights coming into our airports; and by improving preparation for everything from cyber security attacks to active shooter scenarios to outbreaks of communicable diseases.

This legislation will also benefit consumers by requiring airlines to offer refunds for lost or delayed bags, by providing more information on things like seat availability, and by improving travel for passengers with disabilities. It accomplishes this without increasing taxes or fees on passengers and without imposing heavyhanded regulations that diminish choice for travelers.

This important FAA reauthorization and airport security legislation is the result of strong leadership by Senator THUNE, the chair of the Commerce Committee, and Senator AYOTTE, the chair of the Aviation Subcommittee, as well as their Democratic counterparts, Senators NELSON and CANTWELL. They worked diligently across party lines, listened to their colleagues' ideas, and never stopped working for legislation both sides could support.

In the Commerce Committee, nearly 60 amendments were accepted from both sides, and the bill passed by voice vote. On the floor, more than a dozen amendments were accepted from both sides, and I am optimistic that we will soon pass it here on a bipartisan basis. I appreciate the efforts of the bill managers to work through amendments and move the bill forward.

This important FAA reauthorization and airport security legislation was bipartisan from the start. It shows why returning to regular order is so important. It is another example of what can be achieved in this Republican-led Senate—a Senate we put back to work for the American people.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Mr. President, thanks to an agreement reached last night, the Senate is now poised to pass broad, bipartisan energy legislation too. We have an agreement to take the Energy Policy

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

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Modernization Act back up, consider even more amendments, and then take a final vote on it.

I was encouraged to see the Democratic leader yesterday agreeing that this is important legislation. It will support more American jobs, more American growth, and more American energy independence, and we will finish our work soon.

Passage of this bill will represent the culmination of more than a year's worth of hard work, countless listening sessions and oversight hearings, numerous amendment votes and debate hours, and impressive reserves of determination from both the chair, Senator MURKOWSKI, and the ranking member, Senator CANTWELL.

Senator MURKOWSKI and Senator CANTWELL never gave up. Even when passage of this bill seemed impossible, they never stopped pushing for it. I have been impressed by their efforts just as I have been impressed with what this broad bipartisan energy bill can achieve for our country.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ENERGY AND FAA BILLS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I agree with the Republican leader that the energy bill is a good bill. As I said yesterday, it is just 3 years behind time. We have tried many times to move forward on it, but filibusters took place by the Republicans, and we were unable to get it done.

He is right that Senator CANTWELL and Senator MURKOWSKI never gave up and they worked through lots of problems. I wish we could have taken care of Flint in the process. That held things up for a little while but not long, and we are still looking at ways to take care of the people of Flint who have been really damaged by bad government.

So we are glad that Flint will come up in the near future, and we think we have ways of getting that done. Maybe we will see it in the appropriations bills that we are doing.

Energy is good, and I am glad we got it done. Now, we have allowed this to move forward. We have not been blocking the bill. We agreed, even though the bill is long overdue, and we are not going to treat people the way we were treated. So we are glad that is done.

On the FAA bill, I am glad we are going to get something done. As we know, we missed an opportunity to take care of a lot of people who are desperate for help. People in the State of Nevada—geothermal—they need help. Fuel cells, biomass, and other energy initiatives were left out. By inadvertence in the drafting of the bill, they were left out. The Republican leader said he will take care of that, and I am confident that he will. It is a longer wait for people, and it makes it difficult for people to hang on to their businesses. I know that his job is hard. He has told me and he has told Leader PELOSI that he will get this done this year. So we are looking forward to that.

PASSING A BUDGET RESOLUTION AND FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. President, tomorrow is April 15. Under the Congressional Budget Act, that is the day by which Congress is supposed to have completed a budget resolution.

This Republican Congress will not meet tomorrow's deadline. We have known that for some time. By all indications, they have no intention of doing anything to pass a budget resolution any time soon.

As the Republican leader told reporters earlier this week, in the absence of a budget resolution, Republicans will simply use the top-line spending numbers that we agreed upon last year. Here is what he said:

> We're waiting to see if the House is able to do a budget. In the meantime I've already announced, and I'll announce again today that we're going to move to appropriations next week, probably starting with energy and water, and we'll mark these bills to the top line that we agreed to in the agreement last year.

As we know, just a minute ago, he filed cloture on the energy and water bill.

If this statement he made sounds familiar, it should, because that is what we did when we were in the majority. We used the top line numbers in the Murray-Ryan budget agreement as a basis for spending bills. Republicans will begin that same process today as the appropriations process gets under way with the first full committee markup of the year.

But how did Republicans react when we did the same thing? They were falling all over themselves—speech after speech—to criticize us. They had charts and graphs and anything to focus on there being no budget. They came out endlessly to taunt us with over-the-top rhetoric. They shed crocodile tears by the bucket. They even threatened to withhold Members' pay as punishment. There was legislation produced to that effect, but it was all for show.

Republicans promised voters that, once in power, they would pass a budget each and every year. That is what the Republican leader promised in 2012, saying:

> I don't think the law says, ''Pass a budget unless it's hard,'' so I think there's no question that we would take up our responsibility. . . . We will be passing a budget. . . . Every year.

That was the Republican pledge: Give us the majority, and we will pass a budget every year.

Well, it is pretty clear that they are going to break that promise.

This is just the latest example of the Republicans refusing to meet their commitments—refusing to do their jobs—even according to their own terms.

It is just like the refusal to consider Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland. We have years and years' worth of statements from the Republican leader and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee in which they said unequivocally that it is the Senate's duty to consider the President's Supreme Court nominees. I have read their quotes on this floor endlessly.

These statements go back decades. The Republican leader wrote papers in law school demanding the Senate give Supreme Court nominees all due consideration. Well, all due consideration is not refusing to meet with a man, not holding hearings, and not allowing a vote.

But now that he, the Republican leader, is in a position to do something about that article he wrote in law school and the other statements that have been made by the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, he won't give Merrick Garland a hearing or a vote. He won't even meet with him, even though the chairman of the Judiciary Committee met with him in secret, not in his office but in the private dining room downstairs, and then went out the back door, described as stumbling over chairs to vacate the premises.

So, basically, what I ask is this: Where are all the Republican Senators who came to the floor to bash Democrats for the lack of a budget resolution? They have gone silent. I am just asking: When are the Republicans going to do their job?

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESS TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 636, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

> A bill (H.R. 636) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes.

Pending:

> McConnell (for Thune/Nelson) amendment No. 3679, in the nature of a substitute.
>
> Thune amendment No. 3680 (to amendment No. 3679), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The senior Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support the motion to end debate so the Senate can vote and pass the pro-security and pro-consumer provisions within the bipartisan Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2016.

For the past 2 weeks on the Senate floor and earlier at the Commerce Committee, we have engaged in a constructive and open process to consider amendments making important changes to this legislation that sets

aviation policies for our country. On the Senate floor we added 19 amendments, 10 from Democrats and 9 from Republican Senators, and at the Commerce Committee we approved 57 amendments, 34 from Democrats and 23 from Republicans. A number of these amendments were substantial, including the vast majority of the aviation security provisions within the legislation.

We have also agreed to set aside discussions on certain issues for now so we could continue to have a bill with broad bipartisan support. On some policy issues where there was disagreement, we found the will of the Senate through negotiation and votes. Our debate has been constructive, and I value the process by which we have allowed Senators to make their mark on this bill.

After 2 weeks of consideration, it is now time to conclude our work on the bipartisan legislation I introduced along with my friend, the ranking member from Florida, Senator BILL NELSON, and our Aviation Subcommittee leaders, KELLY AYOTTE and MARIA CANTWELL.

The bill we can vote on today has been described in the Washington Post as ''one of the most passenger-friendly Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bills in a generation.''

Even more important, this bill includes strong, new security measures that address the threat that ISIS and other terrorist groups pose to airline passengers. It is a comprehensive bill addressing needs in cyber security, the aircraft design approval process, undue regulatory burdens on noncommercial pilots, airport infrastructure, rural air service, lithium battery safety, mental health screening for pilots, communicable disease preparedness, drone safety, and many other important issues. This bill helps the public that relies on our air transportation system, and we shouldn't let them down.

A vote yes on the motion to end debate allows us to move forward and to get these reforms going forward by agreeing to ultimately vote on them and to vote on passage of this bill.

Again, I thank all who are involved. Senator NELSON and I started this process months ago. I think we had somewhere on the order of seven hearings, full committee and subcommittee, in debating and helping shape the bill. It was a very constructive process as we went through the markup, where we incorporated the suggestions and good ideas that came from many Members of our committee. We tried to continue that process on the floor of the Senate, and we have been successful in adding some amendments that strengthen the bill. I wish we could add more. I hope we can still reach agreement. There are still negotiations underway for another package of 25 or 30 amendments that we would like to get added to this bill if we can get the level of cooperation that is necessary to accomplish that.

In the end, we need to pass this. It is important for the American people. It is a piece of legislation that needs to get voted on in the Senate, hopefully on to the House, and eventually on the President's desk.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from South Dakota. He has been a real friend and a champion in being able to work together in the best traditions of the Senate in trying to craft—and I think we have successfully—a bipartisan piece of legislation that continues, as the Senator has quoted from one of the papers, to advance the FAA in a way that we should be sensitive to the needs of the flying public.

It is also this Senator's hope that where we have disagreements on just a few amendments, that after we have a big vote invoking cloture so we can move on with the bill, that a package of 30-some amendments—noncontroversial, bipartisan—would then be allowed to be adopted by unanimous consent, and then it is possible that we could move on to the final passage early this afternoon. That is this Senator's hope.

Let me underscore what the Senator has already said. There are a lot of challenges in how we conduct ourselves in the airspace of this country. There are a lot of important things that we have to do, such as modernizing the air traffic control system, the next generation of technology in moving us efficiently, and in the process it has to be safe.

Therefore, as we see new kinds of challenges because of technology—for example, unmanned aerial vehicles, drones—we have to approach that with great caution and make sure we know what we are doing so the flying public is safe.

I hope we get a big vote on this motion for cloture.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Senate amendment No. 3679.

Mitch McConnell, Daniel Coats, Roger F. Wicker, Roy Blunt, Orrin G. Hatch, Thom Tillis, John Hoeven, Rob Portman, James Lankford, John Thune, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, John Barrasso, Johnny Isakson, James M. Inhofe, Jerry Moran, Kelly Ayotte.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on amendment No. 3679, offered by the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. MCCONNELL, to H.R. 636, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 94, nays 4, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 45 Leg.]

YEAS—94

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

NAYS—4

Boxer	Portman
Lee	Rubio

NOT VOTING—2

Cruz	Sanders

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 94, the nays are 4.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 627

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, America was horrified 2 years ago as the scandal at the VA unfolded. We heard about veterans dying while they were waiting for care. Meanwhile, we discovered that VA employees manipulated appointment wait lists to hide the fact that the VA couldn't provide the care our veterans needed in a timely fashion.

The denial of earned care is always tragic, but it is inexcusable when the denial is driven by bureaucratic tampering and falsifications. Cooking the books was one bureaucratic offense, but not holding accountable those responsible is an additional bureaucratic failure, and one that continues to haunt our system.

These weren't just a few scattered incidents either. The VA inspector general investigated 73 VA facilities across

the country and found problems in 51 of them, ranging from rule violations to outright fraud. These reports demonstrate that inappropriate scheduling practices were systematic at the VA.

This map shows how widespread the wait-list rule violations and manipulations have been. The inspector general's office found out how our veterans were treated when they called up looking for care. The information the VA gave was manipulated to make it seem as though the VA was doing much better than it was. We literally know that veterans died while waiting for care. That is shameful, and we owe it to those who served this Nation to serve them. They earned this by defending us and our freedoms.

Unfortunately, one of those 51 cases was the VA medical center in my home State of New Hampshire.

A New Hampshire newspaper summarizes the inspector general's report as follows:

> Staff at the Manchester VA Medical Center manipulated appointment dates and refused to schedule referrals beyond 14 days in some speciality departments, all to make it appear patients were being seen quickly.
>
> One report also shows that top officials at the Manchester VA discouraged the use of electronic waiting lists.
>
> Another shows extremely long waits at the facility's Pain Clinic, where one patient waited an average of seven to eight months for injection treatments.
>
> The reports show a near obsession with keeping numbers down when it comes to the length of time that veterans had to wait for appointments, which is one of the ways bonuses for hospital officials were determined.

Bonuses were determined by how you performed on the scheduling and whether you were actually meeting the needs of our veterans on time. Yet we know they were manipulating wait lists across the country to show that they were, in fact, serving our veterans when they were not.

Last week I met with the current Manchester VA medical center director to discuss the findings of the inspector general's report. Even though it didn't occur under her leadership, these findings are serious and must be dealt with appropriately. While I was encouraged to hear of the steps the director has taken to address the scheduling misconduct, I will be closely following the medical center's practices and performance.

We cannot let this happen again. Part of not letting it happen again is what brings me to the floor today. I will make sure we aren't incentivizing misconduct and allowing wrongdoers to get away with it, whether it is the wait-list manipulations or misconduct.

Unfortunately, the wait-list scandal isn't the only scandal at the VA. There is a common theme with all these scandals: Those committing misconduct are getting bonuses—yes, bonuses. Those involved in wrongdoing are getting checks paid by the American taxpayer. That is unacceptable, and that is why I introduced bipartisan legislation to improve accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs by requiring the VA Secretary to claw back bonuses paid to VA employees who were involved in serious misconduct or felonies. It would also require the VA to retain a copy of any reprimand or admonishment given to an employee by the Department which would then be in that employee's permanent record. Keeping that information in someone's employment record seems like common sense, but we have to pass this bill in order to do that. Amazingly, the Secretary of the VA doesn't currently have the authority to claw back bonuses even if, as with the wait list, the perpetrator's misconduct led to a bigger bonus check. That is unacceptable. We cannot reward those who commit fraud and misconduct by doling out taxpayer dollars.

A recent report noted that in 2014 the VA paid out $140 million in bonuses. Nearly half of the VA's employees got bonuses. More importantly, we know that individuals who were implicated in an array of scandals also received bonuses. For example, the director of the Phoenix VA hospital who was fired for her misconduct got a $9,000 bonus. The VA senior managers who improperly leveraged their positions to get hundreds of thousands of dollars in relocation funds to move to new facilities, along with a bump in pay—even though they were committing misrepresentations and fraud—got bonuses. A VA employee who recently pleaded the Fifth Amendment before a congressional committee got a bonus. Executives overseeing the $1 billion-over-budget VA medical center construction project in Colorado got bonuses. A doctor implicated in overprescribing opioids at the Tomah VA facility called ''Candy Land,'' where veterans were harmed—bonus.

We can't let these bonuses keep going to wrongdoers. It will just continue the erosion of trust of our veterans, who have done so much to defend this Nation and our freedom. That is why we need to pass this bill. The VA Secretary must be active in pursuing the disciplinary actions against VA employees guilty of misconduct so they aren't getting bonuses and taking away resources that could go to help our veterans. Without my legislation, the VA Secretary does not have the authority right now to go after a bonus, even if the bonus is given to a wrongdoer, to claw that money back.

This bill passed out of committee by a voice vote. The records retention provisions in this bill passed out of the House of Representatives by voice vote. Let's put this authority into law so that those who break the law don't get bonuses. That is why I am standing on the floor today asking for unanimous consent to pass this legislation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 240, S. 627. I further ask that the Ayotte and Brown amendments be agreed to; the committee-reported substitute amendment, as amended, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; the title amendment be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I agree with much of what the Senator from New Hampshire said, and that is that our veterans deserve to have the highest quality care by the Veterans Administration. Those employees at the Veterans Administration who have not carried out their responsibility should be disciplined, and when there are adverse findings, there should be consequences to them. So I agree with much of what she has said.

However, let us be mindful that the overwhelming number of Federal workers, including those at the Veterans Administration, are hard-working public servants, asked to do more with less resources. They have been through freezes, furloughs, government shutdowns, sequestration—you name it.

I understand that the Veterans' Affairs Committee is considering more comprehensive legislation, as they should. As my colleague from New Hampshire has mentioned, this deals with one aspect of those who have adverse findings in regard to their ability to get bonuses or the reprimand on their record.

Here is my problem. If we use a unanimous consent request, there is no opportunity for amendment, and there is no opportunity for debate. When I finish my comments, I am going to ask that the Senator amend her unanimous consent request to include an amendment that I wish to offer. Let me explain what it does.

Yes, we want to hold the employee accountable—those who have not carried out the public trust in which there are adverse findings. But there also has to be accountability for the supervisors, for those who should be managing the agency so that we don't have employees doing what they did.

Managers need to have tools. They need to be able to manage their employees. They need to be able to determine how their employees are handled if we are going to hold them accountable, and I want to hold the supervisors accountable. So my amendment would allow the supervisor to determine the length of the suspension of the bonus that the individual could receive.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If I could just ask Members to take their conversations out of the Senate Chamber.

Mr. CARDIN. I appreciate that, and I thank the Presiding Officer very much. I thought I was getting an agreement here.

So to continue, it could be longer than the 5 years that is in the bill of the Senator from New Hampshire, but it would be the manager or supervisor who would determine the length of the suspension of the right to receive the

bonus, so that the manager has the tools in order to manage the workforce and we can hold the supervisor accountable.

The second amendment is similar, as it relates to the reprimand being retained in the records. It allows the manager to have the discretion as to the length of time.

The bill that the Senator from New Hampshire is recommending is a hard 5-year period, and it doesn't give the manager the ability to use these tools as ways to advance service to our veterans.

The bottom line here is service to our veterans. That is the bottom line—that they get the services they deserve.

So I ask unanimous consent that the Senator modify her request so that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 240, S. 627; that in lieu of the committee-reported substitute and title amendments, that the Cardin substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; that the Cardin title amendment be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

That would carry out the modifications that I said, giving the manager the ability to impose either a shorter or longer period of time than the bill of the Senator from New Hampshire.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from New Hampshire so modify her request?

Ms. AYOTTE. No, I do not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. CARDIN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I certainly thank the Senator from Maryland. I agree, and I believe there are many hard-working Federal employees. The reason that I have been fighting for this bill in particular is, No. 1, to make sure that those who commit misconduct are held accountable. No. 2, I actually want to make sure that we aren't sending the wrong message to the people who are working hard and doing their jobs. When they see someone else who has committed misconduct by literally manipulating wait lists get a bonus, that actually demoralizes the good, hard-working employees who are doing their jobs and serving veterans.

So this is about making sure that the people who actually do a good job get recognized. But when you give a bonus to someone who has committed misconduct, you not only obviously undermine our system—thinking about the veterans who have served our Nation with so much courage and done so much for us—not only do we corrode their trust, but I think we corrode the trust of the workforce that is doing really great work every day, and I want to thank those who are doing the good work on our behalf. I have had a chance to meet many of them.

I want to address the point of the Senator from Maryland about giving managers authority. I wish to point out that the problem we have here is that this is rampant—absolutely rampant. If we look at what happened with the director of the Phoenix VA who lost her job—fired for misconduct—where literally wait lists were manipulated and veterans died, she got a $9,000 bonus. So who are we going to leave discretion to here? Many of the managers, I know, need to manage the facilities, which is important. But when it comes to the bonus issue, we literally would be putting, for example in the Phoenix situation, the individual who gets fired for overseeing all of this in charge of whether and how long other people's bonuses are clawed back. I would also say that this has been rampant, unfortunately, about management, and not just of the director of the Phoenix VA but the other examples I gave, including the VA senior managers who improperly leveraged their positions to get hundreds of thousands of dollars in relocation funds. So, in other words, they were misappropriating taxpayer dollars. They got bonuses too. They are managers.

We have executives overseeing the huge cost overrun in the Colorado VA who got bonuses. We have many examples. If we put this at the discretion of how long this is going to go in place instead of putting a logical time period in place, which my bill does, then we are going to keep perpetuating the same situation where the discretion makes it so it doesn't happen. That worries me, because, unfortunately, we have a pattern here that needs to be addressed.

Second, I would just say that, as we look at even the ability to retain records, most employers do have standard recordkeeping in terms of if you receive a reprimand or an admonishment and how long that is retained. So if we just leave that completely loosey-goosey discretion among managers, where we have already established some of them have been part of this misconduct, then I fear there really will be no accountability and these provisions will not have the teeth in them that they should.

Let me just say that this bill that we have been working on, that did pass out of committee, is something that I have been working on and negotiating for months, working and taking people's concerns into account. It does ensure that, before any employee is subject to having the bonus clawed back, they do have the opportunity for due process. So that is built into this to challenge the underlying claims made against them. But if we put this all into a discretionary basis, then we are just going to be in the same situation that we are right now and not have the teeth that we need in this commonsense measure.

I talked to some of my constituents about this issue, and they can't believe that we actually have to pass a law to say that if you got a bonus and you committed misconduct—in fact, one of the reasons you got the bonus is because of the misconduct, because you manipulated the wait list—yes, you can give that money back, and you shouldn't be receiving a bonus. It is kind of shocking that this isn't just common sense. But right now the VA Secretary does not have this authority.

Our veterans deserve better. This is plain common sense. I am disappointed that the modification that was sought on the floor would weaken this commonsense bill. I am going to continue to fight for more accountability in our VA. But let's have some common sense in all of this. We shouldn't be rewarding our employees who are committing misconduct for the very conduct that they are committing and that unfortunately is harming our veterans who have done so much for this Nation.

I am the granddaughter of a World War II veteran. My husband is an Iraq veteran. I have had the privilege in my job of meeting so many of our veterans, both current Active-Duty military and those who have served in conflicts going back to World War II. There is no greater example of patriotism and what makes our country great than our veterans. Really, if we think about what has happened in our VA and how shameful it is, this is something that we need to make sure we get right once and for all for those who have defended this Nation and who really show us what it means to be an American.

So I am going to continue to fight for such a commonsense piece of legislation, but I hope my colleagues will join me in this so that we can make sure that the VA performs its mission, which is to give our veterans the best care they can receive and that they certainly have earned defending our great Nation.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I appreciate the hard work Senator AYOTTE has put into her bill and her willingness to work across the aisle with the ranking member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and Senator BROWN. Since I objected to her unanimous consent request and she objected to my counteroffer, I would like to take a few moments to outline my concerns about her bill and explain why I offered a complete substitute amendment that reflects those concerns and an amendment to change the title.

At the outset, I want to make it clear that I do not condone malfeasance by any Federal executive or employee. The well-documented problems at the Veterans Administration, VA, are particularly troubling because they harmed the men and women who have defended our Nation—and their families. That is unacceptable.

There is an old proverb, ''You can fix the blame or you can fix the problem.'' Actually, VA Secretary Robert McDonald, his leadership team, and the VA rank-and-file are doing both.

To that end, I would encourage my colleagues to read the December 9, 2015, testimony of Sloan D. Gibson, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

In the context of patient access and scheduling data manipulation concerns that came to light at the Phoenix VA Medical Center, Deputy Secretary Gibson reported that, as of October 2015, VA completed 97 percent of appointments within 30 days of the clinically indicated or veteran's preferred date; 91 percent within 14 days; 87 percent within 7 days; and 24 percent on the same day. VA's average wait time for completed primary care appointments is 4 days; specialty care is 5 days; and mental health care is 3 days.

The Veterans Benefits Administration, VBA, completed 1.4 million claims in fiscal year 2015, nearly 67,000 more than the previous year and the highest completion rate in VA history. Fiscal year 2015 marked the 6th year in a row of more than 1 million claims.

VBA reduced its claims backlog 88 percent from a peak of 610,000 in March 2013 to a historic low of 75,122 and reduced inventory 58 percent from a peak of 884,000 in July 2012 to 369,328, 28 percent lower than fiscal year 2014.

The average number of days a veteran is waiting for a claims decision, pending, is 91 days, a 191-day reduction from a peak of 282 days in March 2013 and the lowest average number of days pending in the 21st century. VBA's average days to complete is now 129 days—a 60-day reduction from fiscal year 2014. So VA is improving its services to veterans. That is fixing the problem.

Now, what about VA supervisors and employees who engaged in misbehavior or wrongdoing? There is a popular misconception that you can't get rid of Federal workers. In fact, in fiscal year 2015, 2,348 VA employees were removed, terminated during probation, or retired or resigned with a removal action pending. Over 1,800 of these individuals—or more than 75 percent—were fired. To be clear, these numbers pertain to the entire Department for all infractions and are not limited to the wait list problem.

It is a mistake just to focus on those numbers. As Secretary McDonald and Deputy Secretary Gibson wrote in the January 21, 2016, Wall Street Journal, ''You can't fire your way to excellence.'' But the point here is that punishments have been and are being meted out; people have had their careers ended. That is fixing the blame.

I will briefly outline my concerns with S. 627, even as reported and as it would be modified by the Ayotte and Brown amendments.

First, the bill deprives the Secretary of the discretionary authority needed to manage and discipline the VA workforce appropriately.

Second, the bill establishes new precedents for punishing Federal workers that haven't been thoroughly vetted and may have harmful unintended consequences.

Third the bill has two major components. The first deals with bonuses; the second deals with employees' personnel records and reprimands and admonishments. The second component was added at mark-up and was not a subject considered when the Veterans Affairs Committee held its hearing on bonuses on May 13, 2015. The Republican leader talks about the need to restore regular order. There ought to be a hearing regarding the second component. And fairness dictates that a witness from a Federal employee union, such as the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents many VA workers, should be invited to testify.

As Senators BLUMENTHAL, MURRAY, SANDERS, BROWN, TESTER, and HIRONO stated in their Minority Views in Senate Report 114–148:

> Besides the substantive issues with the provision that we have identified, section 2 of S. 627 was derived from S. 1496, a bill that has not been considered in a legislative hearing. For a significant and controversial provision like section 2 of S. 627, the Committee should have held a legislative hearing to give all Members the opportunity to hear from witnesses and fully understand the consequences of this provision.

I am not objecting simply to object. I would like to work with the junior Senator from New Hampshire to see if we can find common ground, and that is why I sent a substitute amendment and title change amendment, which needs to be done separately, to the desk, and asked her to modify her consent request to reflect these two amendments.

Let me explain exactly what I am proposing. The unanimous consent that has been hot-lined consists of three elements. The first is S. 627 as reported. The second is an Ayotte amendment modifying provisions of that bill dealing with bonuses. The third is a Brown amendment modifying provisions of that bill dealing with reprimands and admonishments.

What I have done is to combine all three elements into a single substitute and modify it to restore to the Secretary some managerial discretion, which I feel is essential for someone charged with running a department the size of a Fortune Six company.

As reported, the title of the bill is ''To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to revoke bonuses paid to employees involved in electronic wait list manipulations, and for other purposes''.

While the wait list problem may have spawned this bill, that title is inaccurate. The bill has no such limitations implied by that title; it applies Department-wide for any offense.

So I propose a simple amendment changing the title to read: ''To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup inappropriate bonuses paid to or on behalf of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.''

Section 1 of S. 627 as reported and as further modified by the Ayotte amendment prohibits the Secretary from awarding bonuses for 5 years to any employee who is the subject of an ''adverse finding.'' My substitute amendment changes that provision to give the Secretary discretion to withhold future bonuses ''until such date as the Secretary considers appropriate.''

Now, my language theoretically empowers the Secretary to withhold bonuses for more than 5 years. The point here is to provide the Secretary with the flexibility needed to manage, discipline, and incentivize 340,000 people in an appropriate fashion. I wonder if there is any Senator who has managed a workforce as large as the VA's and, if so, would have preferred surrendering his or her discretion to make personnel decisions as he or she thought necessary.

Section 1 of S. 627 as reported and further modified by the Ayotte amendment of the bill states in part that:

> The Secretary may base an adverse finding . . . on an investigation by, determination of, or information provided by the Inspector General of the Department or another senior ethics official of the Department or the Comptroller General of the United States . . .

I believe the Secretary must base an adverse finding on an independent determination. As I have stated, I fully support increasing accountability at the VA—and that includes making sure that a VA employee does not receive a bonus while engaging in misconduct.

Senator AYOTTE's bill, however, does not require the Secretary to base an adverse finding on the determination of an independent decisionmaker. My amendment would cure this defect and set appropriate limits by requiring the Secretary to base an adverse finding on an independent determination. By doing so, it would ensure that bonus bans are not arbitrary.

Section 1 of S. 627 as reported and further modified by the Ayotte amendment requires the Secretary to recoup bonuses paid to employees if they are subsequently subject to an adverse finding with respect to the years during which the bonuses were awarded.

Furthermore, section 1 requires VA employees to certify that they will repay any bonus received during a year in which an adverse finding may subsequently be made.

These provisions raise many unanswered questions, including how such actions would be treated with respect to determining Federal and State tax liabilities. But I have left these provisions unchanged.

Section 1 of S. 627 as reported and further modified by the Ayotte amendment states that ''The Secretary may promulgate such rules as the Secretary considers appropriate to carry out this section.''

Considering the unprecedented nature of the sanctions in section 1, I believe it is imperative that the Secretary engage in a formal rulemaking

to allow all interested parties the opportunity to weigh in with their concerns and suggestions.

S. 627 is characterized as a legislative response to a specific management crisis at the VA. Yet it sets several new precedents and penalties that will be applied in a much broader context. As such, I believe it would be appropriate to sunset the bill after 3 years to encourage Congress to revisit whether it is an appropriate legislative remedy to the ''wait list'' problem at the VA and whether the bill is causing any adverse unintended consequences.

My original proposal to the junior Senator from New Hampshire included two sunset provisions, for section 1 and for section 2, which I will discuss momentarily. Senator AYOTTE objected to the sunset provisions, so I have removed them from my substitute amendment at the desk.

