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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MEADOWS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 13, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK MEADOWS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

HONORING PERRY C. MCGRIFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, February 2, 2017, Gainesville, Florida, and the State of Florida lost a favorite son in Mr. Perry C. McGriff. Perry was an icon in my hometown of Gainesville, Florida, and was known for his strong civic duty in helping people wherever and whenever they needed it.

Perry was born in Arcadia, Florida, in 1937, and went to school at the University of Florida, where he became an all-star standout in both Gators football and baseball. His contributions on the field earned him entry into the prestigious Hall of Fame as a Gators Great in 1969.

Perry was married to his wife, Noel, for 57 years, raised four children—Jana, Mark, Keith, and Matthew—and enjoyed the joy and laugher of their 15 grandchildren.

A tremendous family man, Perry was also successful in business. He was an insurance agent for 48 years. He had the honor of being the youngest person ever elected as mayor of Gainesville, and he was a representative for the State of Florida.

He was a tireless volunteer and doer in Gainesville, receiving countless awards and recognition for his community service. Two of those particularly stick out to me. He received the first ever Ethics in Business Award and the Service Above Self Award, given by the Gainesville Rotary for his lifetime of service. In addition to his time, Perry donated more than 60 gallons of blood and set an example for all to follow.

For all the things Perry was and all the good things Perry did, I will always remember him most for his smile, his great attitude, and his notorious reputation to have his camera at the ready. He was always snapping pictures of people enjoying life and making sure to send to each individual a copy so they could remember the happy moments in the life that he captured.

To Noel and the McGriff family, thank you for sharing Perry's time. Thank you for sharing your husband and father with all of us. We will miss him forever, but we will never forget Perry. All of us, the city of Gainesville, the State of Florida, and I are all better for having known Perry.

STANDING STRONG AGAINST NORTH KOREA

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, North Korea said it had successfully completed the launch of a new ballistic missile. The Pukguksong-2, a medium-range ballistic missile, was test-fired on Sunday. The actions by the North Korean regime are unacceptable and in clear violation of the U.N. Security Council.

It is imperative that the U.S. stand strong with Japan, South Korea, and all of our allies in the region against the provocative and threatening actions of the North Korean totalitarian regime. It is a regime that is determined to thumb their nose at the world by advancing their nuclear capabilities, thus threatening their neighbors, the region, and for that matter, the world.

The United States and its world partners must continue to persuade North Korea to adhere to the U.N. Security Council resolutions or they choose to invite worldwide sanctions upon them. This is North Korea's decision and nobody else's.

CORETTA SCOTT KING LETTER TO SENATE JUDICIARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter and statement by Coretta Scott King from March 19, 1986.

THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CENTER FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE, INC.,
Atlanta, GA, March 19, 1986.

Re Nomination of Jefferson B. Sessions, U.S. Judge, Southern District of Alabama Hearing, March 13, 1986.

Hon. STROM THURMOND,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR THURMOND: I write to express my sincere opposition to the confirmation of Jefferson B. Sessions as a federal district court judge for the Southern District of Alabama. My professional and personal roots in Alabama are deep and lasting. Anyone who has used the power of his office as

☐ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., ☐ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

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United States Attorney to intimidate and chill the free exercise of the ballot by citizens should not be elevated to our courts. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome powers of his office in a shabby attempt to intimidate and frighten elderly black voters. For this reprehensible conduct, he should not be rewarded with a federal judgeship.

I regret that a long-standing commitment prevents me from appearing in person to testify against this nominee. However, I have attached a copy of my statement opposing Mr. Sessions' confirmation and I request that my statement as well as this letter be made a part of the hearing record.

I do sincerely urge you to oppose the confirmation of Mr. Sessions.

Sincerely,

CORETTA SCOTT KING.

STATEMENT OF CORETTA SCOTT KING ON THE NOMINATION OF JEFFERSON BEAUREGARD SESSIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA—SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE, THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 1986

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express my strong opposition to the nomination of Jefferson Sessions for a federal district judgeship for the Southern District of Alabama. My longstanding commitment which I shared with my husband, Martin, to protect and enhance the rights of Black Americans, rights which include equal access to the democratic process, compels me to testify today.

Civil rights leaders, including my husband and Albert Turner, have fought long and hard to achieve free and unfettered access to the ballot box. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens in the district he now seeks to serve as a federal judge. This simply cannot be allowed to happen. Mr. Sessions' conduct as U.S. Attorney, from his politically-motivated voting fraud prosecutions to his indifference toward criminal violations of civil rights laws, indicates that he lacks the temperament, fairness and judgment to be a federal judge.

The Voting Rights Act was, and still is, vitally important to the future of democracy in the United States. I was privileged to join Martin and many others during the Selma to Montgomery march for voting rights in 1965. Martin was particularly impressed by the determination to get the franchise of blacks in Selma and neighboring Perry County. As he wrote, ''Certainly no community in the history of the Negro struggle has responded with the enthusiasm of Selma and her neighboring town of Marion. Where Birmingham depended largely upon students and unemployed adults [to participate in non-violent protest of the denial of the franchise], Selma has involved fully 10 per cent of the Negro population in active demonstrations, and at least half the Negro population of Marion was arrested on one day.'' Martin was referring of course to a group that included the defendants recently prosecuted for assisting elderly and illiterate blacks to exercise that franchise. In fact, Martin anticipated from the depth of their commitment twenty years ago, that a united political organization would remain in Perry County long after the other marchers had left. This organization, the Perry County Civic League, started by Mr. Turner, Mr. Hogue, and others, as Martin predicted, continued ''to direct the drive for votes and other rights.'' In the years since the Voting Rights Act was passed, Black Americans in Marion, Selma and elsewhere have made important strides in their struggle to participate actively in the electoral process. The number of Blacks registered to vote in key Southern states has doubled since 1965. This would not have been possible without the Voting Rights Act.

However, Blacks still fall far short of having equal participation in the electoral process. Particularly in the South, efforts continue to be made to deny Blacks access to the polls, even where Blacks constitute the majority of the voters. It has been a long uphill struggle to keep alive the vital legislation that protects the most fundamental right to vote. A person who has exhibited so much hostility to the enforcement of those laws, and thus, to the exercise of those rights by Black people should not be elevated to the federal bench.

The irony of Mr. Sessions' nomination is that, if confirmed, he will be given life tenure for doing with a federal prosecution what the local sheriffs accomplished twenty years ago with clubs and cattle prods. Twenty years ago, when we marched from Selma to Montgomery, the fear of voting was real, as the broken bones and bloody heads in Selma and Marion bore witness. As my husband wrote at the time, ''it was not just a sick imagination that conjured up the vision of a public official, sworn to uphold the law, who forced an inhuman march upon hundreds of Negro children; who ordered the Rev. James Bevel to be chained to his sickbed; who clubbed a Negro woman registrant, and who callously inflicted repeated brutalities and indignities upon nonviolent Negroes peacefully petitioning for their constitutional right to vote.''

Free exercise of voting rights is so fundamental to American democracy that we can not tolerate any form of infringement of those rights. Of all the groups who have been disenfranchised in our nation's history, none has struggled longer or suffered more in the attempt to win the vote than Black citizens. No group has had access to the ballot box denied so persistently and intently. Over the past century, a broad array of schemes have been used in attempts to block the Black vote. The range of techniques developed with the purpose of repressing black voting rights run the gamut from the straightforward application of brutality against black citizens who tried to vote to such legalized frauds as ''grandfather clause'' exclusions and rigged literacy tests.

The actions taken by Mr. Sessions in regard to the 1984 voting fraud prosecutions represent just one more technique used to intimidate Black voters and thus deny them this most precious franchise. The investigations into the absentee voting process were conducted only in the Black Belt counties where blacks had finally achieved political power in the local government. Whites had been using the absentee process to their advantage for years, without incident. Then, when Blacks, realizing its strength, began to use it with success, criminal investigations were begun.

In these investigations, Mr. Sessions, as U.S. Attorney, exhibited an eagerness to bring to trial and convict three leaders of the Perry County Civic League including Albert Turner despite evidence clearly demonstrating their innocence of any wrongdoing. Furthermore, in initiating the case, Mr. Sessions ignored allegations of similar behavior by whites, choosing instead to chill the exercise of the franchise by blacks by his misguided investigation. In fact, Mr. Sessions sought to punish older black civil rights activists, advisors and colleagues of my husband, who had been key figures in the civil rights movement in the 1960's. These were persons who, realizing the potential of the absentee vote among Blacks, had learned to use the process within the bounds of legality and had taught others to do the same. The only sin they committed was being too successful in gaining votes.

The scope and character of the investigations conducted by Mr. Sessions also warrant grave concern. Witnesses were selectively chosen in accordance with the favorability of their testimony to the government's case. Also, the prosecution illegally withheld from the defense critical statements made by witnesses. Witnesses who did testify were pressured and intimidated into submitting the ''correct'' testimony. Many elderly blacks were visited multiple times by the FBI who then hauled them over 180 miles by bus to a grand jury in Mobile when they could more easily have testified at a grand jury twenty miles away in Selma. These voters, and others, have announced they are now never going to vote again.

I urge you to consider carefully Mr. Sessions' conduct in these matters. Such a review, I believe, raises serious questions about his commitment to the protection of the voting rights of all American citizens and consequently his fair and unbiased judgment regarding this fundamental right. When the circumstances and facts surrounding the indictments of Al Turner, his wife, Evelyn, and Spencer Hogue are analyzed, it becomes clear that the motivation was political, and the result frightening—the wide-scale chill of the exercise of the ballot for blacks, who suffered so much to receive that right in the first place. Therefore, it is my strongly-held view that the appointment of Jefferson Sessions to the federal bench would irreparably damage the work of my husband, Al Turner, and countless others who risked their lives and freedom over the past twenty years to ensure equal participation in our democratic system.

The exercise of the franchise is an essential means by which our citizens ensure that those who are governing will be responsible. My husband called it the number one civil right. The denial of access to the ballot box ultimately results in the denial of other fundamental rights. For, it is only when the poor and disadvantaged are empowered that they are able to participate actively in the solutions to their own problems.

We still have a long way to go before we can say that minorities no longer need be concerned about discrimination at the polls. Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans are grossly underrepresented at every level of government in America. If we are going to make our timeless dream of justice through democracy a reality, we must take every possible step to ensure that the spirit and intent of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution is honored.

The federal courts hold a unique position in our constitutional system, ensuring that minorities and other citizens without political power have a forum in which to vindicate their rights. Because of this unique role, it is essential that the people selected to be federal judges respect the basic tenets of our legal system: respect for individual rights and a commitment to equal justice for all. The integrity of the Courts, and thus the rights they protect, can only be maintained if citizens feel confident that those selected as federal judges will be able to judge with fairness others holding differing views.

I do not believe Jefferson Sessions possesses the requisite judgment, competence, and sensitivity to the rights guaranteed by the federal civil rights laws to qualify for appointment to the federal district court. Based on his record, I believe his confirmation would have a devastating effect on not only the judicial system in Alabama, but also on the progress we have made everywhere toward fulfilling my husband's dream that he envisioned over twenty years ago. I therefore urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to deny his confirmation.

I thank you for allowing me to share my views.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday, Senator ELIZABETH WARREN sought to bring to the attention of the Senate some material about an Attorney General nominee, Senator Jeff Sessions. She was silenced. She persisted. Ultimately, the RECORD of the Senate does not reflect the remarks she was trying to give.

In particular, Senator WARREN was trying to bring to the attention of the Senate a statement and letter of Coretta Scott King from 1986. In 1986, then Jefferson B. Sessions was a U.S. Attorney, a Federal prosecutor who had been appointed for a position as a U.S. district judge.

At that time, Coretta Scott King wrote to the then-chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Strom Thurmond. While the Senate may not entertain these remarks and while the Senate may stifle a United States Senator, this is the people's House and it is appropriate that the RECORD of this House, at least, reflect the comments of Coretta Scott King.

So I would like to use the time remaining to read her cover letter from March 13, 1986, and to read excerpts from the statement she attached to it.

''Dear Senator Thurmond:

''I write to express my sincere opposition to the confirmation of Jefferson B. Sessions as a federal district court judge for the Southern District of Alabama. My professional and personal roots in Alabama are deep and lasting. Anyone who has used the power of his office as United States Attorney to intimidate and chill the free exercise of the ballot by citizens should not be elevated to our courts. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome powers of his office in a shabby attempt to intimidate and frighten elderly black voters. For this reprehensible conduct, he should not be rewarded with a federal judgeship.

''I regret that a long-standing commitment prevents me from appearing in person to testify against this nominee. However, I have attached a copy of my statement opposing Mr. Sessions' confirmation and I request that my statement as well as this letter be made part of the hearing record.

''I do sincerely urge you to oppose the confirmation of Mr. Sessions.''

The statement attached to that letter is fairly long and very convincing, and I will read parts of it here:

''Mr. Sessions has used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens in the district he now seeks to serve as a federal judge. This simply cannot be allowed to happen. Mr. Sessions' conduct as U.S. Attorney, from his politically-motivated voting fraud prosecutions to his indifference toward criminal violations of civil rights laws, indicates that he lacks the temperament, fairness and judgment to be a federal judge.''

''A person who has exhibited so much hostility to the enforcement of those laws, and thus, to the exercise of those rights by Black people should not be elevated to the federal bench.

''The irony of Mr. Sessions' nomination is that, if confirmed, he will be given life tenure for doing with a federal prosecution what the local sheriffs accomplished twenty years ago with clubs and cattle prods.''

''The actions taken by Mr. Sessions in regard to the 1984 voting fraud prosecutions represent just one more technique used to intimidate Black voters and thus deny them this most precious franchise.''

''In these investigations, Mr. Sessions, as U.S. Attorney, exhibited an eagerness to bring to trial and convict three leaders of the Perry County Civic League including Albert Turner despite evidence clearly demonstrating their innocence of any wrongdoing.''

''In fact, Mr. Sessions sought to punish older black civil rights activists, advisors and colleagues of my husband, who had been key figures in the civil rights movement in the 1960's.''

''Therefore, it is my strongly-held view that the appointment of Jefferson Sessions to the federal bench would irreparably damage the work of my husband, Al Turner, and countless others who risked their lives and freedom over the past 20 years to ensure equal participation in our democratic system.''

Clearly, if these criticisms set forth in this statement—the entirety of which will be made part of the House Record—indicate, as they did to the United States Senate in 1986, that Mr. Sessions should not be a district court judge, they also argue that he should not have been confirmed as Attorney General of the United States.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 10 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SMITH of Nebraska) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

We give You thanks, O God, for giving us another day.

During this Black History Month, we are made aware again of the history that has formed our Nation and affects us still. With the craft of mass communication and the skill of good teachers and of artists, You have brought to life again powerful stories of African-American heroes, scholars, artists, and outstanding leaders throughout our Nation's history.

Much of this artistry, delightful spirit, strong determination, and hard work, was inspired by religious faith in You and the promise of the Holy Bible and, in recent decades, for many, the Holy Koran. Their witness to undying hope and peaceful resolution carry the hope of forming a better United States forever.

Lord, we praise and thank You for the African-American communities across this landscape who have shared our past, bless our present, and endow our future with hope, laughter, memorable music, and other contributions to our common good. Bless them, and bless our Nation with peace and reconciliation.

And here, in the people's House, may all that is done be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. POE of Texas 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.

RESIGNATION FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation from the House of Representatives:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
February 10, 2017.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER RYAN: In order to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in President Donald J. Trump's administration, I hereby resign my seat in the United States House of Representatives effective 9:00 AM on February 10th, 2017.

Please see the enclosed letter to the Honorable Nathan Deal, Governor of the State of Georgia.

Yours truly,

THOMAS PRICE, M.D.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
February 10, 2017.

Hon. NATHAN DEAL,
Governor, State of Georgia, Atlanta, GA.

DEAR GOVERNOR DEAL: In order to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in President Donald J.

Trump's administration, I hereby resign effective 9:00AM on February 10th, 2017, from the United States House of Representatives.

The opportunity to serve the citizens of the Sixth District of Georgia has truly been one of the greatest honors of my life. This job and my passion for serving would not have been possible without the support, love, and friendship of family, constituents, community, colleagues, and staff throughout the years. It has been a blessing to work with such talented and bright minds to advance real solutions to some of our nation's toughest issues and challenges.

My first professional calling was not that of an elected official, it was to care for patients—following in the footsteps of both my father and grandfather who were also physicians. The caring relationship a doctor has for their patients is what brought me into public service, and it is that caring approach I wish to continue at the Department of Health and Human Services.

With the remarkable challenges that lay ahead for our great nation, I am enthusiastic for the opportunity to be a part of solving them on behalf of the American people. There is much work to be done to ensure we have a health care system that works for patients, families, and doctors; that leads the world in the cure and prevention of illness; and that is based on sensible rules to protect the well-being of the country while embracing its innovative spirit.

It will be my honor to continue working with you and every other Governor of these great United States to ensure that that our health care system becomes one that is more patient-centered, innovative, responsive and affordable for all Americans. Thanks to you for your service, friendship, and support.

Yours truly,

THOMAS PRICE, M.D.,
Member of Congress.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under clause 5(d) of rule XX, the Chair announces to the House that, in light of the resignation of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE), the whole number of the House is 432.

NO TRAFFICKING IN OUR CITY, OUR STATE, OR OUR COUNTRY

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Houston recently hosted the exciting Super Bowl LI. As Texas welcomed people from across the United States, the message was clear: no trafficking, not in our city, not in our State, not in our country.

As exploiters and buyers roamed the streets looking for prey, Mayor Turner, the Department of Homeland Security, and local law enforcement were prepared to jail traffickers and rescue victims.

Well, Mr. Speaker, 183 sex buyers and nine traffickers were arrested; 76 victims were rescued. The local news showed the faces of the arrested traffickers and buyers across the bottom of Houston television screens. The days of hiding in plain sight are over.

I am proud of all the work by Houston, the NFL, local law enforcement, all worked together to track down traffickers and buyers during the Super Bowl, making the game a huge success.

As the game moves to Minnesota next year, those in the slave trade need to know the law will be ready to capture them.

And that is just the way it is.

PRESIDENT TRUMP'S REPORT CARD

(Mr. SMITH of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, here is President Trump's report card after less than a month in office:

The President wants to stop terrorist attacks by conducting background checks on refugees from countries that are considered security threats.

The President wants to prevent criminal immigrants from being released into our neighborhoods where they continue to prey on innocent Americans.

The President wants to lower the cost of health care and let individuals choose their own insurance plans.

The President wants to reduce our $500 billion trade deficit and export goods and services, not jobs.

The President wants to eliminate unnecessary regulations which are a drag on the economy.

Mr. Speaker, the President's critics oppose all these actions. Only the people are on the President's side.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 13, 2017.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
The Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on February 13, 2017, at 10:11 am.:

That the Senate agreed to without amendment H. Con. Res. 18.

Appointment: National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity.

With best wishes, I am,
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 4:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 6 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1629

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky) at 4 o'clock and 29 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

ABIE ABRAHAM VA CLINIC

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 609) to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, as the ''Abie Abraham VA Clinic''.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 609

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

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Abie Abraham of Lyndora, Pennsylvania, was stationed during World War II with the 18th Infantry in New York; 3 years with the 14th Infantry in Panama; 15th Infantry, unassigned in China, while the U.S.S. Panay was sunk; 30th Infantry, Presidio, San Francisco; and the 31st Infantry, Manila, Philippines, for 9 years.

(2) During World War II, Abraham fought, was captured, endured the Bataan Death March and as a prisoner of war for 3½ years, was beaten, stabbed, shot, survived malaria and starvation to be rescued by the 6th Rangers.

(3) Abraham stayed behind at the request of General Douglas MacArthur for 2½ more years disinterring the bodies of his fallen comrades from the Bataan Death March and the prison camps, helping to identify their bodies and see that they were properly laid to rest.

(4) After his promotion in 1945, Abraham came back to the United States where he served as a recruiter and then also served 2 years in Germany until his retirement with 30 years of service as a Master Sergeant.

(5) Abraham received numerous medals for his service, including the Purple Heart, and had several documentaries on the Discovery Channel and History Channel.

(6) Abraham wrote the books ''Ghost of Bataan Speaks'' in 1971 and ''Oh, God, Where Are You'' in 1977 to help the public better understand what our brave men endured at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army as prisoners of war.

(7) Abraham was a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Purple Heart Combat/Infantry Organization, the American Ex-POWs, the Disabled American Veterans, and the American Defenders of Bataan.

(8) Abraham was a volunteer at Veterans Affairs Butler Healthcare for 23 years from

1988 to 2011 and had 36,851 service hours caring for our veterans.

SEC. 2. ABIE ABRAHAM VA CLINIC.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the ''Abie Abraham VA Clinic''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in any law, regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the health care center referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the ''Abie Abraham VA Clinic''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 609, a bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, the Abie Abraham VA Clinic.

This bill is sponsored by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLY), my good friend. I am grateful to him for introducing this legislation in honor of an American hero.

Master Sergeant Abraham lived a truly remarkable life. As a teenager, he set a world record for tree sitting—a popular pastime in those days—after sitting in a tree for 3½ months, according to his obituary in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

In 1932, at the age of just 19, he enlisted in the United States Navy and, 2 years later, the United States Army. Over the course of a 30-year military career, he served in the Philippines, China, Germany, and Panama. He earned a number of accolades, including the Purple Heart. He survived, Mr. Speaker, the Bataan Death March and 3½ years in captivity, being beaten, shot, and starved.

Following his rescue, instead of returning immediately to the United States, Master Sergeant Abraham agreed to stay behind to recover the remains of his fallen comrades and to ensure they received the recognition they were certainly due.

Following his service, Master Sergeant Abraham devoted his time to caring for his fellow brothers and sisters in arms as a lifelong member of several veterans service organizations and as a volunteer at the VA Butler Healthcare Center, where he spent a total of almost 40,000 hours over the course of 23 years tending to the veteran patients there.

In his spare time, he authored two books, made public appearances at schools and community centers, and participated in documentary films that have aired on the Discovery and History Channels. In addition to all of that, he was also a lightweight boxing champion and trainer.

Master Sergeant Abraham most certainly lived a full and interesting life characterized by both service in and out of uniform. Given that, it is only fitting and appropriate that we honor him by naming the VA healthcare center in Butler County, Pennsylvania, after him. This legislation satisfies all the committee's naming criteria and is supported by the Pennsylvania congressional delegation as well as many VSOs.

Once again, I thank my colleague, Congressman MIKE KELLY, for introducing this bill. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would, first of all, like to thank the chairman for bringing H.R. 609 to the floor, and a very special thank you to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLY) for the honor and privilege to learn about this great American. You heard a little bit of the story, and you will hear more of it from Mr. KELLY. It is sometimes unimaginable that such as Mr. Abraham walked amongst us.

I oftentimes hear that people disparage when Congress does naming bills. If anyone was ever deserving of having a VA center named after them, and the importance of attaching that name and the history for those who come after, this is the gentleman.