Section 2 of S. 627 as reported and further modified by the Brown amendment requires the Secretary to retain reprimands and/or admonishments in the personnel records of affected employees for a minimum of 5 years. While this is a significant improvement over the original provision, which was to retain such actions permanently, it is still problematic.

First, as I mentioned previously, this provision was added after the Veterans Affairs Committee conducted its hearing and, consequently, hasn't been sufficiently considered.

Furthermore, Active-Duty personnel can request that reprimands be removed from their military personnel records jackets, MPRJs, at any time, and reprimands can only remain in the MPRJ for a maximum of 3 years.

One in three VA employees is a veteran. Should someone have fewer rights to clear his or her personnel record as a civilian than he or she had while serving on Active Duty?

Section 2 of the bill is unlikely to increase accountability at the VA. However well intentioned the provision may be, it is much more likely to cause significant increases in taxpayer-funded litigation costs because the VA will no longer be able to resolve routine personnel disputes through Clear Record Settlement Agreements, CRAs. The Merit Systems Protection Board, MSPB, reported in 2013 that 95 percent of agency representatives resolved disputes using Negotiated Settlement Agreements, NSAs, and 89 percent of these agreements involved CRAs.

Quoting again from the Minority Views I referred to previously:

> In testimony before the House Committee of Veterans' Affairs, VA noted that it is the standard practice across the Federal government, including the Department of Defense, for letters of reprimand and/or admonishment to be retained on a time-limited basis. According to VA, making letters of reprimand or admonishment permanent would prevent VA managers from ''settling workplace grievances with employees with terms that would limit the amount of time these documents remain in the employee's permanent record,'' and it would restrict VA managers from removing these documents as a ''term of settlement.'' Both of these tools are frequently used by VA managers to ''resolve complaints before they go into costly and high-risk'' litigation. These tools also allow VA managers to promote good performance of employees ''because they are usually conditioned upon no further misconduct of the type that initially led to the reprimand or admonishment.''

Given all of these problems with section 2, even as it has been significantly improved by the amendment offered by the senior Senator from Ohio, I come back to the basic proposition that the Secretary must have sufficient discretion when it comes to managing the VA workforce. My amendment gives the Secretary that discretion by allowing, not mandating, that reprimands and/or admonishments may be retained for 5 years. Note that this still represents a significant departure from current practices government-wide. And, as I mentioned a moment ago, I originally proposed sunsetting section 2 after 3 years, but I removed that provision from the current version of the substitute amendment.

I sincerely believe these changes are reasonable and improve S. 627, and I hope the junior Senator from New Hampshire will ultimately agree.

To reiterate, no one condones what happened at the VA. But it is important to acknowledge that accountability is being restored and the miscreants are being punished.

As Secretary McDonald and Deputy Secretary Gibson wrote in the Wall Street Journal:

> You can't fire your way to excellence. You have to inspire the people you keep to do better, and you have to recruit and inspire new talent. You can't do either by capriciously punishing people on the basis of unsubstantiated rumors, complaints or media reports . . . Neither we nor anyone else can accomplish the VA's mission of caring for veterans by depriving VA employees of basic fairness. To do right by veterans, we must do right by VA employees. We will do right by both, whatever the consequences.

I am privileged to represent 130,000 civilian federal workers, including members of the Senior Executive Service, SES; other senior managers; and rank-and-file employees who work in Maryland. Tens of thousands more live in Maryland or live and work in Maryland. Nearly 20 percent of these individuals have already served our Nation in uniform. Overwhelmingly, these individuals are hard-working, dedicated, and patriotic Americans who perform critical missions under difficult circumstances. In the last 5 years, civilian Federal workers have ''contributed'' $182 billion to deficit reduction. They have endured a 3-year pay freeze. They lost $1 billion in pay due to furloughs related to sequestration. They have been forced during government shutdowns to stay home against their will or to work without being paid on time. And they have been victimized by data breaches that have compromised their most sensitive personal information—some of which the Washington Post reported on January 31, 2016, has literally been provided to the Islamic State terrorist group.

While we can and will disagree on the proper size and scope of the Federal Government, I would hope we can all agree that we want the ''best and brightest'' to perform critical missions such as providing our veterans with the care they have earned so valiantly. This is especially true with regard to the senior executives entrusted with managing large workforces and multi-billion dollar budgets.

Depriving or diminishing due process rights at the VA already has caused the number of applicants over the past 3 years for both title 5 SES positions and title 38 equivalent positions to decline significantly.

With respect to VA title 5 SES positions, in fiscal year 2013, there were 8,721 applicants. In fiscal year 2014, that number dropped to 6,908. In fiscal year 2015, it dropped even further to 6,317.

With respect to VA title 38 SES equivalent employees, in fiscal year 2013, there were 1,020 applicants. In fiscal year 2014, that number dropped to 432. In fiscal year 2015, it dropped even further to 228.

One might argue that these declines represent the ''winnowing out'' of unqualified or underqualified applicants.

I would argue it is just as likely, if not more so, that these declines represent the winnowing out of highly qualified applicants who could have helped to restore greater accountability and better service at the VA, but were discouraged from applying because the deck is being stacked against them.

We all want our veterans to receive the best care possible. So I reiterate my sincere desire to work with the junior Senator from New Hampshire. As I said at the outset of my remarks, I appreciate the hard work Senator AYOTTE has put into her bill and her willingness to work across the aisle with the ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and Senator BROWN.

Rather than simply leaving the matter here, I would note that the Department of Veterans Affairs has identified several Senate bills that provide the agency with the authority and tools it needs to address what the VA calls ''breakthrough priorities'' such as: improving the veterans' experience; improving access to health care; improving community care; developing a simplified appeals process; and reducing homelessness among veterans.

As I understand it, there is an effort underway in the Veterans' Affairs Committee to develop comprehensive legislation that helps the VA to meet these priorities while also addressing accountability and internal staffing issues. I think it makes sense to work on a comprehensive reform and accountability package bill rather than trying to pass individual bills in a piecemeal fashion, and I look forward to working with the junior Senator

from New Hampshire and every other Senator concerned about our veterans to accomplish this objective in the weeks and months ahead.

Ms. AYOTTE. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, just a little while ago there was an overwhelming vote to proceed with the FAA bill, the Federal Aviation Administration bill, a very important bill. I know how hard the managers have worked on it—the chairman, the ranking member—and I have a tremendous amount of respect for them. I voted no. Only four of us voted no. It is rare that I do that, and I felt it was important to explain why.

We have in our Nation an amazing system of transportation, and we always have to stay on top of it to make it safer and safer. There is one thing we know without a doubt. We know it intuitively, but we also know it because the National Transportation Safety Board has told us that the No. 1 problem they face in terms of safety is fatigue.

We all know how it is. All of us, regardless of what we do for a living, know how it feels when we are utterly exhausted. We are not making the same decisions we would make. We can't carry them out the way we otherwise would. It is not rocket science. It is sleep science. We know about it because the experts have told us, and the NTSB has told us.

I will show a picture of two planes. They look exactly alike. As our kids say, one of these things is not like the other. Here is a cargo plane and passenger jet. They are the same size. They fly over the same skies. They have pilots whom we trust, whom we count on.

Today, because of special interest pressure, there is a different set of rest rules. The passenger plane pilot can only fly up to 9 hours a day because—rightly so, with all of that responsibility—that pilot has to get rest. The cargo plane pilot flies the same exact plane. That pilot can be on duty up to 16 hours a day before he or she is guaranteed adequate rest.

I know the Presiding Officer has worked very hard in recent months, and I know the energy it took to go out and do what he did. I know what it was like when I was running for the Senate so many times—thank you, California—with almost 40 million people in the State, how hard it was, how much rest was needed to be sharp so we could think. In our work if we make a mistake, it only hurts us, but when a pilot makes a mistake, it can hurt a much larger community because the cargo plane is flying over the same homes as the passenger jet. How does it make sense to say one can be on duty up to 16 hours and the other cannot, especially when the National Transportation Safety Board has said pilot fatigue is one of the biggest problems we are facing today.

Now one might ask: Can you prove that it is a problem? Yes, I am going to prove it to you. I am going to show a graphic of a conversation that took place between two cargo pilots, the pilot and copilot. This was 2013, and they were over Alabama. These are excerpts from the grave. This is dramatic. It isn't me trying to persuade the Presiding Officer. These are the pilots.

Pilot 1: I mean I don't get that. You know it should be one level of safety for everybody.

Pilot 2: It makes no sense at all.

Pilot 1: No it doesn't at all.

Pilot 2: And to be honest, it should be across the board. To be honest in my opinion whether you are flying passengers or cargo . . . if you're flying this time of day . . . the you know fatigue is definitely. . . .

Pilot 1: Yeah . . . yeah . . . yeah. . . .

Pilot 2: When my alarm went off I mean I'm thinkin', I'm so tired.

Pilot 2: I know.

Look what happened to that plane within hours of that conversation. Look what happened to that plane. This shows what happened, and the pilots are dead.

After the flight recorder was released and this conversation was out, I thought for sure this administration would do the right thing. They did the wrong thing, and the Senate did the wrong thing. This isn't partisan.

We have the Obama administration, which I agree with, and today I heard some amazing news on jobs. I am just saying on this they haven't been right. There ought to be no disparity between a pilot who is flying a passenger jet and a pilot who is flying a cargo jet. The pilots are telling us this. The pilots who are telling us this are not selfish. In fact, many of them are the pilots of passenger jets such as Southwest Airlines—8,000 of them. There are 8,000 of them supporting the Boxer-Klobuchar amendment.

I can't get a vote. That is why I voted no along with three other colleagues who had their reasons. This was my reason. How do we do a bill like this and not address the No. 1 safety issue facing us? I don't get it.

If you don't believe me, fair enough, because I am not a pilot. I admit it. I just trust pilots. What is your choice? You walk on a plane, the pilot is in charge of the aircraft, and you know that pilot wants to land safely. You know that pilot wants to go home to his or her family. You know that pilot has your best interests at heart. Sometimes I am in a rush, and I get on a plane and the pilot says: You know what. We are not going to take off right now because I know there is something wrong in one of the monitors here. It could be nothing, but I put safety first.

Everyone in the plane says: Oh, no. We are going to be late. They get out their cell phones and they call their loved ones, but we know the pilots know what they are talking about. We trust them. I trust them so much I wrote with then-Senator Smith the guns-in-the-cockpit law for pilots. The NRA thinks I am the worst of the worst, but I said I trust pilots. They should have a chance if there is a terrorist on board. I trust them. Why doesn't this administration trust them? Because of special interests that make billions a year—billions.

It is going to cost us a tiny bit more, and it is a tiny bit more. What price would we put on our kids? There is none, for goodness' sake. If it cost a few cents more to ship a package so a pilot doesn't have to fly 16 hours, isn't that the right thing to do?

I will close with a quote from Sully Sullenberger. I think we all remember Sully. Before we show that, let's remind people who he is. We have another chart that shows him. Sully Sullenberger was the ''Hero of the Hudson.'' We remember how he landed his plane in the Hudson River, how he saved all the passengers on that plane and his crew. He is so famous now, he goes all over the world.

He came to the press conference I had with Senator KLOBUCHAR, because she and I are working on this amendment as well as Senator CANTWELL. His words were inspiring because he did not kid around. He said: ''Fatigue is a killer.'' Fatigue is a killer.

You don't have to say any more. If you know fatigue is a killer, then don't say passenger pilots can fly 9 hours but cargo pilots can fly 16. Here is what Sullenberger said when we first introduced our legislation, the Safe Skies Act: ''You wouldn't want your surgeon operating on you after only five hours sleep, or your passenger pilot flying the airplane after only five hours sleep, and you certainly wouldn't want a cargo pilot flying a large plane over your house at 3 a.m. on five hours sleep trying to find the airport and land.''

Sully said at the press conference that had he been suffering from fatigue on that fateful day that he safely landed that plane in the waters of the Hudson River, if he was suffering from fatigue, he said he never could have done it.

So I can't get a vote on my amendment. It is so simple, even a 6-year-old can understand it. You don't have disparity when you have the same responsibility. You are traveling in the same skies, and a cargo plane can crash into a house or another plane carrying passengers.

I am so disappointed in this administration that they have not done the right thing on this. I am so disappointed in the U.S. Senate that they blocked a vote on this because the special interests don't want to charge 2 or 3 or 4 cents more on their packages. If it is to save lives of our people, this is what I call a classic no-brainer.

So I am here today to explain my vote to my constituents—why I voted no for an FAA bill that otherwise is a good bill. But I want just to make a statement that it is ridiculous not to give me an up-or-down vote. They tied it to other issues that are poison pills: immigration issues, gun issues. Come on. This is the biggest problem—fatigue.

Can't we just get an up-or-down vote on it? I am going to try to do that at every chance I get. Now I am working on a modified amendment to see if we can get it into a package. I don't know whether we can or not. But I want to say to the pilots out there who may be listening to this debate: A lot of us here have your backs.

We are not going to forget about this issue just because the FAA bill is moving forward. We are not going to forget about you. We are not going to forget about what it means when you are fatigued. We are not going to forget about the two pilots who, through the recorder, told us before they crashed that they were exhausted. They addressed the issue of the disparity. We are going to be fighting on this.

If we can't get it done here, maybe some brave soul in the House will do it, and it will wind up in the bill. If we can't get it done legislatively, we are going to try to get it done through the FAA regular order of their rules. Where is the FAA on this? I want to say: FAA, you turned your back on too many safety measures that the NTSB, which is in charge of our safety, has recommended.

It took years to get some simple things done. So while we are working to get a modified amendment—which is not going to be the be-all and the end-all; it just moves us a little bit forward—I just want to send a message that it is rare that I vote no—one of four. It does not happen often.

I view this as a moral issue. I view this as a moral issue for those pilots that are on duty up to 16 hours straight in the middle of the night, where, as Sully Sullenberger said, their circadian rhythms are off, and they are not at the top of their game. They are flying over the airspace of the American people.

I thank the presiding officer so much for his attention. I live to fight another day, another hour, another minute on this.

I want the pilots to know and the flying public to know and everyone to know they should engage in this issue. There is no disparity between people who do the same work.

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. GARDNER. 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. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act, to talk about the importance of passing this legislation for Colorado and, indeed, the Nation. I commend Chairman THUNE, our colleague from South Dakota, Ranking Member NELSON, Senator AYOTTE, and Senator CANTWELL for their work in crafting this very important piece of legislation.

It is an economic driver, certainly a national security issue, and a number of issues that we are able to address in this legislation of great importance to Colorado and the country. Our Nation's airspace is clearly one of the most important economic drivers that we have. It is important in the movement of passengers and cargo, along with the many other users of airspace, whether it be for agriculture or unmanned aerial systems.

The economic importance of aviation in Colorado cannot be stated enough when it comes to tourism. In 2014 alone, 71.3 million visitors came to Colorado, with $18.6 billion in economic impact for the State, according to the Colorado Tourism Office. That tourism results in well over 100,000 jobs throughout the State of Colorado.

Many of those 71 million tourists came through Denver International Airport, the nation's fifth busiest and largest commercial airport. In 2014 alone, more than 50 million people passed through Denver International Airport, a State with a population of about 5.5 million—50 million people passing through the fifth busiest airport, with some of these passengers continuing on to one of Colorado's additional 13 commercial airports or 60 general aviation airports.

The economic impact that airports and aviation have throughout the State is absolutely incredible. When you take in the multiplier effect, nearly 300,000 jobs are a result of aviation in Colorado—a payroll of about $12.6 billion in Colorado, with the multiplier effect, for an economic output of about $36.7 billion.

In fact, there is one airport, which is the premier business airport of the United States, Centennial Airport in Colorado, surrounded by 23 different business parks, with about 6,000 different businesses surrounding this airport in those 23 different business parks. This airport, those 6,000 businesses, and the 23 business parks around the airport account for nearly 27 percent of Colorado's total gross domestic product.

Think about that. One airport, one business airport, and the businesses that surround it account for nearly 27 percent of Colorado's economy. So whether it is skiing or snowboarding or visiting one of our great national parks, enjoying the outdoors, hiking, camping, fishing, or visiting one of our world-class cities, it is not easily achievable without well-run, maintained, and secured airspace.

These airports connect cities like Denver, CO, to Durango, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, and smaller cities; rural communities like the city I live in, Lamar and Yuma; and to the rest of the country. They help businesses reach beyond the borders of our State. Maintaining our airport infrastructure then becomes one of the most critical functions we can perform.

Communities in Colorado and across the country continue to push their airport infrastructure improvements, betterments, to help realize the full potential, the economic potential, to access that airspace and the access that airspace indeed brings. That is why I am glad to talk about this legislation and the many achievements we were able to accomplish and the provisions I was able to secure and include in the bill to help improve that airport infrastructure, including improvements to the Airport Improvement Program, or AIP, and a study with recommendations on upgrading and improving the Nation's airport infrastructure.

Additionally, I am pleased that this bill includes language that I pushed to help allow improvements to Pena Boulevard, the prime access road to connecting Denver International Airport with the rest of Colorado. If you have been to Denver International Airport and you have driven to downtown Denver, you have driven on Pena Boulevard.

This bill will address the needs, the infrastructure, and the improvements that are needed to make sure that Pena Boulevard remains an efficient, safe roadway to the Nation's fifth busiest airport. It will allow DIA the flexibility it needs and the clarity to ensure the primary access road that Pena Boulevard represents is capable of handling the traffic that comes with increased use of the airport.

The bill also includes language that builds on a successful pilot program for virtual towers and ensures that those towers will be eligible for AIP funding, Airport Improvement Program funding, once certified by the FAA.

It is important because these virtual towers, such as the one at the Fort Collins-Loveland airport area, will allow small- and medium-sized airports to offer commercial service in an economically viable and sustainable way. Northern Colorado really is the gateway to Colorado's energy hub, the gateway to Colorado's biotech, bioscience, and engineering research university hub. By allowing this virtual tower in northern Colorado at the Fort Collins-Loveland airport, we can help expand the opportunity to reach that area for businesses that wish to locate there, for customers who wish to fly into the area, and also for those businesses that are already there to expand, to have further reach around the country and the world.

Another central responsibility of the FAA is to ensure that the airspace is being safely managed while allowing the industries that are dependent on

aviation to thrive. I think this legislation, after months and months of work, really does strike that appropriate balance. I was proud to support amendments during consideration of the bill that I believe will help ensure that the Transportation Security Administration, law enforcement agencies, and security personnel have the resources they need to provide for the safety of the traveling public.

I believe more could and should be done, however. That is why I filed on the floor an amendment to the bill which will improve TSA's operations at our airports by creating a testing location to help TSA and airports to work hand in hand to develop future screening technologies and passenger screening methods to ensure we are able to keep passengers and airports safe.

If you look at the needs that we have at airports, there is the combination of coming into an airport and checking in at an airport gate or kiosk. Most people use their iPhone or their smartphone to have their digital printout of a ticket. They don't even go to a kiosk anymore; they just go straight to the security line. But as we have seen, we need to have an increase in security from curb to gate.

It is not just a security concern where people may be gathering around the screening or people may be getting in and out of cars or lining up at the desk; it is an overall curb-to-gate security approach that we need. That is what my amendment will accomplish. So I look forward to continuing to work with Senator THUNE and the Commerce Committee on a path forward for this amendment because it is critically important that we address additional security measures to prevent violence like the recent terrorist attack in Brussels from happening and occurring at our airports.

To remind people, the attack in Brussels did not happen on an airplane; it happened outside where passengers were gathering. So if we can address this curb-to-gate security, alleviate the slowdowns and the spots that make it more difficult for efficiency at the airport to get through security—this amendment can help do that—we can avoid danger to the public from those who wish to do our people harm.

The bill includes important certification reforms that will improve the processing of new aircraft designs and modifications at the FAA. This is important because we had an agricultural aviator, a crop duster, in Colorado who was trying to get his plane certified. This is a spray plane. He was trying to get this plane certified, but what he found out was that, first, the FAA was taking a very, very long time to certify his crop duster, to give him the permission to use this plane to spray crops.

After they said they found his application, he ended up in a queue, a line behind United Airlines, behind Frontier Airlines. So, basically, this crop duster in southeastern Colorado had a very small plane, not a passenger plane by any means. He was put in line with a 747, a 757, and a 767. That is nonsense. It doesn't make any sense, and we were able to address those certification challenges in this bill.

A couple of years ago I requested the inspector general at the FAA to look at what was happening in the Rocky Mountain regional facility in Denver. They pointed to a number of challenges that region had in terms of its management, in terms of its process, and in certification in other areas. We were able to include the suggestions and the changes that the inspector general's report identified in this legislation in the FAA today.

Finally, the legislation, of course, makes key strides in the future of our aviation industry by addressing unmanned aerial systems. We have a number of great areas in Colorado where we can test and where we can certify, and, of course, the need is great—from agriculture to our ski resorts to wildfires. Think about what we can accomplish in the future with unmanned aerial assistance.

I thank the leadership. I thank Senator THUNE, our colleague from South Dakota for the leadership he provided. I thank the Presiding Officer for the work the Presiding Officer has done to make this legislation a success.

With that, I urge support for the legislation. I conclude my remarks on the FAA bill asking Members to support the bill.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I compliment the Senator from Colorado for his active participation in shaping this bill. Obviously, he is a very active member of our Commerce Committee and cares deeply and passionately about these issues. He was very involved in the issues that he addressed in his remarks and that were incorporated into this. They were simply and purely a credit to his persistence and hard work. They do make this bill much stronger. I appreciate his good work making that possible.

I wish to say again what I had mentioned earlier today, and that is, as Senator NELSON and I put this bill together, it was done in regular order. We had on the order of seven hearings—either subcommittee or full committee—where we took testimony and tried to assemble the best ideas. We worked together with members of the committee, including the Presiding Officer, in shaping a bill that we brought to a markup—getting it to the markup and through the markup. We adopted 57 amendments—34 Democratic amendments and 23 Republican amendments—before it came to the floor. After coming to the floor last week, we have had 19 amendments that have been added. We have another 30 or thereabouts that have been cleared, if we could get objections withdrawn so that those amendments could get cleared. But we have some other amendments of Members who would like to get votes.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up and reported by number: Sessions No. 3591; Paul No. 3693, as modified; and Rubio No. 3722; further, that there be 45 minutes of debate concurrently on the amendments, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, and that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote in relation to the amendments in the order listed with a 60-affirmative-vote threshold required for adoption of the amendments, and that no second-degree amendments be in order prior to the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I so admire the managers of this bill. I really do. As a former chairman and ranking member now, I know how hard this is, but this is not a balanced request.

I would just say that I have spoken on the safety of pilot fatigue so many times. I won't reiterate that here. I feel strongly that I want a vote. I know others on our side do as well. I don't think this is balanced. So, sadly, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, in the same spirit of the chairman of the committee, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up and reported by number: Boxer No. 3489 and Markey No. 3467; further, that there be 45 minutes of debate to run concurrently on the amendments, equally divided in the usual form; and that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote in relation to the amendments in the order listed, with a 60-affirmative-vote threshold required for adoption of the amendments; and that no second-degree amendments be in order prior to the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. I would simply say that we have worked to try to get the amendment from the Senator from California a vote. We have tried to get the other amendment referenced by the Senator from Florida, Senator MARKEY's amendment, a vote. But we have Members on our side who also want votes, and the other side is objecting to those votes. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, as you may have heard a moment ago, one of

the amendments that is being objected to from our end is an amendment that I have filed, and I will describe it briefly.

I wish to first describe the issue I am trying to address.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article entitled ''U.S. welfare flows to Cuba'' from October 1, 2015.

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

[From the Sun Sentinel, Oct. 1, 2015]

U.S. WELFARE FLOWS TO CUBA

(By Sally Kestin, Megan O'Matz and John Maines with Tracey Eaton in Cuba)

THEY'RE TAKING BENEFITS FROM THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER TO SUBSIDIZE THEIR LIFE IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Cuban immigrants are cashing in on U.S. welfare and returning to the island, making a mockery of the decades-old premise that they are refugees fleeing persecution at home.

Some stay for months at a time—and the U.S. government keeps paying.

Cubans' unique access to food stamps, disability money and other welfare is meant to help them build new lives in America. Yet these days, it's helping some finance their lives on the communist island.

America's open-ended generosity has grown into an entitlement that exceeds $680 million a year and is exploited with ease. No agency tracks the scope of the abuse, but a Sun Sentinel investigation found evidence suggesting it is widespread.

Fed-up Floridians are reporting their neighbors and relatives for accepting government aid while shuttling back and forth to the island, selling goods in Cuba, and leaving their benefit cards in the U.S. for others to use while they are away.

Some don't come back at all. The U.S. has continued to deposit welfare checks for as long as two years after the recipients moved back to Cuba for good, federal officials confirmed.

Regulations prohibit welfare recipients from collecting or using U.S. benefits in another country. But on the streets of Hialeah, the first stop for many new arrivals, shopkeepers like Miguel Veloso hear about it all the time.

Veloso, a barber who has been in the U.S. three years, said recent immigrants on welfare talk of spending considerable time in Cuba—six months there, two months here. ''You come and go before benefits expire,'' he said.

State Rep. Manny Diaz Jr. of Hialeah hears it too, from constituents in his heavily Cuban-American district, who tell of flaunting their aid money on visits to the island. The money, he said ''is definitely not to be used . . . to go have a great old time back in the country that was supposed to be oppressing you.''

The sense of entitlement is so ingrained that Cubans routinely complained to their local congressman about the challenge of accessing U.S. aid—from Cuba.

''A family member would come into our office and say another family member isn't receiving his benefits,'' said Javier Correoso, aide to former Miami Rep. David Rivera. ''We'd say, 'Where is he?' They'd say, 'He's in Cuba and isn't coming back for six months.' ''

''They're taking benefits from the American taxpayer to subsidize their life in another country.

One woman told Miami immigration attorney Grisel Ybarra that her grandmother and two great aunts came to Florida, got approved for benefits, opened bank accounts and returned to Cuba. Month after month, the woman cashed their government checks—about $2,400 each time—sending half to the women in Cuba and keeping the rest.

When a welfare agency questioned the elderly ladies whereabouts this summer, the woman turned to Ybarra, a Cuban American. She told Ybarra her grandmother refused to come back, saying: ''With the money you sent me, I bought a home and am really happy in Cuba.''

Cubans on the island, Ybarra said, have a name for U.S. aid.

They call it ''la ayuda.'' The help.

SPECIAL STATUS ABUSED

Increasing openness and travel between the two countries have made the welfare entitlement harder to justify and easier to abuse. But few charges have been brought, and Congress and the Obama Administration have failed to address the problem even as the United States moves toward détente with Cuba.

Cubans' extraordinary access to U.S. welfare rests on two pillars of special treatment: the ease with which they are admitted to the country, and America's generosity in granting them public support.

Cubans are allowed into the U.S. even if they arrive without permission and are quickly granted permanent residency under the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act. They're assumed to be refugees without having to prove persecution.

They're immediately eligible for welfare, food stamps, Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income or SSI, cash assistance for impoverished seniors and disabled younger people.

Most other immigrants are barred from collecting aid for their first five years. Those here illegally are not eligible at all.

The Sun Sentinel analyzed state and federal data to determine the annual cost of taxpayer support for Cuban immigrants: at least $680 million. In Florida alone, costs for welfare, food stamps and refugee cash have increased 23 percent from 2011 through 2014.

Not all Cubans receive government help. Those arriving on visas are ineligible, and some rely on family support. And many who receive aid do so for just a short time until they settle in, as the U.S. intended. Cubans over time have become one of the most successful immigrant groups in America.

''They come to the U.S. to work and make a living for their family,'' said Jose Alvarez, a Cuba native and city commissioner in Kissimmee. ''I don't believe that they come thinking the government will support them.''

But some take advantage of the easy money—and then go back and forth to Cuba.

A public housing tenant in Hialeah, who was receiving food stamps and SSI payments for a disabled son, frequently traveled to Cuba to sell food there, records show. She admitted to a city housing investigator in 2012 that she ''makes $700 in two months just in the sales to Cuba.''

Another man receiving food stamps admitted to state officials ''that he was living in Cuba much of 2015.''

A recent arrival with a chronic illness got Medicaid coverage and turned to attorney David Batchelder of Miami to help him get SSI as well. But the man was ''going back and forth to Cuba'' so much that Batchelder eventually dropped the case. ''It was just another benefit he was applying for.''

Concerns about Cubans exploiting the aid are especially troubling to exiles who came to this country decades ago and built new lives and careers here.

Dr. Noel Fernandez recalls the assistance his family received from friends and the U.S. government when they immigrated 20 years ago, help that enabled him to find work as a landscaper, learn English and complete his medical studies. Now medical director of Citrus Health Network in Hialeah, Fernandez sees Cuban immigrants collecting benefits and going back, including three elderly patients who recently left the U.S. for good.

''They got Medicaid, they got everything, and they returned to Cuba,'' he said. ''I see people that said they were refugees [from] Cuba and they return the next year.''

State officials have received complaints about Cubans collecting aid while repeatedly going to Cuba or working as mules ferrying cash and goods, a common way of financing travel to the island.

Another way of paying for the trips: cheating. Like other welfare recipients, some Cubans work under the table or put assets in others' names to appear poor enough to meet the programs' income limits, according to records and interviews. Some married couples qualify for more money as single people by concealing marriages performed in Cuba, where the U.S. can't access records.

''Stop the fraud please!'' one person urged in a complaint to the state. Another pleaded with authorities to check airport departure records for a woman suspected of hiding income. ''It would show how many times she has traveled to Cuba.''