You are going to hear more of this, but Mr. Abraham was born in Lyndora, Pennsylvania. The stories just keep coming up. Apparently he was gifted academically and, of course, was a boxer. Again, this is a point of personal privilege on this, he was actually a Regimental Sergeant Major for a time when he was in his service. He served in the Philippines, China, Germany, and Panama. He survived the Bataan Death March. Having been out on Corregidor Island and hearing the stories of the people who survived, unimaginable horrors that they survived, and then imagine after being rescued and being liberated and having a chance to come home, Mr. Abraham chose to make sure that all of his comrades came home.

He was a recipient of the Purple Heart and a lifelong member of the VFW, the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the American Ex-Prisoners of War Organization, the Disabled American Veterans, and the American Defenders of Bataan; but I think the chairman brought up something truly remarkable: giving 40,000 hours of volunteer service to his fellow veterans. This Nation could ask no more of a single person, and Mr. Abraham continued to give.

To the gentleman from Pennsylvania, the State of Pennsylvania is represented well here. They were represented well by Mr. Abraham. It is an honor and a privilege to support this piece of legislation. I encourage my colleagues to not only support this, but to maybe go read the bio of this great American.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLY), my friend and colleague.

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman. I brought with me today a picture of Master Sergeant Abraham. Now, I never knew him when he looked like this. I knew him when he was much older. I have got to tell you that to know Master Sergeant Abraham, you would never have known what he had gone through in his life because all of these folks from that time period just did what they had to do. When you ask them, ''Why did you do it?'' they said, ''It wasn't an option. It wasn't an option. We had to do it.'' There is just certain times in our history that people rise up and they do things that are incredible, ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Just being around Mr. Abraham for a long time—I never called him Abie, by the way. I did not call him Abie. I always called him sergeant or Mr. Abraham—I was just always so impressed with him. It is such an honor and a privilege to be able to stand here in the people's House to talk about a true American hero, somebody who was not just a patriot, but was compassionate, somebody who never stopped serving his country in so many different ways.

When I first read ''The Ghost of Bataan,'' I went back and I talked to Mr. Abraham. I said: You never told me about these things.

He said: Oh, don't worry about that. Those were just things we had to do.

I said: No, but what you did was incredible: to survive the Bataan Death March, to be in a Japanese prison camp for 3½ years, to be stabbed, to be shot, to be beaten, to survive malaria and starvation. Did you ever think of trying to get away?

He said: Yeah, MIKE, I did, but here was the thing: if one of us were to escape, the Japanese soldiers would shoot 10 of the prisoners who were still in the camp; so we didn't want to do that to any of our colleagues. I watched them die. I held them as they died. We tried to get them through the darkest times that we could.

I said: How did you endure?

He said: My faith. My faith.

That is how we all get through the darkest time, on both knees, believing that God is there for us no matter what. But when you read his books and you understand who this man was—and

I think the second book was the one that was incredible. Let me read this because I just thought if there was anything that somebody did out of love, it was Mr. Abraham.

His second book was ''Oh, God, Where Are You?'' I want you to think of this as a prisoner of war who survived the Bataan Death March, who watched his colleagues killed along the way, and if they fell down, they got shot. Toward the end, when they fell down and they couldn't move anymore, they were put into open graves, and they were told to go ahead and cover the graves. He refused to do it. He said: They are still moving.

So we come to today and we think about what it is that we as Americans can do. What is it we can do? What is in our hearts? What is in our memory? What about all those who came before us and what they went through?

Mr. Abraham, as a child, went to school barefoot. His family didn't have money to even buy him shoes, but he had a love for our Nation. He had a love for his fellow man. He had a love for veterans that was just incredible. But imagine the despair of being in that prison camp and not knowing what was going on in the outside war.

I asked him: What did you do? How did you keep people's spirits up?

He said: I made up stories. I would tell them that I just heard there was a rumor going through camp that our armies are close and they are going to rescue us.

Think about that. They were clinging to a made-up story from this man because he knew that is how he could keep their spirits up in the darkest of times. He kind of smiled about it.

I said: That is incredible.

He said: Well, sometimes you have to do things a little different just to get people's spirits up.

I want you to fast forward to who this man was. I watched him walk with a cane as he got into his later years, in his eighties and nineties, going to VA Butler Healthcare Center every single day to help fellow veterans. His sole purpose in life was to help other American citizens, to help other veterans, to bring a little light into their life, to bring a little happiness into their life; 40,000 hours of service in a VA center. He could have spent his time doing other things, but he didn't. He chose to stay with those he loved. He chose to serve those he loved. He chose to continue to serve even in his retirement this Nation that he loved so much.

I can't tell you how much it means to be able to look at that new health center going up and knowing that Mr. Abraham, from his new post, is looking down and is so thankful to a grateful nation that we are taking time to take care of those who have given everything they can to make sure our Nation remains free.

This is an incredible time in our history. This has nothing to do with parties. It has nothing to do with who you vote for. It has to do with who we are, the fact that every single one of us has a role. I would just ask people to please look into Abie Abraham. Go online and see about Mr. Abraham. Go and see what Master Sergeant Abraham did, and say: If I could just be a little bit like Abie Abraham, the world would be a better place. For all those who have died in the service of our country, they will rest easier.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers and I am prepared to close.

I would just like to thank the gentleman again for bringing this to our attention, honoring Master Sergeant Abraham's life. Again, I think there is a little lesson here of how we conduct ourselves reflects on the sacrifice that people like Mr. Abraham gave; and the gentleman has done so honorably and nobly, and I thank him for that. I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 609.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I think this is an amazing story that Mr. KELLY shared before us. I had a history professor in college who survived the Bataan Death March. He spent 3½ years in the same—I wonder if these two men knew each other. He, indeed, too, was a remarkable man. I can think of no better honor in Butler, Pennsylvania, than to honor his memory by naming this medical center. Once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 609.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WORKING TO INTEGRATE NETWORKS GUARANTEEING MEMBER ACCESS NOW ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 512) to title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 512

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Working to Integrate Networks Guaranteeing Member Access Now Act'' or the ''WINGMAN Act''.

SEC. 2. PROVISION OF ACCESS TO CASE-TRACKING INFORMATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 59 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''§ 5906. Access of certain congressional employees to veteran records

''(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) The Secretary shall provide to each veteran who submits a claim for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary an opportunity to permit a covered congressional employee employed in the office of the Member of Congress representing the district where the veteran resides to have access to all of the records of the veteran in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

''(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, upon receipt of the permission from the veteran under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall provide read-only access to such records to such a covered congressional employee in a manner that does not allow such employee to modify the data contained in such records or in any part of a database of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

''(3) A Member of Congress may designate not more than two employees of the Member as covered congressional employees.

''(b) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary may not impose any requirement other than the requirements specified under subsection (e)(1) before treating an employee as a covered congressional employee for purposes of this section.

''(c) NONRECOGNITION.—A covered congressional employee may not be recognized as an agent or attorney under this chapter.

''(d) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—None of the amounts made available to carry out this section may be used to design, develop, or administer any training for purposes of providing training to covered congressional employees.

''(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term 'covered congressional employee' means a permanent, full-time employee of a Member of Congress—

''(A) whose responsibilities include assisting the constituents of the Member with issues regarding departments or agencies of the Federal Government;

''(B) who satisfies the criteria required by the Secretary for recognition as an agent or attorney under this chapter; and

''(C) who is designated by the Member of Congress as a covered congressional employee for purposes of this section.

''(2) The term 'database of the Veterans Benefits Administration' means any database of the Veterans Benefits Administration in which the records of veterans relating to claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary are retained, including information regarding medical records, compensation and pension exams records, rating decisions, statements of the case, supplementary statements of the case, notices of disagreement, Form–9, and any successor form.

''(3) The term 'Member of Congress' means a Representative, a Senator, a Delegate to Congress, or the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''5906. Access of certain congressional employees to veteran records.''.

(c) NO AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section or the amendments made by this section. This section and such amendments may only be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized to be appropriated, of which, during the period of fiscal years 2018 through 2021, not more than $10,000,000 may be obligated or expended for such purpose.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today and urge all Members to support H.R. 512, as amended, the WINGMAN Act.

First, I want to say a special thanks to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS), our colleagues, for introducing the WINGMAN Act. This bill will help Members cut through the red tape and help constituents who have applied for benefits from VA.

Isn't that why we are here, to help our constituents?

The problem is that when a constituent calls one of our offices to ask about the status of a claim for benefits, the only thing we can do is write VA and wait for the VA to respond. I know I get very frustrated, and I am sure my colleagues do as well, with how long it takes for the VA to get back to us. The WINGMAN Act provides a simple solution. The bill allows designated, permanent, full-time congressional staffers to look up the status of a claim on VA's database, but only if the veteran has given the staffer permission. Staffers would have read-only access to VA databases, meaning they wouldn't be able to add or remove any information.

Passing H.R. 512, as amended, would allow Members to help constituents who simply want to understand the status of their claim for benefits. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 512, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1645

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 512, as amended, the WINGMAN Act. I, too, would like to thank the gentleman from Florida for trying to do all they can to speed constituent services to their folks.

This legislation gives certain designated congressional office caseworkers access to veterans' electronic disability claim records at the Veterans Benefits Administration, or VBA. It has broad support in this House, both Democrat and Republican.

This bill would allow designated congressional employees to have read-only access to the Veterans Benefits Administration database to look at veterans' records. Congressional staff would not be able to add or remove anything from a record, but simply check on the status of a veteran's claim and check that evidence and documentation are submitted. The reason this is so important is that a veteran will, at times, wait months, only to be told a piece of document has been missing that could have been added months before. It makes sense. It tracks the system. It ensures that the veteran is getting the fastest, best possible claim adjudication.

The purpose is to provide that faster status and let them know. There are privacy safeguards in the bill, which reinforce the necessity for getting prior consent from the veteran. Also, the bill clearly requires that congressional employees designated for this access must be full-time employees who provide constituent services.

Veterans service organizations have suggested that the VA should put a tracking system in place to ensure that these employees are only assisting constituents from their congressional district, and that congressional staff be held accountable if found to abuse any aspect of this new and unprecedented authority. I support that suggestion.

In my district, county veterans service organizations have also asked to have read-only access to veterans' records so they can assist veterans. I wish to work with Chairman ROE to examine whether that might be something that could be included down the road.

There is broad bipartisan support for giving congressional staff access to veterans' records so they can help veterans navigate a complex claims system. Often it takes too long to find out the status of a veteran's claim from the VA. Allowing certain professional staff to do the checking themselves seems like a simple step in the right direction, and I support it.

Last Congress, similar legislation to H.R. 512 unanimously passed this House. I urge my colleagues to support it today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) control the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act.

I am honored to represent the First District of Michigan, which, as a State, has a higher than average percentage of veterans, and the First District has double the percentage of veterans of the rest of the State. To advocate for these fine men and women who have served so honorably, we have the absolute imperative to make sure that they get the help that they need to cut through the bureaucratic red tape at agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I have been serving in Congress for just over a month now, and, already, my office has been flooded with requests from veterans seeking aid in navigating the benefits claims process.

Unfortunately, the VA is notoriously plagued by a culture of complacency and inefficiency. Even something as simple as checking the status of a veteran's claim means that congressional staff members have to circle back around numerous times with VA employees before being able to provide the veterans in the First District with an accurate update.

As a veteran of the Vietnam war, I know that time is valuable to our veterans. We have to introduce more efficiency and transparency into the benefits claims process.

H.R. 512 is designed to cut out the middle step. The WINGMAN Act provides congressional offices with read-only access to veterans' records within the Veterans Benefits Administration. This commonsense bill allows our veterans quicker access to simple status inquiries, provides greater transparency for congressional offices, and allows the VA employees more time to work on completing these claims.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN), my good friend, a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and a stalwart supporter of this Nation's veterans and those in uniform.

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. WALZ, for allowing me to speak in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act.

I rise today in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act, introduced by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO), my colleague, which would allow veterans to grant designated congressional office staff read-only access to their claim records within the VBA, Veterans Benefits Administration.

Mr. Speaker, there are no Veterans Benefits Administration personnel in the Northern Marianas. The veterans in my district have no one to meet with, but for the very occasional, usually one 6-hour visit to the Marianas from a VBA staff based in Guam or Hawaii. It usually comes once every 6 months if we are lucky.

Staffs' request for information on behalf of veterans sometimes takes months to receive a reply. This bipartisan bill would eliminate the delay by enabling permitted staff to obtain the information directly from VBA databases. This would be especially meaningful to veterans in my district who face additional challenges for disability claims due to the lack of VA presence.

Mr. Speaker, I represent three islands. I work with Social Security and Selective Service, of course, like other Members. For Social Security, we are

allowed to go and take data information, application forms, bring them to the main island of Saipan, where we go in line like everyone else and submit the applications on behalf of those constituents we serve.

So having separate islands and having a post office in one island and no post office in another island is a little complicated and difficult. Can you just imagine for the veteran who needs access to his VBA records or who needs access to his Veterans Health Administration file? Because we only have one in the Northern Marianas. This one really would allow us to serve the veterans who deserve nothing else but the best.

Our veterans responded to our call to serve and defend this country without hesitation. We must, in return, do everything we can to serve them in the same manner.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO), a good friend and a strong advocate for our veterans.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. BILIRAKIS for the work that he has done. And I want to congratulate Chairman ROE for taking over the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

I would also like to thank the committee staff for their diligence and help on this piece of legislation, as well as the co-leads of this bill, Representatives RODNEY DAVIS, KYRSTEN SINEMA, and JOHN DELANEY.

Last Congress, WINGMAN passed the Veterans' Affairs Committee unanimously in the House due to the bipartisan support of the Members of this Chamber. While it was disappointing that we were unable to get it across the finish line in the Senate, I feel confident, given the support this bill has witnessed early on in this year, with 175 Members in the House and 7 Members in the Senate, I am encouraged, and my hope is that we will see it pass the Senate this Congress and be signed into law by the President.

Congressional constituent advocates worked diligently in our district offices to help veterans navigate the VA claims appeals system. But, they are hampered by having to wait weeks, months, and sometimes even years to receive documents from the VA that are often vital to helping the veteran reach a favorable resolution.

WINGMAN will help to expedite the process by cutting out the middleman and providing direct access to the files our office already has permission to obtain. Currently, advocates must have a privacy release form signed by the constituent prior to acting on their behalf. This doesn't change. What changes is the wait time our offices, veterans, and their families must endure while the VA sends us the appropriate documents.

WINGMAN will help veterans such as James, from my district, who had eight separate, but related, claims filed. He didn't know which files were attached to which claims, the dates they were received, which department they were referred to, or that he could have filed one single, fully developed claim. Had my staff had access to the files, which WINGMAN permits, they would have been able to assess the issue and update his claims without having to go on a wild goose chase for the documents with the VA system. Getting his case on track could have happened in a matter of days, rather than years. He is more than deserving of this, especially since some of his claims are over 6 years old.

Another constituent lost her husband while he was serving this Nation. The VA was mailing all correspondence to his widow to an incorrect address. This resulted in an overpayment, which she was unaware of since she was not receiving the mail. The long-term result was a veteran's widow having her account sent to collections, which damaged her credit, and ended with her new spouse's tax return being confiscated. With access to the system files, our office would have had a clearer picture of the timeline of events and been able to direct and streamline our inquiry. Instead, our staff had to hunt down the relevant files from numerous branches within the VA and reassemble them like a jigsaw puzzle.

When I hear the story of Sergeant ABRAHAM or Colonel BERGMAN or Staff Sergeant BRIAN MAST behind me, these people have paid a price for their service to this country, and our country owes them a debt. As a country, we can do better by our veterans and their families. WINGMAN will not get rid of the claims backlog or solve all of the problems. What it will do, however, is make the process helping our veterans easier.

Let's put the words ''customer service'' into our government. So I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD) one of our warriors and a veteran of the war in Iraq, and a staunch advocate for this Nation's veterans.

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I appreciate most about the job that I have to represent Hawaii's Second District is to be able to respond to and provide assistance to the hundreds of veterans from across my State that contact our office every single year. They call to ask for help with things like compensation and pension issues, health care, mileage reimbursement, especially for our veterans who live on the neighboring islands where they don't have a VA clinic on an island, education, home loan benefits, and more. This is a responsibility as a Member of Congress and as a fellow veteran that I take very seriously.

Right now, if a veteran contacts my office for assistance, we are required to go directly through the congressional liaison at the VA. We act as the veterans advocate to try to get answers for them on things that they haven't been able to get answers on, things that they haven't heard back on.

Too often, we are faced with the bureaucratic layers within the VA and a slow turnaround that leave congressional staff, like mine and my colleagues here, jumping through hoops to access basic, but critical, information on behalf of our veterans and their families. At times, we have waited for months to get answers from the VA on behalf of a Hawaii veteran for something that should be a quick turnaround, like a status update. This is unacceptable.

I am proud to cosponsor the WINGMAN Act, legislation introduced by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO), my friend and colleague, which allows us to cut through the red tape and ensure that our certified caseworkers within our offices can provide quicker, more efficient, and effective service to our veterans. It would help streamline the veterans claims process by allowing congressional offices on behalf of our veteran constituents to directly access the status of pending claims, rating decisions, statement of the case, and so on.

I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation so that all of us working here in the people's House can better serve our veterans who have sacrificed so much for our communities and our country.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge support of H.R. 512.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1700

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

Representative YOHO does outstanding work. He traveled to VISN 8 in St. Petersburg, Florida, which is about 3 hours away. We had a discussion about this particular issue. He came up with the suggestion, and he is following through with it. It is a good piece of legislation. Let's get it through the Senate this time.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 512, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: ''A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees, and for other purposes.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HONORING INVESTMENTS IN RECRUITING AND EMPLOYING AMERICAN MILITARY VETERANS ACT OF 2017

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 244) to encourage effective, voluntary private sector investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual presidential awards to private sector employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 244

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Honoring Investments in Recruiting and Employing American Military Veterans Act of 2017'' or the ''HIRE Vets Act''.

SEC. 2. HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD PROGRAM.

(a) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor shall establish, by rule, a HIRE Vets Medallion Program to solicit voluntary information from employers for purposes of recognizing, by means of an award to be designated a ''HIRE Vets Medallion Award'', verified efforts by such employers—

(1) to recruit, employ, and retain veterans; and

(2) to provide community and charitable services supporting the veteran community.

(b) APPLICATION PROCESS.—Beginning in the calendar year following the calendar year in which the Secretary establishes the program, the Secretary shall annually—

(1) solicit and accept voluntary applications from employers in order to consider whether those employers should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award;

(2) review applications received in each calendar year; and

(3) notify such recipients of their awards; and

(4) at a time to coincide with the annual commemoration of Veterans Day—

(A) announce the names of such recipients;

(B) recognize such recipients through publication in the Federal Register; and

(C) issue to each such recipient—

(i) a HIRE Vets Medallion Award of the level determined under section 3; and

(ii) a certificate stating that such employer is entitled to display such HIRE Vets Medallion Award.

(C) TIMING.—

(1) SOLICITATION PERIOD.—The Secretary shall solicit applications not later than January 31st of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(2) END OF ACCEPTANCE PERIOD.—The Secretary shall stop accepting applications not earlier than April 30th of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(3) REVIEW PERIOD.—The Secretary shall finish reviewing applications not later than August 31st of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(4) SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.—The Secretary shall select the employers to receive HIRE Vets Medallion Awards not later than September 30th of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(5) NOTICE TO RECIPIENTS.—The Secretary shall notify employers who will receive HIRE Vets Medallion Awards not later than October 11th of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(d) LIMITATION.—An employer who receives a HIRE Vets Medallion Award for one calendar year is not eligible to receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award for the subsequent calendar year.

SEC. 3. SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.

(a) APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall review all applications received in a calendar year to determine whether an employer should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award, and, if so, of what level.

(2) APPLICATION CONTENTS.—The Secretary shall require that all applications provide information on the programs and other efforts of applicant employers during the calendar year prior to that in which the medallion is to be awarded, including the categories and activities governing the level of award for which the applicant is eligible under subsection (b).

(3) VERIFICATION.—The Secretary shall verify all information provided in the applications, to the extent that such information is relevant in determining whether or not an employer should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award or in determining the appropriate level of HIRE Vets Medallion Award for that employer to receive, including by requiring the chief executive officer or the chief human relations officer of the employer to attest under penalty of perjury that the employer has met the criteria described in subsection (b) for a particular level of Award.

(b) AWARDS.—

(1) LARGE EMPLOYERS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish two levels of HIRE Vets Medallion Awards to be awarded to employers employing 500 or more employees, to be designated the ''Gold HIRE Vets Medallion Award'' and the ''Platinum HIRE Vets Medallion Award''.

(B) GOLD HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD.—No employer shall be eligible to receive a Gold HIRE Vets Medallion Award in a given calendar year unless—

(i) veterans constitute not less than 7 percent of all employees hired by such employer during the prior calendar year;

(ii) such employer has retained not less than 75 percent of the veteran employees hired during the calendar year preceding the preceding calendar year for a period of at least 12 months from the date on which the employees were hired;

(iii) such employer has established an employee veteran organization or resource group to assist new veteran employees with integration, including coaching and mentoring; and

(iv) such employer has established programs to enhance the leadership skills of veteran employees during their employment.

(C) PLATINUM HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD.—No employer shall be eligible to receive a Platinum HIRE Vets Medallion Award in a given calendar year unless—

(i) the employer meets all the requirements for eligibility for a Gold HIRE Vets Medallion Award under subparagraph (B);

(ii) veterans constitute not less than 10 percent of all employees hired by such employer during the prior calendar year;

(iii) such employer has retained not less than 85 percent of the veteran employees hired during the calendar year preceding the preceding calendar year for a period of at least 12 months from the date on which the employees were hired;

(iv) such employer employs dedicated human resources professionals to support hiring and retention of veteran employees, including efforts focused on veteran hiring and training;

(v) such employer provides each of its employees serving on active duty in the United States National Guard or Reserve with compensation sufficient, in combination with the employee's active duty pay, to achieve a combined level of income commensurate with the employee's salary prior to undertaking active duty; and

(vi) such employer has a tuition assistance program to support veteran employees' attendance in postsecondary education during the term of their employment.

(D) EXEMPTION FOR SMALLER EMPLOYERS.—An employer shall be deemed to meet the requirements of subparagraph (C)(iv) if such employer—

(i) employs 5,000 or fewer employees; and

(ii) employs at least one human resources professional whose regular work duties include those described under subparagraph (C)(iv).

(E) ADDITIONAL CRITERIA.—The Secretary may provide, by rule, additional criteria with which to determine qualifications for receipt of each level of HIRE Vets Medallion Award.

(2) SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED EMPLOYERS.—The Secretary shall establish similar awards in order to recognize achievements in supporting veterans by—

(A) employers with 50 or fewer employees; and

(B) employers with more than 50 but fewer than 500 employees.

(c) DESIGN BY SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall establish the shape, form, and design of each HIRE Vets Medallion Award, except that the Award shall be in the form of a certificate and shall state the year for which it was awarded.

SEC. 4. DISPLAY OF AWARD.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The recipient of a HIRE Vets Medallion Award may—

(1) publicly display such Award through the end of the calendar year following receipt of such Award; and

(2) publicly display the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Certificate issued in conjunction with such Award.

(b) UNLAWFUL DISPLAY PROHIBITED.—It is unlawful for any employer to publicly display a HIRE Vets Medallion Award, in connection with, or as a part of, any advertisement, solicitation, business activity, or product—

(1) for the purpose of conveying, or in a manner reasonably calculated to convey, a false impression that the employer received the Award through the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program, if such employer did not receive such Award through the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program; or

(2) for the purpose of conveying, or in a manner reasonably calculated to convey, a false impression that the employer received the Award through the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program for a year for which such employer did not receive such Award.

SEC. 5. APPLICATION FEE AND FUNDING.

(a) FUND ESTABLISHED.—There is established in the Treasury of the United States a fund to be designated the ''HIRE Vets Medallion Award Fund''. Amounts appropriated to the fund pursuant to subsection (c) shall remain available until expended.

(b) FEE AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary may assess a reasonable fee on employers that apply for receipt of a HIRE Vets Medallion Award and the Secretary shall deposit such fees into the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Fund. The Secretary shall establish the amount of the fee such that the amounts collected as fees and deposited into the Fund are sufficient to cover the costs associated with carrying out this Act.

(c) USE OF FUNDS.—Amounts in the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Fund shall be available, subject to appropriation, to the Secretary to carry out the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program.

SEC. 6. INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION.

The HIRE Vets Medallion Program shall begin to solicit applications on January 31 of the year that is two fiscal years after the fiscal year during which funds are first appropriated to carry out this Act.

SEC. 7. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

(a) REPORTS.—Beginning not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress annual reports on—

(1) the fees collected from applicants for HIRE Vets Medallion Awards in the prior year and any changes in fees to be proposed in the present year;

(2) the cost of administering the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program in the prior year;

(3) the number of applications for HIRE Vets Medallion Awards received in the prior year; and

(4) the HIRE Vets Medallion Awards awarded in the prior year, including the name of each employer to whom a HIRE Vets Medallion Award was awarded and the level of medallion awarded to each such employer.

(b) COMMITTEES.—The Secretary shall provide the reports required under subsection (a) to the Chairman and Ranking Member of—

(1) the Committees on Education and the Workforce and Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committees on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and Veterans' Affairs of the Senate.

SEC. 8. Definitions.

In this Act:

(a) The term ''employer'' means any person, institution, organization, or other entity that pays salary or wages for work performed or that has control over employee opportunities, except that such term does not include—

(1) the Federal Government; or

(2) any State government, as defined in such section.

(b) The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Labor.

(c) The term ''veteran'' has the meaning given such term under section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous materials.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 244, as amended, would require the Department of Labor to establish a HIRE Vets Medallion Program to recognize and award employers with a HIRE Vets Medallion for their efforts to recruit, employ, and retain veterans, as well as their work to provide community and charitable services to veterans and their local communities.

While we still have work to do, it is important to note that the veteran unemployment rate has continued to decrease over recent years and, as of last month, was at the low rate of 4.5 percent. Again, we have more work to do. While many factors have led to the continued reduction of the unemployment rate for the men and women who have served, our Nation's employers in both the public and private sectors deserve a lot of credit, and it is important that we highlight the work that these companies have done and that we publicly recognize their commitment to hiring our veterans—hiring our true American heroes. I commend them so much.

With this idea in mind, H.R. 244, as amended, would authorize the Secretary of Labor to create the HIRE Vets Medallion Program, which would recognize employers who hire and retain veterans as well as companies that provide support services to the veterans and their communities.

Employers would earn either platinum or gold status based on requirements that are related to the number of veterans hired each year, providing pay equity for guardsmen and Reserve employees who were called up to active military service and other requirements. Once these employers have earned HIRE Vets Medallions, they would be able to publicly display their awards to illustrate the work they have done on behalf of our veterans and the priorities they place on hiring veterans within their workforces.

As we work to continue to decrease the national unemployment rate among our men and women who have served, it is vital that we highlight and thank the employers who have stepped up and have recognized the benefits of hiring a veteran, and there are many benefits as their work ethic is outstanding—their dedication, their integrity. They are really outstanding people, and I am glad that our employers have stepped up.

I thank the staff of the Department of Labor and the Trump administration for working with us to make improvements to the legislation from what was passed last year.

I also thank Colonel PAUL COOK of California for introducing and advocating for this bill, which, again, has my full support.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 244, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 244, as amended, the HIRE Vets Act.

I give a special thank-you to my colleague from California, Colonel COOK, who, himself, is a Vietnam veteran. Since the first day he got into Congress, he has been our veterans' stanchest supporter, and I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, this is an innovative, bipartisan piece of legislation. The HIRE Vets Act directs the Department of Labor, or DOL VETS, to establish a HIRE Vets Medallion Program. This program solicits voluntary information from private sector employers, which we know they want to give—and we know they are out there hiring folks—and allows these employers to display, with other marketing materials, a recognized medallion as a symbol of their support and willingness to make sure we hire veterans. Employers who provide community and charitable services that support veterans will also be eligible.

Hiring veterans isn't just the right thing to do because it is morally and ethically right; it makes good business sense, and our folks know that.

The men and women who have served in our military have received invaluable training and experience that has proven to help them thrive in post-military employment. What they need is a foot in the door. Fortunately, we have been seeing encouraging trends in veterans' employment. Thanks to the hard work of DOL VETS, combined with efforts within the private sector and Federal and State governments, the veterans' unemployment rate in January of 2017 was 4.5 percent, which is lower than the national average. We also know that the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans remains unacceptably high at 8 percent.

We must remain vigilant to make sure that the men and women who signed up to defend our Nation enjoy opportunities for growth when they return home. The HIRE Vets Medallion Program represents an additional incentive for employers to hire and retain veterans, which is something we can all get behind.

Again, I thank Colonel COOK for offering this bipartisan legislation. Thank you to the vice chairman for bringing this up and throwing his support behind it. I am certainly proud to stand in support of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. COOK), a good friend and a great veterans' advocate. I thank him for his service.

Mr. COOK. I thank Mr. BILIRAKIS for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as a combat veteran, I am deeply concerned that the men and women of our Armed Forces continue to struggle to find jobs upon their return to civilian life. These individuals have not only displayed great courage in serving their country, but have acquired certain skills that make them ideal candidates for employment.

I am not going to go over many of the things that were said about how the program is an incentive, as I think that has already been covered. I just want to underscore the fact that this is a problem. It is not a new problem. You can have the statistics, but one has to ask oneself: Why do we have a lower percentage of veterans who are getting the jobs?

As was already mentioned, I am a product of the Vietnam war; and the veterans who were getting out there, a lot of people were afraid to hire them. They didn't know whether they would be recalled back into the service, and they didn't know whether they had post-traumatic stress disorder. They were not going to take a chance on them, and that was sad. That was many, many years ago, but the stats don't lie.

I am very, very supportive. I get passionate about these programs because the bottom line is we have to make sure that we take care of the troops, and this is a bill that, with the cooperation of private industry, has those incentives built in there. I am optimistic. We had bipartisan support the last time. We went all the way up there and were waiting the last time for the Senate—holding our breath. Everybody knows you don't always get what you want. I am not going to give up and neither will the people who have been supporting this bill because we are all very, very passionate about veterans.

I thank Chairman ROE. I thank Ranking Member WALZ for his great support and military service. I thank Representative TULSI GABBARD for, once again, being the original cosponsor of this important legislation and for always being there for the veterans and the military. I also thank Congressman BILIRAKIS for his great support.

Once again, this passed out of the House last November and had unanimous support. I urge my colleagues to once again vote in favor of this bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD), who still serves this Nation in uniform.

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of H.R. 244, the HIRE Vets Act, which I am so proud and honored to have worked on with my colleague and fellow veteran, Colonel PAUL COOK from California.

This is personal for us. This is about our brothers and sisters in uniform—from different generations—who have been honored and thanked for their service in uniform but who, unfortunately, are often forgotten about when they lay that uniform down. Most people aren't aware that every single day roughly 500 veterans are transitioning from military life to civilian life, joining more than 2.9 million veterans who have returned home since 9/11 alone. Through their service and training, these are men and women who are highly trained, who have experience in leading, in making decisions under pressure, in acting and working well as members of a team, and in accomplishing the mission.

Data show that veterans are civic assets in our communities. They have higher rates of voting, of engaging with local governments and community organizations, of participating actively in community service, and more. Together, these qualities make our veterans especially valuable to employers, whether it be in the private sector, in the public sector, or in the nonprofit sector.

Unfortunately, for them, returning to a civilian job market is not as easy as it should be. They often face an unfriendly job market or even an unfriendly culture that doesn't fully understand them and what they bring to the table. Many people don't understand that our veterans are not seeking pity or a handout but are simply looking for an opportunity to continue to serve—to continue to contribute to our communities and to our country.

This legislation is focused on encouraging employers to hire more veterans. We have seen different programs and initiatives in my home State of Hawaii and in States across the country that focus on recruiting and retaining veterans, but the fact is that there are still more than 400,000 unemployed veterans across the country. We need to do more.

This legislation, the HIRE Vets Act, gets directly at this need by setting up an incentive system to encourage employers to hire and retain veterans. It creates a standard of recognition for employers who go the extra mile to recruit and retain veterans and provide services that support our veteran community.

We came together at the end of last year and passed this legislation unanimously. I am hopeful that my colleagues will once again stand and pass this important legislation and move it along through the Senate and to the President's desk for his signature.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 244, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 244, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

BOOSTING RATES OF AMERICAN VETERAN EMPLOYMENT ACT

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 974) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, to give a preference to offerors that employ veterans.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 974

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act'' or the ''BRAVE Act''.

SEC. 2. PREFERENCE FOR OFFERORS EMPLOYING VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding after section 8128 the following new section:

''§ 8129. Preference for offerors employing veterans

''(a) PREFERENCE.—In awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, the Secretary may give a preference to offerors that employ veterans on a full-time basis. The Secretary shall determine such preference based on the percentage of the full-time employees of the offeror who are veterans.

''(b) ENFORCEMENT PENALTIES FOR MISREPRESENTATION.—(1) Any offeror that is determined by the Secretary to have willfully and intentionally misrepresented the veteran status of the employees of the offeror for purposes of subsection (a) may be debarred from contracting with the Department for a period of not less than five years.

''(2) If the Secretary carries out a debarment under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall commence debarment action against the offeror by not later than 30 days after determining that the offeror willfully and intentionally misrepresented the veteran status of the employees of the offeror as described in paragraph (1) and shall complete debarment actions against such offeror by not later than 90 days after such determination.

''(3) The debarment of an offeror under paragraph (1) includes the debarment of all principals in the offeror for a period of not less than five years.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 8128 the following new item:

''8129. Preference for offerors employing veterans.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

□ 1715

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, to improve employment opportunities for veterans and business opportunities for the companies that employ them, H.R. 974 would authorize the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to consider how many veterans an offeror employs during a

decision to award a contract. Under this bill, the Secretary may give a preference to such employers based on the percentage of the workforce made up of veterans. It makes sense.

The bill would also allow the Secretary to debar any offeror who willfully and intentionally misrepresents the number of veterans they employ. I am glad that provision is in there.

Mr. Speaker, the unemployment rate among certain age groups of veterans still exceeds their nonveteran peers, and this legislation is one commonsense step to incentivize employers to bring veterans into their workforce and increase job opportunities for veterans of all ages.

I firmly believe that we should do all we can to encourage both small and large businesses to provide job opportunities for veterans as well as provide the Secretary the authority to consider such hires when making contracting decisions. This will further incentivize government contractors to make a positive investment in their companies by making investments in our Nation's veterans.

I thank Miss RICE for her hard work on this bill, and it has my full support.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 974.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise in support of H.R. 947, the Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act, or BRAVE Act.

I thank the vice chairman for his kind words on this bill, and I especially would like to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Miss RICE), an unwavering advocate of our veterans and author of this smart piece of legislation.

Both parties agree it is unacceptable that men and women returning home from our most recent conflicts don't have good, reliable jobs waiting for them. We can start right here in the Federal Government. The VA establishes long-term contracts with private companies for medical equipment, construction, supplies, services, and more.

Currently, the VA gives preferences to veteran-owned small businesses. That is great. What this piece of legislation does is expand this contracting preference to allow the VA Secretary to give a preference to companies that actively search out and employ veterans, a policy that would incentivize companies to even hire more veterans. This is already a smart approach for those companies because veterans bring to a job the skills they have learned over the years and make the company even stronger.

This bipartisan piece of legislation adds no cost to the taxpayers. It allows for debarment of any company that knowingly misrepresents its portion of veteran employees in order to receive the contracting preference.

The BRAVE Act represents a win-win for the private sector, the Federal Government, and, most importantly, for our veterans.

Again, I would like to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Miss RICE), who will tell us a little more about this in a few moments, and Chairman ROE of Tennessee and Vice Chairman BILIRAKIS for continuing to bring good pieces of veterans legislation to the floor. We are grateful for that.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Miss RICE), the author, the lead sponsor of this piece of legislation, a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee since coming to Congress, and a fierce advocate for those warriors.

Miss RICE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 974, the Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act, which I introduced along with Congressman and Colonel PAUL COOK of California.

The BRAVE Act is commonsense, bipartisan legislation that will authorize the VA Secretary, when awarding Federal contracts, to give preference to contractors with high concentrations of full-time veteran employees. This bill will cost taxpayers absolutely nothing.

It will, first, reward companies that actively hire and invest in our veterans, companies that seek out veterans and give them opportunities to bring their unique skills, training, and experience to the civilian workforce.

Second, it will create an incentive for other companies to do the same and bring more veterans into their workforce.

Most importantly, as more and more companies hire more and more veterans, they will ultimately see that investing in veterans is good for business. That is the real incentive here. It is not just an advantage in securing Federal contracts; it is getting the benefit of employees who have worn the uniform, who have been trained by the greatest military in the world, and who have learned to get the job done, no matter what that job is.

We need more businesses in the private sector to recognize the value of investing in the men and women who have served our country. It is not an act of charity. Veterans are not looking for a handout; they just need an opportunity. The BRAVE Act will help ensure that more veterans have those opportunities.

I want to thank Chairman ROE of Tennessee, Vice Chairman BILIRAKIS, and Ranking Member WALZ for supporting this bill and for helping to bring it to the floor today.

This legislation passed unanimously in the last Congress, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to, once again, give it the bipartisan support it deserves.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers on my side.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 974.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation. I commend Representative RICE for her good work.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 974.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO UNITED STATES-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to section 1238(b)(3) of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2001 (22 U.S.C. 7002), as amended, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individuals on the part of the House to the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission for a term expiring on December 31, 2018:

Mr. Larry Wortzel, Williamsburg, Virginia

Mr. Robert Glenn Hubbard, New York, New York

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO THE CREATING OPTIONS FOR VETERANS' EXPEDITED RECOVERY COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to section 931(c) of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (Pub. L. 114–198), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Creating Options for Veterans' Expedited Recovery Commission:

Captain John M. Rose, U.S. Navy, Retired, Kenosha, Wisconsin

Lieutenant Colonel Jamil S. Khan, U.S. Marine Corps, Retired, Janesville, Wisconsin

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to section 553(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Pub. L. 114–328), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individual

on the part of the House to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service:

Mr. Thomas Kilgannon, Centreville, Virginia

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO THE MEDAL OF VALOR REVIEW BOARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to section 3(b) of the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act of 2001 (42 U.S.C. 15202), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Medal of Valor Review Board for a term of 4 years:

Mr. Brandon Clabes, Choctaw, Oklahoma

Mr. Brian Murphy, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 2103(b), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individual to the Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress on the part of the House for a term of 6 years:

Ms. Patricia A. Atkinson, Carson City, Nevada

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WOODALL) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 66, DISAPPROVING RULE SUBMITTED BY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATING TO SAVINGS ARRANGEMENTS BY STATES FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES, AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 67, DISAPPROVING RULE SUBMITTED BY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATING TO SAVINGS ARRANGEMENTS BY QUALIFIED STATE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES

Mr. BYRNE, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 115–11) on the resolution (H. Res. 116) providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by States for non-governmental employees, and providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 67) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 244, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 974, by the yeas and nays.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. The second electronic vote will be conducted as a 5-minute vote.

HONORING INVESTMENTS IN RECRUITING AND EMPLOYING AMERICAN MILITARY VETERANS ACT OF 2017

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 244) to encourage effective, voluntary private sector investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual presidential awards to private sector employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes, as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 409, nays 1, not voting 21, as follows:

[Roll No. 86]

YEAS—409

Abraham
Adams
Aderholt
Aguilar
Allen
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barletta
Barr
Barragán
Barton
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Bergman
Beyer
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Blumenauer
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Bost
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brat
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Brown (MD)
Brownley (CA)
Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Capuano
Carbajal
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Cheney
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Correa
Costa
Costello (PA)
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crist
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Curbelo (FL)
Davidson
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DeSaulnier
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Donovan
Doyle, Michael F.
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Dunn
Emmer
Engel
Eshoo
Espaillat
Esty
Evans
Farenthold
Ferguson
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gabbard
Gaetz
Gallagher
Garrett
Gibbs
Gohmert
Gonzalez (TX)
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gottheimer
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Griffith
Grijalva
Grothman
Guthrie
Hanabusa
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings
Heck
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins (LA)
Higgins (NY)
Hill
Himes
Holding
Hollingsworth
Hoyer
Hudson
Huffman
Huizenga
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd
Issa
Jackson Lee
Jayapal
Jeffries
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Kaptur
Katko
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Khanna
Kihuen
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger
Knight
Krishnamoorthi
Kuster (NH)
Kustoff (TN)
Labrador
LaHood
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latta
Lawrence
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (MN)
Lieu, Ted
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham, M.
Luján, Ben Ray
Lynch
MacArthur
Maloney, Carolyn B.
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Marshall
Massie
Mast
Matsui
McCarthy
McClintock
McCollum
McEachin
McGovern
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Messer
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Mullin
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Newhouse
Noem
Nolan
Norcross
Nunes
O'Halleran
O'Rourke
Olson
Palazzo
Pallone
Palmer
Panetta
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters
Peterson
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Polis
Posey
Price (NC)
Quigley
Raskin
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (NY)
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney, Francis
Rooney, Thomas J.
Ros-Lehtinen
Rosen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Roybal-Allard
Royce (CA)
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Russell
Rutherford
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)

Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Smucker
Soto
Speier
Stefanik
Stewart
Stivers
Suozzi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Taylor
Tenney
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Trott
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Watson Coleman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westerman
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Zeldin

NAYS—1

Amash

NOT VOTING—21

Boyle, Brendan F.
Buchanan
Delaney
Ellison
Faso
Gallego
Garamendi
Gutiérrez
Jenkins (KS)
LaMalfa
McCaul
Meeks
Moore
Moulton
Mulvaney
Pingree
Pittenger
Rush
Waters, Maxine
Welch
Zinke

□ 1854

Mrs. DEMINGS, Mr. BUCK, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, and Mr. HUFFMAN changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: ''A bill to encourage effective, voluntary investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual Federal awards to employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

THANKING JOYCE MEYER

(Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, all of us have people in our lives, in these vocations, without whom none of this would be possible. Today, I want to say good luck and good-bye to one of those people.

Joyce Meyer, whom many of you know on my staff, is heading to the White House after being with me in this office for 18 years—and, yes, there are some gray hairs here. She and I go back even further than that.

Joyce and I started off as staffers together in the United States Senate. In many ways, we grew up together. We were just kids then, fresh out of college. She went by Joyce Yamat in those days. She was a good friend, but she was an equally good staffer, which is why she was, at that time, one of the first people I asked to come work with me when I, at 28 years old, got elected to the House of Representatives.

She has been at the heart of our team ever since—through every up and down, every adventure, every budget, every run for office. So much of what we have accomplished has been because of her—because of her leadership, because of her planning, because of her caring nature, because of her deep understanding of how this place works. She really is a person of the House.

Above all, she never, ever forgot and never let me forget whom I was working for: the people of the First District of Wisconsin. She is from Wisconsin. She is from Franklin, Wisconsin, which is a small town in southern Wisconsin, near Milwaukee. She is a Badger. Wisconsin is so much at the heart of who she is. She knows when the deer rut is. She knows that, on Sundays, there are only two things you do: Mass and Packers games in the fall. For all of her years here, she never forgot where she came from.

The truth is we have been through it all together. In fact, she has not just been a confidant or a friend—she is family. I often refer to her as my sister; and, to Joyce, family is at the center of everything. She treated all of our staff like family. She hosted wedding showers and baby showers. She made sure that everyone on our team put their own loved ones first. It is her own family that, through all of these years, has really been her source of inspiration: her parents; her sisters; her husband, Don, who, himself, was part of our team; and, of course, their beautiful and sweet daughter, Eva.

I know it is for a better life for Eva and her generation that Joyce has made serving government her life's work. She could have gone on and done something so much more rewarding to the pocketbook, but she is doing this because she believes in our country.

I will cut this short because, for anyone who knows Joyce, she does not like attention; she does not like the fuss. She is here to serve. She is the best of what we aspire to in public service. This woman has done so much to make us successful, has done so much to make me successful. I just want to thank, from the bottom of my heart, a person who has done so much to make this House successful, and she is Joyce Meyer.

Joyce, I wish you and your family the best of luck. Thank you for serving us so much. Joyce, you are always going to be considered a person of the House of Representatives. Thank you so much, Joyce.

And there is her mom.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Speaker RYAN for yielding. He admonished us to be brief. So, Joyce, I will be brief.

Often I rise on this floor when we have extraordinary staffers retire on either side of the aisle, Republican or Democrat, and observe what an extraordinary difference they make to the comity that does, in fact, exist but is rarely seen by the public.

Joyce Meyer has been an extraordinary member of our family. Speaker RYAN says family is important to her. Family is important to all of us, and this is a family. It is sometimes a contentious family, but it is a family.

Frankly, the peacemakers in the family are largely the members of the staff, particularly the highest ranking staffers, and particularly those staffers who have been with each of us and many of us for a significant period of time. They understand the tensions that can be created, but they also understand that there is a responsibility to the American people. Every time I went across the aisle and talked to Joyce Meyer, I knew that she understood that and that she wanted to be a positive force in making this institution work better.

Let me say that Joyce Meyer now has an even bigger responsibility because she is going to the White House. May we all wish her the best in making that institution work better.

Joyce, God bless you and Godspeed.