Florida officials typically dismissed the complaints for lack of information, because names didn't match their records or because the allegations didn't involve violations of eligibility rules. Travel abroad is not expressly prohibited, but benefits are supposed to be used for basic necessities within the U.S.

''Our congressional folks should be looking at this,'' said Miami-Dade County Commissioner Esteban Bovo Jr., a Cuban American. ''There could be millions and millions of dollars in fraud going on here.''

MONEY TO CUBA

Accessing benefits from Cuba typically requires a U.S. bank account and a willing relative or friend stateside. Food stamps and welfare are issued monthly through a debit-type card, and SSI payments are deposited into a bank account or onto a MasterCard.

A joint account holder with a PIN number can withdraw the money and wire it to Cuba. Another option: entrust the money to a friend traveling to Cuba.

Roberto Pizano of Tampa, a political prisoner in Cuba for 18 years, said he worked two jobs when he arrived in the U.S. in 1979 and never accepted government help. He now sees immigrants ''abusing the system.''

''I know people who come to the U.S., apply for SSI and never worked in the USA,'' he said. They ''move back to Cuba and are living off of the hard-earned taxpayer dollars.''

He said family friend Gilberto Reyno got disability money from the U.S. and renovated a house in Cuba. The Sun Sentinel found Reyna living in that house in Camaguey, Cuba. He said he was no longer receiving disability, but Pizano and another person familiar with the situation said the payments continue to be deposited into a U.S. bank account. The Social Security Administration would not comment, citing privacy concerns, but is investigating.

Federal investigators have found the same scenario in other cases.

A 2012 complaint alleged a 75-year-old woman had moved to Camaguey two years earlier and a relative was withdrawing her SSI money from a bank account and sending it to her. Social Security stopped payments, but not before nearly $16,000 had been deposited into her account.

Another recipient went to Cuba on vacation and stayed, leaving his debit card with

a relative. Social Security continued his SSI payments for another six months—$4,000 total—before an anonymous caller reported he had gone back to Cuba.

One woman reportedly moved to Cuba in 2010 and died three years later, while still receiving SSI and food stamps, according to a 2014 tip to Florida welfare fraud investigators. A state official couldn't find her at her Hialeah home, cut off the food stamps and alerted the federal government.

Former congressman Rivera tried to curb abuses with a bill that would have revoked the legal status of Cubans who returned to the island before they became citizens.

''Public assistance is meant to help Cuban refugees settle in the U.S.,'' Mauricio Claver-Carone of Cuba Democracy Advocates testified in a 2012 hearing on the bill. ''However, many non-refugee Cubans currently use these benefits, which can average more than $1,000 per month, to immediately travel back to the island, where the average income is $20 per month, and comfortably reside there for months at a time on the taxpayer's dime.''

Rivera recently told the Sun Sentinel that he interviewed welfare workers, Cubans in Miami and passengers waiting for charter flights to Havana. He said he found overwhelming evidence of benefits money going back, especially after the U.S. eased travel restrictions in 2009.

The back and forth undermines the rationale that Cubans are refugees fleeing an oppressive government, Rivera said. And when they return for visits, they boast of the money that's available in the U.S., he said. ''They all say, 'It's great. I got free housing. I got free food. I get my medicine.' ''

Five Cubans interviewed by the Sun Sentinel in Havana said they were aware of the assistance and knew of Cubans who had gone to America and quickly began sending money back. Two said they believed it was U.S. government aid.

''I don't think it's correct, but everyone does it for the well-being of their family,'' said one woman, Susana, who declined to give her last name.

Outside welfare offices in Hialeah, the Sun Sentinel found Cuban immigrants who had arrived as recently as three days earlier, applying for benefits. They said family and friends told them about the aid before they left Cuba.

''Back in the '60s, when you came in, they told you the factory that was hiring,'' said Nidia Diaz of Miami, a former bail bondswoman who was born in Cuba. ''Now, they tell you the closest Department of Children and Families [office] so you can go and apply.''

CROOKS COLLECT IN CUBA

Miami bail bondswoman Barbara Pozo said many of her Cuban clients talk openly about living in Cuba and collecting monthly disability checks, courtesy of U.S. taxpayers.

''They just come here to pick up the money,'' Pozo said. ''They pretend they're disabled. They just pretend they're crazy.''

SSI payments, for those who cannot work due to mental or physical disabilities, go up to $733 a month for an individual. Most other new immigrants are ineligible until they become U.S. citizens.

Some Cubans try to build a case for SSI by claiming trauma from their life under an oppressive government or the 90-mile crossing to Florida.

Diaz, the former bondswoman, said she has heard Cuban clients talk about qualifying: '' 'Tell them that you have emotional problems. How did you get these problems? Well, trying to get here from Cuba.' ''

Antonio Comin collected disability while organizing missions to smuggle Cubans to Florida, including one launched from a house in the Keys, federal prosecutors said. Comin claimed he rented the home to celebrate his birthday—after receiving his government check.

Casimiro Martinez was receiving a monthly check for a mental disability—but his mind was sound enough to launder more than $1 million stolen from Medicare. Martinez was arrested at Miami International Airport after returning from a trip to Cuba.

Government disability programs are vulnerable to fraud, particularly SSI, with applicants faking or exaggerating symptoms. Some view SSI as ''money waiting to be taken,'' said John Webb, a federal prosecutor in Tennessee who has handled fraud cases.

While benefits are supposed to be suspended for recipients who leave the United States for more than 30 days, the government relies on people to self-report those absences, and federal audits have found widespread violations.

The government could significantly reduce abuses by matching international travel records to SSI payments, auditors have recommended since 2003. The Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security are still trying to work out a data sharing agreement—12 years later,

Jose Caragol, a Hialeah city councilman and Havana native, said aid for Cubans ''was meant to assist those who were persecuted and want a new life. The bleeding has to stop.''

Mr. RUBIO. I will not read the whole article. But I am going to paraphrase from it.

By the way, as to the Democratic amendments that have been proposed and on which the Senator from California has just made a presentation regarding travel issues and pilot hours—she referred to the fact I have traveled extensively over the last year—they are issues I am actually very sympathetic toward. Perhaps we can work together to get her a vote on that amendment, because I think that is a legitimate issue.

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you.

Mr. RUBIO. Let me now talk about the one I want to talk about. This is how the article begins. I talked about yesterday.

Let me back up and explain what people are facing. Today, if an immigrant enters the United States from another country legally and comes here on a green card, with 5-year residency, they cannot receive Federal benefits. If you immigrate to the United States from any country in the world with an immigrant visa legally—not illegal immigration, as illegal immigrants do not qualify for Federal benefits—a legal immigrant to the United States does not qualify for any Federal benefits. There is an exception in the law, however, and that is if you happen to be someone who comes from Cuba without a visa.

There is a law called the Cuban Adjustment Act. When the Cuban Adjustment Act was passed during the Cold War, it was passed so that Cubans who came to the United States fleeing communist oppression were immediately admitted to the United States. In essence, that is why there is really no such thing as an illegal immigrant from Cuba. If a Cuban makes it to the shores of the United States, they become legal in this country, and a year and a day after they have arrived, they are allowed to apply for a green card. But unlike any immigrant from any part of the world, they are allowed to receive Federal benefits because they are automatically presumed to be refugees. That is a status that I am not trying to change in terms of the Cuban Adjustment Act. I have said that I am open to that being examined, but I am not trying to change that law in my amendment.

I do want to discuss why we should automatically assume at this point that anyone who comes from Cuba is a political refugee. The reason why that now is in doubt is because many of the people who are coming from Cuba, supposedly as refugees seeking to flee oppression, are traveling back to Cuba 15, 20, 30 times a year.

There are people being oppressed politically in Cuba, absolutely. It is one of the reasons why I think the President's policies toward Cuba have been misguided, because they refuse to see that even after this opening to Cuba, the political situation on the island has deteriorated. It has gotten worse, not better. There are absolutely people from Cuba who are coming here as refugees. But we also cannot ignore the fact that many of the people coming from Cuba no longer are coming here for political reasons. The evidence is that shortly after they arrive, they are going back to Cuba 15, 20, 30 times a year. You do not normally travel back to a place where you are fleeing from oppression, much less repeatedly over an extended period of time.

So as a result, we now have a law that basically says that if you come from Cuba, you are automatically entitled to a full platform of Federal benefits.

This is how the article begins:

Cuban immigrants are cashing in on U.S. welfare and returning to the island, making a mockery of the decades-old premise that they are refugees fleeing persecution at home. . . .

Cubans' unique access to food stamps, disability money, and other welfare is meant to help them build new lives in America. Yet these days, it's helping some finance their lives on the communist island.

America's open-ended generosity has grown into an entitlement that exceeds $680 million a year and is exploited with ease. No agency tracks the scope of this abuse, but a Sun Sentinel investigation found evidence suggesting it is widespread.

Fed-up Floridians—

Where a lot of these Cubans are moving to—

are reporting their neighbors and their relatives for accepting government aid while shuttling back and forth to the island, selling goods in Cuba and leaving their benefit cards in the U.S. for others to use while they are away.

Some do not even come back at all. The U.S. has continued to deposit welfare checks for as long as two years after the recipients moved back to Cuba for good.

It goes on to talk about several people. For example there is a shopkeeper

in Hialeah, FL, where a lot of these folks are coming and moving. He says he hears about it all the time. He is a barber. He has been in the United States for 3 years, and he said:

Recent immigrants on welfare talk of spending considerable time in Cuba—six months there, two months here. ''You come and go before benefits expire.''

The article goes on:

The sense of entitlement is so ingrained that Cubans are now routinely complaining to the local Congressman about the challenge of accessing U.S. aid—from Cuba.

What they are complaining about is that they are coming into the office. This is what a former aide to a former Congressman from Miami said: A family member would come into our office and say a family member isn't receiving his benefits. They would ask: Where is he? And they would say: He is in Cuba, and he isn't coming back for 6 months.

This is unreal. There are people coming into congressional offices complaining: We are having trouble getting access to our benefits. You ask them why, and they say it is because the person who gets the benefits is not in America; he is in Cuba and he can't get access to his benefits from Cuba.

One woman told Miami immigration attorney Grisel Ybarra that her grandmother and two great aunts came to Florida, got approved for benefits, opened bank accounts and returned to Cuba. Month after month, the woman cashed their government checks—about $2,400 each time—sending half to the women in Cuba and keeping the rest.

They kept for themselves a 50 percent commission.

When a welfare agency questioned the elderly ladies' whereabouts this summer, the woman turned to Ybarra, a Cuban American. She told Ybarra her grandmother refused to come back, saying: ''With the money you sent me, I bought a home and I am really happy in Cuba.''

That means your money—the American taxpayers' money.

Ybarra went on to say that the Cubans on the island have a name for this U.S. aid. It is called ''la ayuda,'' which means the help.

Cubans are allowed into the U.S. even if they arrive without permission and are quickly granted permanent residency. . . .

As I said earlier, under the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, they are automatically assumed to be refugees without having to prove it.

They are immediately eligible for welfare, for food stamps, for Medicaid, and for supplemental social security, or SSI, and also cash assistance for impoverished seniors and for disabled young people.

But let's be frank, not all Cubans receive government aid. For example, if you come to the United States from Cuba on a visa—because there is a visa lottery and every year the government awards visas to people living in Cuba—you do not qualify for these benefits.

If, however, you arrive in the United States on a raft or if you fly on an airplane to Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, or Mexico and cross the U.S. border—as is now increasingly happening—then you do qualify for these benefits I have just outlined. So let's be frank, not everyone who is coming from Cuba is doing this. There are people coming from Cuba who are fleeing persecution, but many are taking advantage of the easy money, and then they are going back and forth to Cuba.

I will give you some examples cited in this article:

A public housing tenant in Hialeah, who was receiving food stamps and SSI payments for a disabled son, frequently traveled to Cuba to sell food there, records showed. She admitted to a city housing investigator in 2012 that she ''makes $700 in two months just in the sales to Cuba.''

And $700 a month is a lot of money in Cuba.

How does this work? They take the food stamp card. They go to the grocery store. They load up a van with canned goods. They travel back to Cuba. They just got that food with your taxpayer money. They travel back to Cuba with duffel bags full of canned goods, and they sell it in Cuba for a profit—$700 over a 2-month period.

Another man receiving food stamps admitted to State officials ''that he was living in Cuba for much of 2015.''

A recent arrival with a chronic illness got Medicaid coverage and turned to [his] attorney . . . of Miami to help him get SSI as well. But the man was ''going back and forth to Cuba'' so much that Batchelder eventually dropped the case. ''It was just another benefit he was applying for.''

This, of course, concerns people who came to the United States as exiles and are now watching this happen. There is a doctor whose name is Noel Fernandez, and he recalls when his family arrived here from Cuba that the U.S. Government helped them a little. When they immigrated here 20 years ago, he was helped to find work as a landscaper, he was helped to learn English, and he was helped to complete his medical studies. Today he is the medical director of Citrus Health Network in Hialeah.

Fernandez sees Cuban immigrants collecting benefits and then going back, including three elderly patients who recently left the United States for good.

''They got Medicaid, they got everything, and they returned to Cuba,'' he said. ''I see people that said they were refugees [from] Cuba and they return the next year.''

That is his quote.

State officials—

In my home State of Florida—

have received complaints about Cubans collecting aid while repeatedly going to Cuba or working as mules ferrying cash and goods, which is a common way of financing travel to the island.

How that works is, people know you are traveling to Cuba, and they have relatives they want to get money to or clothes to or whatever, and so they pay you. They actually pay you. They give you money and they say: Will you take this with you on your trip to Cuba and deliver it to the people we are trying to get it to? That is why they call them a mule. Well, from the money you get paid to take these things back to Cuba, that is how you pay for your plane ticket.

Another way of paying for these trips, by the way, is cheating. According to the Sentinel article:

Like other welfare recipients, some Cubans work under the table or put their assets in others' names to appear poor enough to meet the programs' income limits, according to records and interviews. Some married couples qualify for more money as single people.

Many of our welfare programs actually give you more money if you are not married because you don't have to combine your incomes. So because they were married in Cuba, they simply conceal the fact that they are married because the United States can't access those records. That is another way of cheating.

Now look, ''accessing benefits from [someone who is in] Cuba typically requires a U.S. bank account and a willing relative or friend stateside.'' By the way, that is just for now because as part of this opening to Cuba, the Obama administration is going to make it easier for there to be banking transactions with Cuba. So what we are facing here, my friends, is that in a very short period of time—once banking becomes regularized with American banks—they will not even need to rely on their relatives in order to get this stuff. All they are going to need is an ATM or debit card or a credit card secured to that account, and you—the American taxpayer—will deposit the welfare check, the SSI, into their bank account, and they will then be conducting transactions or withdrawing the cash from Cuba directly.

So they will not even need a relative to do it, but right now they still need that. ''Food stamps and welfare are issued monthly to a debit-type card and SSI payments are deposited into a bank account or onto a MasterCard.'' And soon they will be able to use that in Cuba. Then what you need is ''a joint account holder with a PIN number who can withdraw the money and wire it to you in Cuba.''

Another option is just to entrust the money to a friend who is traveling to Cuba.

Roberto Pizano of Tampa, a political prisoner in Cuba for 18 years, said he worked two jobs when he arrived in the U.S. in 1979 and never accepted government help. He now sees immigrants ''abusing the system.''

He says he has a ''family friend,'' and this family friend got ''disability money from the U.S.'' and with the disability money he ''renovated a house in Cuba.'' The Sun Sentinel found this man. His name is Gilberto Reyno. You know where they found him? They found him living in Camaguey, Cuba. Quoting from the article:

The Sun Sentinel found Reyno living in that house in Camaguey, Cuba. He said he was no longer receiving disability, but Pizano and another person familiar with the situation said the payments continue to be deposited into a U.S. bank account.

Here is another example that Federal investigators found, according to the article:

A 2012 complaint alleged a 75-year-old woman had moved to Camaguey two years earlier and a relative was withdrawing her SSI money from a bank account and sending it to her. Social Security stopped payments, but not before nearly $16,000 had been deposited into her account.

Another recipient went to Cuba on vacation and then stayed, leaving his debit card with a relative. Social Security continued his SSI payments for another six months—$4,000 total—before an anonymous caller reported he had gone back to Cuba.

One woman reportedly moved to Cuba in 2010 and died three years later, while still receiving SSI and food stamps, according to a 2014 tip to Florida welfare fraud investigators.

Five Cubans interviewed by the Sun Sentinel in Havana said they were aware of the assistance and knew of Cubans who had gone to America and quickly began sending money back. Two said they believed it was U.S. government aid.

That means this is now spreading through word-of-mouth. So you live in Cuba, you know someone who left for the United States, they qualified for these benefits, and they start coming back and bringing the money with them or sending it back to their relatives, and word gets around. That is why it is not a surprise to read in this article:

Outside welfare offices in Hialeah, the Sun Sentinel found Cuban immigrants who had arrived as recently as three days earlier, applying for benefits. They said family and friends told them about the aid before they left Cuba.

''Back in the '60s, when you came in, they told you the factory that was hiring,'' said Nidia Diaz of Miami, a former bail bondswoman who was born in Cuba. ''Now they tell you the closest Department of Children and Families [office] so you can go and apply.''

This is a quote from another bail bondswoman:

Miami bail bondswoman Barbara Pozo said many of her Cuban clients talk openly about living in Cuba and collecting monthly disability checks, courtesy of U.S. taxpayers.

''They just come here to pick up the money,'' Pozo said. ''They pretend they're disabled. They just pretend they're crazy.''

SSI payments, for those who cannot work due to mental or physical disabilities, go up to $733 a month for an individual. Most other new immigrants are ineligible until they become U.S. citizens.

Some Cubans try to build a case for SSI by claiming trauma from their life under an oppressive government or the 90-mile crossing to Florida.

Diaz, the former bondswoman, said she has heard Cuban clients talk about qualifying: ''Tell them that you have emotional problems. How did you get these problems? Well, trying to get here from Cuba.''

Here is one that should really gall everybody, though these are all bad stories.

Antonio Comin collected disability while organizing missions to smuggle Cubans to Florida, including one he launched from a house in the Keys, Federal prosecutors said. Comin claimed he rented the home to celebrate his birthday—after receiving his government check.

Casimiro Martinez was receiving a monthly check for a mental disability—but his mind was sound enough to launder more than $1 million stolen from Medicare. Martinez was arrested at Miami International Airport after returning from a trip to Cuba.

While benefits are supposed to be suspended for recipients who leave the United States for more than 30 days, the government relies on people to self-report those absences, and Federal audits have found widespread violations.

So the only way you can find that someone is actually doing this is they have to call and say: Hey, by the way, I am now living in Cuba, and I am still collecting my checks. Well, that ain't gonna happen. This is an outrage.

Listen, my parents came from Cuba. I live in a community where Cuban exiles are a plurality of the people who live there. So no one can say this is an anti-immigrant thing or a mean-spirited thing. We have the support of every elected Cuban American Member of the House for this idea.

I myself come from a Cuban American family. This is an outrage. It is happening right underneath our noses. Who can be for this? Let me rephrase it. Who can be against doing something about this? We are talking about close to $700 million a year of American taxpayer money that could be spent right now to deal with the Zika virus issue that we are facing, for example. Instead, this money is being abused. It is being stolen.

So one would think: Wow, that is a commonsense thing; right? People here in the gallery, people at home—if anyone is actually watching C-span—would say: That is common sense. They will do something about it. Yet I can't get a vote on this amendment. I cannot get the Senate to vote on an amendment to stop this practice.

Here is the only thing I am asking. I am asking that if you come from Cuba, you have to prove you are a refugee. Prove that to us. I am not even saying we are not going to let you in. I am just saying that if you come from Cuba using the Cuban Adjustment Act, prove that you have been persecuted in Cuba. That is not hard to do. You were in jail; you were beaten. We know who the people are who are being persecuted. All I am saying is prove that you are a refugee, and then you will qualify for the benefits because we help refugees. But, apparently, that is too much to ask.

Here is the thing. Everybody here comes up to me and says: I am for your amendment. I support what you are trying to do. Great. Why can't we vote on it? We can't vote on it because if we give you your amendment, then we have to give the other side their amendments. And let me just tell you guys that this is why people are so sick of politics.

I don't want to get too much into the weeds on this, but suffice it to say I have spent from April 13 of 2015 through very recently traveling all over this country on another endeavor, and one of the things you hear from people is that they are just angry. They are just fed up. They think: Nobody whom we elect, whom we vote for, whom we send to Washington—nothing ever changes or happens. It doesn't matter. You can vote Republican, you can vote Democrat, or you can vote for a vegetarian. It doesn't matter whom you vote for. Nothing happens. These people don't do anything.

They are right. I have just come here today and laid this out. No one can argue against what I have just said—no one. I challenge any Member of this Senate to come here now—I will give the rest of the time I have apportioned to me—and tell me why changing this is a bad idea. But I can't even vote get a vote on an amendment to change this.

The excuses are long: Oh, we can't do it because we don't want to open the tax portion of the bill because then other people will want their amendments. This is crazy. This is nuts. We can't solve problems. We can't solve something as clear and simple as that. We can't even get a vote. If you want to vote against what I am proposing, vote against it. We can't even get a vote on an amendment like this. It makes no sense.

This is not a small issue. We are talking $700 million. This is not an issue of national coverage. It is not in the news every day. This is not controversial. This is bipartisan. The chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, a Congresswoman from Florida, is a cosponsor of this bill in the House. So this is not partisan. It is not about getting anyone elected to anything. I am not running for anything. This is about doing what is right.

This is about being able to go back to my home community and say to people: This abuse has been addressed. But if I go home tonight or tomorrow to Florida and I run into somebody at the grocery store, I can't explain to them with a straight face why the Senate will not give me a vote on this because it makes no sense. If I came to you and said: They are stealing $700 million a year from you, and here is a very simple way to stop it, you would say: Let's do it. We have to do it. But here they are saying: We can't do it. And no one will tell you why we can't do it, except for some procedural internal Senate thing.

This is ridiculous. This is why people are angry. This is why people are so upset. This is why people have taken on this attitude to get rid of everyone. And I have to tell you, it is hard to blame them after seeing what is happening here now. This is total and complete outrage.

There is another amendment being debated, by the way, by Senator SESSIONS. It is another one of the amendments that was denied a vote. It has to do with the entry-exit tracking system, which basically means that when you come into the United States with a visa—you get a visa to visit the United States for 90 days as a tourist. You want to go to Washington, you want to

go to Disney World, you want to go to New York City, and you have 60 to 90 days to visit the United States. When you arrive, we check you in. But we never check you out. So we never know when or if someone has left.

As a result, today, of the 12 or 13 or 14 million people who are here illegally, about 40 percent or so of them are people who have overstayed their visas. They didn't cross the border illegally. They came on an airplane, and they overstayed their visa.

Everyone says they are in favor of a system that tracks entries and exits so we can crack down on these overstayed visas. Everyone says they are in favor of it. In 2013, the Senate passed a controversial immigration reform bill that I was a part of and we helped craft, and an entry-exit tracking system was part of that bill.

Everyone—Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative—says they are in favor of doing that. But you can't get a vote on an amendment dealing with it. Again, it makes no sense. This place can't solve anything, and this is ridiculous.

So what happens when you don't solve things for a long time? The problems stack up. The problems stack up and people lose confidence. People lose faith.

Look, I understand this process. I know everyone is not always going to get everything. You are not going to achieve everything you want when you get involved in these issues, but these are commonsense issues. An entry-exit tracking system—of course that makes sense.

By the way, you have to do that on the FAA bill. You have to because that has to do with airports where most of the entry-exits are happening. This issue is drafted to this bill because this bill has a piece of it that deals with the Tax Code and finance. A moment ago, the chairman said we had a lot of debate. They had an open amendment process on the FAA bill, but there is a finance component to this bill that was not offered until it got here. That is what my amendment is drafted on, so I couldn't have offered this in a committee.

I think people come to Washington and watch this process; they hear me explain this thing. They are wondering, there has to be a catch, right? What is the other side of the argument? There is no other side of the argument. There is none. There is none.

Why should you, the people watching, the people here, why should anybody, why should the American taxpayer be giving money to people who don't live here to build houses in another country? That is what is happening right underneath our noses. Forget about passing it. You can't even get a vote on it, for reasons no one can explain.

Do you want to know why people are upset and frustrated with the political process? This is a small but important example of why people are so frustrated. I hope this will change. I hope it will change. I hope it will change on this bill because I don't think you can explain with a straight face why something like this can't pass or why something like this can't even get a vote on it. This makes absolutely no sense, but this is what is happening here every single day on a routine basis. When I say ''here,'' I mean in Washington. The result is, people start to scratch their heads and say: You know what. It doesn't matter whom we elect, nothing changes. That explains a lot about the frustrations that are going on in this country. I hope that will change.

HONORING ASSAULT BRIGADE 2506

Madam President, I want to talk about another topic briefly. It is also related to Cuba but on a much different note. It has to do with the Bay of Pigs, which is something that happened a while back. April 17 will mark the anniversary of a significant event in history. It is an event that many in our government over the years have been eager to forget and is often cited as a blemish on our history, but I beg to differ in some ways. The result wasn't what we wanted, but we have a lot to be proud of. I think it has become increasingly important to remember.

Fifty-five years ago this Sunday, on April 17, 1961, there were 1,500 brave volunteers who embarked upon a mission to liberate Cuba from Fidel Castro's oppressive grip. This force was primarily made up of Cuban exiles, but they were a diverse group from all backgrounds within Cuban society.

They knew they would be badly outnumbered and they would face extraordinary odds. Yet these men stormed the beaches of Playa Giron at the Bay of Pigs. They did it for what at the time was their country, Cuba. They did it for their families. They did it for freedom itself. Over the next 4 days, nearly 100 members of the Brigada de Asalto—Assault Brigade 2506—lost their lives—nearly 100 members. Included in that number were four American pilots and five others who were executed. The majority were captured and imprisoned for many months and years and in inhumane conditions.

Though the Bay of Pigs invasion failed, it was a triumph of courage for the brave Cuban exiles at the mission's helm, and it serves as a reminder of an era when the U.S. Government actually embraced America's role as the watchman on the walls of freedom.

Since taking power those many years ago, the anti-American Castro regime has never relented in its attempts to undermine our security and suppress its own people. More than 1 million Cubans have voted with their feet, fleeing the island in search of political freedom or better economic conditions—we just discussed that a moment ago—often coming to the United States.

Many of these refugees are my neighbors, my friends, and constituents. My own parents left Cuba several years before Castro took over, but their lives were nonetheless marred by his rule as well. The relationships with family and friends and access to their homeland were abruptly severed.

For the nearly 1,500 Cuban exiles who made up the Assault Brigade 2506, Fidel Castro was not the leader of their country. He was what he has always been—a thief and an imposter. They knew liberty was a God-given right, and they needed to do all in their power to reclaim it.

Their story says as much about their own resilience as it does about America. The very building I stand in, and the proud body I am a Member of, would not exist were it not for men like them over 150 years before.

America's Declaration of Independence says of mankind's inalienable rights that ''whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.''

Those who undertook the Bay of Pigs invasion fought for their country, not against it. Their cause was a humanitarian cause, a noble cause, in many ways, an American cause. Many of those who were captured and eventually released and exiled to the United States came with nothing—not a penny—and in many cases no English skills. They went to work and embraced America's blessings, but they never forgot their homeland.

Some made it their life's work to promote the cause of a free Cuba. Others went to work on a different endeavor to provide for their families but dedicated countless hours as faithful volunteers of the cause. Many of the former members of the Brigade 2506 would take up arms for the United States, serving in our Armed Forces with the same bravery and distinction they showed at the Bay of Pigs. In doing so, they served as teachers to an entire community.

For example, today in Miami a Brigade 2506 monument and museum now exists as much to commemorate these heroes as they do to educate others. Far from being forgotten, the example of these brave men has inspired others to carry on their work. Their legacy lives, and it lives on among those of us who follow in their footsteps by making their cause of a free Cuba our cause.

Today the spirit of those who paid the ultimate price is alive and well in the brigade's Veterans Association and continues to stand firmly against the Castro brothers' dictatorship. Their spirit is also alive inside Cuba, represented by all those who stand up to the repressive regime and its beatings, detentions, and suppressions of speech. A strong dissident movement within the island refuses to be silenced, demanding change and the right of every human being to be free.

Sadly, this administration has betrayed that spirit of dissension by treating the Castro government as if it were democratically elected. The President's actions have only motivated the dictatorship to increase in

its very nature, but as long as the spirit of the brigade lives on, the dream of a free Cuba will never die.

Following the Bay of Pigs invasion, in December of 1962, President Kennedy delivered a speech in Miami honoring those who fought. Accepting an honor from them in return, he accepted the flag of their brigade. President Kennedy said: ''I can assure you that this flag will be returned to this brigade in a free Havana.''

That assurance was not made by a man but by a nation. It came with no expiration date. I believe we as Americans owe it to the fearless men who fought at the Bay of Pigs to ensure that their flag, which last touched the shores of Cuba 55 years ago this week, is one day returned to a free Havana and that everything that flag represents—freedom, sacrifice, the dreams of the Cuban people—remains the cause of the United States.

To the veterans of Assault Brigade 2506, thank you for your service and God bless you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I thank Senator RUBIO for his comments and his heartfelt expressions. It is important, and his amendment is very commonsensical. It deals with a very real abuse that I know he and many Cuban Americans understand to be an abuse and want to see ended. This would be a good opportunity for us to pass it, and I understand Senator RUBIO's frustrations that we seem to be unable to fix problems around this body.