BOOSTING RATES OF AMERICAN VETERAN EMPLOYMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, 5-minute voting will continue.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 974) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, to give a preference to offerors that employ veterans, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 407, nays 0, not voting 24, as follows:

[Roll No. 87]

YEAS—407

Abraham
Adams
Aderholt
Aguilar
Allen
Amash
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barletta
Barr
Barragán
Barton
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Bergman
Beyer
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Blumenauer
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Bost
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brat
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Brown (MD)
Brownley (CA)
Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Capuano
Carbajal
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Cheney
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Correa
Costa
Costello (PA)
Courtney
Cramer

Crawford
Crist
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Curbelo (FL)
Davidson
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DeSaulnier
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Donovan
Doyle, Michael F.
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Dunn
Emmer
Engel
Eshoo
Espaillat
Esty
Evans
Farenthold
Ferguson
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gabbard
Gaetz
Gallagher
Garrett
Gibbs
Gohmert
Gonzalez (TX)
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gottheimer
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Griffith
Grijalva
Grothman
Guthrie
Hanabusa
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings
Heck
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins (LA)
Higgins (NY)
Hill
Himes
Holding
Hollingsworth
Hoyer
Hudson
Huffman
Huizenga
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd
Issa
Jackson Lee
Jayapal
Jeffries
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Kaptur
Katko
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Khanna
Kihuen
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger
Knight
Krishnamoorthi
Kuster (NH)
Kustoff (TN)
Labrador
LaHood
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latta
Lawrence
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (MN)
Lieu, Ted
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham, M.
Luján, Ben Ray
Lynch
MacArthur
Maloney, Carolyn B.
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Marshall
Massie
Mast
Matsui
McCarthy
McClintock
McCollum
McEachin
McGovern
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Mullin
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Newhouse
Noem
Nolan
Norcross
Nunes
O'Halleran
O'Rourke
Olson
Palazzo
Pallone
Palmer
Panetta
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters
Peterson
Pittenger
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Polis
Posey
Price (NC)
Quigley
Raskin
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (NY)
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney, Francis
Rooney, Thomas J.
Ros-Lehtinen
Rosen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Roybal-Allard
Royce (CA)
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Russell
Rutherford
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Smucker
Soto
Speier
Stefanik
Stewart
Stivers
Suozzi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Taylor
Tenney
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Trott
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Watson Coleman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westerman
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Zeldin

NOT VOTING—24

Boyle, Brendan F.
Buchanan
Delaney
Duncan (TN)
Ellison
Faso
Gallego
Garamendi
Gutiérrez
Jenkins (KS)
LaMalfa
McCaul
Meeks
Messer
Moore
Moulton
Mulvaney
Pingree
Ratcliffe
Rush
Shuster
Waters, Maxine
Welch
Zinke

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining.

□ 1911

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. FASO. Mr. Speaker, my apologies for not being able to be present for today's recorded votes. My flight from ALB to DCA was cancelled due to a winter storm, and I could make no other flight that would have gotten me to Washington in time. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea on rollcall No. 86, and "yea" on rollcall No. 87.

HONORING ISRAEL BONDS

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am so honored that the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) is here to listen to this important 1 minute, as he always does.

Israel Bonds recently hosted its annual award ceremony at the Fontainebleau Hotel located in Miami Beach, in my congressional district.

For over 30 years, Mr. Speaker, Israel Bonds has honored members of the Jewish community from all over the country who have made an incredible impact on the U.S.-Israel relationship and who have helped make Israel's economy one of the world's strongest.

I have had the privilege of working with Israel Bonds over the years and the many individuals who helped make its mission such a success.

One of those individuals, who I know is a friend of the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), Alex Halberstein, was honored with the Israel69 Award for his commitment to strengthening the economy of the democratic Jewish State of Israel.

Mr. Speaker, Alex is the chairman of Israel Bonds for south Florida. Alex and his wife, Monique, are deserving of such a high honor. I congratulate them both for such a tremendous achievement.

□ 1915

DRAINING THE SWAMP

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, President Trump said he was going to drain the swamp.

Really?

His actions speak louder than words. Check the facts. Wall Street's gold diggers are in charge of the swamp already.

The President's senior strategist, Steve Bannon, spent half a decade working at Goldman Sachs. Trump's National Economic Council Director, Gary Cohn, spent 25 years more there. He rose to be Goldman Sachs' president. Trump's Senior Counsel for Economic Initiatives, Dina Powell, was a partner since 2010 at Goldman Sachs.

Steve Mnuchin, up for a vote tonight for Treasury Secretary, spent 17 years at Goldman. Dubbed the ''Foreclosure King,'' Mnuchin was the fast-buck artist who maneuvered OneWest out of IndyMac's collapse with shady tactics that kicked hundreds of thousands of families out of their homes in Ohio and beyond. Mnuchin is the ultimate swamp dweller. His father worked at Goldman, his brother still works there, and they all return for alumni engagements.

Come now. While millions of Americans lost their homes, with millions more underwater today, Goldman increased its profits. It is obvious, Wall Street's trolls have squiggled their way through the White House transom even before the First Lady has remodeled the living quarters.

When Wall Street rigs our economy again, does anyone seriously expect President Trump to drain the swamp?

He is fast in it with them.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, February is Career and Technical Education Month.

As co-chairman of the Career and Technical Education Caucus, and as a senior member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, I have long been aware of the importance of CTE programs that provide learners of all ages with career-ready skills.

From agriculture to the arts, from marketing to manufacturing, CTE programs work to develop America's most valuable resource—its people.

CTE is taught in a range of settings, from high schools and area technical centers, to technical and 2-year community colleges. In total, 12.5 million

high school and college students are enrolled in CTE programs across the Nation.

Last Congress, I was proud to introduce the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act. This bill, which passed the House by a vote of 405–5, aimed to close the skills gap by modernizing the Federal investment in CTE programs and connecting educators with industry stakeholders.

I look forward to reintroducing similar legislation this Congress and I remain committed to working with the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN), my CTE Caucus co-chair and good friend, to improve our Nation's career and technical education system.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to join the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON), my friend and co-chair of the Career and Technical Education Caucus, to recognize February as Career and Technical Education Month.

In Rhode Island and across the country right now, employers are struggling to find workers with the skills that they need to fill jobs in STEM, in manufacturing, in IT, and so many other skilled trades. Hundreds of thousands of high-skilled, high-paying jobs are open right now, going unfilled, and this number is growing.

To close the skills gap, we must better align education and industry to make sure that what we are teaching in classrooms is better meeting the needs of real-world companies right now. We must increase work-based learning and build education pathways to help students become career and college-ready.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support investment in CTE in the 115th Congress, including by reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act to adapt our workforce to the 21st century economy.

Mr. Speaker, this act passed with strong, bipartisan support in the last Congress, and I hope we can quickly bring it up again to pass it with strong bipartisan support in this Congress as well.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for his leadership.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF NICK LITTLEFIELD

(Mr. KENNEDY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening with a heavy heart to honor the memory of Nick Littlefield, a dear friend and dedicated public servant who passed away last week.

Few in our country could match Nick's career. From the stages of Broadway to classrooms at Harvard Law School, to courtrooms in New York City, and eventually to the Halls of this Capitol as an aide to my late uncle, Senator Ted Kennedy, Nick did it all.

Always guided by the simple principle that our laws should help protect our citizens, his fingerprints can be found on landmark legislation such as the Children's Health Insurance Program, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, and the 1996 minimum wage increase.

Every day that he arrived at his Senate office, he brought a contagious enthusiasm for his work and extraordinary empathy for the people he served. Even while battling the multiple system atrophy that ultimately cost him his life, he considered himself ''not entirely unlucky'' to have this disease because it allowed him to ''truly sympathize'' with those who had disabilities.

Nothing was ever more important to him than his family. In this difficult time, my thoughts and prayers are with Nick's incredible wife, Jenny, as well as his stepchildren Frank, Tom, and Kate.

NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACH RECOGNITION WEEK

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join my colleague, Congressman MARKWAYNE MULLIN today in introducing a resolution designating the week of February 13 as National Health and Wellness Coach Recognition Week.

Lifestyle-related chronic diseases are causing a health crisis in this country. Chronic diseases are the leading cause of preventable deaths and disabilities, and they cost the U.S. economy more than $1 trillion per year.

This crisis is so severe that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has deemed chronic disease to be ''the public health challenge of the 21st century.''

We can reduce lifestyle-related chronic disease and end this crisis, but that means improving and sustaining health-related behaviors. That is where the health coaches come in. They step in to fill the gap between healthcare provider recommendations and sustainable lifestyle changes. By helping to improve individual health and wellness, health coaches get to the root of this Nation's health crisis.

I want to give my deepest thanks to the health and wellness coaches who are making the people of this Nation healthier. We should all support them in their efforts.

HONORING THE RICHMOND FREE PRESS

(Mr. MCEACHIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCEACHIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Richmond Free Press, an independent, Black-owned weekly newspaper that recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.

The newspaper was founded by Raymond H. Boone, a former Howard University associate professor and reporter who tirelessly served as editor and publisher until his death in June of 2014.

The Richmond Free Press serves as a voice for all people and, since its inception, has altered the media landscape of Richmond, the former Capital of the Confederacy. The paper has positively impacted the community through its news stories and its editorials.

Through the leadership of Mrs. Jean Patterson Boone, advertising director and wife of the late founder, Raymond Boone, this is an award-winning publication. Not only has the Richmond Free Press been a source of information for 25 years, but it has been a pilar in our community.

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that this recognition come during Black History Month, for the Richmond Free Press does not only chronicle history, it has made history for the last 25 years.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

(Mr. LAWSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAWSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Black History Month. It is especially meaningful to me this year as I am so proud to have the honor to represent the great people of Florida's Fifth Congressional District.

Now, more than ever, it is incumbent upon all of us to work to ensure we are protecting our beacons of democracy within our government institutions, from maintaining a vigilant and responsive Department of Justice, to a robust Department of Health and Human Services, to ensuring that our Department of Education is advancing public education and protecting our Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

One African-American who left a lasting legacy in education in Florida is John G. Riley, who was born a slave in 1857 and who died as a millionaire in 1954. Riley was a schoolteacher in Wakulla County, near Tallahassee, and later became the principal of Lincoln Academy in Tallahassee, Florida, serving the community as an educator for 49 years.

Riley was also the first African-American in Tallahassee to own property at the turn of the century. Today, we can all visit the John G. Riley Museum for African American History and Culture to learn more about his contributions to the fabric of African-American history.

In Jacksonville, we celebrate Mary Littlejohn Singleton, who became the first Black woman elected to the City Council in Jacksonville, Florida, and then elevated herself to be elected to the Florida Legislature, the first one since the Reconstruction era. Singleton paved the way for other Black women to follow in her footsteps in the Florida Legislature, like former Congresswoman Carrie Meek, and our colleague, FREDERICA WILSON, who serves now with us today.

It is stories like John G. Riley's and Singleton's and countless others that remind me to work and lead us ahead in the future. We must think differently and act differently to affect change by working together to help our fellow men and women.

I am committed to standing with the Congressional Black Caucus and to keep the fight for equality for all Americans.

CELEBRATING THE 60TH BIRTHDAY OF OVERSEER ELVIS L. BOWMAN

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 60th birthday of my good friend, overseer Elvis L. Bowman, the senior pastor of the Greater Mt. Tabor Christian Center in my hometown of Fort Worth, Texas.

Pastor Bowman was born February 23, 1957, and became a lifelong member of Greater Mt. Tabor Christian Center and their congregation; and the church was founded by his father, E.L. Bowman.

Pastor Bowman graduated from the University of Texas in Arlington with a bachelor's degree in business and a minor in music. He has since used his education to serve the congregation in so many wonderful ways.

An accomplished musician, Pastor Bowman served as a staff musician under his father before being appointed minister of music in 1974. He then served as the Church business manager before he was appointed pastor in 2002. He was later elevated to full gospel district overseer of Tarrant County in 2008.

Pastor Bowman, I wish you happy birthday, my friend, on your 60th birthday. I wish you nothing but health and happiness. Please enjoy your special day.

LEGISLATION TO DEREGULATE GUN SILENCERS

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, on a warm Sunday morning, yesterday, six men in a blue truck and six men in a black truck began shooting along Griggs Road. Women and children fled. Families fled in fear of their lives. Because of the gunshot noise, police were able to come, and those who were hovering and sheltering could dial 911 on their cell phones.

So today I want to join with the law enforcement coalition who are working with former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly, who are standing up against legislation that would deregulate and allow civilians to buy silencers.

It indicates that the gun lobby applauds introduction of the Hearing Protection Act. A quote in an article says many gun owners and sportsmen suffer severe hearing loss after years of shooting. Yet, the tool necessary to reduce such loss is onerously neglected and taxed.

What about the law enforcement officers who will suffer at the hands of those who want to do us harm with silencers on their guns? What will happen to those who will be murdered in the streets? What about them and their families?

This is a legislation misdirected. This is a legislation that is unfortunate. I join with my fellow Americans and law enforcement officers, first responders, in standing up against a nonsensical and misdirected initiative.

Let's stand with those who are to protect us and let's protect our families and not support this legislation.

□ 1930

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, W. E. B. Du Bois is quoted as saying: ''The cost of liberty is the less than the price of repression.'' And the cost of liberty has come at a steep price for members of the Black community. But despite this immense challenge the Black community has faced, our resiliency is what we celebrate every month during Black History Month.

Every February, we get together to talk about it, highlight it, and share with school children, friends, and family the accomplishments of the men and women who changed the course of American history. We thank these pioneers for expanding what we believed possible and use them as an inspiration for the fight that remains.

There have been so many African-American pioneers in every field, including medicine. Dr. James McCune Smith was the first African American to earn a medical degree and practice medicine in the U.S.; Dr. Daniel Hale Williams owned the first Black-owned hospital and is credited with the first successful heart surgery performed by an African American; Dr. Charles Drew—many have heard of him—renowned for his research during World War II which allowed for us to better understand blood plasma and its storage for transfusions. More recently, Dr. Regina Benjamin became the first Black woman elected to the American Medical Association Board of Trustees and was appointed the 18th surgeon general by President Barack Obama in 2009.

Each of these medical pioneers broke barriers for the betterment of the community, and each worked to use tools of their profession to improve the health of each patient they treat and also for future generations.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services shared similar responsibilities, but on a much, much wider scale, Mr. Speaker. The agency, as you know, of HHS is tasked with enhancing and protecting the health of all American citizens. However, the recent appointment of Dr. Tom Price as HHS Secretary threatens to roll back the progress pioneered by Black medical professions and the progress made under President Barack Obama.

Dr. Price, as many of you know and as has been documented and seen on television on the cable news shows, was very hostile, extremely hostile, and openly hostile to the Affordable Care Act during the time that he was in Congress, despite the law ultimately extending health insurance for close to 20 million Americans who didn't have it before. That is what is so amazing that a doctor would take that view.

Because of the ACA, 2.3 million African Americans between the ages of 18 and 64 gained coverage, and the uninsured rate, among African Americans, fell by nearly 7 percent. In the district that I represent, 47,000 more residents now have coverage thanks to the ACA. And for the district that I represent, that is pretty significant.

People hear a lot about the Texas miracle and about all the jobs and the economic growth in the State of Texas. Despite living in Dallas-Fort Worth—one of the most vibrant economies in the entire world, quite frankly—it had the highest uninsured rate out of any congressional district in the country. It is a shame that, with that type of prosperity, we would have such a large group of people—over 1 million people collectively when you include people outside of the district that I represent—in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex who don't have insurance. It is really a shame. We cannot let the progress forged by African-American trailblazers be undermined by a Secretary of Health and Human Services who does not see how expanding healthcare access can help better health outcomes for African Americans.

Similarly, in an area of history where we saw historic tenures of both

Eric Holder and Loretta Lynch as Attorneys General, the recent confirmation of Jeff Sessions as Attorney General is very troubling and really a blatant reminder that we must remain vigilant for those who would like to turn back the clock on the civil rights progress that African Americans fought and died for, particularly when you start talking about voter fraud.

It seems like right now what we are starting to see is the very beginning of people who are against the gains that have been made. They are trying to lay the groundwork so they can go in and do some really, really serious oppression. And that is absolutely scary just because that was a chapter in our country's history that we don't want to go back to.

We want to know that the new Attorney General is going to be working for us and not trying to undermine us when it comes to people being able to exercise their suffrage. And in the Senate Chamber, a very esteemed colleague in Congress, Senator WARREN, brought much attention to a letter that Coretta Scott King wrote opposing Senator Session's consideration for a Federal judgeship.

This Chamber has yet to hear Mrs. King's words in a letter that she used to highlight the brutal harm Sessions could wreak on voting rights. And if you look at her letter, it simply states: ''Free exercise of voting rights is so fundamental to American democracy that we cannot tolerate any form of infringement of those rights. Of all the groups who have been disenfranchised in our nation's history, none has struggled longer or suffered more in the attempt to win the vote than black citizens. No group has had access to the ballot box denied so persistently and intently.''

And Mrs. King continued: ''The actions taken by Mr. Sessions in regards to the 1984 voting fraud prosecutions represent just one more technique used to intimidate black voters and thus deny them this most precious franchise. The investigations into the absentee voting process were conducted only in the black belt counties where blacks had finally achieved political power in local government. Whites had been using the absentee process to their advantage for years, without incident. Then, when blacks, realizing its strength, began to use it with success, criminal investigations were begun.''

Mrs. King went on to state: ''In fact, Mr. Sessions sought to punish older black civil rights activists, advisers and colleagues of my husband, who had been key figures in the civil rights movement in the 1960's. These were persons who, realizing the potential of the absentee vote among blacks, had learned to use the process within the bounds of legality and had taught others to do the same.''

And that is what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, is that sort of attitude, that sort of hostility towards the African-American community when it comes to the right of suffrage, the right to vote that we hold so precious—that all of us are worried about.

But Mrs. King went on to describe why she believes Jeff Sessions would do irreparable harm to her husband's civil rights legacy. ''The exercise of the franchise,'' she states, ''is an essential means by which our citizens ensure that those who are governing will be responsible. My husband called it the number one civil right. The denial of access to the ballot box ultimately results in the denial of other fundamental rights. For, it is only when the poor and disadvantaged are empowered that they are able to participate actively in the solutions to their own problems.

''We still have a long way to go before we can say that minorities no longer need be concerned about discrimination at the polls. Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans are grossly underrepresented at every level of government in America. If we are going to make our timeless dream of justice through democracy a reality, we must take every step possible to ensure that the spirit and intent of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the 15th Amendment to the Constitution is honored.''

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to a Member of this body that is no stranger when it comes to civil rights, knew Mrs. King, knew many of the key players and figures, and was a key player and figure himself, and that is the gentleman from South Carolina. I would like to recognize our assistant leader, JIM CLYBURN, to come and talk on this topic of Black History Month and some of the things that are so important to our community this month and why we are going to continue to talk about these issues.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join my colleagues and people throughout the United States to celebrate Black History Month. It may come as a surprise to some that Black History Month is also celebrated in Canada and the United Kingdom, although they do so in the United Kingdom in the month of October.

Thanks to the hard work and persistence of Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the celebration of Black history was inaugurated in 1926. In response to Mr. Woodson's advocacy, it was to be for 1 week, the second week in February, in order to envelope the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln, February 12, and Frederick Douglass, February 14.

First proposed by students at Kent University in 1969 and 1970, the week was officially expanded to a month in 1976. Gerald Ford was President at the time. When the month was established, President Ford urged the country to ''honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans.'' There is a lot of talk about health care these days, and in no area has the contributions of African Americans been more neglected and dishonored as much as in the field of health care.

How many people are aware of the contributions of Charles Drew who unlocked the secrets that led to the ability to perform blood transfusions; or Daniel Hale Williams who performed the first successful open-heart surgery; or Samuel Kountz who performed the first successful kidney transplant not done on identical twins? Because of these and many other slights in many other fields, Mr. Speaker, I have not always celebrated this occasion with pleasure.

During those discussions back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I, and many others, felt that the appropriate action was not just to expand from 1 week to a month but to mandate the incorporation of African-Americans' contributions and achievements throughout the curricula of all of our schools year round.

But, with each passing day, I grow more and more appreciative and respective of a lesson taught in 1 Corinthians 11:13, which I share with you in JIM CLYBURN's version. ''When I was a child, young and inexperienced, I spoke with the reasoning and understanding of a child, but as I grew and matured, I put those childish thoughts, expressions, and ways behind me.''

I have come to understand, Mr. Speaker, that Black History Month is not only about celebrating past achievements and contributions. It is also a time for reflection and introspection.

□ 1945

Aristotle once intoned: ''A life without contemplation is not worth living.''

I have spent a lot of introspective moments over the last several weeks. Over the last several days, I have reflected on the comments made by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the annual meeting of the Medical Committee for Human Rights back in 1966, when he said: ''Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.''

That is what was on my mind when I addressed this House on the day that we passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. On that occasion, I referred to the Affordable Care Act as the civil rights act of the 21st century.

It may seem a bit odd to some to hear the Affordable Care Act referred to as a civil rights act, but that is exactly what it is. The Affordable Care Act outlawed discrimination against children with preexisting conditions, outlawed discrimination against people with disabilities, and outlawed discrimination against women just because they are women.

Mr. Speaker, I want to believe that we have grown and matured beyond where we were when our country allowed insurance companies to discriminate against women with breast cancer

and men with prostate cancer. I would like to believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have put behind us the childish practice of kicking children off of their family insurance policies as soon as they turn 21, even if they are still in school or have not yet found employment. Mr. Speaker, what could be more childish and immature than allowing insurance companies to deny benefits to the sick and disabled in order to gain big bonuses and payouts for executives?

These arguments are not new. In fact, they are reminiscent of an age-old debate.

Fifty years ago, during my years of student protest, there were those who urged us to slow down. You are pushing too hard, too fast, they would say. Some of those who wanted a slower approach claimed to be on our side, like those eight White ministers who implored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to slow down, arguing that Christianity took 2,000 years to accomplish all it has. Those ministers believed that the escalation of marches and demonstrations to secure civil rights was unwise and untimely.

In 1963, while sitting in the Birmingham city jail, Dr. King started penning a letter that, of course, he finished after leaving jail, but in that letter he dealt with the whole issue of time. In his letter, Dr. King said: ''Time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively.''

He continued: ''More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful word and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.''

Dr. King continued: ''Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitably; it comes through the tireless efforts of men''—and, I might add, women—''willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that time is always ripe to do right.''

I believe these words ring true today, in our current situation. Our Nation has waited for nearly a century to find a way to bring all its citizens into the healthcare system. The time was ripe to do right for the American people.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank our assistant leader for his comments. He has such a plethora of information when it comes to the civil rights movement. He knew Reverend Abernathy and a lot of figures that aren't as well known, like A. G. Gaston and James Farmer from my family's hometown in Marshall, Texas. He is able to bring all of that in today and tie it into the relevance of what we are working on here in Congress.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), a friend here on the House floor from Houston. She is a fellow Texan that also knows about Black history just because so much of great Black history in our country has been made in Harris County, in Houston, Texas. I thank her for participating on this very important Special Order hour.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank my friends and distinguished leaders of this Special Order, Congressman VEASEY of Texas and Congresswoman PLASKETT of the Virgin Islands.

As I begin today, I want to pose a question that was posed by Eddie Chambers. Chambers is a professor of art and art history at the University of Texas in Austin.

As I say that, let me respond to Congressman VEASEY and indicate that we do have a lot of history in Harris County, but also in the State of Texas. Also, I had the privilege of working for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the leadership of, then, Ralph David Abernathy and met Hosea Williams and many of the foot soldiers that worked with Dr. King. I can see the historic perspective that they were able to garner by their experience and association with this great modern-day profit, a man who understood that injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere.

As I answer the question, I want to cite from Eddie Chambers' article that appeared in the Chronicle today. He said in one of his sentences: ''Is there an important place for a celebration that might well appear in some respects as anachronistic?

''In a word,'' he said, ''yes.''

He went on to say: ''As a professor whose classes invariably deal with aspects of African-American history and African Diaspora history, any moment of doubt I might have about the validity of Black History Month are dispelled once classes begin each semester. I am still shocked and saddened at the level of ignorance among students of important events and personalities that are part of African-American history, and consequently, American history. I don't, of course, blame my students, and this ignorance is by no means restricted to students of a particular ethnicity or cultural background.''

In other words, he said: ''Widespread ignorance of Black American history leads to an insufficient grasp of American history.''

So my few words tonight will explain or highlight the fact that this is a need for not only African-American History Month, which is February, but it needs to be taught throughout the year and integrated into the education of all students, no matter where they live; and it is shameful testimony that the books that children are learning from, the curriculum, is so missing, so lacking in the history that is American history—African-American history.

My challenge tonight is for those of my colleagues who are listening, those educators in primary and secondary education, in colleges, Ivy League and otherwise, what is your answer to the question: Is it now still time to celebrate and commemorate Black History Month? What are you doing about it?

I know that Texas is certainly full and rich with history, although our schoolbooks do not denote that. In fact, there was a vigorous fight with the Texas education board on their lack of responsibility in terms of insisting on textbooks that had an accurate recounting of Black history.

Certainly, we know—I hope that we know—the names of Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm, the first woman African American to run for President; my colleague and former predecessor, the Honorable Barbara Jordan, who in the Judiciary Committee said, ''We, the people,'' and repeated a statement of the importance of the Constitution; activists like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Sojourner Truth.

Secretary Hillary Clinton and myself introduced legislation to put the first American bust, that of Sojourner Truth, in the United States Capitol, where she sits today. Who would have known her name, had it not been for the celebration through that legislation of over 2,500 women who came to celebrate the placing of this bust?

Astronaut Mae Jemison still remains the first African-American woman to go into space. We have mathematicians Catherine G. Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn, and Mary Jackson, who I believe are evidenced in the film ''Hidden Figures.'' ''Fences'' is another great movie of great history. We have Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Gwendolyn Brooks. All of these are evidence of great people.

Or the likes of Ruby Mosley, who started with the city of Houston but was an activist and is an activist in Acres Homes. Not one thing of good news happened in Acres Homes and around the city without Ruby Mosley's great leadership. She is still going.

Barbara Jordan, Mickey Leland, Craig Washington, and myself, who served in this seat in the 18th Congressional District, fought to make sure that seniors had housing, make sure their Social Security and city services were there, and standing up to fight for civil rights. There were so many like Ruby Mosley. All of them should be placed in literature to announce their greatness.

And then, of course, let me say how proud I am to have a father by the name of Ezra C. Jackson, one of the first African-American cartoonists working in New York City in the media of comic books. He was a strange figure there. Tragically and unfortunately, as the White men begin to return after World War II, the African Americans who worked during that time, since he was the youngest of four sons—three went to World War II—were displaced. Racism. But yet I am so proud of him for being such an astute and brilliant artist. So much of his work still remains, shown in the Smithsonian in its early stages of putting together the

National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Also, my father-in-law, Phillip Ferguson Lee, one of the Tuskegee Airmen. Clearly, it began as an experiment to determine whether colored soldiers were capable of operating expensive and complex combat aircraft but ended as an unqualified success, based on the experience of the Tuskegee Airmen, whose record included 261 aircraft destroyed, 141 aircraft damaged, 15,553 combat sorties, and 1,578 missions over Italy and north Africa.

This past weekend, we buried a church member of mine, Clyde Alexander, who was also a Tuskegee Airman. To both of those men, we pay tribute, and I ask the question: How many textbooks in America, in school districts, rural and urban, have the story about the Tuskegee Airmen?

Is the question: Do we need to celebrate and commemorate Black history? If that is the question, then the answer is not only a resounding yes, but what are you doing in the academic institutions across America to ensure that we tell the story not of African American history or Black history, but of American history?

Let me finish my remarks by adding a challenge evidenced in the Los Angeles Times.

One of the things that comes out of the commemoration of African-American history is a connection to the diaspora. The Congressional Black Caucus has been the singular connecting force to the diaspora, whether it is to the Caribbean; whether it is to the African Brazilians in Brazil who happen to be of Nigerian heritage; whether it is, as I indicated, in the Caribbean, where my parents and grandparents came from, from Jamaica; from Panama, where my grandfather worked on the Panama Canal. All of this is part of the portfolio of the Congressional Black Caucus, and I thank our chairman, Mr. RICHMOND.

□ 2000

We have been the strongest voices on these issues. Mickey Leland, who was my predecessor, died on the side of an Ethiopian mountain because he cared about the horrible and devastating drought that was killing those in the region and he continued to want to take them food and to hold dying babies in his hands.

Now we have a new challenge, and that is of Somalia, a new hunger emergency. Millions are going to die if this President does not recognize that his responsibilities include not only being the Commander in Chief, but many times the chief humanitarian of the world.

In the last drought, some 350,000 children died in this region because of starvation. Right now they are expecting that starvation is going to impact hundreds of thousands of women and children. This is a picture of a woman and her child walking by the dead goats that would be the source of their livelihood because there is no water.

As I close my remarks, I call upon this Congress and I call upon this President to get the wheels back on the White House and begin to recognize that America has always been the comforter in receiving refugees, and it has always been a friend of the continent of Africa. There are Members of Congress who have gone to Africa in times of need, but we have also worked with the administration, from George Bush to Bill Clinton, to Barack Obama and many others, who recognized that we are connected to the continent of Africa by the very slaves who were brought here.

Let us fight for Somalia to survive. I call upon my fellow colleagues to join me in legislation dealing with the starvation here, that we can raise up humanitarian dollars and efforts to save the lives of hundreds of thousands who are now on the brink of starving. That is what this month commemorates, not only the African American history, but the diaspora of which we are so connected.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for sharing that great information and talking about some of the highlights that Black Americans have made toward our story when it comes to African American History Month this February.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands, STACY PLASKETT, who is here tonight to also talk about contributions from the part of the world that she represents. I thank her for her efforts here tonight and for being part of this Special Order hour.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman MARC VEASEY for assisting me and for being a leader in this Special Order hour for the Congressional Black Caucus. Of course, I thank the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, our friend and colleague, the Honorable CEDRIC RICHMOND, for his continued leadership of both our caucus and on issues impacting Black America and minority communities across this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is a time to reflect on notable African-American icons, their achievements as a people, and our continued struggle for a more perfect Union. Not only does it serve as a source of great pride and an anchor to the African descendants in the African-American community, but it is also a vehicle to educate the masses on the totality of the Black experience throughout the history of this Nation.

As we gather this evening to celebrate the life, legacy, and achievement of African descendants, it is important to remember the journey told and employ the same resilient spirit in our continued push for fair and equal access to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus is a body of 49 members in both houses of Congress representing millions of African Americans and other minorities and majority people across this country. We are alarmed by the recent actions of this administration and the threat those actions pose to the hard-fought progress of African descendants and minorities in this country.

The nomination of Jeff Sessions as Attorney General for many minorities across this country was a direct affront to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael, our colleague JOHN LEWIS, and the many others who sacrificed and dedicated their lives to the civil rights movement and the right to vote. The concerns expressed by the great Coretta Scott King 30 years ago about the dubious past of Mr. Sessions with respect to enforcing civil rights laws remain the same for many Americans today. Mr. Speaker, the American Dream was, in fact, made possible by the plight of African descendants, and we must remain vigilant and steadfast in the fight against racial, social, and economic injustice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise another area of concern that African Americans have, and that is for health care. My district of the U.S. Virgin Islands, home to the first African-American female physician in Congress, my esteemed predecessor, Donna Christensen, like many underserved communities across the country, is adversely impacted by disparate health outcomes. Diabetes, hypertension, along with funding for disease such as sickle cell, may be adversely affected in this administration. Programs for nutrition and preventative health, like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs, or SNAP, provide critical food to the neediest in all of our communities, especially mine, the Virgin Islands, and especially to our children.

Repeal of the Affordable Care Act would create unhealthy African-American communities. Since the Affordable Care Act was passed, nearly half of the African-American adults who didn't have health insurance now have health insurance. Under the Affordable Care Act, the number of working-age African-American adults who are uninsured has been cut from 27 percent to 14 percent, the lowest rate ever. The number of African-American children without insurance also decreased to the lowest rate ever, negative 5 percent. Repealing the Affordable Care Act would take away coverage for more than 3.3 million African Americans. In my district, we are looking for ways to expand coverage, not to remove or repeal it.

Members of this caucus and members before us have offered policy solutions and continue to push policies and initiatives that would help African-American communities because we know the work that our communities have done, the work of our forefathers to ensure that we have a place at the table; individuals like Shirley Chisholm, as was

spoken about by my colleague SHEILA JACKSON LEE. People who have come to America to be part of the experience of the African diaspora are people from many parts of the Caribbean. Right now we have Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE, representing the Ninth District of New York, of Jamaican descent. Other notable Jamaicans who have served this country: General Colin Powell, the first Black U.S. Secretary of State; Constance Baker Motley, the first Black woman appointed to the Federal bench; our previous Attorney General, Eric Holder, whose family hails from Barbados; Cicely Tyson, the Academy Award-nominated actress whose family is from Nevis; Edward Blyden, from my own St. Thomas, who has been known as the father of pan-Africanism; Hubert Harrison, a prominent political activist, writer, and orator; and my own special hero, Ruby Rouss of the island of St. Croix, who was the first Black woman assigned as a permanent staff of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. It is the work of these great African Americans and those who are not heralded and those that we don't know.

Ms. JACKSON LEE talked about her own family members. My own father, LeRoy Plaskett, and my mother, who came from the Virgin Islands and went to New York as older siblings to give back and to ensure that their younger siblings could have the things needed back home in the Virgin Islands. They have given a legacy for all of us, and we are so grateful for the work they have all done. I spoke of Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE of New York.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I now yield to another distinguished member of the New York delegation, my colleague, the great HAKEEM JEFFRIES, who has led this Special Order before and who I look to for guidance on how to continue the great work that he and JOYCE BEATTY did previously.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands for her very kind remarks and for yielding and for the tremendous job that she and my classmate, MARC VEASEY, have done in leading this CBC Special Order hour over this 115th Congress during the last few weeks.

We stand here today in the midst of Black History Month where many African Americans throughout the country are asking the question: What do we do now that the unthinkable has occurred?

As a community, as a nation, we have gone from the Presidency—distinguished and dynamic 8 years—of Barack Obama to the current situation where we have a swamp percolating at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue under the leadership of Donald J. Trump.

He began Black History Month by saying that he was convening folks for what he called his little Black history breakfast. Those of us who actually watched some of the coverage seemed perplexed by his reference to the great Frederick Douglass as if he was still alive. If anyone has any questions about the relevance of Black History Month, we can start by noting that perhaps it is important to make sure that the Nation's Commander in Chief understands the contributions that African Americans have made to the United States of America, going all the way back to the Boston Massacre, where one of its leaders, Crispus Attucks, was the first American killed at the onset of the American Revolution in connection with the Boston Massacre, challenging the unjust taxation policies of the British Empire.

Now, the 45th President of the United States of America asked a question over the last several months: What exactly do Black folks have to lose?

Many of us were perplexed by that question, given his history, and actually think that you have lost your mind if you come to the conclusion that the current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue has any interest in making a positive difference in the lives of people of color generally, African Americans specifically, perhaps because of his own history.

We know that in the early 1970s The Trump Organization, of which he was president, was sued by the Justice Department for racial discrimination in the housing stock that they owned, where they were denying African Americans and people of Puerto Rican ancestry access to apartments, notwithstanding their economic qualifications to be renters or co-op owners.

I would just note parenthetically that it was the Nixon Justice Department—not the Kennedy Justice Department or the Johnson Justice Department or the Carter Justice Department or the Clinton Justice Department or the Obama Justice Department—that concluded that Donald J. Trump and his organization was discriminating on the basis of race.

Those of us from New York understand that the current occupant of the White House was the leader of the high-tech lynch mob designed to try to get the wrongfully convicted Central Park Five sentenced to death, taking out a full-page ad in some of the local periodicals in New York calling for that. It turns out that all five individuals were wrongfully convicted and spent years in jail for a crime they did not commit. Donald J. Trump has never apologized for that reckless and irresponsible action.

Then, of course, for 5 years he perpetrated the racist lie that Barack Obama was not born in the United States of America, all designed to undermine the legitimacy of the 44th President of the United States of America, which is why here in Black History Month it is very interesting to me that some of my friends on the other side of the aisle question whether we, as members of the Congressional Black Caucus, or others are being irresponsible in not giving the current President a chance.

How dare you ask that question. From the beginning of the Presidency of Barack Obama, you declared war on him. You followed a philosophy that may be familiar to those of us who are familiar with the history of the Deep South: obstruction today, obstruction tomorrow, obstruction forever.

□ 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL declared that his top priority was to make Barack Obama a one-term President. And yet, he questions whether Americans, who are part of the growing resistance movement, have failed to give Donald Trump a chance. Let's be clear. He has zero credibility on the issue of lecturing us about Presidential etiquette. We will decide what the rules of engagement are when it comes to this current President. Pipe down as it relates to talking to any of us about how to engage the White House because he has no credibility on the issue. His obstruction took place in the midst of two failed wars in the worst economy since the Great Depression.

So we have got a lot of issues that we have got to sort out with this current President here in Black History Month, both for the African-American community and for the broader community of Americans in blue States, in red States, in urban America, in rural America, in suburban America, in the north, the south, the east, and the west. And I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus, and others, to tackle issues like criminal justice reform, to fix the Voting Rights Act that was damaged in such an irresponsible way by the Supreme Court decision in Shelby County v. Holder, and to work to build an economy that works for all Americans, not simply the millionaires and billionaires who dominate the Trump Cabinet.

I thank my distinguished colleague from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts today. I thank my colleague, MARC VEASEY, for his continued leadership. And I look forward to hearing my distinguished colleague, BRENDA LAWRENCE, from Motown.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. VEASEY.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. LAWRENCE), who is my classmate and one of my very good dear friends.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Representative MARC VEASEY from Texas, who has been an amazing advocate for voting rights and has been standing with the people in Texas across this country for American values with the refugee ban.

And I can't say enough about my colleague, my freshman class member, STACY PLASKETT, from the beautiful Virgin Islands. Her commitment to being a voice for people who are often not heard has been one that has been valuable, not only to us here in Congress but for this country.

Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is a time to celebrate our progress while recognizing the challenges that we still face today.

The President, Donald Trump, posed the question to African Americans asking: What do you have to lose?

Our Black history is outlined with the great progress and hard sacrifices endured by our forefathers. Under this administration and under these current circumstances that we are dealing with, yes, Mr. President, we have a lot to lose. We have a lot to lose for every point of progress that we have made in this country. And for every hard fought step forward, we have a lot to lose.

Instead of draining the swamp, this administration is filling it with unqualified and dangerous megadonors. Our basic rights and privileges included in our Constitution are under the risk of being attacked under this administration. Old battles that we fought and celebrate the wins, such as equal rights and quality education and criminal justice, have now begun again anew.

How are they under attack, you would ask? Well, let's go appointment by appointment.

Under DeVos' leadership, our education system is under attack.

African Americans have historically fought for equal access and opportunity in education.

African Americans had to suffer through the Jim Crow era to fight a segregated education system. They were forced to learn under a system that was both separate and unequal.

African Americans have faced and fought against injustice in the education system ever since our emancipation.

And now, in 2017, our Secretary of Education is Betsy DeVos. And frankly, she is not qualified to be the Secretary of Education because she has zero experience in public education, and she is not the right person to lead our public schools. Being a millionaire does not mean you are qualified to direct good policy.

We have real issues in Detroit. Under DeVos' direct involvement in Michigan public schools, we now have a challenge in our city of Detroit with school deserts. Some of you may not have heard about that. But a school desert is where a community does not have a local public school to attend. This means a family's only opportunity to educate their children would be to go to a for-profit charter school that is miles away, and there is no public transportation given for your child to get there, so you are in a school desert.

Our Secretary of Education should be enforcing civil rights equality and making sure that every child is educated in America, and this includes children of color who can't advocate for themselves.

Funneling taxpayer dollars to private religious schools is a step backwards. Resegregation masked under the guise of school of choice is a step backwards.

So let's talk about Secretary Sessions.

Our criminal justice system is under attack.

Civil rights icons that we know and celebrate during Black History Month, like Martin Luther King and our amazing Congressman JOHN LEWIS, endured pain and suffering during a peaceful protest and support of voting rights in 1965.

Disproportionate injustices against African Americans and minorities did not end with the civil rights movement.

Today, we fight for equality under the law. This fight continues.

Now, we have Senator Jeff Sessions charged with leading the Justice Department. His record speaks for itself. He was denied for a position as a Federal court judge speaks volumes.

Clearly, there seems to be a certain amount of fear of the truth when it comes from the mouth of Coretta Scott King.

We cannot go backwards. African Americans have worked hard to be a part of the fabric of this country through education, and health care is one of them.

Let's talk about Charles Drew, who, with his research, developed a technique to have blood banks that we can use in transfusions; Daniel Williams, the first person to successfully complete open-heart surgery; and Dr. Patricia Bath, whose invention in cataract lenses transformed eye surgery, and she was the first African-American woman doctor to receive a patent for a medical invention.

Now, our society's most vulnerable stand to lose something that we fought so hard for, and that is ensuring everyone receives health care in America, ACA. Women should not be charged more for insurance than a man. The sick shouldn't be denied insurance because of preexisting conditions. And Republicans instead want to repeal, take away, the ACA without any plan to replace it. We are going backwards.

This month, we celebrate how far we have come. We celebrate the progress of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. We celebrate the heros and sheros who paved the way. We have come too far to go back now.

That is why I am proud to be a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, along with others who have fought for Americans' equality and for the millions of Americans we represent. It is time for us to remember the great progress we have made as a nation. It is time to remember the past injustices so that we never repeat them. The sacrifices of those who came before us must never be forgotten. Their sacrifices must not be in vain.

During this month of remembrance, let us all remember we are not going back. We, the African-American community, we Americans, we are moving forward.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mrs. LAWRENCE so much for that discussion and inspiration she has given us. We are not going to go back.

We have heard from so many of our colleagues about the achievements of African Americans. But not just the achievements—the struggles, and the issues that we are facing today.

Mr. Speaker, we heard from Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE, who outlined not just the past struggles of African Americans and their achievements, but also about the rising concerns throughout the African diaspora when she talked about what is happening in Somalia and other places, and the fact that African Americans have a duty to support other diasporas and the work that they are doing and the struggles they have.

We heard about the Affordable Care Act from our assistant leader, Mr. CLYBURN, the civil rights movement, the work that was done, and the assault that is occurring now on some of those issues.

So we, as the Congressional Black Caucus, have a duty to present those issues here before you all, our colleagues, here in Congress, Mr. Speaker, to put those issues on the RECORD so that we can expound on them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to Mr. VEASEY if there is anything else that he wanted to discuss or that he reflected on in hearing some of the words that our colleagues spoke about today.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for offering that to me.

There were several things that I heard that were deeply inspiring, yet deeply troubling at the same time. It is amazing how when you start talking about Black history, and you get ready to apply it to present day, you understand just how important it is that we do bridge those two things—the history, the future, and where we are at today.

If you look at education, for instance, I know that BRENDA LAWRENCE talked about the school desert phenomena and how there are some neighborhoods where there are no neighborhood schools. That is really sad. Because when you think about Brown v. Board of Education and some of the things that were brought out about people having to travel great distances just to be able to get an education, and now you start looking at today in modern-day America and there still are no neighborhood schools, there is still segregation in schools, and then you see a Secretary of Education who wants to try to implement plans that many say would resegregate the schools, would eliminate neighborhood schools, that is what brought us here. The neighborhood school is what brought us here. That is what allowed us to have so many great inventions when you start talking about the inventions in Black History Month, when you learn about medicine, when you start talking about science, almost all of those people mentioned, even during that time of some of the most awful segregation in our country.

And I think about that in my own family. I have a high school invitation from the 1930s in a little town called Henderson in Rusk County. I think LOUIE GOHMERT is the representative there. When you open up the high school invitation—it is from my grandmother's first cousin—and it says Henderson Negro High School, and the graduation will be held at the Henderson Negro High School auditorium.

I like to bring that up because when people start asking: Well, why is there Black History Month—

Ms. PLASKETT. So we don't forget.

Mr. VEASEY. So we don't forget. But before there was a Black History Month, people started putting those things—Black, Negro, colored, whatever it may happen to be for that time period—in front of schools. They didn't put White in front of there. There was no Henderson White High School. It was the Negro High School.

□ 2030

I think the important thing in our trying to bridge all of that is we want to make sure that we don't go back. We don't want to take steps backwards when it comes particularly to education because all of those people, whether they went to the Henderson Negro High School, whether it be blood transfusions—whatever it may happen to be—they got there because of the investment that we made in this country in our public education system. The fact that someone in a position of importance would want to roll back those opportunities is absolutely scary.

It is the same with health care, when you start talking about health care and so many people who don't have adequate health care. It is when we see the racial discrepancies and the life expectancy amongst African Americans. An African-American man, in particular, has the lowest life expectancy.

And you want to remove people—20 million Americans—from having life insurance?

Ms. PLASKETT. Sure.

Mr. VEASEY. It is absolutely scary.

I thank the gentlewoman for participating in this very timely conversation. We needed to have this conversation with the country.

Ms. PLASKETT. We did. There are some additional conversations that we need to have, but I know that our time has drawn nigh.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, February 14, 2017, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

543. A letter from the Assistant to the Board, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting the Board's final rule — Amendments to the Capital Plan and Stress Test Rules [Docket No.: R-1548] (RIN: 7100 AE-59) received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

544. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Office of Policy Development and Research, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's final rule — Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

545. A letter from the Special Inspector General, Office of the Special Inspector General For The Troubled Asset Relief Program, transmitting the Office's quarterly report on the actions undertaken by the Department of the Treasury under the Troubled Asset Relief Program; to the Committee on Financial Services.

546. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, transmitting a report titled ''Effects of Climate Change on Federal Hydropower: The Second Report to Congress'', pursuant to Sec. 9505 of the SECURE Water Act of 2009; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

547. A letter from the Director, Regulations Policy and Management Staff, FDA, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule — Refuse to Accept Procedures for Premarket Tobacco Product Submissions; Revised Effective Date [Docket No.: FDA-2016-N-1555] received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

548. A letter from the Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's Initial Report to Congress on the EPA's Capacity to Implement Certain Provisions of the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act as required under Sec. 26(m)(1) of the Toxic Substances Control Act as amended; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

549. A letter from the Acting Secretary, Department of the Treasury, transmitting a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Lebanon that was declared in Executive Order 13441 of August 1, 2007, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1641(c); Public Law 94-412, Sec. 401(c); (90 Stat. 1257) and 50 U.S.C. 1703(c); Public Law 95-223, Sec 204(c); (91 Stat. 1627); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

550. A letter from the Director, International Cooperation, Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Department of Defense, transmitting Transmittal No. 04-17, informing of an intent to sign the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Kingdom of Denmark, pursuant to Section 27(f) of the Arms Export Control Act and Executive Order 13637; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

551. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-104, pursuant to Sections 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

552. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-079, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

553. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-109, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

554. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-101, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

555. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-096, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

556. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-084, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

557. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-133, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

558. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-127, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

559. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-119, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

560. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting determinations of the Secretary and the associated report, pursuant to the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

561. A letter from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting seventeen (17) notifications of a federal vacancy, designation of acting officer, nomination, or action on nomination, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

562. A letter from the Solicitor, Federal Labor Relations Authority, transmitting a notification of a federal vacancy, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

563. A letter from the General Counsel, National Mediation Board, transmitting the Board's final rule — Access to Information [Docket No.: C-7156] (RIN: 3140-AA00) received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

564. A letter from the Acting Attorney General, Department of Justice, transmitting a decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, United States v. Robert Cardena et al., 842 F.3d 959 (7th Cir. 2016), pursuant to 28 U.S.C.

530D(a)(1); Public Law 107-273, Sec. 202(a); (116 Stat. 1771); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

565. A letter from the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting an update on the Bureau of Prisons' compliance with the Revitalization Act's privatization requirements, pursuant to Public Law 105-33, Sec. 11201(c)(2)(B); (111 Stat. 734); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

566. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Standards Branch, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Civil Penalty Inflation Adjustment [Docket ID: BSEE-2017-0001; 17XE1700DX EX1SF0000.DAQ000 EEEE50000] (RIN: 1014-AA34) received February 6, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

567. A letter from the Chairman and CEO, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Rules of Practice and Procedure; Adjusting Civil Money Penalties for Inflation (RIN: 3052-AD16) received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

568. A letter from the Chairman, Surface Transportation Board, transmitting the Board's final rule — Civil Monetary Penalties —— 2017 Adjustment [Docket No.: EP 716 (Sub-No. 2)] received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

569. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Revenue Procedure for Early Voluntary Country-by-Country Filing (Rev. Proc. 2017-23) received February 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

570. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Updated Withholding Foreign Partnership Agreement and Withholding Foreign Trust Agreement (Rev. Proc. 2017-21) received February 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

571. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final regulations and temporary regulations — Dividend Equivalents from Sources within the United States [TD 9815] (RIN: 1545-BM33) received February 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. BYRNE: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 116. Resolution providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by States for nongovernmental employees, and providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 67) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees (Rept. 115–11). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. LYNCH (for himself, Mr. SCHRADER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. ROSEN, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. O'HALLERAN, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. GABBARD, Ms. BONAMICI, and Ms. SHEA-PORTER):

H.R. 1001. A bill to exempt certain veterans and other individuals from the application of the hiring freeze; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. DENT (for himself, Mr. TONKO, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. POLIS, and Mr. BARLETTA):

H.R. 1002. A bill to authorize a National Heritage Area Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 1003. A bill to authorize the establishment of a program of voluntary separation incentive payments for nonjudicial employees of the District of Columbia courts and employees of the District of Columbia Public Defender Service; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. WALBERG (for himself, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Mr. MEADOWS, Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. GOSAR, and Mr. FARENTHOLD):

H.R. 1004. A bill to amend chapter 3 of title 5, United States Code, to require the publication of information relating to pending agency regulatory actions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. ZELDIN (for himself and Miss RICE of New York):

H.R. 1005. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the provision of adult day health care services for veterans; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. JAYAPAL (for herself, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. NADLER, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. GUTIÉRREZ, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. RICHMOND, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mrs. TORRES, Mr. KILMER, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. LANGEVIN, Ms. ESHOO, Ms. NORTON, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia):

H.R. 1006. A bill to clarify the rights of all persons who are held or detained at a port of entry or at any detention facility overseen by U.S. Customs and Border Protection or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Homeland Security, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. KATKO (for himself, Mr. KING of New York, and Mr. PETERSON):

H.R. 1007. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a task force on Agent Orange exposure; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. SOTO (for himself and Mr. CRIST):

H.R. 1008. A bill to ensure reliable observation of hurricanes; to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

By Mr. MITCHELL (for himself, Mr. MEADOWS, and Mr. PALMER):

H.R. 1009. A bill to amend title 44, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to review regulations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BARLETTA:

H.R. 1010. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to expand the definition of an unauthorized alien to include aliens who have not been admitted to and are not lawfully present in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 1011. A bill to make clear that an agency outside of the Department of Health and Human Services may not designate, appoint, or employ special consultants, fellows, or other employees under subsection (f) or (g) of section 207 of the Public Health Service Act; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 1012. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the dollar limitation on employer-provided group term life insurance that can be excluded from the gross income of the employee; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. CASTRO of Texas (for himself, Ms. JACKSON LEE, and Mr. NOLAN):

H.R. 1013. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the above-the-line deduction for certain expenses of elementary and secondary school teachers to individuals involved in early childhood education programs; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Ms. CLARKE of New York (for herself, Ms. LEE, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. NORTON, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. SOTO, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California, Ms. BASS, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. ELLISON, Ms. WILSON of Florida, and Mr. SERRANO):

H.R. 1014. A bill to designate Haiti under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to permit nationals of Haiti to be eligible for temporary protected status under such section; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CONNOLLY (for himself, Ms. NORTON, Mr. NOLAN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mr. SOTO, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. BEYER, Mr. TONKO, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, and Mr. POLIS):

H.R. 1015. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against

income tax for qualified conservation contributions which include National Scenic Trails; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. DELAURO (for herself, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. BLUMENAUER, and Mr. SERRANO):

H.R. 1016. A bill to amend the Inspector General Act of 1978 to establish an Office of Inspector General in the Executive Office of the President, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. DENT (for himself, Mr. PAYNE, and Mr. LANCE):

H.R. 1017. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to waive coinsurance under Medicare for colorectal cancer screening tests, regardless of whether therapeutic intervention is required during the screening; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. DESJARLAIS (for himself and Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee):

H.R. 1018. A bill to replace the Director of the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection with a 5-person commission, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. GARRETT (for himself, Mrs. COMSTOCK, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. WITTMAN, Mr. TAYLOR, Mr. GRIFFITH, and Mr. BRAT):

H.R. 1019. A bill to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse located at 255 West Main Street Charlottesville, Virginia, as the ''Justice Antonin G. Scalia Federal Building and United States Courthouse''; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. GRIFFITH (for himself and Mr. BRAT):

H.R. 1020. A bill to allow the manufacture, importation, distribution, and sale of investigational drugs and devices intended for use by terminally ill patients who execute an informed consent document, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. KING of Iowa (for himself and Mr. BRAT):

H.R. 1021. A bill to amend section 349 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to deem specified activities in support of terrorism as renunciation of United States nationality, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York (for herself, Mrs. COMSTOCK, Mr. HOYER, Mr. CONNOLLY, Ms. NORTON, Mr. BEYER, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. SOTO, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. NADLER, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. KEATING, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. COOPER, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. ADAMS, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. DELANEY, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. TAKANO, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. COHEN, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Ms. TSONGAS, Mr. FOSTER, Ms. BONAMICI, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. MOORE, Mr. KILMER, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY):

H.R. 1022. A bill to provide that 6 of the 12 weeks of parental leave made available to a Federal employee shall be paid leave, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. MEEHAN (for himself and Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts):

H.R. 1023. A bill to create penalties for massage establishment owners and employees who fail to report knowledge or reasonable suspicion of sexual assault; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MESSER:

H.R. 1024. A bill to amend section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, to require that annual budget submissions of the President to Congress provide an estimate of the cost per taxpayer of the deficit and of the public debt; to the Committee on the Budget.

By Mr. NADLER (for himself, Mr. CONNOLLY, and Mr. QUIGLEY):

H.R. 1025. A bill to provide for media coverage of Federal appellate court proceedings, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. NOLAN (for himself, Mr. WELCH, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. PETERSON, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. WALZ, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. BEYER, Mr. TONKO, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. FASO, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, and Mr. PAULSEN):

H.R. 1026. A bill to revise the authorized route of the North Country National Scenic Trail in northeastern Minnesota and to extend the trail into Vermont to connect with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. SARBANES (for himself, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Ms. DELAURO, and Mr. LARSON of Connecticut):

H.R. 1027. A bill to amend title XXI of the Social Security Act to improve access to, and the delivery of, children's health services through school-based health centers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. SIRES:

H.R. 1028. A bill to amend titles 23 and 49, United States Code, with respect to congestion mitigation and metropolitan transportation planning, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. TIPTON (for himself and Mr. SCALISE):

H.J. Res. 71. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Office of Natural Resources Revenue of the Department of the Interior relating to consolidated Federal oil and gas and Federal and Indian coal valuation reform; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. CHABOT:

H. Res. 114. A resolution providing amounts for the expenses of the Committee on Small Business in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. SESSIONS:

H. Res. 115. A resolution providing amounts for the expenses of the Committee on Rules in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. CHAFFETZ (for himself and Mr. CUMMINGS):

H. Res. 117. A resolution providing amounts for the expenses of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. ELLISON (for himself, Mr. MCGOVERN, and Mr. POCAN):

H. Res. 118. A resolution expressing support for the designation of February 14 of each year as International Flower Workers' Day, in acknowledgment of workers in flower-producing countries and to demonstrate the commitment of the United States to practices that respect labor rights in other countries; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. GOODLATTE:

H. Res. 119. A resolution providing amounts for the expenses of the Committee on the Judiciary in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. KING of Iowa:

H. Res. 120. A resolution expressing the sense of the House with regard to the courts' actions against President Trump's executive order; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. PAYNE (for himself, Mr. MULLIN, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Ms. NORTON, Ms. MENG, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mr. PETERS, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, and Mr. DEFAZIO):

H. Res. 121. A resolution expressing support for health and wellness coaches and ''National Health and Wellness Coach Recognition Week''; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. SMITH of Texas:

H. Res. 122. A resolution providing amounts for the expenses of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress; to the Committee on House Administration.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. LYNCH:

H.R. 1001.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.

By Mr. DENT:

H.R. 1002.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 1003.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution.

By Mr. WALBERG:
H.R. 1004.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the Constitution of the United States; the power to regulate commerce among the several states and Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers.
The bill will prevent Executive Agencies from violating the rule and spirit of the Administrative Procedures Act by requiring additional transparency about public communications made by the agencies; most importantly communications made with the intent of artificially promoting support for pending regulatory actions. Congress has the authority to limit regulations by the Executive branch under its Commerce Clause power and it is necessary and proper to introduce legislation to effectively carryout this power.
By Mr. ZELDIN:
H.R. 1005.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.
By Ms. JAYAPAL:
H.R. 1006.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I of the United States Constitution and its subsequent amendments, and further clarified and interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States.
By Mr. KATKO:
H.R. 1007.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1 Section 8 Clause 1: Congress shall have power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States.
By Mr. SOTO:
H.R. 1008.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, of the United States Constitution.
By Mr. MITCHELL:
H.R. 1009.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers.
By Mr. BARLETTA:
H.R. 1010.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clauses 4 and 18
By Mr. BURGESS:
H.R. 1011.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 9, clause 7, ''No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.''
By Mr. BURGESS:
H.R. 1012.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section VIII, clause 1 enumerates that, ''The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises . . .'' Further, Amendment XVI states that ''The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several states, and without regard to any census or enumeration.''
By Mr. CASTRO of Texas:
H.R. 1013.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
The Congress shall have power . . . To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the government of the United States, or in any department or officer thereof.
By Ms. CLARKE of New York:
H.R. 1014.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
the power granted to Congress under Article I of the United States Constitution and its subsequent amendments, and further clarified and interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States.
By Mr. CONNOLLY:
H.R. 1015.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 1 of section 8 or article I of the Constitution, and clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution.
By Ms. DELAURO:
H.R. 1016.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8
By Mr. DENT:
H.R. 1017.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Section 8, Article I of the Constitution, to provide for the general welfare, to regulate commerce, and to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution federal powers.
By Mr. DESJARLAIS:
H.R. 1018.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18:
The Congress shall have Power . . . . To make Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.
By Mr. GARRETT:
H.R. 1019.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution, specifically Clause 1 (relating to providing for the general welfare of the United States), Clause 6 (relating to post offices and post roads), and Clause 18 (relating to the power to make all laws necessary and proper for carrying out the powers vested in Congress), and Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 (relating to the power of Congress to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States).
By Mr. GRIFFITH:
H.R. 1020.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.
By Mr. KING of Iowa:
H.R. 1021.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 4 which states: ''The Congress shall have the Power To . . . establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization . . .''
By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York:
H.R. 1022.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 3:
Congress shall have the power . . . to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian Tribes.
By Mr. MEEHAN:
H.R. 1023.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
This bill is enacted pursuant to: Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 and Article I, Section 8, Clause 18
By Mr. MESSER:
H.R. 1024.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1, which provides that, ''The Congress shall have the Power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts, and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States,'' and Article 1, Section 9, Clause 7, which provides that, ''No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be publish from time to time.''
By Mr. NADLER:
H.R. 1025.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution.
By Mr. NOLAN:
H.R. 1026.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this bill.
By Mr. SARBANES:
H.R. 1027.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution.
By Mr. SIRES:
H.R. 1028.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Pursuant to clause 3(d)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee finds the authority for this legislation in article I, section 8 of the Constitution.
By Mr. TIPTON:
H.J. Res. 71.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 1 and Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 25: Mr. HENSARLING.
H.R. 60: Mr. SIMPSON.
H.R. 112: Mr. MAST.
H.R. 179: Mr. COOK, Mr. BYRNE, and Mr. LOBIONDO.
H.R. 233: Ms. DELBENE and Mr. O'HALLERAN.
H.R. 244: Mr. KILMER.
H.R. 246: Mr. KINZINGER, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. FASO, Mr. SIMPSON, Mr.

ROUZER, Mr. VALADAO, Mr. DESJARLAIS, Mr. O'HALLERAN, Mr. BOST, Mr. BERGMAN, Mr. MEADOWS, and Ms. MCSALLY.

H.R. 275: Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 281: Mr. NEWHOUSE,

H.R. 291: Mr. GOTTHEIMER.

H.R. 299: Mr. PALLONE, Mrs. TORRES, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. KING of Iowa, Mr. FITZPATRICK, and Mr. POLIQUIN.

H.R. 350: Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. WALZ, Mr. HENSARLING, Mr. MITCHELL, Mr. JORDAN, and Mr. BYRNE.

H.R. 355: Mr. YOHO.

H.R. 367: Mr. AMODEI.

H.R. 389: Mr. SHERMAN.

H.R. 391: Mr. BRAT.

H.R. 392: Mr. POCAN, Mr. WOODALL, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. GROTHMAN, Mr. NADLER, Mr. RICE of South Carolina, Mr. TONKO, Mr. ROTHFUS, Mr. KHANNA, Mr. COOPER, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. TROTT, and Mr. SCHIFF.

H.R. 394: Mr. HENSARLING.

H.R. 402: Mr. TAKANO.

H.R. 421: Mr. BACON.

H.R. 428: Mr. LUCAS.

H.R. 459: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 469: Mr. SMITH of Missouri.

H.R. 502: Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. WALZ, Mr. O'HALLERAN, Mr. AGUILAR, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. TITUS, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 512: Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. WALKER, and Mr. KILMER.

H.R. 523: Mr. HENSARLING and Mr. RICE of South Carolina.

H.R. 530: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. YARMUTH, and Mr. KIHUEN.

H.R. 540: Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. JEFFRIES, and Ms. HANABUSA.

H.R. 544: Mr. THOMPSON of California and Ms. SHEA-PORTER.

H.R. 550: Mr. GOTTHEIMER.

H.R. 613: Mr. NORCROSS, Mr. RUSSELL, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. ROHRABACHER, and Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky.

H.R. 624: Mr. ISSA.

H.R. 625: Mr. COOK.

H.R. 630: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY and Mr. NADLER.

H.R. 632: Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. SWALWELL of California, and Mr. MCGOVERN.

H.R. 637: Mr. SHIMKUS.

H.R. 656: Mr. OLSON, Mr. BANKS of Indiana, and Mr. RUSSELL.

H.R. 662: Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. GRAVES of Missouri, Ms. MOORE, and Mr. WITTMAN.

H.R. 664: Mr. KATKO and Mr. RENACCI.

H.R. 671: Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Ms. ROSEN, and Mr. CRIST.

H.R. 686: Mr. MEEHAN.

H.R. 691: Mr. BANKS of Indiana.

H.R. 696: Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 710: Mr. HARPER and Mr. HENSARLING.

H.R. 721: Mr. PAULSEN, Mr. WELCH, Mr. LOEBSACK, and Mr. HIGGINS of New York.

H.R. 747: Mr. BANKS of Indiana, Mr. SCHRADER, Mr. RICE of South Carolina, Mr. CALVERT, and Mr. PEARCE.

H.R. 748: Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. CLARKE of New York, and Mrs. LOWEY.

H.R. 756: Mr. RUSSELL and Mrs. LAWRENCE.

H.R. 757: Mr. CLAY, Mr. DELANEY, Mr. SIRES, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. POCAN, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 772: Mr. CARTER of Georgia and Mr. LUCAS.

H.R. 782: Mr. COFFMAN.

H.R. 787: Mr. BLUMENAUER and Ms. JUDY CHU of California.

H.R. 800: Ms. SHEA-PORTER.

H.R. 804: Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. KHANNA, Mr. KEATING, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. KIHUEN, and Ms. TITUS.

H.R. 807: Ms. NORTON, Mr. LOEBSACK, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. COHEN, Mr. JONES, Mr. COLE, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. WALZ, Mr. HARPER, and Mr. GRIJALVA.

H.R. 816: Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. KEATING, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. GAETZ, Ms. NORTON, and Ms. LEE.

H.R. 820: Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. TIPTON, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Ms. LOFGREN, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. CRAMER, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. RICHMOND, Mr. DEUTCH, Mrs. BUSTOS, Ms. NORTON, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Mr. POLIS, Mr. SARBANES, and Mr. MULLIN.

H.R. 828: Mr. BYRNE, Mr. SMUCKER, Mr. WALKER, and Mr. RICE of South Carolina.

H.R. 830: Mr. BARR.

H.R. 842: Mr. QUIGLEY.

H.R. 850: Mr. FASO and Mr. YOHO.

H.R. 852: Mr. DEUTCH.

H.R. 858: Mr. RUIZ and Mr. AGUILAR.

H.R. 860: Mr. FORTENBERRY.

H.R. 866: Ms. JAYAPAL.

H.R. 868: Mr. AL GREEN of Texas.

H.R. 869: Mr. AL GREEN of Texas.

H.R. 881: Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. WELCH, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. TED LIEU of California, and Mr. COOPER.

H.R. 893: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 898: Mr. MEEKS.

H.R. 906: Mr. SMITH of Texas.

H.R. 909: Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. GABBARD, Ms. PLASKETT, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. EVANS, Mr. KIHUEN, and Ms. SEWELL of Alabama.

H.R. 926: Mr. HASTINGS and Ms. ESHOO.

H.R. 931: Mr. REED, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, and Mr. MACARTHUR.

H.R. 939: Mr. VISCLOSKY.

H.R. 943: Mr. SOTO.

H.R. 947: Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas and Mrs. DAVIS of California.

H.R. 972: Ms. TITUS.

H.R. 974: Mr. YODER, Mr. KILMER, Mr. GARAMENDI, and Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire.

H.R. 976: Mr. TAKANO and Mr. BILIRAKIS.

H.R. 997: Mr. MASSIE and Mr. JONES.

H.R. 998: Mr. SESSIONS and Mr. CHAFFETZ.

H.J. Res. 6: Mr. PALMER and Mr. BUDD.

H.J. Res. 27: Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. GROTHMAN, and Mr. RENACCI.

H.J. Res. 31: Mr. COOPER.

H.J. Res. 42: Mr. RATCLIFFE and Mr. BABIN.

H.J. Res. 53: Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas, Ms. ROSEN, and Ms. VELÁZQUEZ.

H.J. Res. 59: Ms. CHENEY and Mr. HUDSON.

H.J. Res. 66: Mr. ROE of Tennessee and Mr. SESSIONS.

H.J. Res. 67: Mr. ROE of Tennessee and Mr. SESSIONS.

H.J. Res. 69: Mr. SESSIONS and Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia.

H. Con. Res. 17: Mr. SOTO.

H. Con. Res. 21: Mr. GRIJALVA.

H. Res. 15: Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. PETERS, Mr. ROYCE of California, Mrs. BEATTY, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. DONOVAN, Ms. TENNEY, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, and Ms. SÁNCHEZ.

H. Res. 21: Mr. GALLEGO.

H. Res. 23: Ms. CLARKE of New York.

H. Res. 28: Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. COOK, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHI, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. DONOVAN, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Ms. LEE, Ms. DELAURO, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. CLAY, Ms. MENG, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. NADLER, Mr. ZELDIN, Mr. MCGOVERN, and Ms. TENNEY.

H. Res. 30: Mr. PETERS and Mr. THOMPSON of California.

H. Res. 31: Ms. DELAURO, Mr. WALZ, Mr. NADLER, Mr. DONOVAN, Mr. AGUILAR, and Ms. TENNEY.

H. Res. 47: Mr. FASO.

H. Res. 57: Ms. SPEIER.

H. Res. 60: Mr. HENSARLING.

H. Res. 72: Mr. VELA.

H. Res. 78: Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. MEEKS, and Ms. DEGETTE.

H. Res. 79: Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, and Mr. SERRANO.

H. Res. 85: Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York.

H. Res. 94: Ms. JACKSON LEE and Mr. GUTIÉRREZ.

H. Res. 102: Mr. COHEN, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. VELA, Mr. VEASEY, and Mr. MCGOVERN.

H. Res. 104: Ms. CLARKE of New York and Mr. KIHUEN.

H. Res. 105: Mr. PANETTA, Ms. MOORE, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, and Ms. ADAMS.

H. Res. 111: Ms. LEE, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. SARBANES, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.

CONGRESSIONAL EARMARKS, LIMITED TAX BENEFITS, OR LIMITED TARIFF BENEFITS

Under clause 9 of rule XXI, lists or statements on congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits were submitted as follows:

OFFERED BY MS. FOXX

The provisions warranting a referral to the Committee on Education and the Workforce in H.J. Res. 66 do not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 of rule XXI.

OFFERED BY MS. FOXX

The provisions warranting a referral to the Committee on Education and the Workforce in H.J. Res 67 do not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 of rule XXI.

PETITIONS, ETC.

Under clause 3 of rule XII, petitions and papers were laid on the clerk's desk and referred as follows:

13. The SPEAKER presented a petition of the Common Council of Albany, NY, relative to Resolution No. 11.12.17R (MC), opposing a wholesale repeal of the Affordable Care Act, urging Congress to protect Americans from losing health insurance, and recognizing health care as a basic human right; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

14. Also, a petition of the City Council of Akron, OH, relative to Resolution No. 15-2017, urging the Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell not to repeal the Affordable Care Act as this law has been so important for the health and wellbeing of Akron residents; jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, Education and the Workforce, the Judiciary, Natural Resources, House Administration, Rules, and Appropriations.