That is my feeling this afternoon, too—this frustration that we are not able to finally take action on things like the entry-exit visa system and complete it, as we promised to do for years. We get very close, but we don't get there. I thank Senator RUBIO for his excellent leadership on this issue and support for the amendment that I have worked on. I think it is very reasonable and an appropriate amendment. It gives plenty of opportunity for us to carry out the necessary program in a reasonable way.

The amendment I submitted will ensure the implementation of the statutorily required biometric exit system. It has been in law for a long time. It was first set in law in 1996—20 years ago. There were at least eight or more times where we mandated this legislation. The first one was in 1996. These requirements were basically ignored. They were eventually modified and then the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, occurred.

Congress responded to that by demanding the government implement this entry-exit system when we passed the PATRIOT Act to provide greater security for America. It stated that an entry-exit data system should be fully implemented for airports, seaports, land border ports of entry ''with all deliberate speed and as expeditiously as practical.'' That was in 2001.

If you remember what happened after 9/11, we had a 9/11 Commission—and it was a bipartisan Commission—and that Commission was charged with a serious responsibility of analyzing our immigration system, analyzing our public safety system, our intelligence system, and all kinds of problems that made us more vulnerable than we need to be. One of their recommendations was that we have a system when you come into America on a visa, you clock yourself in—like many workplaces have—and you clock yourself out when you leave the country and your time on your visa expires. Then the United States would know who would come and who had exited.

Of course, we also know, if you recall back to that day, a number of the 9/11 attackers who killed 3,000 Americans came on visas lawfully. Several of them overstayed with the visas they had. So this was the response.

We have the capability of doing this. We have had the capability for many years, and it has not happened. Ten years after 2001, the 9/11 attack, the 9/11 Commissioners met again. The purpose of their meeting was to ascertain how much of what they had recommended had actually been accomplished by the U.S. Government. One of the very first things they noted was the failure to complete the exit system. This is why it has become such a big issue.

In 2002 we passed a law that further moved forward with the system. It required the government to install biometric readers and scanners at all ports of entry of the United States. In fact, we have a system to collect biometric information from individuals who wish to enter the country, but oddly we don't have the exit system. Why is it so much harder to have a system to allow you to document your exit than it is to document your entry? This is a serious problem.

Subsequently, and consistent with the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, Congress passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which mandated the entry-exit system be complete and be biometrically based. That is different from biographic. In a biographically-based system, you give your Social Security number and name and they check to see if somebody has a warrant out for your arrest or if you should be on a no-fly list or if you are connected with terrorism or organized crime or drug-dealing gangs or whatever is in our systems. You can just give a false name. That is not a very secure system at all.

What the 9/11 Commission correctly concluded was, if you used a biometric system where they read your fingerprints, somebody couldn't come in and say they are John Jones and they are really Ralph Smith, who has a warrant out for his arrest for terrorism somewhere. That is the kind of thing this system was designed to do and can be done.

Despite the relatively successful implementation of a biometric entry system, the Department has largely failed to implement the requirements. To date, the Department of Homeland Security has only implemented a handful of pilot programs. It is not hard to do. Yet they have been dragging their feet for years now. However, there are some promising developments on this system. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 created a dedicated source of money for implementation of the biometric exit. It has been estimated that this will result in approximately $1 billion in funds that will be used solely for the implementation of the biometric exit system. That is already in law and required to be a part of our legal and immigration system.

Yet, even with this source of funding, hurdles remain to the implementation this system. My amendment will remove one of the biggest remaining hurdles to the implementation of the system. It simply states that no funds from this Federal aviation bill, which funds airports, runways, safety systems, and all of those different systems, can be expended ''for the physical modification of any existing air navigation facility that is a port of entry or construction of a new air navigation facility intended to be a port of entry, unless the Secretary of Homeland Security certifies that the owner or sponsor of the facility has agreed to a plan that guarantees the installation and implementation of the [biometric exit system] at such facility not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of the Act.'' In other words, it gives them 2 years. They have to reach an agreement to actually take steps to fix this problem.

I modified my amendment in an attempt to address some concerns that were raised by the airlines by explicitly referring to the $1 billion appropriated for this system. We received positive feedback from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which has to deal with this every day. My amendment also has been endorsed by the Border Patrol Union. They know this is a loophole in our system, a gaping hole in our security. They want to see it completed, and it is long overdue.

The amendment allows the U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers and each airport that serves as a port of entry to create a solution that works specifically for the needs of the CBP and the limitations of each individual airport. It does require, however, that the parties agree to a plan that guarantees the system will be installed and implemented.

The suggestions we have had in response as to the kind of language critics and objectors would like to see—it never has an end date. They say, well, you can begin a pilot project or you can do this, that, and the other, but they never give a date as to when it should actually be completed.

Colleagues, this system can be made to work. In my opinion, it can be implemented in every airport in 6

months. We have companies that have this kind of system that is used all over the place, and even Disney World and Disneyland use a fingerprint system. It is on our cell phones. This is the kind of thing that is really no problem to make happen, but we lack the will and determination to see it through, and we let people who don't like it—special interest groups—push back, and as a result, it somehow never gets completed.

In fact, Homeland Security, airports, and airlines have already had a generous amount of time in which to get this completed. It could be done quickly.

One manufacturer said: We should host a special products day. You should just have a day out here. People think it can't be done. Have a day and ask all the manufacturers around the country to bring forth their equipment that is being used in businesses and places all over the country, such as nuclear plants, and set them up and let us show you what we can do with it.

Another company said: You don't even have to touch a screen. You can wave your hand in front of the screen, and it will read your fingerprints.

These are proven products, and the prices are low and falling and at the most basic level. If Apple and Samsung can put it on their phones, we can certainly do it at the airports.

The special interests also say it will take up a lot of space. It will not take up a lot of space. Police officers have these kinds of fingerprint-reading systems in their automobiles. When they arrest somebody for a crime and want to know if there is a warrant for that person's arrest somewhere around the country, they ask that person to put their hand on the screen. The computer reads it and runs the fingerprint against the National Crime Information Center records. If it says bingo, there is a warrant for his arrest for murder, robbery, or drug dealing, they can detain that person.

CBP can work with larger airports with international terminals and install physical equipment at their international departure gates. It is only the international departure gates. CBP—Customs and Border Patrol—can work with smaller airports and even deploy handheld systems similar to the ones that are in cars at the gates that handle international flights. Ultimately, all passengers exiting the United States need to do is place their hands on a simple screen—or with some devices, just wave their hands at it—and it will biometrically identify the passenger as truly the one shown on the flight documents as exiting the United States.

You can come here with a false document. Terrorists work on these things all the time. Terrorists use false identification. We know there are systems out there making them by the thousands and tens of thousands. But if your fingerprint doesn't match the fingerprint of the person whose name you are using and it turns out to match somebody who is on a terrorist watch list, then you can stop it and create safety. If a person puts out their hand and there is a hit because the person boarding the plane is on a no-fly list, the passenger can be denied boarding or removed from the plane before it takes off, and their baggage can be removed from the plane before it takes off.

Importantly, the United States will have a unified, automatically produced list of people who departed when their visa said they should depart and a list of people who did not depart when their visa expired.

By the way, colleagues, several years ago the Congressional Budget Office found that 40-plus percent of people illegally in America came by visa. They came legally; they just did not leave. They said that number is increasing. I believe it is increasing rather rapidly, and we are going to see more of it in the future. If you don't have a system to identify people who overstay their lawful entry, then you do not have a lawful system of immigration. It is just that simple.

For a host of reasons, this system should be based on fingerprints.

The former Secretary of Homeland Security and former Governor of Pennsylvania, Secretary Ridge, set up this system some time ago. When I talked to him about it, I told him as a former prosecutor that it needed to be based on the fingerprint system. Some people had other ideas about it, such as eye or facial recognition. These things can technically be done, but they can't run a check on somebody who committed murder somewhere and has a warrant out for their arrest and is fleeing the United States, because our basic law enforcement system only has certain data of people who are wanted for criminal activity. You need to use the fingerprint. It has been proven, it works, and it is used in every criminal justice system in the United States.

When he left office after going round and round about this subject, Secretary Ridge said: I have one bit of advice for my successors, and that is, use the fingerprint. I believe he was totally correct, and it still remains the only real system that will work.

Let's also be aware that numerous countries across the world—including New Zealand, Singapore, and Hong Kong—have been using biometric systems for years. This is nothing new. Others do it, and we can do it too.

Ending this failure has bipartisan support. My subcommittee, the Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest, held a hearing on January 20 of this year entitled—I thought it was a pretty good title—''Why is the biometric exit tracking system still not in place?'' That is a pretty good question. Well, during the hearing, we got promises from government officials, but there was no commitment that they would actually complete the system. They said: Oh, we are doing pilot projects. We are considering this and working on it. Well, they have been working on it for 20 years. We had our members who were there—all three Democratic members who were at that subcommittee hearing said they favor this. There is no real opposition to it.

Just a few weeks after the hearing, Secretary Johnson of Homeland Security made public statements directing DHS to begin implementation of the system at our airports by 2018. To begin implementation when? In 2018. There was no promise that it would be completed, and there was no assurance that they were going to make the system a reality. This is at least an acknowledgement that it is needed, but we need a completion date.

It is these kinds of lulling comments that we have heard for years that have resulted in no action. If people in the Senate would like to know why the American people are not happy with the performance of Congress, this is a very good example. Congress promises to fix the problem, even claims we voted for and passed laws to fix a problem, and then it stands by while two decades go by and nothing happens. Why? Well, their special interests speak up. We have lobbyists sending out letters telling Members to oppose the Sessions amendment.

It is time for us to represent the national interest. The time for the special interests is over on this subject. Congress has spoken repeatedly. The American people are getting tired of this. I am getting tired of this. Who runs this place? Elected representatives or some high-paid lobbyist somewhere? They have been dragging this out and fighting it tenaciously with every effort they have had for years, and it has not happened and America is at risk because of it. Airports and airlines are happy to get Federal assistance whenever they can. They better be trying to cooperate and make their airlines even safer than they are today.

It is time to fulfill the promise and commitment we made to the American people. How much longer can this go on? We promised the American people a system that will demonstrably improve our national security. We voted for it time and again. We have bipartisan support for it. If we can get a vote on this amendment, we will see a huge bipartisan majority vote for it. I don't know who would vote against it. But we don't get to vote, and as a result nothing happens for years.

This was noted by the former Commissioners on the 9/11 Commission in a report issued in 2014:

> Without exit-tracking, our government does not know when a foreign visitor admitted to the United States on a temporary basis has overstayed his or her admission. Had this system been in place on 9/11, we would have had a better chance of detecting the plotters before they struck.

That is why it is important. We have long known that visa overstays pose a serious national security risk. A number of the hijackers on September 11

overstayed their visas. The number of visa overstays implicated in terrorism since that date is certainly a significant number.

A new poll came out earlier this year that indicates that three out of four Americans not only want the Obama administration to find those aliens who overstay their visas but to also deport them.

Why not? They came here for a limited period of time. We have a law that says they can stay for a certain amount of time. It is not that hard to get a visa to the United States, but shouldn't they leave when their visa is up? Do they just get to stay here and take a job, perhaps from an unemployed American citizen?

The same poll indicates that 68 percent of Americans consider visa overstays as a ''serious national security risk'' and 31 percent consider visa overstays as a ''very serious'' national security risk. There is no doubt as to why.

The risk to our national security is too high for us to maintain the status quo. We must fulfill this promise. We must do everything we can to implement the system. I hope that some way, somehow, before this bill goes to final passage—dealing with airports and public safety issues—we fix this problem. Why not? I don't know a single person who opposes it, but we couldn't get the amendment up; we couldn't make it pending. The Democrats objected to it. Now we have an objection to having a vote on it before final passage of the legislation.

So I am frustrated. I have been pushing this for years. Even the Gang of 8 bill had it in there. So this is not something that I think is in any way unreasonable. It is time to bring it to a conclusion. I urge my colleagues: Let's figure out a way to make this happen.

I appreciate Senator THUNE, who is managing the bill. He is definitely for it and wants to see it happen. But right now we have objections from the Democratic side, and we don't seem to be able to get it through.

I urge my colleagues to reevaluate and approve passage of this amendment that should have virtually unanimous support in the Senate.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the opening on the Supreme Court. Today I am going to focus my remarks on how important filling the current vacancy on the Supreme Court is for our system of governance.

When our Founding Fathers drafted the Constitution, they envisioned a system of governance upheld by three branches of government. The Federalist Papers outline this balance of power in detail. In Federalist Paper No. 51, James Madison spoke about the importance of checks and balances among three branches of government. As Madison stated: ''It is . . . evident that the members of each department should be as little dependent as possible on those of the others.'' I don't think we always refer to ourselves as members of a department, but what he meant by this is that there are three departments in our government—the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. In Federalist Papers 78 and 80, Alexander Hamilton wrote about the important role of the Federal judiciary in particular. The writings of the Founders make clear that our democracy only works when all three branches are functioning.

In recent years, gridlock has hobbled the ability of the legislative branch to function. Although we have made some progress in starting to turn that around with the passage of the recent Transportation bill, the Education bill, and the budget, we also have had some very difficult times—fiscal cliff, the government shutdown. We cannot take that dysfunction to the third—as was called by James Madison—department of government, which is the judiciary. We cannot have a Supreme Court that doesn't function, which is exactly what is happening as some continue to obstruct the process, when all we want is a hearing.

We have already witnessed the Court split evenly without a ninth Justice to break the tie this year. These types of decisions can prevent the Court from responding to pressing issues in a timely fashion. In some decisions where there has been a 4-to-4 split, the result is effectively the same as if the Supreme Court never heard the case to begin with.

What if there was an emergency case like we had with Bush v. Gore? Again, do we want a 4-to-4 split in a case like that? Justice Kagan has said the current Justices on the Court are doing everything they can to avoid a 4-to-4 split, but that is not how it should work. Often these types of decisions provide less guidance to States, offering them less legal certainty.

Last week I held a meeting of the Steering and Outreach Committee, where I heard firsthand about what a serious issue this is for State and local governments. You have patchwork decisions across the country with perhaps 2 years that will go by before you have a High Court of the land that can decide which case and which decision rules when there is a split in the circuit. You can't continue to have a split on the Court.

As the former chief prosecutor from Minnesota's largest county, I know from my own experience how important it is to have an ultimate arbiter to settle the law of the land. Cases challenging critical laws are now before the Supreme Court. We want those laws to rise or fall because the Supreme Court has decided the issue—not because of a 4-to-4 split, not because they were unable to do their job.

More split decisions are not the only risks we are facing. The current vacancy on the Supreme Court also has implications for the number of cases the Court is able to take in the first place.

In March of last year, the U.S. Supreme Court granted certiorari—that means they took the case—in eight cases. This year, it only did so for two cases. The current situation is compromising the integrity of our judiciary. If we allow the Supreme Court to become a casualty of the polarization in our politics, if we let politics impede the Court from having another Justice and from doing its job, people will lose confidence in the Court.

That is what sets our country apart. When you talk to companies across the world that want to invest in different countries, they look at the fact that we have a functioning judiciary.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 18, notwithstanding rule XXII, the Thune amendment No. 3680 be agreed to; the substitute amendment, as amended, No. 3679, be agreed to; and the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on H.R. 636.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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. THUNE. 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. THUNE. Mr. President, again I say to my colleagues that we made a lot of good headway on the FAA reauthorization bill. Throughout the day today—as we did quite late last night—we have attempted to negotiate a path forward to adopt more amendments. We have a package of amendments that have been cleared. A number of our colleagues wanted votes on their amendments, but there have been objections on both sides of the aisle which prevented us from getting to a final resolution.

This morning we adopted cloture on the substitute with a very big vote, but we still have to have a cloture vote on Monday on the underlying bill, which will occur at 5:30 p.m. So I am here to inform my colleagues that there will be no further rollcall votes during today's

session of the Senate and we will proceed with the cloture vote on the underlying bill at 5:30 p.m. on Monday. Shortly after that vote, I hope to get to final passage on the FAA reauthorization so we can move on to other business in the Senate.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. 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. THUNE. 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. KING. 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

(The remarks of Mr. KING pertaining to the introduction of S. 2800 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I also want to address a second issue while I have the floor, and that is a conversation I had yesterday with Judge Merrick Garland. We had an opportunity to talk in my office for about 45 minutes to an hour. We talked about a wide range of topics: the limits on the President's Executive authority, how the Court should provide oversight to regulatory agencies, the Second Amendment, the role of stare decisis respect for precedence, general judicial philosophy. We talked about a number of issues, and I wanted to share with the Senate some observations from that meeting.

No. 1, the first thing I thought of last night after reflecting upon this conversation is that I used to be in the judge-appointing business. As Governor of Maine, I probably appointed 10 or 15 judges over my 8-year term, maybe more. I don't have a specific number, but I do recall the process which brought prospective judges in by a judicial selection committee, and then I would consider their qualifications and interview them in much the same way I did yesterday.

I always look for the same qualities: first, high intellect; knowledge of the law; nonpomposity—as a young lawyer, I didn't like pompous judges, and I don't like people who uphold themselves, particularly when they are in positions of authority, so a kind of modest demeanor; finally, a temperament whereby they can apply the law and make decisions without any discernible political or ideological bent. Indeed, as I thought back on the conversation I had with Judge Garland yesterday, I realized that he exactly fit that criteria. Were he an applicant or a candidate for the supreme court in the State of Maine and if I were the Governor, he would be the kind of guy I was looking for.

The other thing I reflected on as I was thinking about the conversation is that I wish the people of America had been looking over my shoulder and had heard the conversation, the questions, heard his answers, studied his body language and how he approached these questions, how his mind works, how he thinks.

I thought about the fact that many of us are having these meetings with the judge over these weeks, Members from both parties, and what we are doing is kind of a slow-motion hearing without the public being able to watch what is going on. I think that is where we are missing the boat on this nomination.

I fully understand the discretion every Senator has to make their own decision on whether this is a nomination that should go forward, but we are denying the American people the opportunity to participate in this process by not having a hearing and allowing them to see and hear and meet Judge Garland. I don't understand that.

Well, I guess I do understand the politics, and I will talk about that in a minute, but I don't understand why we are shutting the people out of this process, because if there was a hearing, it would probably go on for hours, there would be dozens of questions, the Senators could ask all the questions they wanted, and the public and the Senators would be able to observe this man and get a feel for who he is, what he would bring to this job, and the kind of person he is.

I have not made a final decision. If and when he is brought to the floor for a vote, I haven't yet decided how I will vote, although based upon my meeting yesterday and my knowledge of his prior judicial experience and his reputation, I am inclined to say yes. But I want to have a hearing. I want to see how he does in that hot seat where he is asked difficult questions by our colleagues. I want to see the reaction not only of the Senators but of the people of America as they have a chance to meet Judge Garland.

One of the things that concerns me about this process—and ironically Chief Justice Roberts commented on this just a few months ago, before the death of Justice Scalia—is the politicization of the Supreme Court. I am not naive, and I realize the Supreme Court makes important fundamental decisions. It is an important part of our governmental structure and makes far-reaching decisions that have effects on many people across the country. But I am afraid that today we have gotten to the point where the Supreme Court is treated as almost like a third branch of Congress. It is another political body. Instead of being elected by the people, it is being elected by the Senators, and we are arguing about who gets to elect this so-called swing vote and which way the Court is going to be.

The Supreme Court should not be a political body, period. It should be a body made up of people—my impression of Judge Garland—who are servants of the law, who are students of the law, who are moderate and temperate.

I walked out of our meeting and I thought, this guy is a conservative with a small ''c.'' He is a modest man with a deep knowledge of the law and a razor-sharp intellect but no political or ideological agenda that I could discern. I suspect that if and when—I believe it will ultimately be when—he is confirmed, he will turn into a Justice who will vote on one side of issues sometimes and make certain people happy and others unhappy at other times. I think he is going to be a straight-down-the-middle judge who calls it as he sees it, and I think that is exactly what we need on the Supreme Court today.

The other quality he has demonstrated as chief judge of the circuit court is the ability to bring consensus. By all reports of people who have worked with him—judges, people who have known him—he is a consensus builder. He is not a flamboyant, strong, charismatic kind of guy, but he brings people together. He marshals the court. He works toward unanimity. He is not a dissenter. He is not a firebrand. He is principled, but he is a consensus builder, and we definitely need that.

Five-to-four decisions, whichever way they go, in the long run are not good for the country, in my view, because they divide us and illegitimize the Court as a judicial arbiter of the Constitution as opposed to another political branch of our government.

So I believe what we should be doing is fulfilling our constitutional responsibility—not to vote yes, necessarily. The Constitution does not say the President shall nominate and we shall approve—but to consider and to advise and consent. That involves the simple matter of a hearing and would include the American people in the process.

There is a lot of discussion here of ''let's hear from the American people.'' The way to hear from the American people is to have hearings, let them watch, let them take the measure of this person, and let us know how they think we should carry forth our constitutional responsibility in this case.

He appears to be—from what I know so far—an extraordinary candidate, not ideological, not partisan. I have no idea of his partisan background. I did not even ask him. It occurred to me afterward that perhaps I should have, but I didn't. I know he has worked in the Justice Department. He has been a prosecutor. He has been a private attorney, and he has been a very well respected judge.

I think he is a judge's judge, a lawyer's lawyer. That is the kind of person I think we need on the Court in this day and age. So I hope we can find a way to move to hearings, to allow the American people to participate in this process, to watch the process unfold, to get to know the judge. Let's get to know him better and then make our decision so we can carry out our constitutional responsibility to advise and consent.

That, I believe, is what we owe the Constitution and what we owe the people of the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask to speak in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

ISIS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss briefly the fight against ISIS and the sources of its financial support. As the administration accelerates the coalition military campaign against ISIS, I believe the administration must continue to intensify efforts to dismantle the financial networks that support this vicious terrorist organization.

We know that ISIS operates like a criminal syndicate and profits from the illicit sale of oil, antiquities, and other items through the black market, all while extorting civilians it has under its control. ISIS uses this funding to conduct terror attacks and control territory in both Iraq and Syria. They use it to buy more weapons, ammunition, and components for improvised explosive devices, which we know by the acronym IEDs.

They also use this funding to pay for salaries for fighters and to develop propaganda materials to spread their hateful ideology. Already, we have seen evidence that both U.S. and coalition efforts against their financial networks, including airstrikes on oil trucks and cash storage sites, have had a meaningful impact on their finances—the finances of ISIS.

There is evidence that ISIS has had to reduce the salaries they pay their fighters in recent months. That is good news. I believe that if we can cut off their money, we can significantly diminish their ability to operate. Members of Congress should support this effort in any way we can.

Recently, during the month of February, I traveled to four countries to focus on part of this effort. I visited Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar to press the foreign leaders in those countries, especially the last three, to accelerate the fight against terrorist financiers and facilitators.

Much more remains to be done to cut off the financing that ISIS receives. A recent report by the Culture Under Threat Task Force describes ISIS as ''industrial, methodical, and strictly controlled from the highest levels of the organization's leadership.'' This report further indicates the analysts' warning that ISIS may try to increase its antiquities trafficking activity as other revenue streams such as oil sales are, in fact, cut off.

So we have to be on guard for this and take action against it. I sponsored the Senate version of the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act of 2015. This is a bill that would restrict the importation into the United States of antiquities smuggled out of Syria since the beginning of the conflict. It also expresses the sense of Congress that the administration should better coordinate among the many agencies with expertise in counterterrorism finance and cultural heritage protection so there is better coordination within the administration. That is the aim of the legislation.

This bill also sends a strong signal that the United States will not be a market for this illicit activity that only benefits terrorists and especially ISIS. It also will not be a market that funds any terrorist group that leads to the destruction of cultural heritage. So I want to thank Senators PERDUE, GRASSLEY, COONS, and PETERS for their cosponsorship of this important legislation.

I am pleased that the Senate passed the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act. It passed just last night. It is urgent that we send this bill to the President's desk.

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

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

FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise to urge swift passage of the bipartisan Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2016 currently pending on the Senate floor.

This legislation supports U.S. jobs and promotes competition while increasing safety in the national aerospace system. In the wake of the tragic attacks in Brussels, the bill includes a number of important airport security reforms.

We are proposing to invest in our Nation's airports by authorizing a $400 million increase for the Airport Improvement Program, which airports across the Nation rely on to modernize their infrastructure. We are also seeking to preserve the Federal Contract Tower Program, which supports general aviation safety, commercial airports, law enforcement, and emergency medical operations.

Michigan is a large State, and our rural airports keep smaller communities across the Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan competitive and connected. Maintaining the Essential Air Service Program supports airports that Michiganders rely on, such as the Alpena County Regional Airport, Muskegon County Airport, and Delta County Airport.

This bill also advances responsible usage of unmanned aircraft systems—known more commonly as UAS or drones—by addressing safety and privacy issues, enhancing enforcement against irresponsible usage, and creating new opportunities for research, development, and the testing of these innovative technologies.

I thank my colleagues—Commerce Committee Chairman JOHN THUNE and Ranking Member BILL NELSON—for working with me during the committee markup process to include a provision that grew out of bipartisan legislation I authored with Senator MORAN of Kansas—the Higher Education UAS Modernization Act. This important legislation will clear the way for our Nation's students and educators to use UAS technology for research, education, and job training. This will keep our research universities, workforce, and manufacturers on the cutting edge of global competitiveness as they develop the UAS of the future that will drive our economy forward. Our brightest minds will have the ability to design, to refine, and to fly UAS so they can advance these technologies to help prepare our country for safe, widespread integration of UAS into the National Airspace System. This will support job creation across the income spectrum as our Nation's workforce will be able to get the training they need to operate these systems both safely and efficiently.

This legislation has the support of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, the Association of American Universities, and dozens of other colleges and universities across this country.

In addition to advancing the next generation of civilian drone development, the reauthorization being considered also supports and protects the ability of our Air National Guard to safely and effectively operate remotely piloted aircraft, or RPAs.

I worked to include legislation that helps Air National Guard units across this country maintain their operations, including the Michigan Air National Guard's 110th Attack Wing in Battle Creek, MI, which I had the privilege of visiting earlier this month. The 110th has two critical missions: operating MQ–9 Reaper RPAs and a Cyber Operations Squadron.

Michigan is proud to host these cutting-edge, high-tech military operations that securely and effectively operate aircraft located thousands of miles away supporting our troops that are deployed overseas. Our troops have

a high demand for remotely piloted aircraft, which conduct intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations as well as offensive strike operations.

The Air Force is working hard to meet the demand for RPAs from commanders in theater and has already increased incentive pay for RPA pilots and doubled pilot class sizes to keep up with the demand.

Air National Guard units based in the United States but flying aircraft which could be anywhere else in the world add additional capacity to meet our global security needs. These are sensitive operations requiring very specific infrastructure that the Air National Guard has invested in at bases all across the country.

As certain Air National Guard units operating at civilian airports, like Battle Creek, transition from manned missions to remotely piloted aircraft missions, they are concerned the airport where they lease their base could be forced to either raise their rent or risk losing eligibility for much needed FAA grants. I worked with my colleagues—Senators COTTON and ERNST—on legislation to prevent this unfair and unnecessary choice for Battle Creek and other airports across the country. I am proud this provision has been included in the legislation we are considering today, which will prevent the FAA from denying grant funding on the basis that an airport renews a low-cost lease with a military unit, regardless of whether that unit operates aircraft physically stationed at the airport.

While I understand the FAA's interest in ensuring that airports receive a fair rate for the space they lease, I am glad this legislation will clarify that military units, including the National Guard, can continue to receive nominal leases. If an airport and a military unit agree to renew a low-cost lease, they should be able to proceed without concern the FAA will revoke the airport's grant authority.

The communities that host our military bases are proud of their role in national defense.

These airports shouldn't have to choose between continuing to host a military tenant and maintaining eligibility for grants that can improve the safety and efficiency of local airport operations.

Again, I want to applaud Leader MCCONNELL, Leader REID, Chairman THUNE, and Ranking Member NELSON for their work on this important bipartisan legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support its passage early next week.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). 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.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, it may not look like it now, but we are actually making great progress in moving forward with a critical piece of legislation that would reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration and, in the process, make flying safer and more efficient for all of our citizens. Members across the aisle have worked together on this legislation, and I know we will have an important vote at 5:30 p.m. on Monday and hopefully be able to process some of the amendments that have been agreed upon by the managers of the bill, which are a part of the managers' package.

CALLING FOR APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL COUNSEL

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I want to turn to a topic that has concerned me a lot over the last year and troubles me more each day, and that is the use by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton of an unsecured private email server while serving as our Nation's top diplomat. We have known about her private email server for a while now and the great lengths she has gone to avoid compliance with some pretty important laws that Congress has passed and that have been signed into law by the President of the United States.

I believe transparency in government is very important in terms of building public confidence for what we are actually doing. That is why even when I was at the State level as Texas Attorney General, I was an avid supporter of open records and open meetings legislation so the public had access and saw their right to know honored.

Here in Congress, since I have gotten here, I have been working closely with my ideological opposite, Senator PAT LEAHY from Vermont, with him on the left end of the spectrum and me on the right end of the spectrum, but both agreeing that the public's right to know is so important when it comes to self-government and what the public doesn't know can hurt them. That is why when Lyndon Johnson signed the Freedom of Information Act into law, it passed with such broad support, and it continues to enjoy that kind of broad support today. It applies the principle of transparency and accountability, and in the process, it helps build confidence for what Congress is doing on the people's behalf.

It is pretty clear that Secretary Clinton sought to evade those important laws by setting up this private email server.

I know most people are familiar with the dot-com domains that we use perhaps at your home or my home, and we have the dot-gov domain, which is used by government agencies and the like. But then there is a dot-mil, which is used by the Department of Defense and is a classified system. There is actually another system that operates independently which carries the most sensitive classified information circulated by our intelligence community around the world.

Those are important distinctions because those don't necessarily talk to each other. In fact, they are not connected to the Internet. The classified intelligence system server is not connected to the military classified system or to the dot-gov system and certainly not to the dot-com or the private email server.

I have not heard another example of anybody who has been quite so careless—to use the President's term—or reckless—to use my term—with how private email servers are used to conduct official business. There is a lot of risk associated with that.

We know the former Secretary of State did delete tens of thousands of emails that were once on the server. In other words, she hadn't turned those over to the State Department to vet and determine whether they complied with court orders requiring the State Department to produce emails that were producible under the Freedom of Information Act. She just deleted them.

We know that her emails contained classified information, some at very high levels of government classification. As many of our Nation's top security experts will tell you, it is likely that our adversaries had easy access to and monitored Secretary Clinton's unsecured server, as well as the sensitive communications that were contained on it.

As Secretary of State, you are a member of the President's Cabinet. You are operating at the highest levels of classification with very sensitive information, and it is simply irresponsible to subject that information to the efforts by our Nation's adversaries to capture and read it and use it to their advantage.

All of this should concern all of us. I am not just talking about the political ramifications. This is not primarily about politics. But Secretary Clinton's actions were such an extreme breach of the Nation's confidence, and they potentially gave away extremely sensitive information that put our national security in jeopardy, not to mention the lives of those who serve our country in the intelligence community and whose very identity may have been revealed by this very sensitive classified information.

This is not a trivial matter. We need to treat this seriously, and the facts must be pursued in a thorough, impartial investigation. I know most people don't really believe there is such a thing as an impartial investigation here in Washington, DC, but there is a category of counsel that has been created by Congress to provide some measure of independence from the Department of Justice. That is called a special counsel. It is up to the Attorney General herself whether to appoint the special counsel when she recognizes

that there is an apparent conflict of interest or at least an appearance of partiality that ought to be dealt with by the appointment of a special counsel.

Given the unprecedented nature of this case and the unavoidable conflicts of interest, I strongly believe there is no other appropriate action for Attorney General Loretta Lynch to take than to appoint a special counsel in this case to get to the bottom of it, to follow the facts to wherever they may lead, and to make sure the law is applied impartially and fairly wherever those may fall.

The American people were reminded of the need for a special counsel last weekend when, once again, President Obama opined publicly about the investigation. In an interview on Sunday, President Obama dismissed the email scandal by splitting hairs about how the government classifies information. According to the President—get this—''there's classified, and then there's classified'' information.

He was attempting to draw meaningless distinctions between levels of classification, suggesting that release or exposure of some classified information was OK as long as it wasn't the ''classified'' information, which supposedly he would say should be kept from our Nation's adversaries and kept confidential.

President Obama, in other words, was trying to indicate that even though classified information was on Secretary Clinton's private server, he somehow divined that it was not so sensitive that it would put our country in jeopardy.

First of all, we know that some of Secretary Clinton's emails were classified even beyond confidential, to the secret and top secret special access program levels—some of the highest levels of classification. Second, the President's comments have to be confusing to many public servants around the country, who, as part of their daily work, handle classified information and the way they do it when they are issued a national security clearance or sign a nondisclosure agreement. According to the President, it must be OK to expose some classified information to public view but not others. I can guess that people who work in that world must be somewhat confused and perplexed by the President's statement.

To dismissively talk about the different levels of classification is not only wrong but, frankly, it is insulting to Americans who work tirelessly on a daily basis to protect our national security and, in particular, to those who go to great lengths to properly and carefully handle classified information, even when it isn't particularly convenient.

But perhaps worse, the President was opining publicly on the results of an ongoing criminal investigation over which it turns out he knows absolutely nothing—at least if you believe the key players in that investigation. Although he claims to adhere to a strict line between himself and the investigation, President Obama repeatedly suggests his desired outcome and acts as if he is Secretary Clinton's front line of defense.

Here is President Obama in the same interview. He said that he ''continues to believe that [Secretary Clinton] has not jeopardized America's national security.''

How in the world could the President possibly know that if, in fact, there is a strict line between himself and the investigation?

Attorney General Lynch has testified and stated in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee—and FBI Director Comey has likewise testified—that there has been no reporting to the White House about the results of the ongoing investigation. Everybody understands that would be improper, but somehow the President suggests it is all OK and that he knows, when, in fact, he doesn't know.

How could the President possibly know that, especially when—as the President made clear last Sunday—he has not been ''sorting through each and every aspect'' of the issue? By the President's own admission, he doesn't talk to the Attorney General or the FBI Director about ongoing investigations, and he certainly isn't conducting it, so he wouldn't have personal knowledge. Under no circumstance is this kind of commentary by the President OK. There is simply no way to read this without running a serious risk of trying to influence the outcome of the investigation, which everybody should recognize would be completely improper. The President has done this before and so has his spokesman, the White House Press Secretary. Time and again the White House has projected its desired outcome in this investigation to the public and, worse, to those people conducting it. As I said, it is completely inappropriate, but don't just take it from me.

As I mentioned a moment ago, last month the Judiciary Committee heard testimony from Attorney General Loretta Lynch. I conveyed to her at the time the need for a special counsel to investigate the case. At the hearing, Attorney General Lynch testified that it was her hope that everyone, including the White House, would stay silent when it comes to commenting on an ongoing investigation by the FBI.

I couldn't agree with her more. The responsible thing for the President to do would be to say nothing, particularly if he knows nothing about the content of an ongoing criminal investigation. I wish the President would take the advice of his lawyer, the Attorney General of the United States, and respect her prerogative as the Nation's chief law enforcement officer and the reputation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Director Comey made it clear that the FBI does not care for politics. It doesn't play politics. In fact, the credibility and integrity of the FBI depends upon their not playing politics. So why is the President playing politics with law enforcement?

Well, the threat of a President influencing an ongoing investigation intentionally or otherwise is not something we must just accept. What we need is an investigation that is as independent as possible.

I hope the Attorney General, in light of the President's comments and his attempt to influence the investigation—I can think of no other reason he would say what he did—reconsiders her refusal to appoint a special counsel in this case. At the very least, I hope the President quits talking about a subject he knows nothing about, which is what the investigation is revealing, and let the Justice Department do its job without feeling the pressure that apparently the White House is attempting to impose on the FBI and the Department of Justice.

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

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

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I am here today to talk about the Zika virus, which we have been hearing a lot about in the news lately. It is a virus that first began to appear—well, obviously it has been around for a long time, but we began to see it in the news lately with regard to its implications in Brazil and Latin America. But it has now found its way here to the United States, and there has been a lot of discussion about it.

As the Presiding Officer knows, the President has requested $1.9 billion to deal with it. There are a lot of different things we need to do to address it. There has been a little bit of a squabble in the Congress about whether we should be spending that much money on it.

So one of the things I argued for—and it has happened—is that we should take some of the money that was set aside for Ebola when the Ebola crisis was going on—it was about $500 million of that that had been unspent. I argued that before we go to the $1.9 billion, there was $500 million immediately available. Let's assign that to be used. The President has agreed to do that. But there is still a shortfall on this issue. It does need to be addressed. I hope we can find a way to address it.

Obviously my political differences with the policies of the White House are well known and established, but this is an issue where I believe and I hope they will be supportive of this request.

To be abundantly clear, it is not just about throwing money at it. We have to make sure the money is being spent on the right things. This is not just saying ''Here is $1.9 billion'' and throwing the money at Zika; you want to make sure, No. 1, it is all being spent on dealing with the virus. Oftentimes in this place, when money is assigned for a catastrophe or a disaster or anything like this, a breakout of a disease, suddenly you see all kinds of other ideas and programs attached to it that have nothing to do with the primary reason the money is being spent. So we want to make sure, No. 1, that if there is $1.9 billion that is going to be spent on this, that all of it is spent on this and not on some other thing.

The second is, we want to make sure the money is being spent on the right things. What are the right things? Well, we have discussed those over the last few days. One of the most important things that need to happen long term is the money necessary for basic research to incentivize the vaccine. There is a belief that they can pretty quickly get to a vaccine that will protect people from this. That is important.

I think there needs to be thought put into the testing. Today, testing for the Zika virus is less than reliable. There is not a commercially available test. For example, in Florida, if you want to be tested for Zika, it has to be through the State department of health. You cannot go down to Quest Laboratory or one of the providers of lab tests and get it. There is not a commercially available test. So that has to be improved as well.

Those are the sorts of things I hope the money will be geared towards. This is why it is so important. I don't want us to take our eyes off of this because if this issue really takes off on us here in the United States, we don't want to say that we knew it was happening but we ignored it and did nothing about it.

On Monday of this week, there was a Reuter's report in which U.S. officials warned that the Zika virus is ''scarier'' than they initially thought. The Zika virus is now present in about 30 States. And by the way, there are hundreds of thousands of infections that could appear in the territory of Puerto Rico.

Here is a quote from the Deputy Director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

> Everything we look at with this virus seems to be a bit scarier than we initially thought. And so while we absolutely hope we don't see widespread local transmission in the Continental United States, we need the States to be ready for that.

As of now, from my understanding, there has only been one case of transmission in the continental United States. That happens to be in Polk County, FL. But there are dozens in the territory of Puerto Rico. So this is deeply concerning.

The other thing they found is that the mosquito species that primarily transmits the virus is present in about 30 States rather than 12, as previously thought. So that, too, indicates that this could be a very serious issue that could find itself in places outside of the tropical climates to which we once thought it was limited.

On Wednesday, the Centers for Disease Control—this was last Wednesday—the CDC said that it is now clear that Zika definitely causes severe birth defects. Confirming the worst fears of many pregnant women in the United States and Latin America, U.S. health officials said Wednesday that there is no longer any doubt that the Zika virus causes babies to be born with abnormally small heads and other severe brain defects.

This is something that now—looking at what has happened in Brazil and other parts of the country, there is now real concern about what this can mean for pregnant women and the ability to transmit that to their unborn child. The effects of it are devastating.

Initially it was thought that the Zika virus is very dangerous if you contract it in the first trimester but that after that the risk is no longer as grave. But on Thursday of this week, we got the news—this was reported in USA TODAY—that the Zika virus may, in fact, affect babies even in the later stages of pregnancy. The Zika virus may pose a threat to women and their fetuses even in the later stages of pregnancy, according to a study published online Wednesday in the BMG, which was formerly known as the British Medical Journal.

Doctors initially suspected that Zika infections, which are largely spread by mosquitoes, would be most harmful to fetuses in the first trimester or the first 3 months of a 9-month pregnancy. In this study, however, 23 percent of the mothers of babies with microcephaly were infected with Zika in the second trimester. Two mothers were infected in the sixth month of pregnancy. None were infected in the third trimester.

The babies in the study had problems that went far beyond simply small heads. The brain damage seen in the study was ''extremely severe, indicating a poor prognosis,'' according to the study.

The authors of the report have now expanded the study to a total of 130 babies with microcephaly. Several infants have had epileptic seizures within 3 to 5 months after birth. The extent of the brain damage seen in the babies in the study, which was captured in MRI images, was ''stunning,'' according to James Bale, Jr., a professor of pediatric neurology at the University of Utah School of Medicine. This is the quote: ''This is a really remarkable degree of damage.'' Babies with this condition have severe microcephaly, extra scalp skin, intellectual disabilities, and prominent occipital bone, which is located at the back of the head, according to the CDC.

By the way, these fetal brain disruptions we have talked about are normally extremely rare. A 2001 review in a medical journal identified only 20 cases, according to the CDC. So this is something we are looking at that does not normally happen as a normal risk, but it is clearly being exacerbated by the Zika virus. In fact, in MRI images published by the BMG study, one baby appears to have a very small, even nonexistent brain. Judging by the damage on the MRI, the baby in that image is likely to have severe cognitive impairment and may be unable to learn to walk or talk.

So that is why the same day I sent a letter to the Centers for Disease Control. I sent a letter to them regarding the Zika testing backlog.

On April 8, I hosted a briefing in Miami—a week ago tomorrow. Some State health departments, local health departments, and county government officials were represented. I included health officers from Puerto Rico. I publicly, as I said at the time, offered my support for the President's emergency supplemental funding request.

While I heard there were many obstacles that we face in fighting Zika, one aspect I heard about repeatedly was the distressing length of time it takes for diagnostic tests to be completed. I have subsequently seen media reports of pregnant women who have waited up to a month for the CDC to complete their diagnostic tests for the Zika virus while fearful mothers anxiously waited to know their child's fate.

Of course, we are still waiting for the supplemental request to be passed, and I hope we can do that quickly. There really is no reason to wait on this.

But until Congress approves the request, I urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to use whatever steps are necessary to dedicate currently available resources to clearing its current backlog of Zika diagnostic tests and to prioritize these tests for women who are pregnant.

I believe these essential steps will help us not only to ease mothers' minds who test negative for the virus but also to provide critical care for a child whose mother tests positive for the Zika virus. We know that screening for microcephaly should happen early and often, and receiving the results of a diagnostic test is the first step in that process. The CDC should have the capability to provide those services immediately to those who are waiting.

Ultimately, it is my hope that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration will approve a commercial Zika diagnostic test in the near future so that these tests are more broadly available.

One more thing that was reported on Wednesday was that the House GOP is readying a Zika funding plan. House leaders are working on approving more funding by the end of this year. Once again, I encourage them to do so in light of the circumstances we now face.

I am not saying this is going to be an outbreak of crisis proportions, but I am saying that for a family that is potentially impacted by this, it will be a crisis. I am saying that it is important for

these testing kits to be available—not only for the expectant mothers or potentially pregnant but also for men because, as we know, the Zika virus can also be transmitted sexually, as it was in the transmission that occurred in Polk County, FL.

Beyond it, I hope that in this funding request we don't wait until the end of the year. The summer months are coming, and these are the months where the spread of these mosquitoes—the two strains of the two types of species of mosquitoes that carry the virus—are going to be prevalent in many parts of the country. It is the time of year when many people find themselves outdoors exposed to these mosquitoes.

I hope the funding request can be in place and that we don't wait until the end of the year to deal with this. It shouldn't take this long. Look, I believe in limited government, but I do believe one of the obligations of a limited Federal Government is to protect our people from dangers, whether they be foreign enemies or the risk of disease outbreak.

I hope we will move forward on this endeavor because it is important. It is a proper function of government. We shouldn't be sitting here 6 months from now regretting that we didn't act sooner. I hope we will move promptly and quickly both in the House and then in the Senate to address this issue.

I also wish to say that I don't want to forget about Puerto Rico. Oftentimes people forget that Puerto Rico is the United States. The people who live there are U.S. citizens.

There is already a severe outbreak when it comes to Puerto Rico. They are already facing this crisis. So it is important. If this were one of the 50 States, they would have a Senator on the floor right now, maybe two, arguing on behalf of them. Obviously, Puerto Rico doesn't have a Senator elected from the island.

I stand here today on their behalf to argue that this is an important issue that needs to be addressed for the sake of our country, but most immediately for the sake of the territory of Puerto Rico. I hope we will move quickly to confront this issue and to solve it.

I close by saying one more thing. While government has an important role to play, ultimately we have a responsibility. If you are traveling to parts of this world where you might be exposed to the virus, you have an obligation to get tested to ensure that you are not going to be transmitting this to your partner.

As I argued last week at my press conference, if you are going to be outdoors, you have an obligation to use mosquito repellant to protect yourself and your family from being exposed to this, just the same way you would wear sunscreen. It is important for us more this summer than any other.

It is not only Zika that mosquitoes transmit. They transmit all kinds of other very serious illnesses. There is a level of personal responsibility here. We talked about people not allowing bodies of water, whether it is undrained pools or puddles of water in your backyard. These mosquitoes can grow in water containers as small as the cap of a bottle of water. They don't need a lot of water in order to reproduce and grow. So there are things we need to do in our own lives to take personal responsibility for dealing with the Zika virus.

But there is a proper role for government, and I hope we will play it. We have an obligation to hold the government responsible to ensure that the money that is appropriated is just being spent on Zika and is being spent appropriately on things that work. We should be working with our local and State partners to ensure that we are funding the programs that work and need to be funded. But I think we need to get it done. I hope we can get it done here rather quickly because the summer is upon us. I don't think we want to be halfway through the summer and wake up to the news that hundreds and hundreds of Americans in multiple States have been infected and we did nothing. We will have to explain that to our constituents, and I am not sure we are going to have a good explanation if we don't have it.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

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

REFORMING THE H–1B VISA PROGRAM

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise to speak about H–1B visas, often called the high-skilled immigration visa. Every year, the U.S. Government issues 85,000 new H–1B visas, including 20,000 for workers with advanced degrees. This is in addition to hundreds of thousands of foreign workers already in the United States on H–1B visas.

Beginning on April 1, employers can submit petitions for new H–1B visas. Every year, within a few days, the government announces that it has received many more petitions for visas than the number of visas available.

The government then conducts a random lottery to decide which employers will receive the visas. Every year this leads to a hue and cry from our business community about the need to increase the annual cap for H–1B visas.

Like clockwork, this process played out last week, just as it does every year. Let's take a look at what happened.

When most people think of H–1B visas, they think of big tech companies like Microsoft, Google, and Apple hiring top-notch computer engineers, paying them top dollar to come in from overseas.

But here is the reality. In fact, the top recipients of H–1B visas are foreign companies that use loopholes in the law to displace qualified American workers and send American jobs offshore.

In 2013, outsourcing firms received more than 50 percent of the annual H–1B visa cap. Think about that. Over half of these H–1B visas, designed to bring skilled foreign workers into the United States, are being given to foreign outsourcing companies.

It sounds wrong; doesn't it?

In 2014, 15 of the top 20 H–1B employers used the H–1B visa primarily to offshore American jobs; that is, to take Americans, put them out of work, and have foreign workers take their jobs. These 15 firms gobbled up over 190,000 new H–1B visas over 10 years.

This is how it works. Foreign outsourcing companies import thousands of foreign guest workers using H–1B visas. These companies then cut deals with American companies to outsource American jobs and to move them offshore. The United States keeps them in the United States but with these foreign workers. The U.S. company gives their American workers notice that they will be fired. But before the American workers are laid off—listen to this—the American workers are forced to train the foreign guest workers who are going to take over their jobs.

After they are trained, the outsourcing company returns the foreign workers to their home country where—guess what—they compete with the United States.

Most of these foreign outsourcing companies are from India: Infosys, Tata, and Wipro. You may not recognize those names, but they are making billions of dollars using the H–1B visa to outsource American jobs and displace American workers.

A high-ranking Indian Government official even called the H–1B visa ''the outsourcing visa.'' The International Herald Tribune investigated these Indian companies, and this is what they concluded: ''Rather than building a thriving community of experts and innovators in the United States, the Indian firms seek to funnel work—and expertise—away from the country.''

Congress intended the H–1B program to allow an employer to hire a skilled foreign worker in a specialized occupation when the American employer couldn't find an American worker with those skills and abilities.

We didn't create this program for foreign outsourcing firms to exploit the program and to bring foreign workers to our country to be trained by talented American workers in order to see their jobs shipped away.

So let's take an example. In the last year alone, media reports have documented the replacement of hundreds of American workers by these foreign outsourcing companies. Let me give an example close to home. Abbott Labs of

Illinois, headquartered near Chicago, signed a contract for information technology services with Wipro, one of the largest foreign outsourcing companies based in India and one of the top users of the H–1B visa program.

Here is how it worked: Approximately 150 U.S. employees at Abbott Labs in Illinois are going to lose their jobs. The workers being laid off have stellar experience—many of them have been at Abbott for years. They have the credentials, the performance reviews, and some have amazing work records spanning decades at Abbott Labs. I know from recent conversations with Abbott Labs employees that this layoff is taking its toll on the morale of their remaining workforce.

When I heard about these plans, I wrote to Miles White, the CEO of Abbott Labs. I urged him to reconsider this plan and to keep his American workers who have worked so hard for Abbott Labs for years. Well, I am sorry to report he responded to my letter and confirmed his company's plans to terminate these American workers.

I am very concerned about Abbott Labs because they have required the employees who are losing their jobs and being laid off to sign away their right to sue or even disparage the company if they want to receive any severance pay. As a result of this agreement, Congress and the American people are unable to hear directly from the employees who are affected by this decision at Abbott Labs—employees who are losing their jobs to Wipro, an Indian company that specializes in outsourcing American jobs. Abbot employees have told my staff they were concerned that even if they spoke with our office about what was happening at Abbott Labs, they could be placed in jeopardy.

Other companies that have signed contracts with foreign outsourcing companies to replace American workers have also forced their employees to sign these nondisparagement agreements. So we are in the dark about the human impact of these outsourcing arrangements on the Americans losing their jobs. What we do know is this: 150 skilled and experienced American workers will lose their jobs and have had to sign an agreement that they will not say anything negative about their current employer. If they do not comply with that, they do not get their severance pay.

I sent a followup letter to Mr. White today about the gag order he has forced on his employees. We should be able to hear firsthand from workers who are losing their jobs because of outsourcing as to just exactly what is happening to them.

Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY and I first introduced bipartisan legislation to reform the H–1B visa program in 2007—almost a decade ago. Our bill would end these abuses and protect American and foreign workers from exploitation. The outsourcing companies are worried about our legislation. For a long time, CHUCK GRASSLEY and DICK DURBIN were on the front page of a lot of Indian newspapers. Listen to the corporate jargon Wipro uses to talk about our bill:

> With the growth of offshore outsourcing receiving increasing political and media attention, there have been concerted efforts to enact new legislation to restrict offshore outsourcing. This may adversely impact our ability to do business in these jurisdictions and could adversely affect our revenues and operating profitability.

Let me be clear. My first obligation as a U.S. Senator is to protect American workers. If that adversely affects the profits of a foreign company that specializes in outsourcing American jobs, so be it.

In 2013 I joined the Gang of 8—Democrats and Republicans—and we put together a comprehensive immigration reform bill. Corporate interests fought hard to protect these H–1B visas, but we successfully included several important changes to the program in the bill. Let me give an example. Under current law, employers are permitted to pay H–1B visa holders substandard wages, which creates an incentive to fire Americans and hire foreign workers.

The vice president of Tata, out of India, one of the leading foreign outsourcing firms, candidly acknowledged they use H–1B visas to undercut American workers. Here is what he said:

> Our wage per employee is 20–25 percent lesser than U.S. wage for a similar employee. . . . The issue is that of getting workers in the U.S. on wages far lower than local wage.

He was pretty candid about it. The object is to put Americans out of work and to charge less than what the Americans are being paid. So I wrote a provision in the 2013 comprehensive immigration reform bill that discouraged employers from hiring foreign workers as a source of cheap labor by doubling the minimum wage of H–1B employees, and employers of large numbers of H–1B visa holders would be required to pay, at a minimum, the average wage paid to an American. That is why the chief executive of Tata in India said our bill would have been ''very tough'' on outsourcing companies. So be it.

The Senate passed that bill on this floor 68 to 32. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives refused to even call the bill. They wouldn't debate it or call it for a vote.

Now, the two leading Republican Presidential candidates, Donald Trump and the junior Senator from Texas, have jumped on the bandwagon. They want to reform the H–1B program. Unfortunately, their track records call into question their real commitment. Mr. Trump owns companies that have sought to import at least 1,000 temporary guest workers while turning away hundreds of American workers. In 2013, when the Judiciary Committee considered the comprehensive immigration reform bill, Senator CRUZ of Texas offered an amendment to increase—increase—the annual cap for H–1B visas to 325,000 per year—almost four times the current number.

Nonetheless, if they have changed their mind out on the campaign trail, we welcome that change of heart and welcome them to this debate. We must reform the H–1B visa program and fix other parts of our broken immigration system to protect American and immigrant workers. The solution is still comprehensive immigration reform. The time for action is now. Congress has avoided its responsibility for far too long.

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

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

WORKING WITH OUR ALLIES

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I wish to spend a few minutes talking about our allies across the globe, and I am doing so because they are important to our national security. That seems to be an obvious statement, but our allies seem to be getting a bit of a bipartisan short shrift of late. I come to the floor of the Senate to talk about how important they are to our Nation, to our citizens. It is bipartisan, as I mentioned.

As many of us have read, on the campaign trail Presidential candidate Donald Trump has been critical of NATO, has been critical of our Asia-Pacific allies. Meanwhile—and in many ways it hasn't gotten the news it deserves because it is a sitting President—in a recent article in The Atlantic by Jeffrey Goldberg entitled ''The Obama Doctrine,'' President Obama himself is dismissive of many U.S. allies around the world.

I thought it was important to talk a little bit about our allies and how important they are to U.S. security and to expanding American influence globally.

Let's start with Mr. Trump. He has called NATO—which, by the way, happens to be one of the most successful alliances in the history of the world—an alliance that is ''obsolete'' and ''too expensive.'' About the members of the 28-nation alliance, he said: ''Either they pay up, including for past deficiencies, or they have to get out. And if it breaks up NATO, it breaks up NATO.'' Oh, well. So much for the world's most successful alliance.

However, contrary to public perception, the United States does not pay for a majority of NATO's spending. We pay about 22 percent of NATO's common-funded budgets and programs for all of NATO—about 22 percent.

The Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, was here last week, and he

informed me and many of my colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee that most NATO countries have stopped their decline in defense spending and have recommitted to NATO's goal of 2 percent of their GDP toward defense spending. That is important—working on the finances, reversing this trend. But here is the key point: It is not just about finances. Over 1,000 non-U.S. NATO troops have been killed in action in Afghanistan coming to our defense after 9/11, going after the terrorists who killed over 3,000 Americans on 9/11. Over 1,000 of our NATO allies have paid the ultimate price. You can't put a price tag on that. Thousands more have been wounded. Some sacrifices can't be measured in just dollars.

Based on his comments, Mr. Trump also does not seem to fully comprehend how the presence of American troops in the Asia-Pacific has been the linchpin of security and prosperity in the region for more than 70 years. Today our allies in the Asia-Pacific are substantially increasing their financial and military commitments in that region. Let me give a few examples.

Under Prime Minister Abe's leadership, Japan has amended its Constitution to do much more militarily in terms of being able to work with us and even defend U.S. forces in the region. As we are looking to rebalance and reposition U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific over the next several years, the estimates from Pacific Command are that is going to cost about $37 billion, repositioning U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific. It is a very important part of our strategy. It is a strategy, by the way, that—the President talks about the rebalance, which I think is smart, in the Asia-Pacific. Of that $37 billion for our forces and the military construction that is going to take place with this rebalance, about $30 billion will be paid by Japan and Korea. That is certainly paying their way.

Let me give a couple of examples. Camp Humphreys—that is an Army base in Korea—we are moving a lot of forces there, doing a lot of military construction there, and it is going to cost about $11 billion. Ninety-one percent of that is going to be paid by Korea—for U.S. military forces.

In Guam—U.S. territory where we are repositioning marines and other critical military assets in the Asia-Pacific—Japan is paying $3 billion for that repositioning on U.S. territory. It is the first time ever. A foreign country is paying for military construction on our territory.

The bottom line is that there is no doubt that our allies around the world, particularly in Europe, need to do more in terms of defense spending. Many people have spoken on this. Former Secretary Gates—very well respected—raises this in his recent bio. But it is simply erroneous to suggest that America would be better off without NATO or without our Asia-Pacific allies and alliances. Yes, they need to spend more, but there is a big difference saying we don't need our allies.

Let me say that we should all understand that Mr. Trump, Donald Trump—he is a candidate. He is certainly not an expert on national security affairs. And his views certainly reflect the frustrations that many Americans and many Members of Congress have about allies who are not spending as much on defense. Of course we know this often happens during elections. We have seen that. It is an outgrowth of frustrations.

But what is unprecedented is for a sitting President to be dismissive and even disdainful of our most important allies in a publication read by millions. To do so is not only unpresidential, it threatens to undermine ongoing U.S. national security interests.

I want to talk a little bit about The Atlantic article that I mentioned earlier, written by Jeffrey Goldberg. Mr. Goldberg, who had enormous access to the President for I think well over a year—traveled with him all over on Air Force One, had numerous interviews—in his article, he takes us on a trip across the globe through the eyes of President Obama. I would encourage all of my colleagues in this body to read that article.

As I mentioned, Mr. Goldberg has significant access to the President, but the tour across the world leaves us no doubt that the President not only views himself as the smartest man in the room, he is the smartest man in the world. In Mr. Goldberg's words, President Obama ''has found world leadership wanting: global partners who often lack the vision and the will to spend political capital in pursuit of broad, progressive goals, and adversaries who are not, in his mind, as rational as he is.''

The President assesses the very strengths and weaknesses of our allies. In his view, only German Chancellor Angela Merkel measures up. There is a whole list of leaders from countries that are allies of the United States and are mentioned in this article. The President calls the President of a critical NATO country a ''failure,'' and he is openly disapproving of the leadership role of Britain and France and openly complaining that neither did their part with regard to Libya, where the Obama administration famously, or infamously, announced it was leading from behind.

The jabs and the stories in the Goldberg piece at other leaders, such as the leaders of Jordan, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, are gratuitous. These might be appropriate for later in the President's memoirs, as he is writing his memoirs talking about world leaders and where they measure up and where they are weak, but not while he is still the President. He still has work to do for our country.