United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163 WASHINGTON, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2017 No. 25

Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon 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.

O God, who sends showers to soften the Earth, You are the source of life and joy. You have challenged us to number our days, not our weeks, months, or years. Give us wisdom to comprehend the brevity and uncertainty of our life's journey. Forgive us when we boast about tomorrow, forgetting that our times are in Your hands.

Today, bless our lawmakers and their staffs. Remind them that they belong to You and that You will order their steps. As they wrestle with complex issues, help them seek Your wisdom and guidance. Lord, empower them as stewards of Your bounty, making them faithful in the vocation to which You have called them.

We pray in Your Holy 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the nomination of Steven T. Mnuchin, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Steven T. Mnuchin, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I yield my postcloture debate time to Senator WYDEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, candidate Trump ran a populist campaign that promised so much to working America. Many of those themes were actually echoed in his inaugural address, but ever since President Trump took the oath of office, he has gone about breaking promise after promise to the working people of this country.

A predictable pattern is beginning to emerge. This President uses populist rhetoric to cover up a hard-right agenda. We still hear the remnants of candidate Trump's populism in his speeches, but his actions as President don't match up. Just an hour after he had delivered populist words on the steps of the Capitol in his inaugural address, the President signed an Executive order—his first, I believe—that jacked up the price on Americans trying to afford a mortgage.

Ever since, we here in the Senate have been working through the President's Cabinet, which is filled not with champions of the working class, not with people who came from the working class but with a slew of superrich nominees, Washington insiders, and corporate types who have spent their whole careers sticking it to the working man.

A President's Cabinet provides insight into how they will govern and what their priorities will be. The President has shown his hand by selecting the most anti-working class Cabinet we have ever seen.

The slate of nominees we will soon consider, including Steve Mnuchin for Treasury, Andrew Pudzer for Labor, and RICK MULVANEY for OMB, show the yawning gap between the President's audacious promises to working America and the practical reality of his administration, which is steadily stacking the deck against them.

This evening we will debate the nomination of Steve Mnuchin for Treasury, a Cabinet post that will have oversight over Wall Street.

Candidate Trump spent the campaign lambasting elites and criticizing Wall Street. He said:

I'm not going to let Wall Street get away with murder. Wall Street has caused tremendous problems for us.

Those are his words, but what does President Trump do? With one of his first Executive orders, he started the process to try to roll back Wall Street reform, undoing protections we put in place after the financial crisis to prevent another one from occurring. He wants to eviscerate the one agency that sticks up for consumers when they are being ripped off by payday lenders or debt collectors—the CFPB. That is a broken promise.

Candidate Trump said at his rallies: ''When you cast that ballot, just picture a Wall Street board room filled with the special interests . . . and imagine the look on their faces when you tell . . . them: 'You're fired!' ''

But President Trump told Steve Mnuchin, a Wall Street insider with

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

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decades of experience in that board room he described, ''You're hired,'' as his Treasury Secretary, no less. That is a broken promise.

A President who is a true champion for working America would never consider unwinding protections that were designed to make our financial system more secure and protect hard-working Americans from the risky practices too often seen on Wall Street.

For the Secretary of Labor, the President picked Andrew Puzder, a man who once said he prefers robots to human employees because, in his words, they are always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there is never a slip and fall, or an age, sex, or race discrimination case.

Secretary Nominee Puzder, the guy who is supposed to be protecting laborers—working people—actually said that.

I want to read it again. It galls me that this man is nominated for Labor Secretary. Why does he prefer robots to human employees? Secretary Puzder: They are always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there is never a slip and fall, or an age, sex, or race discrimination case.

This is a man who has such disdain for workers that he said the minimum wage is a big mistake, and while at CKE Restaurants, his company, he continually outsourced American jobs.

A President who is a true champion of working America would never even consider selecting a nominee like Andrew Puzder to run the Labor Department. It is another broken promise to the working men and women of America. Amazing.

What President Trump did during the campaign and said during the campaign and in his inaugural address is almost the exact opposite of what he is doing now. You could not find a more anti-labor nominee for Labor Secretary than Mr. Puzder.

Now, what about OMB? The President selected Representative MIKE MULVANEY, whose congressional career is a direct rebuke to key promises Candidate Trump made to working America. Candidate Trump promised that he was ''not going to cut Social Security like every other Republican and I'm not going to cut Medicare or Medicaid.''

That is a quote from Candidate Trump.

But who does he choose for OMB? A pick who has relentlessly argued to cut both of these programs, including bill after bill that would end both Medicare and Social Security as we know it.

Our new Health and Human Services Secretary—who, unfortunately, passed this Chamber because our Republican colleagues are just marching in lockstep to the President—is in exactly the same vein.

A true champion of senior citizens, of the working man and woman, wouldn't hire someone like Representative MULVANEY or Representative Price to take an ax to the programs they have relied on for generations.

Just 3 weeks in, the administration is stretching the boundaries of cognitive dissonance. The President still speaks like a populist but governs like a hard-right conservative. He promises to stick up for working families, but every decision he has made is rigging the system further against them.

Every American who works hard for their paycheck, who desperately deserves fairer overtime pay, who is counting on Social Security and Medicare to be there when they retire should look at this Cabinet and be very worried.

I know many working people voted for President Trump in hopes that they would change the power structure in Washington, as he promised so many times. His Cabinet is the first way to see if he really meant it. His Cabinet is the first way to measure: Is President Trump measuring up in his Presidency to what he promised in his campaign?

It turns out President Trump was using populist rhetoric to cover up a hard-right agenda, which will be carried out by this bevy of billionaires and bankers and hard-right idealogues—broken promise after broken promise.

Candidate Trump said that Washington was a place where ''the hedge fund managers, the Wall Street investors . . . and the powerful [protect] the powerful.''

''But I'm fighting for you,'' he said to working Americans.

If these first 3 weeks are any indication, that is a broken promise.

The nominations of Steve Mnuchin, Representative MULVANEY, and Andrew Puzder represent broken promise after broken promise after broken promise. We Democrats, over the next several weeks, will make clear to the American people, as we continue to debate these nominations, that what President Trump said on the campaign trail is not what he is doing as President. He is breaking his promises to the working people of America.

Many working people who voted for Mr. Trump are depending on him to do what he said in the campaign. Reading the tea leaves of the first 3 weeks, working Americans are going to be deeply, deeply disappointed over the course of his Presidency.

Thank you. 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. WYDEN. 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. WYDEN. Mr. President, when you serve as the Secretary of Treasury, you are charged with a variety of responsibilities, and right at the center of your duties is to address taxes. This is an area that the nominee to head the Treasury Department, Mr. Steven Mnuchin, waded into very early on after his nomination became public.

News leaked on November 29 of last year that Mr. Mnuchin was the President-elect's choice for Secretary of the Treasury. The very next day, Mr. Mnuchin appeared on a CNBC program and confirmed his selection. During an extended interview with CNBC, he introduced what I have come to call the Mnuchin rule. I will quote Mr. Mnuchin directly with respect to what he said: ''Any reductions we have in upper income taxes would be offset by less deductions, so there would be no absolute tax cut for the upper class.''

I will repeat that last part of the Mnuchin rule: ''no absolute tax cut for the upper class.''

Mr. Mnuchin is the President's nominee for Treasury Secretary. This is a position that has been held by American economic giants like Alexander Hamilton, Albert Gallatin, Salmon Chase, Henry Morgenthau and Lloyd Bentsen. When a nominee for Treasury Secretary makes a pledge like Mr. Mnuchin's, it really ought to mean something. It ought to stand for something.

Unfortunately, it already looks as though the Mnuchin rule is on the ropes. The very first act of the 115th Congress and a unified Republican government, repealing the Affordable Care Act, shatters the Mnuchin rule.

The Affordable Care Act repeal scheme that Republicans kicked off months ago, in my view, is a Trojan horse of tax breaks for the most fortunate. Nobody outside the top 4 or 5 percent of earners would get any of that break. Most of it would go to households in the top 1 percent of earners—even then, the top one-tenth of 1 percent—and it is paid for by taking insurance coverage and tax cuts for health care literally out of the hands of millions of working people.

Then it is back for another whack at the Mnuchin rule later this year. Last week, the New York Times published a story talking about Mr. Mnuchin, which said that ''his guarantee appears impossible to fulfill either under the tax overhaul that the House Republicans are pushing or similar, sketchier proposals that Mr. Trump has offered.''

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the article titled ''Treasury Nominee Vows No Tax Cut for Rich. Math Says the Opposite.''

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

[Feb. 9, 2017]

TREASURY NOMINEE VOWS NO TAX CUT FOR RICH. MATH SAYS THE OPPOSITE.

(By Patricia Cohen)

The newly christened ''Mnuchin rule''—the assurance given by the Treasury nominee Steven T. Mnuchin that ''there would be no absolute tax cut for the upper class''—seems as if it was made to be broken.

Mr. Mnuchin initially made the statement during an interview on CNBC in November,

after President Trump chose him for the cabinet. At Mr. Mnuchin's confirmation hearing, Senator Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, rebranded the comment as a ''rule,'' transforming a throwaway line into a formal pledge.

Whether it will be kept may become clearer in two or three weeks—the timing Mr. Trump mentioned Thursday for delivering a ''phenomenal'' tax plan.

Although Mr. Mnuchin said any rate reductions at the top would be offset by the closing of fat loopholes, his guarantee appears impossible to fulfill either under the tax overhaul that the House Republicans are pushing or similar, sketchier proposals that Mr. Trump has offered.

Redesigning the tax code with an eye fixed on lower rates has been a Republican mission for decades, and one that Mr. Trump adopted. That prospect, combined with a promised regulatory retreat, has pumped up the stock market and fueled optimism among business leaders.

At the same time, the president has raised expectations among his working-class supporters that ''the rich will pay their fair share,'' and that ''special-interest loopholes that have been so good for Wall Street investors, and for people like me, but unfair to American workers'' will be eliminated. Mr. Mnuchin, soon to be one of the administration's top economic policy officials, promised ''a big tax cut for the middle class.''

Yet analyses of the president's and the House Republicans' plans consistently conclude that the wealthy will receive the largest tax cuts by far.

Start with the House blueprint, which at the moment is the closest thing to a working draft that exists. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, a joint project of the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution, found ''high-income taxpayers would receive the biggest cuts, both in dollar terms and as a percentage of income.''

How big? ''Three-quarters of the tax cuts would benefit the top 1 percent of taxpayers,'' if the plan were put into effect this year, it said. The highest-income households—the top 0.1 percent—would get ''an average tax cut of about $1.3 million, 16.9 percent of after-tax income.''

Those in the middle fifth of incomes would get a tax cut of almost $260, or 0.5 percent, while the poorest would get about $50.

That split would worsen down the road, the Tax Policy Center says: ''In 2025 the top 1 percent of households would receive nearly 100 percent of the total tax reduction.''

Those wary of any potential liberal bias could turn to the conservative-leaning Tax Foundation. Its analysis found a smaller gap between the wealthy and everyone else, but a gap nonetheless. The foundation concluded that four out of five taxpayers would see only a 0.2 to 0.5 percent increase in after-tax income, while those in the top 1 percent of the income scale would save at least 10 times as much, or 5.3 percent. That's nearly $40,000 extra for those at the top, compared to $67 for those smack dab in the middle of the income scale.

''The Mnuchin rule is already being broken as Republicans look to strip away hundreds of billions of dollars in Affordable Care Act tax credits for working Americans to pay for a giant tax break for the wealthy,'' Senator Wyden said. ''Bottom line is it's unfair to cut benefits that the middle class depends on, all so the wealthy pay a lower rate.''

Mr. Mnuchin did not respond to a request for comment.

Republicans argue their plan makes everyone a winner—that lower taxes will unleash an enormous swell of economic growth, raising wages, incomes and tax revenue all around.

The historical record does not offer much support for the claim that slashing taxes for the most affluent creates growth. Yet even assuming the rosiest of forecasts, the top 1 percent, according to the Tax Foundation, would still receive close to a $100,000 tax cut—32 times as much as a middle-income family.

Mr. Mnuchin has offered his own formula for adhering to the standard he laid down, explaining that ''any reductions we have in upper-income taxes would be offset by less deductions.''

That would require some otherworldly mathematical magic, however.

Consider the list of proposals that would reduce taxes on the rich:

Cut the top income to 33 percent, from 39.6 percent.

Cut taxes on capital gains, 70 percent of which flow to the top 1 percent.

Eliminate the estate tax, which applies to a tiny number of people, couples that have estates bigger than $10.8 million.

Eliminate the 3.8 percent surtax on high earners' investment income that has been used to subsidize health care for poorer Americans.

End the alternative minimum tax, which currently limits deductions for high earners.

Lower taxes on cash flow and income that passes from small businesses to their owners, which also primarily benefits wealthier Americans.

Now, what deductions could be eliminated that would offset all those cuts at the top? There aren't many, said Alan Viard, an economist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. If Republicans insist on lowering taxes on top wages, capital gains, estates and cash-flow and pass-through income as advertised, ''there's not a lot of latitude to limit itemized deductions further,'' Mr. Viard said.

Any plan to curb itemized deductions would be partly offset by Mr. Trump's plan to increase the standard deduction. Curtailing mortgage deductions for the most expensive homes is probably a good idea, Mr. Viard said, but that isn't going to do much to raise revenue from those at the top of the income pyramid, and the deduction is already roughly limited to the interest paid on $1 million in mortgage debt.

Such alternative ideas, however, assume that the Mnuchin rule will have a meaningful impact on what the White House will propose or Congress will debate. Not everyone is convinced that it will. As Mr. Viard said, ''I don't know how much interest there is in fulfilling that statement by Mnuchin, however it's interpreted.''

Mr. WYDEN. After breaking the Mnuchin rule once, the majority is now planning to fast-track a second tax break for the wealthy. This one will be even larger; in fact, it could be 10 times bigger or more. My guess is that a lot of Americans are wondering what has happened to all the campaign talk about fixing the Tax Code and really going out there and standing up for the working people. As the Republican nominee, the President said he was the guy to repair the country's broken tax system. The particulars of the Trump plan were buried deep in the business pages and on his Web site, but the broad strokes of the message were pitched in rallies across the Nation: Donald Trump alone knew how to do the job because he had taken advantage of the rules himself, and he was ready to crack down on those who weren't paying their fair share.

One of the few specifics Donald Trump offered on the stump was that he would close the carried interest loophole. That, of course, has been a favorite of investment fund managers. It would be great if it were actually true. In reality, the promise turned out to be pretty much just a head fake. Rather than closing the loophole and asking investment fund managers to pay their fair share, the Trump plan actually gives them a 25-percent tax cut. In fact, the Trump plan slashes tax rates for corporations and the wealthy across the board at a cost of trillions of dollars.

The President and Mr. Mnuchin might defend this plan by claiming it is a tax cut for the middle class, so I want to spend just a few minutes checking in with that part of the plan. If we read the fine print, we will notice that one of the Trump tax plan's big casualties is something called head of household status. That is a particularly important benefit for a lot of middle-income taxpayers because it reduces their bills. What would it mean for head of household status to go away? Millions of working Americans, mostly single parents, would get hit with tax increases.

Furthermore, the Trump plan eliminates key personal exemptions for millions of other middle-income families. It pushes a lot of families into higher tax brackets than they are in today. The administration touts its proposals for a larger standard deduction and a new child care tax credit as the cure-all for its tax increases on the middle class and on working people, but the math just doesn't add up. Families who are struggling to get ahead today are going to pay higher taxes tomorrow.

So let's recap the Trump tax plan: a multitrillion-dollar tax break for the wealthy and corporations and a gut punch of higher taxes for working families.

At this point, it would be generous to say that the Mnuchin rule is now on life support. If we wanted to design a tax plan to push more Americans out of the economic winners circle, the Trump plan is what you would come up with. When I look at the Trump tax plan that Mr. Mnuchin would be in charge of spearheading, it looks to me as though the administration has zero interest in cleaning out the rot that is right at the heart of America's tax system.

Here is what it is all about, in my view. The Tax Code today is a tale of two systems. If you are a wage earner—a welder in Portland or a nurse in Louisiana—your taxes come straight out of your paycheck. They are compulsory—no special deals. You can even see the numbers right on your pay stub. Once or twice a month, out it comes. There are no special tax-dodging strategies or loopholes to winnow down the tax bill for the welder in Portland or the nurse in Louisiana. You can't set up a John Doe, Inc., in a Cayman Islands P.O. box to shield your income from taxes.

But the rules are different for the powerful and the well connected. At their disposal are huge armies of lawyers and accountants who specialize in tax games. They specialize in tax tricks. With the right advice, the most fortunate individuals and corporations in the country can decide how much tax to pay and when to pay it. If anybody wonders why people in America feel the tax system is rigged and the rules are stacked against them, this is a big part of the answer. I intend to talk more about that, but I want to come back to highlight the difference between the welder in Portland and the nurse in Louisiana.

When those hard-working Americans are out there working for a wage and once or twice a month have their taxes taken right out of their paycheck, they know they aren't getting anything special. It is compulsory. It is mandatory. They see it on their paychecks. Yet they get lots of news coverage and articles and the like, and they will see that for those who are fortunate, instead of paying taxes in a mandatory and compulsory way, they pretty much get to decide what they are going to pay, when they are going to pay it, and maybe nothing at all. It seems to me that as we look at the nominee for Treasury Secretary, we get a pretty good example of how it does play out in terms of taxes for those fortunate few and how his taxes stand in sharp contrast to that welder in Portland or that nurse in Louisiana.

Not long after ending a 17-year run at Goldman Sachs, Mr. Mnuchin opened a hedge fund called Dune Capital in 2004. He set up an outpost in Anguilla and the Cayman Islands. That is not a move you make for the infrastructure or the ease of the commute. It is about a zero-percent tax rate.

During Mr. Mnuchin's hearing, he claimed that having those overseas funds benefited American nonprofits. When he testified in front of the Finance Committee, he said: You know, the main thing we are doing with these overseas funds is we are helping churches and pension funds. But documents from the Securities and Exchange Commission show something quite different. In some cases, 100 percent of his investors were from outside of the United States, and setting up overseas allowed Mr. Mnuchin to help them avoid paying taxes. What was the end effect? Dune Capital was heavily invested in movies. So millions of dollars in profits from Hollywood exports, like the movie ''Avatar,'' were funneled to an offshore web of entities and investors, giving him the chance to skirt a U.S. tax bill.

At a more recent point in his career, Mr. Mnuchin's bank was up for a merger. The deal had the potential to be a personal windfall for him and a small circle of others. A foundation Mr. Mnuchin chaired reportedly used tax-exempt dollars to fund a write-in campaign pushing for the deal's approval. During the public comment period on a potential merger, this is pretty much the equivalent of stuffing the ballot box.

Now, as a nominee for a Cabinet position, Mr. Mnuchin could be in line for a special elective Federal tax deferral on money made by selling stocks and bonds. That is the very definition of getting to pay what you want, when you want. We hear a frequent and common defense when these kinds of tax tricks are brought into public view. It is true that the people who use them are following the laws on the books, but the outrage in our tax system, as I have said on this Senate floor, is what is legal. That is the real outrage with the American tax system, and it is outrageous that the Senate has allowed obvious gamesmanship to stay legal. It is outrageous that the administration and its chosen nominee for Treasury have shown no interest in changing it.

When you are the Treasury Secretary, one of your paramount obligations is overseeing taxes. The last time the United States overhauled its Tax Code—this was in 1986—the Reagan Treasury Department played a huge role in that effort, and one of the core principles of that reform was treating wages and wealth the same way. Democrats and Republicans came together to pass a tax reform bill based on fairness. It said that the wage earner—that nurse in Louisiana or welder in Portland—their income and the income of those who made their money in finance and on Wall Street and the like would be treated the same. I see no indication that this administration is prepared to repeat that formula.

The campaign promise to fix the broken, dysfunctional Tax Code—Donald Trump's campaign promise—lured in a lot of voters. When I heard that Mnuchin rule the first time, I said that sounds pretty good—no net tax break for those who are the most fortunate. That sounds pretty appealing. The tax plans that the administration and Republicans in Congress have on offer now will not undo the disgusting unfairness that is right at the heart of the American Tax Code. In fact, it is only going to get worse.

This issue has to be at the center of the debate on Mr. Mnuchin's nomination. I am particularly troubled by the fact that the evidence shows that the Mnuchin rule is already on the ropes.

I intend to oppose this nominee. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

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.

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

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

NOMINATION OF DAVID SHULKIN

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support for the nomination of Dr. David Shulkin to be the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I believe his impressive record of service in both the public and private health care sectors as well as his firm grasp of VA health care issues make him extraordinarily well qualified to lead the Department through the coming period of major reforms and continuing transformation.

Dr. Shulkin has served in numerous executive roles at hospitals across the country, including Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City, the University of Pennsylvania Health System, and the Atlantic Rehabilitation Institute. In fact, he has been named one of the top 100 Physician Leaders of Hospitals and Health Systems and one of the 50 Most Influential Physician Executives in the country.

In 2015, Dr. Shulkin brought his extensive experience in the private sector to the Department of Veterans Affairs and served as the VA Under Secretary for Health. Last year, I had the opportunity to host Dr. Shulkin in my hometown of Caribou, ME, as he toured the community-based outpatient clinic and our local hospital, Cary Medical Center, to see the innovative work being done there to provide veterans with top-quality health care closer to where they live.

Cary Medical Center partners with the VA through the Access Received Closer to Home or ARCH Program to provide veterans in Northern Maine with high-quality care, including specialty care close to home and close to their families, rather than forcing them to drive 250 or more miles to receive their care at the Togus VA Medical Center in Augusta, the location of Maine's only VA hospital.

This partnership between Cary Medical Center and the VA has been a huge success, with an approval rating from our veterans exceeding 90 percent. Last spring, when we were faced with the potential expiration of the ARCH Program, Dr. Shulkin, at my invitation, came to Maine and announced his commitment to ensure that veterans using this innovative program in our State would maintain seamless community care. He has kept his word.

During his visit to Maine, Dr. Shulkin also toured the Togus VA Medical Center, the oldest VA facility in the Nation and the community-based outpatient clinic in Bangor. I would note that he drove the 4 hours from Augusta, where the VA hospital is located, to Caribou to get a better sense of the distances in our State. Right now, when we are in the midst of a fierce blizzard, you can imagine how important it is for veterans in need of care to be able to access that care close to home in an emergency.

I was truly impressed, and remain truly impressed, with Dr. Shulkin's understanding of the needs of rural veterans and the challenges of providing health care in rural settings. While in Maine, Dr. Shulkin listened to veterans health care providers, VSO advocates, and the VA staff alike to ensure that our veterans received the care they

have earned through their service to our Nation.

In fact, he remained in Caribou and had a town meeting in which he heard from people representing a variety of views but all of whom encouraged him to continue this wonderful program. Dr. Shulkin's nomination to be VA Secretary has drawn support from our veterans service organizations throughout the country, including the American Legion, the VFW, the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, and the Vietnam Veterans of America.