The President even trains his fire on American leaders, members of the foreign policy establishment, and even GEN Lloyd Austin, the well-respected and recently retired commander of U.S. Central Command. There is a big section in there about how the President viewed Ronald Reagan's leadership and shortcomings in foreign affairs. Everybody seems to be lacking in the President's eyes.

It is not just individuals, it is the way we, as a Nation, supposedly conduct our foreign policy. By the President's own account, he has been a bulwark against American hubris, self-righteousness—his words—in foreign affairs. Let me repeat that. His view is that he has been a bulwark against our hubris and our self-righteousness in foreign affairs.

As the Presiding Officer knows, whether it is Alaska or West Virginia, most Americans understand another more historically accurate narrative of our role in foreign affairs throughout the world. It is not one of hubris, but one of sacrifice, commitment, and courage in defending freedom for hundreds of millions of people across the globe. That has been the role of the United States, and for decades, especially since World War II, there has been a bipartisan, long-term effort by truly some of the smartest people in American foreign policy who were ''present at the creation,'' and beyond—as Dean Acheson said in his autobiography—into deepening our relationship with other countries and, as part of doing that, establishing the forward presence of U.S. military power around the world. These were some of America's best minds—Marshall, Acheson, George Schultz.

Why did they do this? Because forging these alliances ultimately not only advances the goal of freedom and a more peaceful and prosperous world, but it also helps ensure that American influence and power remain preeminent and, most importantly, that our citizens remain safe.

In assessing our significant international challenges right now, one central truth stands out: Many of our enemies and potential adversaries and rivals are ally poor while the United States is ally rich. Think of countries like Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and terrorist groups like ISIS. They have very few allies. Very few other countries are running to them right now. Then think about our allies throughout the world. It is time to recognize and double down on this uniquely American comparative advantage in foreign affairs. We are ally rich. Our rivals are ally poor. We need to take advantage of it. Yet the Obama administration seems to have ignored it.

Indeed, Secretary of State John Kerry has spent more time wooing adversaries like Iran and Russia than doing the hard work of deepening the bonds of trust with our allies. Coupled with the President's remarks in the Atlantic, his missives directed at friends make it seem as if they are actually repelling allies, not working with them and building up trust. This, of course, is a mistake.

Like many in this body, I have had the opportunity to serve my country in

different capacities, trying to work to advance the national security of our Nation. I have had the opportunity to see the positive results of the carefully woven fabric of decades of bipartisan American diplomacy, military engagement, and leadership throughout the world. Without American leaders who understand history and the important role our allies play in America's security and prosperity, the fabric of our alliances put together over decades threatens to unravel. If that happens, the world is going to become a much more dangerous place.

Our Founding Fathers provided the Senate with significant responsibility in terms of foreign affairs, and I am hopeful that every Member of this body will redouble their efforts to reach out and to work with our allies so we don't continue this trend where leaders currently in the White House, or perhaps potential occupants of the White House, view our allies as a burden when in reality they are a key component of our security and prosperity, and we need to continue to work with them.

I yield the floor.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING CORPS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the formal establishment of the Reserve Officer Training Corps, ROTC, at its birthplace, Norwich University in Vermont. Thanks to the vision of Alden Partridge and Norwich University, we now enjoy the benefits of this century-old program that has commissioned more than half a million ensigns and second lieutenants since its inception.

Years before many of his peers, Alden Partridge saw the potential of the citizen soldier. He created Norwich University as a place to educate future generations in a variety of academic fields separate from, but also essential to, the military and to the civic participation synonymous with today's Norwich University. Over the years, the value of the ideals promoted at Norwich University have remained clear to me. Today these proven ideals can be found at institutions of higher education through ROTC programs in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam.

Without question, the country benefits from this diversity of experience. The U.S. service academies create high-quality, professional officers, and I am proud to nominate Vermonters to them every year. Our military, however, cannot rely on leadership that comes solely from a handful of institutions, however excellent they are. For 100 years, ROTC has guaranteed an officer corps that better reflects the diversity of America.

Few schools can boast a history as long, rich, and relevant as Norwich University. Always forward thinking, in 1974, Norwich became one of the first military colleges in the Nation to admit women, beginning yet another proud chapter in its history. Today the school ranks among the top institutions for education in the realm of cyber security, an essential professional discipline nurtured early on largely because of the forethought of Norwich University personnel. I am confident this trend of success will continue.

The faculty and staff at Norwich help produce highly motivated, well-trained graduates who are simply eager to serve. Their role as educators and mentors creates connections that last throughout the military and civilian careers of graduates and, in turn, fosters a powerful alumni connection that brings even more experience and wisdom to the next generation of students.

Vermonters take great pride in their educational institutions, and Norwich University is no exception. Students arrive from around the Nation to study in both corps of cadets and traditional capacities. They develop essential academic and professional skills often while simultaneously fulfilling ROTC obligations that prepare them for future military service. Norwich, like the 274 other institutions supporting ROTC programs, demands and develops excellence in its commissioning-track student body.

I would like to recognize Norwich University, the birthplace of the ROTC, for its role in initiating a program that has enjoyed a century of success. I am confident that Alden Partridge's dream will continue to be realized at colleges and universities throughout the Nation as future generations of ROTC officers are produced and charged with the task of ensuring our Nation's success.

SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION ON INNOVATION AGENDA

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my remarks at the Senate Health Committee's third executive session on its biomedical innovation agenda be printed in the RECORD.

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

SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION ON INNOVATION AGENDA

This is our third and final markup of legislation that is part of our innovation, or ''cures,'' agenda—that is, our effort to take advantage of this exciting time in science and enable safe treatments, drugs, and devices to reach patients more quickly.

Today's markup completes action on about 50 bipartisan proposals this committee has been working on for more than a year—with 10 hearings, five staff working groups that have held more than 100 meetings. When we are finished today, these proposals will together form a companion to 21st Century Cures Act, which passed the House 344–77 last year, and a vehicle for the president's Precision Medicine Initiative and Cancer Moonshot.

If we succeed, this will be the most important bill signed into law this year.

Why do I say that?

Here's one reason: 6-year-old Californian Rylie Rahall, diagnosed with a genetic disorder called Ataxia-Telangiectasia or A–T, so rare—according to NIH—that it affects between 1 out of 40,000 and 1 out of 100,000.

A bill we're voting on today will support the president's Precision Medicine Initiative to map 1 million genomes to help researchers tailor treatments to genetic variations and find cures for diseases, including rare diseases like A–T, and help children like Rylie.

Rylie's mom, Erica, says:

''At the time Rylie was diagnosed, I felt more helpless than hopeful. . . . There are no drugs. There is no cure. There is nothing to stop this disease and nothing you can do to save your child. . . . Five years later all of that is changing. There is more research than ever happening. We are closer than ever to clinical trials . . . Hopeful.''

Here's another reason:

In a floor speech in 2013, Senator Isakson talked about battling a superbug, an infection that runs out of control and resists treatment by common antibiotics. We are voting today on a bill by senators Hatch and Bennet to shorten the development of treatments for superbugs.

And another reason: A 2012 bill sponsored by Senators Burr, Bennet, and Hatch to expedite the FDA review process for breakthrough drugs has been very successful, leading to 118 drugs designated as breakthrough, including 39 approvals, including the first drug ever to actually cure some forms of Cystic Fibrosis. This committee passed similar legislation in March for breakthrough devices.

One more reason: we've heard from doctors that they spend half their time on paperwork, and from patients who lug boxes of medical records from appointment to appointment. This committee unanimously passed legislation to reduce the documentation burden and improve the flow of information so doctors can spend more time with patients, and patients can have easier access to their health information.

This committee has passed—by voice vote or with overwhelming support—14 bills made up of 30 bipartisan proposals; bills that will mean better pacemakers for Americans with heart conditions, better rehabilitation for stroke victims, more young researchers entering the medical field, and better access for doctors to their patients' medical records.

By the time we finish today, 16 of this committee's 22 members will have sponsored one of these bills. Some have sponsored several.

Today we are voting on five bills:

A bill by Senator Murray and myself to help the FDA and the NIH attract and retain top talent, which Dr. Collins and Dr. Califf say is their top priority.

The bill by Sens. Hatch and Bennet to shorten the development time for superbug treatments.

The bill by Senator Murray and myself to support the president's Precision Medicine Initiative, to map 1 million genomes and make the information available to researchers who will share their research.

A bill by Senator Collins, Kirk, Baldwin, Murray, and myself that requires NIH to submit a strategic plan to Congress; and ensures that scientists are including women and minorities in their research.

A bill by Senator Murray and myself to allow NIH researchers to spend more time finding lifesaving treatments and cures and less time on paperwork.

I look forward to moving these bills to the floor.

Senator Murray and I are making progress on an ''NIH Innovation Fund'' to provide a

one-time funding surge for NIH priorities including: Precision Medicine, Cancer Moonshot, the Brain Initiative, Young Investigator Corps, and Big Biothink Awards.

With its 21st Century Cures Act, the House voted 344 to 77 to provide $8.8 billion in paid-for mandatory funding to support such NIH priorities. We continue working on finding an amount that the House will agree to and the president will sign that we can responsibly pay for in a bipartisan way. We have consulted with Senator Hatch, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. I discussed it with Senator Wyden in a meeting with Secretary Burwell. And I've talked with a number of committee members. I hope we'll be able to share an agreement with committee members soon.

I would like to take the proposals we've passed here, along with a bipartisan agreement on the NIH Innovation Fund with Senator Murray, and put them in Senator McConnell's hands as the Senate's contribution to a 21 Century Cures Act.

We'll have an opportunity for more debate on the floor, including:

On a proposal by Senators Kirk, Manchin, and Collins to create a first-time conditional approval for regenerative medicine treatments.

Improving monitoring of medical devices. Senator Murray strongly urged this and it is a top priority for Dr. Califf.

The issue of lab developed tests, which are vitally important to get right to ensure precision medicine and cancer moonshot are a success.

Last year, the most important bill signed into law fixed No Child Left Behind and affected 50 million children in 100,000 schools.

This year, I believe the most important bill will take advantage of this exciting time in science to improve the health of virtually every American.

The House of Representatives has done its job by a margin of 344 to 77.

The president has proposed his initiatives.

I'm hopeful we can take this to the Senate floor, conference with the House, and send a bill to the president.

Sometimes we get caught up in bill numbers and sections, but as we finish our work, we ought to focus on people, like Rylie Rahall, or on Douglas Oliver, a Nashville resident who as recently as August was legally blind due to an incurable form of macular degeneration, but who, after participating in a clinical trial where doctors injected stem cells from his hip into his eye, now has perfect enough vision to read about what we're doing here in the HELP committee and sends us emails about his experience to help improve our work.

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, this week we commemorate National Crime Victims' Rights Week, which began this past Sunday and concludes this Saturday, April 16, 2016. For the over 20 million people in the United States who become crime victims each year, this week offers an opportunity for Congress, the Department of Justice, as well as State and local law enforcement, communities, and service providers across the country to publicly proclaim our support for crime victims and survivors.

The physical, emotional, and psychological impact that crime causes for the victims and their loved ones can prove devastating. Crime wreaks havoc on our communities. Given these hardships, we must do all we can to support and protect survivors by holding their perpetrators accountable and ensuring that all victims are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. We can accomplish this aim, at least in part, by recognizing the critical position that victims hold within the criminal justice process.

The theme for this year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week is ''Serving Victims; Building Trust; Restoring Hope.'' In keeping with that spirit, I want to recognize and thank the countless professional and volunteer victim advocates and service providers. Your dedication and commitment to our moms and dads, brothers and sisters, and daughters and sons, often during their time of greatest need, is truly profound. Thank you, thank you, for being that solid ground and strong shoulder supporting our fellow Americans as they fight for justice and to once again become whole.

To the millions of victims and survivors, you are not alone, and you have not been silenced. We hear you and pledge to do all we can to support you through your recovery. As the Senate Judiciary Committee continues to combat the scourge of crime through legislation and oversight, we will continue to both acknowledge and honor the needs and rights of victims and survivors.

HOW TRADE MADE AMERICA GREAT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, it was while a Yale undergraduate that Fred Smith received a C-plus for his paper outlining a plan to buy large airplanes that would carry packages overnight. This plan a few years later became Federal Express, now FedEx, a global courier delivery services company with nearly $50 billion in revenues and more than 340,000 employees. FedEx has become a leading worldwide economic indicator all by itself and one of our country's great success stories. Mr. Smith not only founded the company, but today still is CEO and Chairman.

Fred Smith's address should be required reading on all college campuses, as well as for all others who may have forgotten the remarkable contribution trade has made to prosperity not only for our country, but for hundreds of millions worldwide. There is no doubt that globalization and technology have improved living conditions in our country, but they have also bred uncertainty and sometimes fear. For many Americans, the cheaper goods we buy from overseas and the salaries we make from selling goods overseas come with dislocations that make it harder for Americans to find jobs and provide for their families.

Added to that are actions by some of our trading partners—Japan in the 1980s and China more recently—that abuse the trade relationship and turn free trade into unfair trade. Nevertheless, before we turn our backs on or significantly change our national policy of encouraging freer trade with other countries, we would be wise to read Mr. Smith's account of the benefits of trade to the average American family during the last 50 years—and also to be reminded of the devastation that restrictions on trade caused during the 1930s when those restrictions helped lead to the Great Depression.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article by Fred Smith from the Wall Street Journal.

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

[From the Wall Street Journal, Mar. 25, 2016]

HOW TRADE MADE AMERICA GREAT

(By Frederick W. Smith)

During our years at Yale, the world was a different place. Foreign travel was exotic, expensive and rare among the population as a whole. While some young Americans had been abroad, by far most Americans had not—and those who did go abroad most likely traveled by sea rather than air. In the early 1960s, flying over the oceans was mainly for the affluent.

Long-distance telephone calls were expensive, international calls prohibitively so. From furniture to TVs and appliances, and especially automobiles, American brands dominated consumer spending in this country. We had just a glimpse of the world to come with the proliferating iconic Volkswagen Beetles and the amazingly small Sony portable transistor radios.

These imported products in the U.S. represented a global political vision that predated World War II. In the early 1930s, President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull believed in liberalized trade as a path to world peace and cooperation. With strong administration support, Congress in 1934 passed the Trade Agreement Act, which allowed Hull to negotiate reciprocal trade treaties with numerous countries, lowering tariffs and stimulating trade.

This liberalization reversed the epitome of U.S. protectionism, the disastrous Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which contributed to a staggering 66% decline in world trade between 1929 and 1934. Integral to Hull's vision was the 1947 General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), which was signed by 23 countries and committed the U.S. to steadily liberalizing world trade. A central pillar of American postwar policy was enticing producers from around the world with access to the giant U.S. market.

The devastation of Europe and Japan and the emergence of Cold War adversaries provided even greater impetus to the opening of American markets, under the protection of the U.S. Navy and the umbrella of various global alliances like NATO. In April 1966 Malcolm McLean launched his first international Sea-Land container operation between New York and Rotterdam. McLean's shipping-container revolution cut the cost of seaborne trade by a factor of 50 versus loose-cargo stevedoring.

That same month, Juan Trippe (Yale '21) at Pan Am ordered 25 revolutionary jumbo 747 widebody Boeing airplanes equipped with equally leading-edge Pratt & Whitney high-bypass fanjets. When the passenger version of the 747 entered service in 1969, it was two-and-a-half times bigger than the Boeing 707 that had pioneered jet travel. The jumbo jet cut overseas travel costs by 70%.

The 747's hump allowed a freighter version to load cargo through a nose door under the cockpit and into the cavernous fuselage. Because of the cargo-carrying 747F, costs for trans-Pacific airfreight were dramatically reduced, a major factor in the extraordinary GDP growth of the Asian ''tiger'' economies of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Japan beginning in the 1970s. Electronics and other high-tech/high-value-added goods from these emerging markets could be distributed and sold in the U.S. and Europe in a few days—an amazing development.

During the 1970s and 1980s, while container ships and planes became increasingly efficient with each successive model, newly developed fiber-optic cables (patented in 1966) began running underseas, connecting the world at the speed of light, lowering voice and data-communication costs by orders of magnitude. Financial markets became globally integrated and transactions multiplied at an astounding rate.

The U.S. opened its markets to former World War II foes, and Germany and Japan as a result became economic titans. Successive administrations mostly ignored Japan's overt mercantilism and growing trade surplus, given the need for American military bases throughout the country. Eventually exchange rates and domestic political pressure pushed Japanese car makers to set up production plants in the U.S., mostly in the South. Electronics manufacturers such as Panasonic, Sony and Hitachi became worldwide giants on the back of exports from Japan to America and then almost everywhere as global trade steadily expanded.

Parallel to the technological progress of transportation and telecommunications was a remarkable series of congressional actions and GATT agreements that substantially liberalized transport and trade regulations. During the Carter administration, inspired by extensive academic research and the example of ultra-low-fare intrastate airlines in Texas and California compared with high-cost national carriers, many Republican and Democratic lawmakers alike pushed for federal economic deregulation of transportation. The Republican mantra was ''free market''; Democrats sought ''consumer benefit'' by lowering the price of travel and goods for the masses.

As a result, legislation was enacted for air cargo (1977), passenger air services (1978), interstate truck and rail transportation (1980), and the federal pre-emption of intrastate trucking in 1994. Both the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) and the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), the air and surface economic regulators, were abolished, in 1985 and 1995 respectively.

In the 10 years following the Staggers Act of 1980 that substantially deregulated railroads, the perennially loss-making rail industry was able to halve the rates charged to customers while restoring financial stability. Surface-transport deregulation also spawned an entire new industry of flexible truckload common carriers to meet the needs of emerging ''big box'' distribution and retailing models such as Wal-Mart and Target. Revolutionary production systems, based on just-in-time supply and fast-cycle manufacturing, were made possible only because of the deregulation of trucking.

From 1977 to 1994, a century's worth of heavy regulation of transportation rates, routes and services that had begun with the railroads was cast aside, with profound effects on the U.S. economy. By the beginning of the 21st century, overall logistics costs were reduced from 16% of GDP during the 1970s to under 9%, thereby making possible substantial increases in government social spending resulting from the Medicare and Medicaid legislation in the 1960s.

On the global-trade front, the GATT framework of 1947 had been ''temporary,'' as Congress refused to approve the International Trade Organization envisioned by the participants at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference that established the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Even so, under GATT there were seven successive negotiating ''rounds'' and agreements until the World Trade Organization (WTO), a modernized International Trade Organization, was finally established in Geneva in 1994.

The GATT/WTO did not cover sea trade, given the traditionally liberal rules regarding shipping except within national regulated waters. Thus unimpeded, containership lines of many registrations proliferated, facilitating the astonishing growth in maritime business and the development of megaports in Asia, Europe and the U.S.

International aviation was likewise a separate regime, but as agreed by 54 nations at the Chicago convention of 1944, international flying was for decades tightly controlled by governments through a labyrinth of bilateral treaties (4,000 at present) that limited competition and regulated rates and services.

Beginning in 1992, however, the U.S. and the Netherlands enacted the first of many Open Skies agreements, which have grown now to 117, including a multilateral treaty with 28 European countries. Passenger airlines opened scores of new routes. New air-cargo and door-to-door express services were also initiated.

Together, these regulatory changes and transport innovations made possible the fantastic growth of travel and trade, which grew two-and-a-half times the rate of world GDP for a quarter-century.

From less than $50 billion in total trade in 1966, the U.S. now imports and exports over $4 trillion annually in goods and services. Container ships have grown from carrying a few hundred boxes on each trip to the new Triple-E behemoths that transport over 18,000 containers called TEUs, or 20-foot-equivalent units. The cost is 1/500th of the shipping rates per pound of the early 1960s. The profusion of agricultural products from the ''Green Revolution'' pioneered by Norman Borlaug, combined with ever more efficient shipping, has resulted in massive amounts of grain traded around the world, something unimaginable to farmers 50 years ago. American railroads were integral to the growth in the nation's maritime trade by moving containers from Pacific ports to the mega markets in the East.

All of these factors have created a global trade market that exceeds $15 trillion annually. Now, the Panama Canal is being widened, which will permit, beginning later this year, massive container ships to cross the Pacific and unload directly into improved Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Coast ports, further reducing the cost of Asia-U.S. trade.

Handling the enormous increase in financial transactions was made possible by a fantastic increase in computer-processing power. The emergence of the Internet in 1994 has allowed the ubiquitous offering of millions of products for fast delivery from anywhere in the world to anyone with a desktop computer . . . then a PC . . . then a tablet . . . and now a smartphone. Languages are translated; products can be instantly, visually displayed; and orders effortlessly entered. The capabilities are unprecedented in the history of commerce.

Three other factors central to the development of these enormous global commercial systems have occurred since 1966: The evolution of a vast world-wide oil market; the integration of the economies of the U.S., Mexico and Canada with the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) of 1994; and the emergence of China as a great commercial power.

The oil cartel known as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries overplayed its hand in the 1970s when, for economic and political reasons, OPEC embargoed shipments to the U.S. Market forces finally sorted out oil supply and demand in America after President Reagan in 1981 dismantled the vestiges of government regulation in the industry. Oil has hardly been immune to the vagaries of any commodities market, but the U.S.—thanks to the technological breakthrough of hydraulic fracturing—is the world's largest producer of natural gas and is on track this decade to surpass Saudi Arabia and Russia as the world's largest oil producer.

True to the central tenet of FDR and Secretary of State Hull that liberalizing trade is inherently beneficial, the U.S. led the effort for China to join the WTO in 2000. Beginning with the Nixon-to-China rapprochement, the industrialization of America's Cold War enemy has lifted more people—hundreds of millions—out of poverty, faster, than ever in history. From the late 1980s and accelerating after the WTO accession, efficient Chinese manufacturing, especially technology-based goods, has rewarded Western consumers with low-cost products that have substantially improved standards of living. Americans and Europeans don't need to be affluent to afford cellphones, digital TVs, furniture and appliances.

China, however, has followed Japan's mercantilistic practices, which have led to a $300 billion trade surplus with the U.S., thanks to state support of Chinese industry and restrictions on foreign competitors. These policies have created a strong political backlash in the U.S., which made the recent congressional renewal of Trade Promotion Authority—which allows the president to negotiate trade treaties and was for years a routine process—extremely difficult.

Today, given low growth in most of the world, rising wages in China and petroleum costs declining because of U.S. fracking technology, the trajectory of the world's commerce is somewhat uncertain.

Trade and global GDP are now growing roughly at parity. Following the 2008 financial crisis, protectionism has shown a troubling popularity in many countries, including the U.S. Stringent new security regulations have also slowed goods crossing many borders.

The Nafta pact has clearly been an economic success. Over the past 20 years, U.S. trade with Mexico and Canada has risen to $1.2 trillion in 2014, from $737 billion. While the immigration issue often gets erroneously conflated with Nafta, the economic numbers tell a clear story. Moreover, some production is now moving back to North America from Asia, given lower transport costs, faster delivery, the increase in Chinese production expenses, easier customs clearance, and the more balanced nature of Nafta trade compared with the massive U.S. deficit with Asia—particularly China and Japan.

Once again, in its own messy, unpredictable political fashion, the U.S.—after a hiatus during the first Obama administration—is pushing for further trade liberalization, with initiatives such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and the Trade in Services Agreement. The WTO likewise continues to push for a new Trade Facilitation Agreement dealing with security and customs issues; the WTO Information Technology Agreement; and a new overall worldwide trade agreement—the so-called Doha Round negotiations. These efforts by many nations under the WTO show continued commitment to further global integration despite the well-publicized difficulties in doing so.

More than three billion people are now connected to the Internet. Billions more have aspirations for a better life and are likely to come online as global consumers. The odds are good, therefore, that today's remarkable transport systems and technologies will continue to improve and facilitate an even larger global economy as individual trade is becoming almost ''frictionless.''

History shows that trade made easy, affordable and fast—political obstacles notwithstanding—always begets more trade, more jobs, more prosperity. From clipper ships to the computer age, despite economic cycles, conflict and shifting demographics, humans have demonstrated an innate desire to travel and trade. Given this, the future is unlikely to diverge from the arc of the past.

74TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DOOLITTLE RAID

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, today I would like to recognize the 74th anniversary of the Doolittle Raid.

Following Japan's deliberate attack on Naval Station Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States was looking for a way to retaliate and boost morale. General Henry Arnold, the chief of the Army Air Corps, and U.S. Navy ADM Ernest King, the Navy Chief of Operations, were tasked with organizing a raid on mainland Japan that would act as the United States' return salvo. They needed an extraordinary airman and leader to execute the raid, and they found one in Army Air Corps Lieutenant Colonel James ''Jimmy'' Doolittle, a well-respected pilot who they believed could inspire his fellow airmen as they carried out this dangerous mission.

Doolittle immediately began selecting crew members for the mission, eventually recruiting 80 flyers who would later be nicknamed the Doolittle Raiders. The Raiders volunteered without knowing any specifics of the mission, but they trusted Doolittle enough that they were willing to follow him anyway.

The geographic isolation of the Japanese mainland posed numerous logistical challenges while planning the raid. Doolittle decided to use B–25 bombers launched from the U.S.S. *Hornet*, which would be positioned about 500 miles away from Japan. The B–25 bombers were an inspired choice, as they were mid-range bombers that were not normally launched from the decks of aircraft carriers and had limited fuel reserves. Despite these risks and the unprecedented nature of the raid, the Raiders began their mission.

On April 18, 1942, the task force was spotted by the Japanese, nearly 200 miles from the planned launch point. All 16 B–25 bombers were able to launch from the deck of the U.S.S. *Hornet*, but they lacked the time or fuel necessary to enter into formation, necessitating individual strikes that caused only minor military and industrial damage to Japan. All but one of the B–25 bombers made crash landings or had their crews bail out. The remaining plane made an emergency landing in Russia, and the crew was interned. Eight soldiers were captured by the Japanese in China, three of whom were executed. Still, the Doolittle Raid was the first successful attack on the Japanese mainland in over 700 years, and it shook the confidence of their military.

The Doolittle Raid changed the course of the war, and the courage and bravery of the Doolittle Raiders is inspiring, even after 74 years. Three of the squadrons that participated in the Doolittle Raid, the 34th, 37th, and 432nd squadrons, are now stationed in Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City, SD. I am proud to have squadrons with such a historic legacy stationed in my State, and I know that the example of the Doolittle Raiders will continue to inspire airmen everywhere.

PACIFIC TSUNAMI MUSEUM COMMEMORATION OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1946 TSUNAMI IN HAWAII

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the 1946 tsunami disaster in Hawaii. Early on the morning of April 1, 1946, an undersea 8.1-magnitude earthquake off the Alaskan coast triggered a tragic event 5 hours and 2,400 miles away. Travelling at nearly 500 miles per hour, a succession of tsunami waves hit the Hawaiian Islands around breakfast time, devastating downtown Hilo on Hawaii Island and killing 96 people. Across the Hawaiian island chain, 159 people lost their lives to the tsunami.

In response to this disaster, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration established the Tsunami Warning System in 1948. Despite the system's proven effectiveness during two subsequent but minor tsunami events, another massive tsunami wave on May 23, 1960, took the lives of 61 Hilo residents. Many of the victims failed to take the warnings seriously or returned to their homes before the danger had passed. Another contributing factor was uninformed city planning that allowed residents to rebuild homes and businesses in tsunami risk zones. Shinmachi, a district in downtown Hilo rebuilt after the 1946 tsunami, was destroyed again by the 1960 tsunami.

While sobering, these tragedies are critical teaching opportunities. Decades after the disasters at Hilo, Dr. Walter Dudley and Jeanne Branch Johnston, a tsunami researcher and a tsunami survivor, respectively, envisioned a place where the public could remember and learn from these tragedies. Without sustained collective memory of the risk posed by tsunamis and complementary public outreach, they believed the tremendous progress in tsunami research and warning systems in the last half century would not prevent future disasters. After all, an unheeded warning is no warning at all.

Since opening its doors in 1994, the Pacific Tsunami Museum, PTM, in Hilo has demonstrated its ability to catalyze public engagement with tsunami risk. Museum exhibits include the history of tsunamis in Hawaii and how past events have shaped the community and impacted long-range planning. The museum places strong emphasis on the human component of the tsunami story, the resiliency of a community that survived the disasters and also pays tribute to the victims. PTM also features exhibits on major tsunami events around the globe and frequently collaborates with sister institutions as far away as Sri Lanka. As part of its public outreach efforts, the museum has developed tsunami curricula and evacuation plans for schools, created publications on tsunami safety, and presented workshops and lectures on the issue both in Hawaii and abroad.

April is Tsunami Awareness Month in Hawaii. On April 16, PTM will host a special open house commemorating the 70th anniversary of the 1946 tsunami. This event seeks to promote awareness of tsunami risk, educate the public on appropriate responses to a tsunami warning, and honor the victims of Hilo's tsunami disasters.

The need to continually cultivate community resilience to tsunami events inspired me to push for stronger Federal support for essential detection, forecast, warning, research, and preparedness programs. My colleagues, Senators MARIA CANTWELL of Washington and DAN SULLIVAN of Alaska, and I introduced the Tsunami Warning, Education, and Research Act of 2015. If signed into law, this bill would reinforce and amplify the great work being done by PTM.

I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering the tragic loss of life at Hilo in 1946 and 1960 and commending the Pacific Tsunami Museum for its tireless work to keep the public safe from tsunamis.

REMEMBERING CLIFF YOUNG

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, today I wish to remember a former Nevada Supreme Court justice, Congressman, and State senator, C. Clifton ''Cliff'' Young, a true Nevada statesman and dedicated public servant. I send my condolences and prayers to his wife, four children, nine grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren during this difficult time. Although he will be sorely missed, his legendary influence throughout the Silver State will continue on.

Justice Young was born in 1922 in Lovelock and earned his degree from the University of Nevada, Reno in 1943. He later served in the U.S. Army in Europe during World War II, earning the rank of major. As one of our Nation's servicemembers, he made exceptional sacrifices for our country and deserves our deepest gratitude. His service to his country, as well as his bravery and dedication to his family and community, earn him a place in history among the many outstanding men and women who have contributed to our Nation and the Silver State.

Following his time in the U.S. Army, Justice Young earned his law degree from Harvard Law School. In 1952, he was elected to represent the State of Nevada in the U.S. Congress, where he served two terms. From 1966 to 1980, Justice Young continued his public service as a State Senator in the Nevada State Senate. He then served for 18 years on the Nevada Supreme Court, where he served as chief justice twice, and retired in 2002. Throughout his tenure, Justice Young was inducted into the Nevada Legislature's Hall of Fame and was honored with the Federal courthouse in Reno being named after him. With his passing, Nevada lost a great man who is immortalized for his service to our Nation and the Nevada community. I extend my deepest gratitude for all of his work on behalf of our State. His years of service will be remembered for generations to come.

For over half a century, Justice Young demonstrated only the highest level of excellence and dedication while serving in the U.S. Congress, Nevada State Senate, and on the Nevada Supreme Court. Our State is fortunate to have had a public servant of such commitment and unwavering devotion, and I am deeply appreciative of his hard work and invaluable contributions to our State. Today, I join citizens across the Silver State in celebrating the life of an upstanding Nevadan, Justice Cliff Young.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO GREG THAYER

• Mr. DAINES. Madam President, I wish to recognize Greg Thayer, CEO of Montana Milling, Inc., who was named the 2016 Montana Small Business Administration's Small Business Person of the Year. Montana Milling is a family-owned business that specializes in providing quality agricultural products to its customers. They are the No. 1 buyer of organic grains produced in Montana. The cleaning system and the milling process that they employ ensures that their products meet the highest quality standards.

Montana Milling under Greg's leadership epitomizes the Montana way of doing business, which is evident by their motto ''Quality and service is our commitment . . . We guarantee it.'' I believe it is this dedication to customer service that led to Greg's selection as being chosen as Small Business Person for the Year. This award is a great testament to Greg's commitment to provide the best possible service to not only his producers, but for over 200 customers throughout the United States and Canada.

It is truly an honor to recognize Greg for this achievement.•

TRIBUTE TO SHIRLEY BECK AND DALE SIEGFORD

• Mr. DAINES. Madam President, today I wish to recognize the owners of a great candy shop in the eastern part of Montana. Shirley Beck and Dale Siegford have own and operated the Sweet Palace located in Philipsburg, MT, since 1998, contributing to many Montanans' sweet tooth.

Shirley, a wife of a rancher, mother of three, and a former special education teacher, started selling Montana jewelry at the Gem Mountain Shop in 1988. Shirley had a great aptitude for assisting the customers in their search for the perfect piece of sapphire jewelry.

Dale, a Missoula, MT, native, began digging for Montana sapphires on Gem Mountain in 1987. Dale became an expert in the art of heat treatment, enhancing the colors of the Montana sapphires, especially pink and yellow.

Together at Gem Mountain, they became a great team and moved on to opening their own shop, the Sapphire Gallery, in 1992. The Sapphire Gallery became a flourishing business and inspired the duo to open the Sweet Palace right next door, the start of a great business partnership, prompting Shirley and Dale to open another store.

It is impressive that two people can go from making jewelry to making candy in our great State. Philipsburg is a beautiful town near the Sapphire Mountains, and through their businesses, they make it even greater.

Thank you, Shirley and Dale, for helping keep Montana alive.•

TRIBUTE TO STACIE MATHEWSON

• Mr. HELLER. Madam President, today I wish to recognize an individual who has gone above and beyond in her endeavors to help fellow Nevadans and Americans across the country, Stacie Mathewson. This ambitious Nevadan founded the Stacie Mathewson Foundation and Transforming Youth Recovery, which promote drug addiction awareness, recovery, prevention, and education throughout our State and country. Her work is truly invaluable to Nevada, helping to break the cycle of drug abuse within our community.

Mrs. Mathewson's unwavering dedication to transform youth recovery began in 2011 when she founded the Stacie Mathewson Foundation, an organization committed to improving addiction recovery and prevention, while eradicating the social stigma involved with substance disorder. In that same year, the foundation helped fund the Nevada Recovery and Prevention Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, UNR. The on-campus program has implemented various recovery groups, in addition to providing supportive gathering places for students who choose sobriety. Mrs. Mathewson also spearheaded the creation of a national sobriety program for college campuses, which has been successful at 150 colleges and universities across the country.

Mrs. Mathewson's work has also more narrowly focused on helping the youth in our great State. In May of 2015, the Youth Offender Drug Court was established, working to provide an alternative treatment for those in need. With help from Transforming Youth Recovery, the Josh Montoya House was created and serves as a facility for the Washoe County Youth Offender Drug Court in order to provide young men who are combating drug addiction with comprehensive residential and outpatient treatment care.

Mrs. Mathewson has focused on growing early prevention within the local community as well. On February 1, 2016, Mrs. Mathewson announced Transforming Youth Recovery's commitment to launching an innovative research program, Doors to Recovery, for students from kindergarten through 12th grade in the Washoe County School District. The program aims to create a comprehensive prevention and intervention program, as well as recovery support services for students and families. Mrs. Mathewson stands as a role model, demonstrating genuine concern and understanding of others who are in need. I am thankful to have her working as an ally to address this national epidemic.

Today I ask my colleagues and all Nevadans to join me in recognizing Mrs. Mathewson for all of her hard work in bringing greater awareness to drug addiction and in transforming youth recovery in the State of Nevada and across the Nation. I am honored to call her a fellow Nevadan and a friend, and I wish her all of the best of luck as she continues in her endeavors with the Stacie Mathewson Foundation.•

RECOGNIZING TRIANGLE COOPERATIVE SERVICE COMPANY

• Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, today I wish to highlight the 100-year history of the Triangle Cooperative Service Company of Enid, OK. This year, 2016, is their 100th year in business in Oklahoma, and I am pleased to highlight them on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Triangle Cooperative Service Company was founded in 1916 by 20 local Oklahoma cooperatives to ensure rural Oklahomans could get their grain products to market at a fair price via rail. Soon, they grew their business to support Oklahomans in other ways, including helping conduct grain audits and by providing accounting services.

In 1929, it was decided that Triangle Cooperative Service Company would continue to offer member services to the local cooperatives, while a separate entity would be the official Grain Sales Agency for both Oklahoma and Texas. During the 1930s and the 1940s, a large number of grain facilities and cotton gins were built throughout Oklahoma. These new facilities created an increased demand for insurance to protect Oklahoma's farming communities from drought, natural disasters, and other severe weather events. In 1932, TCSC Insurance Agency was formed and molded the future of the Triangle

organization. The Triangle Insurance Company was chartered on January 3, 1992, officially becoming a licensed property and casualty insurance company within the State of Oklahoma.

In 1996, the memberships of Triangle Cooperative Service Company and Producers Exchange Cooperative voted to merge the two cooperatives. This decision to merge marked the beginning of Triangle's expansion. Today, Triangle Cooperative Service Company has grown to 125 employees and over 300 members throughout 20 Midwestern States, continuing to spread its proud tradition of quality service.

In addition to the insurance agency and insurance company, Triangle Cooperative Service Company offers its member cooperatives employee group benefits, HR solutions and safety, and compliance management. Today, the Triangle Cooperative Service Company is cooperatively owned and governed by a board of directors and Mr. John Berg serves as president and CEO.

I am pleased to highlight the history and journey of the Triangle Cooperative Service Company as part of their 100-year history today.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

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

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

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:37 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. 3586. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to improve border and maritime security coordination in the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4403. An act to authorize the development of open-source software based on certain systems of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State to facilitate the vetting of travelers against terrorist watchlists and law enforcement databases, enhance border management, and improve targeting and analysis, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4482. An act to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to prepare a southwest border threat analysis, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4509. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to clarify membership of State planning committees or urban area working groups for the Homeland Security Grant Program, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4549. An act to require the Transportation Security Administration to conduct security screening at certain airports, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 12:44 p.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 bills:

S. 483. An act to improve enforcement efforts related to prescription drug diversion and abuse, and for other purposes.

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

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 3586. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to improve border and maritime security coordination in the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 4403. An act to authorize the development of open-source software based on certain systems of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State to facilitate the vetting of travelers against terrorist watchlists and law enforcement databases, enhance border management, and improve targeting and analysis, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 4482. An act to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to prepare a southwest border threat analysis, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 4509. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to clarify membership of State planning committees or urban area working groups for the Homeland Security Grant Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 4549. An act to require the Transportation Security Administration to conduct security screening at certain airports, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

ENROLLED BILLS PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, April 14, 2016, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bills:

S. 483. An act to improve enforcement efforts related to prescription drug diversion and abuse, and for other purposes.

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Appropriations, without amendment:

S. 2804. An original bill making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114–236).

By Mr. GRASSLEY, from the Committee on the Judiciary, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2390. A bill to provide adequate protections for whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

S. 2613. A bill to reauthorize certain programs established by the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.

By Mr. GRASSLEY, from the Committee on the Judiciary, without amendment:

S. 2614. A bill to amend the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, to reauthorize the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program, and to promote initiatives that will reduce the risk of injury and death relating to the wandering characteristics of some children with autism.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. GRASSLEY for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Clare E. Connors, of Hawaii, to be United States District Judge for the District of Hawaii.

(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. MENENDEZ (for himself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. REID, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. TESTER, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 2799. A bill to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a voluntary patient registry to collect data on cancer incidence among firefighters; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. KING, and Mr. PORTMAN):

S. 2800. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide an exclusion from income for student loan forgiveness for students who have died or become disabled; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MENENDEZ:

S. 2801. A bill for the relief of Malachy McAllister, Nicola McAllister, and Sean Ryan McAllister; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. PAUL:

S. 2802. A bill to provide adequate protections for gun owners; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SASSE:

S. 2803. A bill to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to deposit certain funds into the general fund of the Treasury in accordance with provisions of Federal law with regard to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act's Transitional Reinsurance Program; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. ALEXANDER:

S. 2804. An original bill making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017, and for other purposes; from the Committee on Appropriations; placed on the calendar.

By Mr. FRANKEN (for himself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 2805. A bill to modify the boundary of Voyageurs National Park in the State of Minnesota, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. UDALL (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. HEINRICH, Mrs. MURRAY, and Ms. WARREN):

S. Res. 425. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of National Public Health Week; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. BROWN):

S. Res. 426. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States should support and protect the right of women working in developing countries to safe workplaces, free from gender-based violence, reprisals, and intimidation; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. KIRK, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. ENZI, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BROWN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CARPER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. MORAN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. BOXER, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. PETERS, Mr. DAINES, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. COONS):

S. Res. 427. A resolution designating April 2016 as ''Financial Literacy Month''; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. ROUNDS (for himself and Mr. THUNE):

S. Res. 428. A resolution congratulating the 2016 national champions, the University of South Dakota Coyotes, for winning the 2016 Women's National Invitation Tournament; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. PERDUE (for himself and Mr. CARPER):

S. Res. 429. A resolution expressing support for the designation of the week of April 11 through April 15, 2016, as ''National Assistant Principals Week''; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. GARDNER (for himself and Mr. BENNET):

S. Res. 430. A resolution supporting the designation of April 20, 2016, as ''Cheyenne Mountain Day''; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 71

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 71, a bill to preserve open competition and Federal Government neutrality towards the labor relations of Federal Government contractors on Federal and federally funded construction projects.

S. 256

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 256, a bill to amend the definition of ''homeless person'' under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to include certain homeless children and youth, and for other purposes.

S. 746

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 746, a bill to provide for the establishment of a Commission to Accelerate the End of Breast Cancer.

S. 901

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 901, a bill to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances during service in the Armed Forces that are related to that exposure, to establish an advisory board on such health conditions, and for other purposes.

S. 979

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 979, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan by veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 996

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 996, a bill to facilitate nationwide availability of volunteer income tax assistance for low-income and underserved populations, and for other purposes.

S. 1462

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1462, a bill to improve the safety of oil shipments by rail and for other purposes.

S. 1555

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1555, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the Filipino veterans of World War II, in recognition of the dedicated service of the veterans during World War II.

S. 1715

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1715, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims.

S. 2002

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2002, a bill to strengthen our mental health system and improve public safety.

S. 2279

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2279, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to increase efficiency in the recruitment and hiring by the Department of Veterans Affairs of health care workers that are undergoing separation from the Armed Forces, to create uniform credentialing standards for certain health care professionals of the Department, and for other purposes.

S. 2292

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2292, a bill to reform laws relating to small public housing agencies, and for other purposes.

S. 2390

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2390, a bill to provide adequate protections for whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

S. 2441

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2441, a bill to provide that certain Cuban entrants are ineligible to receive refugee assistance, and for other purposes.

S. 2469

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2469, a bill to repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act.

S. 2540

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2540, a bill to provide access to counsel for unaccompanied children and other vulnerable populations.

S. 2548

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2548, a bill to establish the 400 Years of African-American History Commission, and for other purposes.

S. 2566

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2566, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide sexual assault survivors with certain rights, and for other purposes.

S. 2613

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota

(Ms. KLOBUCHAR) 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. 2614

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2614, a bill to amend the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, to reauthorize the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program, and to promote initiatives that will reduce the risk of injury and death relating to the wandering characteristics of some children with autism.

S. 2725

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2725, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to the ballistic missile program of Iran, and for other purposes.

S. 2746

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2746, a bill to establish various prohibitions regarding the transfer or release of individuals detained at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and with respect to United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, and for other purposes.

S. 2749

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the names of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2749, a bill to provide an exception from the reduced flat rate per diem for long-term temporary duty under Joint Travel Regulations for civilian employees of naval shipyards traveling for direct labor in support of off-yard work, and for other purposes.

S. 2752

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2752, a bill to prohibit the facilitation of certain financial transactions involving the Government of Iran or Iranian persons and to impose sanctions with respect to the facilitation of those transactions, and for other purposes.

S. 2755

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the names of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) and the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2755, a bill to provide Capitol-flown flags to the immediate family of firefighters, law enforcement officers, members of rescue squads or ambulance crews, and public safety officers who are killed in the line of duty.

S. 2782

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2782, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the participation of pediatric subspecialists in the National Health Service Corps program, and for other purposes.

S. 2790

At the request of Mr. VITTER, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2790, a bill to provide requirements for the appropriate Federal banking agencies when requesting or ordering a depository institution to terminate a specific customer account, to provide for additional requirements related to subpoenas issued under the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act of 1989, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 349

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 349, a resolution congratulating the Farm Credit System on the celebration of its 100th anniversary.

S. RES. 383

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

S. RES. 422

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 422, a resolution supporting the mission and goals of 2016 ''National Crime Victims' Rights Week'', which include increasing public awareness of the rights, needs, concerns of, and services available to assist victims and survivors of crime in the United States.

AMENDMENT NO. 3511

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, her name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3511 intended to be proposed to H.R. 636, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. KING, and Mr. PORTMAN):

S. 2800. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide an exclusion from income for student loan forgiveness for students who have died or become disabled; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a bill that I am introducing today, along with Senator COONS and Senator PORTMAN, called the Stop Taxing Death and Disability Act. It is a bill that responds to a tragic and unintended and frankly unsupportable policy—an inadvertent policy, I believe—of our government. Senator COONS has been a great leader on this, and I also wish to express my appreciation to Senator PORTMAN for joining.

Not long after I was elected, I was contacted by Donald and Nora Brennen, a couple from Topsham, ME, which is just across the river from my hometown of Brunswick. They are both retired Navy veterans, and they experienced a tragedy in their lives that has inadvertently entangled them with the Internal Revenue Service in a way that I think makes no sense.

Their son Keegan had graduated cum laude from the New Hampshire Institute of Art. He had taken on Federal and private loans in order to enable himself to get his education. He had a bright future. Unfortunately, barely 6 months after he graduated, he passed away suddenly from a non-traumatic brain aneurysm—a tragic loss which I think any of us as parents can only dimly appreciate or understand or empathize with. It is so unthinkable to lose a child in this way that it is just hard to conceive of.

The Federal Government has recognized this kind of situation and forgives the student loan indebtedness of students who pass away in this situation. The Federal Government gets that part right. Congress has already directed the Department of Education to forgive outstanding balances for borrowers who pass away, as well as those funds borrowed by parents on behalf of a child who passes away. The same forgiveness provision, by the way, is also permitted for borrowers who suffer total and permanent disabilities that are certified by the Social Security Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs. So far, so good.

While the Federal Government solved that part of the problem, it inadvertently created another by recognizing that the Tax Code generally treats forgiven student debt as income in the year it is discharged. Because of this, this family in Maine who lost their son was suddenly—overnight—faced with a $24,000 tax bill and a $6,000 tax bill from the State of Maine because of its conformance with the Federal law.

In other words, you lose a child. The loans are forgiven, but the forgiveness is treated as taxable income, and suddenly, in the midst of your grief, you are faced with paying an enormous—one big tax bill on the entire amount of the loan being forgiven.

In this case, the Brennens couldn't possibly pay this in one instance, and it makes no sense from the point of view of policy. It is the opposite of compassion. It is literally adding insult to tragic injury.

Since 2012 when they lost their son, the Brennens have struggled to make ends meet. They had to go into their 401(k). They had to make some kind of arrangement with the IRS, and now they are in the process of paying this enormous tax off.

This family in Maine is not alone in facing this burden. My office has heard from other constituents in our State,

and our research indicates that there are at least several thousand across the country who are facing a tax bill in the midst of the most tragic and difficult circumstances. This just isn't right. It is something we should fix.

As I said, the Department of Education does have it right, and they are working on this, but until this unresolved tax issue is resolved, they can't move forward with an efficient way to provide these discharges.

The bill we are introducing today with Senator COONS and Senator PORTMAN, the Stop Taxing Death and Disability Act, is a commonsense, compassionate, and sensible response to this tragic event. If we are going to forgive the student loan debt, which makes total sense and has been the law for some time, to then turn around and say that loan forgiveness is itself taxable—so in the midst of your grief, you are presented with a massive tax bill—just isn't right. It is not fair, it is not right, it is not compassionate, and it isn't consistent with the earlier decision that has been made to discharge these loans under these tragic circumstances. I think it is time for Congress to add the death and disability exemption to the Tax Code.

I thank Don and Nora Brennen for sharing this story with me—it can't be an easy story to share—and for their service to this country in the U.S. Navy and their commitment to doing the right thing for their family.

I hope and believe we can find it in our wisdom here and in our hearts to act on this bill to be sure that other families in America in the midst of their grief do not have to face this tragic situation.

Again, I thank Senator COONS and Senator PORTMAN for joining me in this bipartisan effort to right a wrong, to correct a mistake, to act in the best principles of this institution, to act on behalf of this small group but important group who suffered loss, to act to relieve this burden that should never have been in place in the first place.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 425—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

Mr. UDALL (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. HEINRICH, Mrs. MURRAY, and Ms. WARREN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 425

Whereas the week of April 4, 2016, through April 10, 2016, was National Public Health Week;

Whereas the theme for National Public Health Week in 2016 was ''Healthiest Nation 2030'', with the goal of making the United States the healthiest nation in one generation;

Whereas public health organizations use National Public Health Week to educate the public, policymakers, and public health professionals on issues that are important to improving the health of the people of the United States;

Whereas the value of a strong public health system is in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and the places in which we all live, learn, work, and play;

Whereas there is a significant difference in the health status of people living in the healthiest States compared to people living in the least healthy States, such as rates of obesity, poor mental health, and infectious disease;

Whereas public health professionals help communities prevent, prepare for, withstand, and recover from the impact of a full range of health threats, including disease outbreaks such as the Zika virus, natural disasters, and disasters caused by human activity;

Whereas public health professionals collaborate with partners that are not in the health sector, such as city planners, transportation officials, education officials, and private sector businesses, recognizing that other sectors have an important influence on health;

Whereas according to the National Academy of Medicine, despite being one of the wealthiest nations in the world, the United States ranks below many other economically prosperous and developing countries with respect to measures of health, including life expectancy, infant mortality rates, low birth weight rates, and the rate of drug-related deaths, which for overdose deaths involving opioids has increased by 200 percent since 2000;

Whereas studies show that small strategic investments in prevention can result in significant savings in health care costs;

Whereas each 10-percent increase in local public health spending contributes to a 6.9-percent decrease in infant deaths, a 3.2-percent decrease in deaths related to cardiovascular disease, a 1.4-percent decrease in deaths due to diabetes, and a 1.1-percent decrease in cancer-related deaths;

Whereas in communities across the country, more people are changing the way they care for their health by avoiding tobacco use, eating more healthfully, becoming more physically active, and preventing unintentional injuries at home and in the workplace;

Whereas despite having a high infant mortality rate as compared to other economically prosperous and developing countries and a death rate that varies greatly among States, overall the United States is making steady progress, with the infant mortality rate reaching a historic low in 2014, with 5.8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births;

Whereas the percentage of adults in the United States who smoke cigarettes, the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States, decreased from 20.9 percent in 2005 to 16.8 percent in 2014; and

Whereas efforts to adequately support public health and prevention can continue to transform a health system focused on treating illness to a health system focused on preventing disease and promoting wellness: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of National Public Health Week;

(2) recognizes the efforts of public health professionals, the Federal Government, States, Indian tribes, municipalities, local communities, and individuals in preventing disease and injury;

(3) recognizes the role of public health in improving the health of individuals in the United States;

(4) encourages increased efforts and resources to improve the health of people in the United States to create the healthiest nation in one generation through—

(A) greater opportunities to improve community health and prevent disease and injury; and

(B) strengthening the public health system in the United States; and

(5) encourages the people of the United States to learn about the role of the public health system in the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 426—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD SUPPORT AND PROTECT THE RIGHT OF WOMEN WORKING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO SAFE WORKPLACES, FREE FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, REPRISALS, AND INTIMIDATION

Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. BROWN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 426

Whereas women in developing countries who join the industrial workforce suffer from, or become increasingly vulnerable to, economic violence, including forced overtime, wage theft, abusive short term contracts, discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence at work;

Whereas women typically make up the majority of the workforce in industries in which the rights of workers have been restricted, including—

(1) export manufacturing (including the global apparel industry); and

(2) other export sectors (including the cut flowers and fresh produce industries);

Whereas sexual violence is often used by a male manager as a means of intimidation or punishment when a female worker makes a mistake, fails to meet a production target, asks for leave, or arrives late to work;

Whereas women are particularly vulnerable to violence and intimidation at work due to—

(1) the frequently disproportionate number of male managers;

(2) the lack of policing and reporting of sexual harassment; and

(3) common cultural norms that assert male dominance and place disproportionate pressure on women to maintain their income and support their children and elders;

Whereas a survey of female garment industry workers in Bangladesh revealed that—

(1) nearly ⅓ of respondents had been a recipient of an unwelcome sexual overture, inappropriate touching, or a threat of being forced to undress; and

(2) nearly ½ of respondents had been beaten or struck in the face by a supervisor;

Whereas some of the most deadly accidents in industrial history have occurred in export processing industries in which female workers predominate, including—

(1) the fire at Ali Enterprises in Pakistan in 2012, the deadliest apparel factory fire in history, in which the lives of 259 workers were lost; and

(2) the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in 2013, in which the lives of 1,134 Bangladeshi workers were lost and 2,500 more workers were injured, the majority of whom were women;

Whereas these and other industrial accidents have occurred in facilities that were monitored and certified as safe and decent workplaces by private, voluntary corporate social responsibility initiatives invested in by global brands from the United States and Europe;

Whereas female workers are often knowingly exposed to dangerous and life-threatening machinery or toxic substances that are no longer used in developed nations due to their reproductive or general health effects, without even simple safety measures like gloves or face masks; and

Whereas research shows that—

(1) workers who are well-informed about health and safety facilitate safer workplaces; and

(2) legal protections that allow elected labor union representatives of workers to raise safety and other concerns without fear of reprisals are essential for worker safety: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that the United States should—

(1) support policies that create safe and decent jobs in developing countries, which are critical to ensuring peaceful and sustainable economic growth and development in a globalized world;

(2) support policies that reduce gender-based violence, and other forms of discrimination, at work, and that improve the ability of women workers to speak out in defense of their rights without fear of reprisals;

(3) encourage the development of an International Labour Conference Convention to address gender-based violence at work;

(4) promote labor rights in trade agreements and enforce the right of women and other workers to join a labor union to defend their other rights and safety;

(5) use diplomatic means and international aid—

(A) to end violence against women in the workplace; and

(B) to empower women and other workers to participate fully in their economies and to protect their safety; and

(6) encourage United States companies with international supply chains, and Federal agencies involved in procurement, to increase transparency and accountability in order to ensure that products are produced in workplaces that—

(A) work aggressively to end gender-based workplace violence; and

(B) respect the rights of women workers.

SENATE RESOLUTION 427—DESIGNATING APRIL 2016 AS ''FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH''

Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. KIRK, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. ENZI, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BROWN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CARPER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. MORAN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. BOXER, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. PETERS, Mr. DAINES, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. COONS) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 427

Whereas according to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (referred to in this preamble as the ''FDIC''), at least 27.7 percent of households in the United States, or nearly 34,400,000 households with approximately 67,600,000 adults, are unbanked or underbanked and therefore have not had an opportunity to access savings, lending, and other basic financial services;

Whereas according to the FDIC, approximately 30 percent of banks reported in 2011 that consumers lacked an understanding of the financial products and services banks offered;

Whereas according to the 2015 Consumer Financial Literacy Survey final report of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling—

(1) approximately 41 percent of adults in the United States gave themselves a grade of ''C'', ''D'', or ''F'' on their knowledge of personal finance;

(2) 75 percent of adults in the United States acknowledged that they could benefit from additional advice and answers to everyday financial questions from a professional;

(3) 24 percent of adults in the United States, or approximately 56,300,000 individuals, admitted to not paying bills on time;

(4) 1 in 3 households reported carrying credit card debt from month to month;

(5) only 39 percent of adults in the United States reported keeping close track of their spending, a percentage that held steady since 2007; and

(6) 13 percent of adults in the United States identified not having enough ''rainy day'' savings for an emergency, and 15 percent of adults in the United States identified not having enough money set aside for retirement, as the most worrisome area of personal finance;

Whereas the 2015 Retirement Confidence Survey conducted by the Employee Benefit Research Institute found that 24 percent of workers were ''not at all confident'' that they had enough money to retire;

Whereas according to the statistical release of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the fourth quarter of 2015 entitled ''Financial Accounts of the United States: Flow of Funds, Balance Sheets, and Integrated Macroeconomic Accounts'', outstanding household debt in the United States was $14,200,000,000,000 at the end of the fourth quarter of 2015;

Whereas according to the 2016 Survey of the States: Economic and Personal Finance Education in Our Nation's Schools, a biennial report by the Council for Economic Education—

(1) only 20 States require students to take an economics course as a high school graduation requirement; and

(2) only 17 States require students to take a personal finance course as a high school graduation requirement, either independently or as part of an economics course;

Whereas according to the Gallup-HOPE Index, only 52 percent of students in the United States have money in a bank or credit union account;

Whereas expanding access to the safe, mainstream financial system will provide individuals with less expensive and more secure options for managing finances and building wealth;

Whereas quality personal financial education is essential to ensure that individuals are prepared—

(1) to manage money, credit, and debt; and

(2) to become responsible workers, heads of household, investors, entrepreneurs, business leaders, and citizens;

Whereas increased financial literacy empowers individuals to make wise financial decisions and reduces the confusion caused by an increasingly complex economy;

Whereas a greater understanding of, and familiarity with, financial markets and institutions will lead to increased economic activity and growth; and

Whereas, in 2003, Congress—

(1) determined that coordinating Federal financial literacy efforts and formulating a national strategy is important; and

(2) in light of that determination, passed the Financial Literacy and Education Improvement Act (20 U.S.C. 9701 et seq.), establishing the Financial Literacy and Education Commission: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 2016 as ''Financial Literacy Month'' to raise public awareness about—

(A) the importance of personal financial education in the United States; and

(B) the serious consequences that may result from a lack of understanding about personal finances; and

(2) calls on the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and the people of the United States to observe Financial Literacy Month with appropriate programs and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 428—CONGRATULATING THE 2016 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS, THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COYOTES, FOR WINNING THE 2016 WOMEN'S NATIONAL INVITATION TOURNAMENT

Mr. ROUNDS (for himself and Mr. THUNE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 428

Whereas, on April 2, 2016, the University of South Dakota Coyotes defeated the Florida Gulf Coast University Eagles by a score of 71 to 65 in the final game of the Women's National Invitation Tournament (referred to in this preamble as the ''WNIT'') in Vermillion, South Dakota;

Whereas this is the first national title for the University of South Dakota Coyotes since the transition of the University of South Dakota to Division I athletics;

Whereas the Dakota Dome of the University of South Dakota, soon to be replaced with a new complex, hosted its final basketball game before a crowd of 7,415 fans;

Whereas the University of South Dakota Coyotes shot 71.4 percent from beyond the 3-point line and 54 percent overall from the field in their 34-point win in the semifinal of the WNIT;

Whereas senior guard Nicole Seekamp was named most valuable player of the WNIT and averaged 14 points per game throughout the WNIT;

Whereas seniors Tia Hemiller and Nicole Seekamp were each named to the WNIT all-tournament team;

Whereas the 2015–16 season was the fourth season for head coach Amy Williams, during which she won her first national title;

Whereas the University of South Dakota Coyotes finished the 2015–16 season with a record of 32–6; and

Whereas the presence of 5 seniors and 4 juniors on the roster of the University of South Dakota Coyotes represents the commitment of the seniors and juniors to the University of South Dakota and its work to enshrine the ideal of the student-athlete into the ethos of the University of South Dakota: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates and honors the University of South Dakota women's basketball team and its loyal fans on the performance of the team in the 2016 Women's National Invitation Tournament; and

(2) recognizes and commends the hard work, dedication, determination, and commitment to excellence of the players, parents, families, coaches, and managers of the University of South Dakota women's basketball team.

SENATE RESOLUTION 429—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE WEEK OF APRIL 11 THROUGH APRIL 15, 2016, AS ''NATIONAL ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS WEEK''

Mr. PERDUE (for himself and Mr. CARPER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 429

Whereas the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA) have designated the week of April 11 through April 15, 2016, as ''National Assistant Principals Week'';

Whereas an assistant principal, as a member of the school administration, interacts with many sectors of the school community, including support staff, instructional staff, students, and parents;

Whereas assistant principals are responsible for establishing a positive learning environment and building strong relationships between school and community;

Whereas assistant principals play a pivotal role in the instructional leadership of their schools by supervising student instruction, mentoring teachers, recognizing the achievements of staff, encouraging collaboration among staff, ensuring the implementation of best practices, monitoring student achievement and progress, facilitating and modeling data-driven decision-making to inform instruction, and guiding the direction of targeted intervention and school improvement;

Whereas the day-to-day logistical operations of schools require assistant principals to monitor and address facility needs, attendance, transportation issues, and scheduling challenges, as well as supervise extra- and co-curricular events;

Whereas assistant principals are entrusted with maintaining an inviting, safe, and orderly school environment that supports the growth and achievement of each and every student by nurturing positive peer relationships, recognizing student achievement, mediating conflicts, analyzing behavior patterns, providing interventions, and, when necessary, taking disciplinary actions;

Whereas since its establishment in 2004, the NASSP National Assistant Principal of the Year Program recognizes outstanding middle and high school assistant principals who demonstrate success in leadership, curriculum, and personalization; and

Whereas the week of April 11 through April 15, 2016, is an appropriate week to designate as National Assistant Principals Week: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the designation of April 11 through April 15, 2016, as ''National Assistant Principals Week'';

(2) honors the contributions of assistant principals to the success of students in the United States; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to observe National Assistant Principals Week with appropriate ceremonies and activities that promote awareness of the role played by assistant principals in school leadership and ensuring that every child has access to a high-quality education.

SENATE RESOLUTION 430—SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF APRIL 20, 2016, AS ''CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN DAY''

Mr. GARDNER (for himself and Mr. BENNET) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 430

Whereas, since 1966, Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station (in this preamble referred to as ''Cheyenne Mountain'') in Colorado Springs, Colorado, has been a synergistic hub for tracking security threats worldwide, serving as an essential component to the defense of North America and to global security;

Whereas countless space and ground sensor data collections are synthesized at Cheyenne Mountain, providing vital information for the key threat assessments needed to ensure the safety and security of millions of people throughout North America;

Whereas the 21st Space Wing at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado, provides operational support and infrastructure sustainability;

Whereas the 721st Mission Support Group at Cheyenne Mountain provides dedicated daily sustainment to more than 13 mission partners performing the national security mission inside of the Cheyenne Mountain Complex;

Whereas, every day, more than 1,000 military and civilian personnel of the United States and Canada, residing in Colorado and working at Cheyenne Mountain, are ever vigilant in ensuring the collective common defense of North America;

Whereas Cheyenne Mountain is—

(1) a valuable national security asset;

(2) seen as one of the greatest engineering marvels of its time; and

(3) relevant both now and in the future;

Whereas Colorado is proud to be a nexus of capabilities that provide for the defense of North America, which is critical to global security not only today but also in the future; and

Whereas April 20, 2016, is the 50th anniversary of Cheyenne Mountain achieving full operational capability and would be an appropriate date to designate as ''Cheyenne Mountain Day'': Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the designation of April 20, 2016, as ''Cheyenne Mountain Day'';

(2) recognizes the strategic importance of Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station to the defense of North America; and

(3) commends the efforts of the 21st Space Wing, the 721st Mission Support Group, and the 1,000 military and civilian personnel of the United States and Canada working at the Cheyenne Mountain Complex to support the collective common defense of North America.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3789. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3725 submitted by Mr. FLAKE and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 3679 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON)) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3790. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3557 submitted by Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. ENZI, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. HELLER, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 636, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3791. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3568 submitted by Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING) and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 3464 proposed by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3792. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3754 submitted by Mr. HATCH and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 3679 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON)) to the bill H.R. 636, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3793. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3794. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3795. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3796. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3797. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 3789. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3725 submitted by Mr. FLAKE and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 3679 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON)) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

(d) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL CRIMINALS EXTRADITED.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has extradited or otherwise rendered to the United States all individuals in Cuba who are sought by the Department of Justice for crimes committed in the United States, including—

(1) General Ruben Martinez Puente, Colonel Lorenzo Alberto Perez-Perez, and Colonel Francisco Perez-Perez; and

(2) fugitive hijackers residing in Cuba, including Charlie Hill.

(e) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL COMPENSATION PROVIDED FOR CONFISCATED PROPERTY.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has—

(1) returned to all United States citizens, and entities for which United States citizens have an ownership interest of 50 percent or more, property confiscated from those citizens and entities by the Government of Cuba on or after January 1, 1959; or

(2) provided equitable compensation to those citizens and entities for such confiscated property.

(f) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL COMPENSATION PROVIDED FOR JUDGMENTS IN UNITED STATES.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has provided compensation to resolve all outstanding judgments against the Government of Cuba issued by a court in the United States.

SA 3790. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3557 submitted by Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. ENZI, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. HELLER, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

(d) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL CRIMINALS EXTRADITED.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has extradited or otherwise rendered to the United States all individuals in Cuba who are sought by the Department of Justice for crimes committed in the United States, including—

(1) General Ruben Martinez Puente, Colonel Lorenzo Alberto Perez-Perez, and Colonel Francisco Perez-Perez; and

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(e) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL COMPENSATION PROVIDED FOR CONFISCATED PROPERTY.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has—

(1) returned to all United States citizens, and entities for which United States citizens have an ownership interest of 50 percent or more, property confiscated from those citizens and entities by the Government of Cuba on or after January 1, 1959; or

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(f) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL COMPENSATION PROVIDED FOR JUDGMENTS IN UNITED STATES.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has provided compensation to resolve all outstanding judgments against the Government of Cuba issued by a court in the United States.

SA 3791. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3568 submitted by Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING) and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 3464 proposed by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

(f) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL CRIMINALS EXTRADITED.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has extradited or otherwise rendered to the United States all individuals in Cuba who are sought by the Department of Justice for crimes committed in the United States, including—

(1) General Ruben Martinez Puente, Colonel Lorenzo Alberto Perez-Perez, and Colonel Francisco Perez-Perez; and

(2) fugitive hijackers residing in Cuba, including Charlie Hill.

(g) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL COMPENSATION PROVIDED FOR CONFISCATED PROPERTY.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has—

(1) returned to all United States citizens, and entities for which United States citizens have an ownership interest of 50 percent or more, property confiscated from those citizens and entities by the Government of Cuba on or after January 1, 1959; or

(2) provided equitable compensation to those citizens and entities for such confiscated property.

(h) LIMITATION ON EFFECT UNTIL COMPENSATION PROVIDED FOR JUDGMENTS IN UNITED STATES.—This section shall not apply until the President certifies to Congress that the Government of Cuba has provided compensation to resolve all outstanding judgments against the Government of Cuba issued by a court in the United States.

SA 3792. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3754 submitted by Mr. HATCH and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 3679 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON)) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. 5033. AUTHORIZATION OF ADDITIONAL SLOT EXEMPTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In addition to the provisions of section 5032 of this Act and notwithstanding sections 49104(a)(5), 49109, and 41714 of title 49, United States Code, not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall, by order, grant exemptions from the requirements of subparts K and S of part 93 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, to enable air carriers to operate limited frequencies and aircraft on routes between Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and airports located beyond the perimeter restriction.

(b) BEYOND-PERIMETER OPERATIONS.—The Secretary shall make available, upon request, not more than 2 exemptions made available under subsection (a) to each air carrier that—

(1) sells flights in its own name;

(2) has daily scheduled service at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport as of the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(3) commits, in using such an exemption—

(A) to discontinue the use of a slot for service between Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and a large hub airport within the perimeter restriction and to operate, in place of such service, service between Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and a medium hub airport or small hub airport located beyond the perimeter restriction that has no daily nonstop air service to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport as of the date of the enactment of this Act;

(B) to operate an aircraft, not to include a multi-aisle or wide body aircraft, with equal or lesser passenger capacity when compared to the aircraft used on service discontinued under subparagraph (A); and

(C) to file a notice of intent with the Secretary to inform the Secretary of any change in circumstances concerning the use of the exemption that specifies the airport to be served using the exemption, the type of aircraft to be used, and the slot the carrier is discontinuing under subparagraph (A).

(c) AIR CARRIER DISCRETION.—Except with respect to the requirements of subsection (b), an air carrier that receives an exemption under subsection (a) shall have sole discretion concerning the use of the exemption, including the selection of the initial airport and any subsequent airports to be served.

(d) RETURN OF WITHIN-PERIMETER SLOTS.—An air carrier shall be entitled to the return by the Secretary of a slot for flights within the perimeter restriction if the use of an exemption made available to the air carrier under subsection (a) is discontinued.

(e) PROHIBITION AGAINST TRANSFERS.—In accordance with section 41714(j) of title 49, United States Code, an exemption granted under subsection (a) to an air carrier may not be bought, sold, leased, or otherwise transferred by the air carrier.

SA 3793. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike section 1215 and insert the following:

SEC. 1215. REPORT ON NON-MOVEMENT AREA SURVEILLANCE PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall submit to Congress a report—

(1) assessing the feasibility and advisability of a pilot program to support non-Federal acquisition and installation of qualifying non-movement area surveillance surface display systems and sensors;

(2) evaluating if—

(A) acquisition and installation of qualifying non-movement area surveillance surface display systems and sensors improve safety or capacity in the National Airspace System; and

(B) the non-movement area surveillance surface display systems and sensors are supplemental to existing movement area systems and sensors at the selected airports established under other programs administered by the Administrator; and

(3) making recommendations with respect to the content of the pilot program described in paragraph (1), including with respect to procurement procedures and the possibility of establishing data exchange processes to allow airport participation in the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Collaborative Decision Making process and fusion of the non-movement surveillance data with the Administration's movement area systems.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) NON-MOVEMENT AREA.—The term ''non-movement area'' is the portion of the airfield surface that is not under the control of air traffic control.

(2) NON-MOVEMENT AREA SURVEILLANCE SURFACE DISPLAY SYSTEM AND SENSORS.—The term ''non-movement area surveillance surface display system and sensors'' is a non-Federal surveillance system that uses on-airport sensors that track vehicles or aircraft that are equipped with transponders in the non-movement area.

(3) QUALIFYING NON-MOVEMENT AREA SURVEILLANCE SURFACE DISPLAY SYSTEM AND SENSORS.—The term ''qualifying non-movement area surveillance surface display system and sensors'' is a non-movement area surveillance surface display system that—

(A) provides the required transmit and receive data formats consistent with the National Airspace System architecture at the appropriate service delivery point;

(B) is on-airport; and
(C) is airport operated.

SA 3794. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Beginning on page 59, strike line 18 and all that follows through page 60, line 2, and insert the following:

(c) DEADLINE.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress the consensus identification standards, and the Administrator shall issue legislative recommendations for codifying such standards.

SA 3795. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 131, strike lines 11 through 19, and insert the following:

(C) CONSIDERATIONS.—In making a determination whether to grant or deny an application for a designation, the Administrator shall consider—

(i) aviation safety;
(ii) personal safety of the uninvolved public;
(iii) national security; and
(iv) homeland security.

SA 3796. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike section 2303 and insert the following:

SEC. 2303. AIRCRAFT TRACKING AND FLIGHT DATA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall assess current performance standards and submit to Congress recommendations for revising the standards to improve near-term and long-term aircraft tracking and flight data recovery, including retrieval, access, and protection of such data after an incident or accident.

(b) CONSIDERATIONS.—In assessing the performance standards under subsection (a), the Administrator shall consider—

(1) various methods for improving detection and retrieval of flight data, including—
(A) low frequency underwater locating devices; and
(B) extended battery life for underwater locating devices;
(2) automatic deployable flight recorders;
(3) triggered transmission of flight data, and other satellite-based solutions;
(4) distress-mode tracking; and
(5) protections against disabling flight recorder systems.

(c) COORDINATION.—In assessing the possibility of revising performance standards under subsection (a), the Administrator shall consult with international regulatory authorities and the International Civil Aviation Organization to assess how to ensure that any new international standard for aircraft tracking and flight data recovery is consistent with a performance based approach and is implemented in a globally harmonized manner.

SA 3797. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3464 submitted by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. NELSON) to the bill H.R. 636, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike section 3109 and insert the following:

SEC. 3109. REFUNDS FOR DELAYED BAGGAGE.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation shall submit recommendations to Congress with respect to the feasibility and advisability of requiring a covered air carrier to promptly provide an automatic refund to a passenger in the amount of any applicable ancillary fees paid if the covered air carrier has charged the passenger an ancillary fee for checked baggage but the covered air carrier fails to deliver the checked baggage to the passenger not later than 6 to 12 hours after the arrival of a domestic flight or 12 to 24 hours after the arrival of an international flight.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 14, 2016, at 9:30 a.m., in room SR–328A of the Russell Senate Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 14, 2016, at 10:45 a.m., in the President's Room of the Capitol.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 14, 2016, at 9 a.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 14, 2016, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''The Federal Perspective on the State of Our Nation's Biodefense.''

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 14, 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. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 14, 2016, at 2 p.m, in room SH–219 of the Hart Senate Office Building.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS, FORESTS, AND MINING

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 14, 2016, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SECURITIES, INSURANCE, AND INVESTMENT AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on Securities, Insurance, and Investment and Economic Policy be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 14, 2016, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''Examining the Current Trends and Changes in Fixed-Income Markets.''

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

NEVADA NATIVE NATIONS LAND ACT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 377, S. 1436

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1436) to require the Secretary of the Interior to take land into trust for certain Indian tribes, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Indian Affairs, 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 ''Nevada Native Nations Land Act''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF SECRETARY.

In this Act, the term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO BE HELD IN TRUST FOR CERTAIN INDIAN TRIBES.

(a) CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO BE HELD IN TRUST FOR THE FORT MCDERMITT PAIUTE AND SHOSHONE TRIBE.—

(1) DEFINITION OF MAP.—In this subsection, the term ''map'' means the map entitled ''Fort McDermitt Indian Reservation Expansion Act'', dated February 21, 2013, and on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

(2) CONVEYANCE OF LAND.—Subject to valid existing rights, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the land described in paragraph (3)—

(A) is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe; and

(B) shall be part of the reservation of the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe.

(3) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in paragraph (2) is the approximately 19,094 acres of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management as generally depicted on the map as ''Reservation Expansion Lands''.

(b) CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO BE HELD IN TRUST FOR THE SHOSHONE PAIUTE TRIBES.—

(1) DEFINITION OF MAP.—In this subsection, the term ''map'' means the map entitled ''Mountain City Administrative Site Proposed Acquisition'', dated July 29, 2013, and on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Forest Service.

(2) CONVEYANCE OF LAND.—Subject to valid existing rights and paragraph (4), all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the land described in paragraph (3)—

(A) is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Shoshone Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation; and

(B) shall be part of the reservation of the Shoshone Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation.

(3) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in paragraph (2) is the approximately 82 acres of land administered by the Forest Service as generally depicted on the map as ''Proposed Acquisition Site''.

(4) CONDITION ON CONVEYANCE.—The conveyance under paragraph (2) shall be subject to the reservation of an easement on the conveyed land for a road to provide access to adjacent National Forest System land for use by the Forest Service for administrative purposes.

(5) FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS.—The Secretary of Agriculture (acting through the Chief of the Forest Service) shall convey to the Shoshone Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation any existing facilities or improvements to the land described in paragraph (3).

(c) CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO BE HELD IN TRUST FOR THE SUMMIT LAKE PAIUTE TRIBE.—

(1) DEFINITION OF MAP.—In this section, the term ''map'' means the map entitled ''Summit Lake Indian Reservation Conveyance'', dated February 28, 2013, and on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

(2) CONVEYANCE OF LAND.—Subject to valid existing rights, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the land described in paragraph (3)—

(A) is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe; and

(B) shall be part of the reservation of the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe.

(3) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in paragraph (2) is the approximately 941 acres of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management as generally depicted on the map as ''Reservation Conveyance Lands''.

(d) CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO BE HELD IN TRUST FOR THE RENO-SPARKS INDIAN COLONY.—

(1) DEFINITION OF MAP.—In this subsection, the term ''map'' means the map entitled ''Reno-Sparks Indian Colony Expansion'', dated June 11, 2014, and on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

(2) CONVEYANCE OF LAND.—Subject to valid existing rights, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the land described in paragraph (3)—

(A) is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony; and

(B) shall be part of the reservation of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony.

(3) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in paragraph (2) is the approximately 13,434 acres of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management as generally depicted on the map as ''RSIC Amended Boundary''.

(e) CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO BE HELD IN TRUST FOR THE PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE TRIBE.—

(1) MAP.—In this subsection, the term ''map'' means the map entitled ''Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation Expansion'', dated April 13, 2015, and on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

(2) CONVEYANCE OF LAND.—Subject to valid existing rights, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the land described in paragraph (3)—

(A) is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe; and

(B) shall be part of the reservation of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe.

(3) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in paragraph (2) is the approximately 6,357 acres of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management as generally depicted on the map as ''Reservation Expansion Lands''.

(f) CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO BE HELD IN TRUST FOR THE DUCKWATER SHOSHONE TRIBE.—

(1) MAP.—In this subsection, the term ''map'' means the map entitled ''Duckwater Reservation Expansion'', dated October 15, 2015, and on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

(2) CONVEYANCE OF LAND.—Subject to valid existing rights, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the land described in paragraph (3)—

(A) is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe; and

(B) shall be part of the reservation of the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe.

(3) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in paragraph (2) is the approximately 31,229 acres of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management as generally depicted on the map as ''Reservation Expansion Lands''.

(g) REVOCATION OF PUBLIC LAND ORDERS.—Any public land order that withdraws any portion of land conveyed to an Indian tribe under this section shall be revoked to the extent necessary to permit the conveyance of the land.

SEC. 4. ADMINISTRATION.

(a) SURVEY.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall complete a survey of the boundary lines to establish the boundaries of the land taken into trust for each Indian tribe under section 3.

(b) USE OF TRUST LAND.—

(1) GAMING.—Land taken into trust under section 3 shall not be eligible, or considered to have been taken into trust, for class II gaming or class III gaming (as those terms are defined in section 4 of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2703)).

(2) THINNING; LANDSCAPE RESTORATION.—With respect to the land taken into trust under section 3, the Secretary, in consultation and coordination with the applicable Indian tribe, may carry out any fuel reduction and other landscape restoration activities, including restoration of sage grouse habitat, on the land that is beneficial to the Indian tribe and the Bureau of Land Management.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be agreed to, 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 committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 1436), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

NATIONAL POW/MIA REMEMBRANCE ACT OF 2015

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 1670, which was received from the House.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1670) to direct the Architect of the Capitol to place in the United States Capitol a chair honoring American Prisoners of War/Missing in Action.

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill 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 bill (H.R. 1670) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

HONORING RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY, AS RUTGERS CELEBRATES ITS 250TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 311.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 311) honoring Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, as Rutgers celebrates its 250th anniversary.

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam 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. 311) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of November 9, 2015, under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following Senate resolutions which were submitted earlier today: S. Res. 427, S. Res. 428, S. Res. 429, and S. Res. 430.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table en bloc.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

ORDER FOR INTERVENING DAY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Friday, April 15, count as the intervening day with respect to the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 2028.

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

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2016

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m., Monday, April 18; 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; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 636.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2016, AT 3 P.M.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam 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 6:11 p.m., adjourned until Monday, April 18, 2016, at 3 p.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE 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. LORI J. ROBINSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. JON T. THOMAS

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. STEPHEN M. TWITTY

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. JOHN G. ROSSI

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. ROBERT B. BROWN

IN THE MARINE CORPS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. CHARLES G. CHIAROTTI
BRIG. GEN. DAVID W. COFFMAN
BRIG. GEN. PAUL J. KENNEDY
BRIG. GEN. JOAQUIN F. MALAVET
BRIG. GEN. LORETTA E. REYNOLDS
BRIG. GEN. RUSSELL A. SANBORN
BRIG. GEN. GEORGE W. SMITH, JR.
BRIG. GEN. MARK R. WISE
BRIG. GEN. DANIEL D. YOO

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, 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

VICE ADM. CHARLES W. RAY

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

JONATHAN M. LETSINGER

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 major

LLOYD TRAVIS A. ARNOLD
SALLY A. BAKER
MICHAEL W. BEST
JARED T. BRADLEY
CAMERON C. CARTIER
CHARLES H. CHESNUT III
CURTIS C. COPELAND
JEFFREY D. DELLAVOLPE
DANIEL R. FARBER
BENJAMIN T. FEENEY
GEOFFREY C. GARST
WILLIAM G. GENSHEIMER
JESSICA C. HAYES
PETER C. HSU
JUSTIN J. KOENIG
DANN J. LAUDERMILCH
KAREN J. LEE
THOMAS J. MEREDITH
DANIEL MILMO
REINALDO MORALES
KERRA MURRAY
RACHAEL L. NEMCIC
SOHIL M. PATEL
CRAIG S. POSTER
LAURA K. RANDOLPH
JOSE R. REYES III
ISAMI SAKAI
SANDIPANI M. SANDILYA
JOHN A. SHANER
CHRISTI L. SHERMAN
MATTHEW T. SMITH
STEPHANIE M. STREIT
EMILY L. STURGILL
COREY M. TEAGARDEN
CASEY T. TURNER
DAVID J. VARGAS
HEATHER J. WERTH
BRENT J. WILKERSON
STUART S. WINKLER
MARIA V. ZILINSKI
KEVIN R. ZIMMERMAN
KONSTANTINA ZUBER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

KRISTIE L. PARTIN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

AIMEE D. SAFFORD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

TRACEY A. GOSSER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant colonel

TODD R. HOWELL

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY DENTAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be lieutenant colonel

PHILLIP W. NEAL

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624:

To be colonel

KODJO S. KNOXLIMBACKER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

LORI R. SCHANHALS

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 lieutenant colonel

DREW R. CONOVER

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

BRADLEY D. OSTERMAN

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 lieutenant colonel

FRANCISCO J. LOPEZ

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY NURSE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be major

MONICA J. MILTON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

TIMOTHY D. AIKEN
MATTHEW R. SARACCO
BRENT D. TROUT
JAMES R. WEAKLEY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

GEORGE A. ROLLINS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

MCARTHUR WALKER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12211:

To be colonel

TIMOTHY D. COVINGTON

JOHNSON C. GOURD, JR.
GREGORY P. JOUBERT
ERIC A. KENNEDY

IN THE NAVY

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

DONALD E. SPEIGHTS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

TIMOTHY M. DUNN
DAVID M. FILLIS
MARK L. HENSON
JOSEPH D. KASNY
TIMOTHY P. MCALLISTER
RYAN M. MCCORMICK
KENNETH D. NASH
PEGGYTARA M. STOLYAROVA

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

SUZANNE M. LESKO
CHARLES E. SUMMERS II

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

ANDREW F. ULAK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

KENNETH N. GRAVES
MARK M. MEADE
BILLY B. OSBORNE, JR.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

STEVE R. PARADELA
JOSHUA J. RUSSELL
REESE K. ZOMAR

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

CHARLES M. BROWN
JOHN E. BYINGTON
KEVIN G. CRUMLISH
JOSEPH L. CUBBA
JOHN E. DAVIS
ERIC L. DENIS
THOMAS E. FOUTS
CHRISTOPHER D. ISAKSON
KEVIN A. JANKOWSKI
CRAIG M. LAWLESS
ANNE H. LOCKHART
HEATH L. MARCUS
KATHERINE S. MUELLER
KATHLEEN A. POWELL
DEREK S. REVERON
JAMES E. TOCZKO
EDWARD D. WHISTON
KARL W. WICK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

ROBERT K. BAER
JOHN L. MORRIS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

BRIAN S. ANDERTON
DAVID N. BARNES
THEODORE J. BEATTY
KYLE D. BRADY
JEFFREY A. BUTCHER
JOHN D. CARLSON
JOSEPH A. CARNELL
ARTHUR M. CASTIGLIA
ELLIOTT I. I. CLEMENCE
RUSSELL J. COOLMAN
SUZANNE L. DALTON
CRAIG S. DERANANIAN
DAVID B. DIAMOND
STEPHAN R. DUPOURQUE
MARK J. EARLY
DAVID J. FAEHNLE
KEITH D. FERNANDEZ
TODD C. FINK
MICHAEL G. FRIEBE
THOMAS G. FRIEDER
WILLIAM S. GARRETT III
JOHN A. GREENE
KAREN M. GRIFFITH
ROBERT L. GUERIN
MARK L. HARRISON
DARRYL L. HOWELL
BRADLEY C. JEFFERIES
JEFFREY A. JURGEMEYER
JAMES M. KATIN
CRAIG S. KUJAWA
ALLEN C. KUNKLE
CHRISTOPHER D. MACMILLAN
RICHARD A. MALONEY
JAMES W. MASON
ALBERT A. MATT
MICHAEL S. MATTIS
ERIC D. MCCARTY
RICHARD K. MCHUGH
PATRICIA L. MELSEN
ANTHONY H. MILLER
BRIAN R. MILLER
JAMES R. MILLER
ANTHONY P. NELIPOVICH
SARAH A. NOLIN
CHRISTIAN A. ORTEGO
ROGER J. OUIMET
PETER G. PATTERSON
DINIS L. PIMENTEL
JONATHAN C. PUSKAS
EYRAN E. RICHARDS
TODD H. ROMNEY
CRAIG RUBIN
JOHN D. SACCOMANDO
ANDREW J. SCHREINER
KYLE D. SCHUMAN
MICHAEL E. SHARP
ANTHONY C. SMITH, SR.
BRYON T. SMITH
EDWIN A. SMITH
WILLIAM D. STROMBERG
JOHN F. SWEETER, JR.
BRETT E. TITTLE
OSCAR J. TOLEDO
ROBERT TREMAYNE
MICHAEL R. VANPOOTS
KENNETH E. WAGENHAUSER
DEAN E. WENCE
SAMUEL S. WEST
CARL V. WIGHOLM
JAMES T. WORTHINGTON III

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

CHRISTOPHER J. R. DEMCHAK
BILLY D. FRANKLIN II
LUKE A. FROST
MATTHEW T. HART
DANIEL S. LAYTON
DOUGLAS J. MUNZ
WAYNE D. OETINGER
WILLIAM PILCHER
SEAN M. RICH
ANTHONY F. SCARPINO, JR.
CHAN H. SHIN
JASON E. SMALL
KATE M. STANDIFER
STEVEN R. THOMPSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

JANETTE B. JOSE
GARY S. LEFEBVRE
MICHAEL J. SCHWERIN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

ERIC R. JOHNSON
GLEN J. OLOUGHLIN
JULIET A. PERKINS
ANDREW R. WOOD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

JAREMA M. DIDOSZAK
SHEILA JENKINS
BRANDON J. LARSON
WILLIAM L. ROTH
RICHARD D. SUSSMAN
RICHARD M. SZCEPANSKI

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

CONRADO G. DUNGCA, JR.

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

ALEXANDER L. PEABODY

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

JASON G. GOFF

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 commander

LUIS A. BENCOMO

THE JUDICIARY

BETH M. ANDRUS, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON, VICE ROBERT S. LASNIK, RETIRED.

J. MICHAEL DIAZ, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON, VICE JAMES L. ROBART, RETIRING.

KATHLEEN M. O'SULLIVAN, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON, VICE MARSHA J. PECHMAN, RETIRED.

FOREIGN SERVICE

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR APPOINTMENT AS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS THREE, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

MARIANO J. BEILLARD, OF FLORIDA
ANTHONY J. GILBERT, OF ALASKA
ALICIA ISOM HERNANDEZ, OF CALIFORNIA
JESS K. PAULSON, OF OREGON
CHRISTOPHER D. RIKER, OF MARYLAND
WILLIAM G. VERZANI, OF NEBRASKA

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE FOR APPOINTMENT AS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS THREE, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

NATHAN SEIFERT, OF UTAH
YURI ARTHUR, OF CALIFORNIA
THOMAS HANSON, OF CALIFORNIA
JEFFREY JUSTICE, OF NORTH CAROLINA

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE FOR APPOINTMENT AS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS FOUR, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

RACHEL KREISSL, OF FLORIDA
OLGA FORD, OF VIRGINIA
DEVIN RAMBO, OF NORTH CAROLINA
JOSHUA BURKE, OF ILLINOIS