That does not surprise me because he has demonstrated, in very concrete ways, his commitment to the veterans we are serving. At a time when bipartisan consensus, unfortunately, has been all too rare in this Chamber, Dr. Shulkin's nomination has been one of the few areas where Republicans and Democrats have found common ground. His nomination was approved unanimously by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

During this time, when crucial reforms and organizational changes are necessary to ensure consistent, high-quality care for our Nation's veterans, it is critical that the VA have a talented, experienced, and committed leader to spearhead the Department's transformation as we seek to improve the quality and timeliness of health care for our veterans.

Dr. Shulkin is an excellent nominee and I urge all of my colleagues to support his confirmation.

Seeing no one seeking recognition, I suggest the absent of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, it is observed that we are being asked to confirm a Treasury Secretary who helped bring about the 2008 financial crisis and profited off the misery that followed.

During his campaign, President Trump promised to crack down on Wall Street abuses. In one of his campaign ads, the President said that the CEO of Goldman Sachs was part of a ''global elite'' that was ''robbing our working class.'' He said that on Wall Street, ''It's the powerful protecting only the powerful.''

Given his campaign promises, it is astounding that President Trump nominated Steve Mnuchin, someone whose business record embodies the worst abuses from the financial crisis, to serve as Secretary of the Treasury.

In the fall of 2008, when I served in the U.S. House, then-Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson came to Capitol Hill and painted a dire picture. He told us that without drastic intervention by Congress and the White House, the entire global financial system would collapse. The situation was so dire, he argued, that we could not even pause to provide additional, meaningful relief to the millions of families across the country facing home foreclosures.

In the years that followed, we learned a lot more about just how bad things were. Many banks sold mortgages to people who couldn't afford them, packaged those mortgages into complex financial instruments, colluded with ratings agencies, and sold those ''products'' as solid investments.

The American people stepped in with hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out Wall Street. But without effective, broad laws in place before the financial crisis to prevent predatory lending, millions of people lost their homes and trillions of dollars in household wealth. Many of those victims have yet to recover.

That was bad enough as it was unfolding, but in the years that followed, we learned more and more about the numerous abuses these banks perpetrated on the American people.

After years of pushing subprime loans on minority homeowners who couldn't afford them, foreclosures devastated minority communities across the country. According to a 2010 study by the Center for Responsible Lending, minority homeowners were 70 percent more likely to lose their homes in foreclosure proceedings.

Many banks also violated judicial foreclosure proceedings when they signed hundreds of thousands of foreclosure documents without reviewing them, also known as robo-signing.

Some of my colleagues might argue that it isn't worth rehashing this devastating economic history, but I disagree because today we will be asked to vote for a Treasury nominee whose questionable business practices earned him the title of ''Foreclosure King.''

As a senior executive at Goldman Sachs for 17 years, Steve Mnuchin was an evangelist for the types of financial transactions—credit default swaps and collateralized debt obligations—that crashed the economy in 2008. He said these instruments were ''an extremely positive development in terms of being able to finance different parts of the economy and different businesses effectively.'' What was essentially just business to him devastated the economy and the lives of millions of people.

As the CEO of OneWest, Mnuchin was deeply involved in subprime lending and was responsible for tens of thousands of foreclosures across the country. Under Mr. Mnuchin's leadership, OneWest was among the worst offenders in robo-signing foreclosure documents. While he denied this fact during his confirmation hearing, a vice president at OneWest admitted to signing 750 documents per week while spending less than 30 seconds on each one. In other words, he was very busy robo-signing these documents.

Under Mr. Mnuchin's leadership, a OneWest subsidiary, Financial Freedom, foreclosed on more than 16,000 seniors who were living on fixed incomes and who had reverse mortgages with that company. In one case, the company foreclosed on a 90-year-old woman's home over a 27-cent debt.

Hundreds of families across Hawaii who had mortgages with OneWest felt the impact of Steve Mnuchin's business practices personally.

In 2013, I received a letter from Suzanne on the Big Island. Suzanne is a retired Navy civilian. She depends on her disability and retirement income to afford her modest home in Hilo. She had her mortgage through OneWest. When she wrote to me, her home was in court-ordered mediation pending foreclosure. Suzanne went into mediation in good faith, assuming that OneWest would assist her with a loan modification. Well, she was wrong. Suzanne and OneWest agreed that before she signed any modification, she would receive a written offer that included the full terms of the agreement. But during their second mediation meeting, in violation of the agreement, OneWest told Suzanne that she owed $30,000 more than her records showed and made a unilateral offer without disclosing any of the terms, contrary to what they had agreed to.

Suzanne wisely refused to accept the so-called offer. At the time that she wrote to me, OneWest was pushing a judge to proceed with her foreclosure. ''I can afford my home,'' she wrote. ''I want to keep my home, but the difference between $1,300 and $1,500 a month is huge.''

OneWest has billions and is considering going public this year.

She went on to say: ''They have made unreasonable offers, lost paperwork, ignored requests. All the nightmares you hear about on the news, well, consider me a poster child.''

Suzanne asked us to write to Steve Mnuchin on her behalf, even though she knew that OneWest had a record of hanging homeowners like her out to dry. She said: ''It seems to me that Mr. Mnuchin was one of the architects of our meltdown.'' She is right.

There are tens of thousands of stories from OneWest customers like Suzanne across the country, and Mr. Mnuchin is responsible for each one of them as CEO of OneWest. Now President Trump is asking us to confirm Mr. Mnuchin to serve as Treasury Secretary.

Throughout his campaign, President Trump made it clear that he wants to dismantle Dodd-Frank, eliminate the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and roll back financial regulations that would prevent another financial crisis. As Treasury Secretary, Mr. Mnuchin would be charged with implementing this agenda.

Credible economists have warned that we could end up in another financial crisis. My question is, Who would a Secretary Mnuchin try to save—Wall Street or the millions of people who will be adversely impacted? His record shows which path Steve Mnuchin

would choose. That is why I call on my colleagues to oppose this nomination.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later today we will welcome Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the Capitol. Canada is more than just our neighbor. Canada is our ally. I am looking forward to a productive discussion with him.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, after much unnecessary delay from Senate Democrats, we will finally confirm two more key Cabinet nominees this evening—Steve Mnuchin as Treasury Secretary and David Shulkin as Veterans Affairs Secretary. The President has selected two well qualified candidates to lead the charge on strengthening our economy and providing veterans with more of the care they deserve. I will have more to say on Mr. Mnuchin and Dr. Shulkin tomorrow, but for now I look forward to their confirmation this evening.

After we work with these nominees, we will continue to put the rest of President Trump's Cabinet in place.

It has been really disappointing to see the historic level of obstruction by Senate Democrats. I would like to remind our colleagues across the aisle of the very real consequences their actions have on our country and on the men and women forced to work grueling hours to keep the Senate running overnight last week.

There are so many who worked around the clock to keep the Senate operating and I would like to offer some words of thanks now.

First, I would like to start with our floor staff led by Laura Dove on the Republican side and Gary Myrick on the Democratic side. They, along with the cloakroom staff and floor teams, worked nonstop to allow us to keep the floor running smoothly. So I want to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

I would also like to recognize the Senate pages, who didn't miss a beat just 2 weeks into their new job. They are Hailey Maggelet, Cameron Mabry, Shelby Hogan, Elizabeth Flachbart, Chris An, Sammy Potter, Sydney Jones, Cynthia Yue, Avery Beard, Wade Quigley, Eddie Owens, Hannah Seawell, Chloe Smith, Bryant Reynolds, Taylor Ball, Mitchell Heiman, Drew Beussink, Harrison Bushnell, Lauren Cavignano, Mitchell Durbin, Allie Glassman, Pablo Gomez Garcia, Julia Graham, Savannah Hampton, Argenis Herrera, Riley Johnson, Holly Newman, Colin Solomon, Katrina Turner, and Kayla Zhu. I know we are all impressed by these young men and women, and we all appreciate the role they play in our Nation's government.

There are so many others, like Sergeant at Arms Frank Larkin and his Deputy, Jim Morhard, who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep the Capitol running smoothly. I would like to thank their team: the doorkeepers, the Senate recording and television studio, the Press Galleries, the IT and technical support, and the help desk, the security and operations teams, the executive office, and the Capitol exchange operators, who oversee the many calls that come into Senate offices. Many of these teams provided support literally around the clock, and we are thankful.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the Capitol Police, headed by Chief of Police Matthew Verderosa. These men and women worked overtime to ensure the safety of the Senate Chamber and the entire Capitol as Members and their staffs worked through the night. We thank them for their service and for keeping us safe every day.

I would also like to thank the Secretary of the Senate, Julie Adams, Assistant Secretary Mary Suit Jones, and their entire team.

Specifically, I would like to thank the following offices and staffers, many of whom who worked for more than 50 straight hours: the Official Reporters of Debates, which include Patrick Renzi, Susie Nguyen, Julia Jones, Mary Carpenter, Patrice Boyd, Octavio Colominas, Alice Haddow, Andrea Huston, Carol Darche, Desirae Jura, Megan McKenzie, Wendy Caswell, Diane Dorhamer, Mark Stuart, and Julie Bryan; the Captioning Services team, which includes Sandra Schumm, Brenda Jamerson, Doreen Chendorain, Jennifer Smolka, and Laurie Harris.

In addition to the offices I just named, I would also like to recognize the following legislative offices: The Bill Clerk, the Enrolling Clerk, the Executive Clerk, the Journal Clerk, the Legislative Clerk, the Daily Digest, and, of course, the Parliamentarians.

Lastly, I would like to thank our subway drivers and the Government Publishing Office, which worked tirelessly to get the RECORD printed.

We are also grateful for the long hours and sacrifice that each of these offices and staffers made last week. Of course, it was completely unnecessary but, nevertheless, they were here through the night.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. President, now, one final matter. When President Clinton took office in 1993, he named his first nominee to the Supreme Court, Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Ginsburg's nomination was not without controversy. She had argued for positions that are still quite controversial today. For example, she had questioned the constitutionality of laws against bigamy because they implicated private relationships. For the same reason, she had opined that there might be a constitutional right to prostitution. She always advocated for coeducational prisons and juvenile facilities. She even proposed abolishing Mother's Day.

So you can understand why Senators wanted to get her views on issues that might come before her as a Justice, but when pressed at her confirmation hearing, here is what she had to say:

> You are well aware that I came to this proceeding to be judged as a judge, not as an advocate. Because I am and hope to continue to be a judge, it would be wrong for me to say or preview in this legislative chamber how I would cast my vote on questions the Supreme Court may be called upon to decide. Were I to rehearse here what I would say and how I would reason on such questions, I would act injudiciously. Judges in our system are bound to decide concrete cases, not abstract issues.

She went on:

> A judge sworn to decide impartially can offer no forecasts, no hints, for that would show not only disregard for the specifics of a particular case, it would display disdain for the entire judicial process.

So summing it up, she said: No hints, no forecasts, no previews, and that is what has become known as the Ginsburg standard. Supreme Court nominees of Presidents of both parties have adhered to it.

For example, President Clinton's second nominee, Stephen Breyer, noted that ''there is nothing more important to a judge than to have an open mind and to listen carefully to arguments,'' and so he told the Judiciary Committee he did ''not want to predict or commit myself on an open issue that I feel is going to come up in the Court.'' That meant, he said, not discussing ''how'' a ''right applies, where it applies, under what circumstances'' it applies.

When his nomination to be Chief Justice was pending, John Roberts said that adhering to the principle embodied in the Ginsburg standard is ''of great importance not only to potential Justices but to judges, which most nominees to the Supreme Court already are.''

''We're sensitive,'' he said, ''to the need to maintain the independence and integrity of the Court.''

Let me repeat that. The Chief Justice said this principle was necessary ''to maintain the independence and integrity of the Court.''

He then explained how the Ginsburg standard helps maintain that independence. Nominees, he said, ''go on the Court not as a delegate from [the Judiciary] Committee with certain commitments laid out and how they're going to approach cases.''

Rather, ''[T]hey go on the Court as Justices who will approach cases with an open mind and decide those cases in light of the arguments presented, the record presented, and the rule of law.

And the litigants before them,'' he concluded, ''have a right to expect that and to have the appearance of that as well. That has been the approach that all of the Justices have taken.''

At the time, my colleague from New York and other Senate Democrats were upset that the Chief Justice followed Justice Ginsburg's approach—even though many of them didn't complain when she refused to preview or prejudge legal issues during her confirmation hearing.

But guess who came to the Chief Justice's defense. Justice Ginsburg. She felt compelled to depart from protocol and weigh in on the matter. She said: ''Judge Roberts was unquestionably right'' in refusing to preview or prejudge legal issues at his confirmation hearing.

Both of President Obama's nominees adhered to the Ginsburg standard as well. His first nominee, Sonia Sotomayor, explained that what her ''experience on the trial court and the appellate court have reinforced for me is that the process of judging is a process of keeping an open mind. It's the process,'' she continued, ''of not coming to a decision with a prejudgment ever of an outcome. . . . '' That process, she said, applied not only to the cases that would come before her on the Supreme Court if she were confirmed but that could come before her in her then-current capacity as a circuit court judge.

Most Senators of both parties have respected the Ginsburg standard.

For example, during her hearing, Senator LEAHY told Justice Ginsburg that he ''certainly'' didn't want her ''to have to lay out a test here in the abstract which might determine what [her] vote or [her] test would be in a case [she had] yet to see that may well come before the Supreme Court.'' Even my friend from New York has recognized the Ginsburg Standard is a ''grand tradition.''

The far left has been pushing my counterpart and other Senate Democrats to oppose anyone—anyone—whom the President nominates to the Supreme Court. So the Ginsburg standard is given way to the double standard.

My friend from New York now says this Supreme Court nominee has to pass some ''special test''—some ''special test''—to show his judicial independence. He says Judge Gorsuch, a highly respected, experienced jurist, must preview his approach or even prejudge legal issues that could come before him, like whether the President's Executive order on refugee vetting is ''constitutional.'' This is clearly an effort to get Judge Gorsuch to prejudge not a matter that could be in the Federal courts but to prejudge on a matter that is in the Federal courts right now.

Senator SCHUMER is not alone in wanting to replace the Ginsburg standard with a new double standard. His colleague who serves on the Judiciary Committee, the senior Senator from Connecticut, also says that Judge Gorsuch, for the first time with Supreme Court nominees, has some ''special obligation''—some ''special obligation''—to give his views on ''specific issues,'' without the benefit of the judicial process that Justice Sotomayor noted was so important.

Under our colleagues' approach, there is no need to review the record in the case, no need to do any legal research, no need to hear the best arguments from each side, no need to deliberate with your colleagues on the bench to arrive at a correct result. Nope. Just give a driveby legal conclusion on a complicated and consequential matter of constitutional law.

Let's be clear about what is going on here. This new ''special test'' and ''special obligation'' aren't about ensuring Judge Gorsuch's judicial independence; they are about compromising it. Our friends on the other side of the aisle want to constrain his ability to rule in a later case according to the facts and the law by holding him to what he said in their meetings or what he said under oath at his hearing.

In the upside down world of my Democratic friends, Judge Gorsuch must lose his judicial independence—both as a sitting circuit court judge and as a future Supreme Court Justice—in order to prove his judicial independence.

As Justice Ginsburg and Justice Breyer and Justice Sotomayor all noted, the process of judging is about having an open mind, seeing what the facts are in a particular case, hearing the arguments on both sides, and making what the judge believes is the correct ruling according to the law. It is not about a judge hemming himself in before a legislative body by previewing how he would view a legal issue, or, as Senator LEAHY noted, announcing the legal test he might apply in a particular case, and it is definitely not about that judge saying whether something in the abstract is constitutional.

So under this double standard, Senators must respect the need for judicial independence of the Supreme Court nominees of Democratic Presidents, even when those nominees espouse views that are far, far outside the mainstream, like suggesting there is a constitutional right to prostitution or urging the abolition of Mother's Day.

Under this double standard, Senators can compromise the judicial independence of clearly mainstream Supreme Court nominees of Republican Presidents, even when those nominees are, like Judge Gorsuch, well-known proponents of maintaining judicial independence, who have a long record on the issue.

That is not just my view of Judge Gorsuch's commitment to judicial independence, by the way; that is according to prominent Democratic lawyers like President Obama's top litigator in the Supreme Court.

This Democratic double standard, though, is not surprising. Recall that the Democratic leader said he was prepared to keep Justice Scalia's seat open for 4 years—4 years. That was made difficult by the nomination of an outstanding candidate like Judge Gorsuch.

So our colleague came up with a new supermajority standard for his confirmation—a standard that didn't exist for seven of the eight Justices currently on the Court—a fact my friend later had to admit.

The Democratic double standard on requiring nominees to prejudge issues is just the latest attempt to come up with something, with anything—anything—to justify opposing an exceptional nominee like Judge Gorsuch. Judge Gorsuch is one of the most impressive, most highly qualified nominees to ever come before us. He has won kudos from across the political spectrum. Even the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee couldn't help but praise him.

Instead of appreciating that our new President has nominated an accomplished, independent, and thoughtful jurist, Democrats are viewing this outstanding nominee as a political problem. Their base is demanding total resistance to everything, but they can't find a good reason to oppose Judge Gorsuch on the merits. They are in a pickle.

So we have this attempt to replace the bipartisan Ginsburg standard with the double standard. I understand the difficulty of their situation, but the standard we are going to follow with this nominee is the same one—the same one—we followed for Ruth Bader Ginsburg and every other Justice on the Court since then: no hints, no forecasts, no previews, fair consideration, and an up-or-down vote.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HATCH. 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. HATCH. Mr. President, we are currently in the midst of the longest transitional leadership gap at the Department of Treasury in our Nation's history. The Senate has never let this much time go without a Treasury Secretary. In fact, the Senate has never left Treasury without a confirmed Secretary in between administrations for this long. Yet, despite the obvious need to fill this position, we have had to deal with continual and pointless delays, courtesy of some of our colleagues.

I will not begrudge any Senator for taking advantage of the privileges offered to them under the rules of the Senate; however, I think we have ample reason to question some of our colleagues' judgment and priorities with regard to how we have dealt with the nomination of Steven Mnuchin to the Office of Treasury Secretary.

Let's get the obvious points out of the way. Mr. Mnuchin has 30 years' experience working in a variety of capacities in the financial sector. He has experience managing large and complicated private-sector enterprises and in negotiating difficult compromises and making tough decisions—and being accountable for those decisions. He has the support of a number of key organizations and associations within the finance industry, and experts across the ideological spectrum have endorsed his nomination.

Long story short: Under any objective standard, Mr. Mnuchin has ample experience, credentials, and qualifications for this important position. Yet my colleagues have done all they can under the rules—even to the point of casting aside some longstanding customs and traditions of the Senate—in order to delay his confirmation.

I will not relive the entire chain of events that got this nomination through the Finance Committee, bringing us to this point. For now, I would urge my colleagues to look fairly at the record. In every case, as the committee processed his nomination, Mr. Mnuchin responded to questions and allegations with full and complete answers and demonstrated no signs of acting or responding in bad faith toward the committee or its members.

People are free, I suppose, to walk into the confirmation process with an assumption of bad faith. But throughout my time in the Senate—and keep in mind, I have been here a long time—that isn't usually how we operate around here.

My colleagues on the other side have put forward a number of claims and allegations about Mr. Mnuchin. They have essentially thrown everything, including the kitchen sink, at this nominee in a desperate attempt to block his confirmation. Well, so far, nothing has worked. That is because none of the allegations my colleagues have raised can withstand even a modest amount of scrutiny. But that hasn't stopped some of them from trying.

I have found it particularly interesting to see my friends raise concerns about matters that did not bother them in the least when it came to voting for Democratic nominees for Treasury Secretary. Indeed, with regard to Mr. Mnuchin, my Democratic colleagues have created a wholly new set of standards from those that were applied to the most recent previous Treasury Secretary. Many issues that seemed to be of little or no concern to my colleagues and my friends on the other side during the confirmation process for Secretary Jack Lew have been considered disqualifying for Mr. Mnuchin. By the way, many of these problems existed in the prior Treasury Secretary too. But we, in good faith, brought him through and allowed him to go through without a lot of fuss and bother.

Let me review just a few of the discrepancies that are claimed.

Mr. Mnuchin placed some investments offshore, in full conformity with the law and not for the purpose of avoiding U.S. taxes. But my friends have simply asserted that no one uses offshore financial vehicles unless they are trying to avoid U.S. taxes, and, therefore, Mr. Mnuchin's investments disqualify him to serve as Treasury Secretary. Yet Secretary Lew, prior to his confirmation, actually made investments in the famous Ugland House in the Cayman Islands, which President Obama described as ''outrageous'' and ''the biggest tax scheme in the world.'' My Democratic colleagues knew this, but did not care, and happily confirmed Secretary Lew with hardly a mention of this matter. We allowed him to go through, in the interest of civility and getting along with our colleagues.

Democrats have argued that Mr. Mnuchin unduly profited from the housing market collapse. Yet Secretary Lew, prior to his nomination, ran ''proprietary trading'' groups at Citigroup, where they invested in a hedge fund that bet heavily on the collapse of the housing market. My Democratic colleagues knew this, but did not care, and happily confirmed Secretary Lew without really ever acknowledging this part of his record.

Democrats claim that Mr. Mnuchin unfairly foreclosed on homeowners, despite evidence to the contrary. Yet Secretary Lew, prior to being nominated, ran a Citigroup division that was, according to arbitration panels at the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority and later the SEC, ''defrauding investors.'' When asked about the toxic securities sold by his Citigroup unit, Secretary Lew's answers varied between not remembering any specific securities to claiming he somehow wasn't involved in the investment decisions made at the Citigroup unit he oversaw. My Democratic colleagues knew this, but they did not care, and happily confirmed Secretary Lew without anything resembling full and complete answers to these questions.

Despite ample evidence to the contrary, Democrats claim that Mr. Mnuchin ran a ''robo-signing'' foreclosure machine. Yet Citigroup, while Jack Lew was in senior management, sliced and diced mortgages and was alleged to have ''robo-signed'' mortgage documents. Democrats knew this, but they did not care, and happily confirmed Secretary Lew without ever really asking him about these issues.

I can go on and on. There are many other issues that my colleagues were willing to overlook, if not outright ignore, with regard to Secretary Lew that have resulted in hyperbolic attacks on Mr. Mnuchin.

I wish to remind my colleagues that despite the numerous concerns that I and others have had about Secretary Lew and the many significant disagreements that I had with President Obama's agenda, I voted in favor of Secretary Lew's confirmation. On this very floor, I stated the following:

> I have always believed that . . . [the] President—any President, regardless of party—is owed a certain degree of deference when choosing people to work in his administration. Therefore, though I personally would have chosen a different person for this position, I intend to vote in favor of Mr. Lew's confirmation.

I wasn't alone. Many other Republicans also voted to confirm Secretary Lew, despite serious reservations, in recognition that the President had a right to appoint who he wanted to—as long as they were not crooks and people of unsavory reputation. Well, Mr. Lew was not either of those.

My, how times have changed. As is typically the case, when a group of Senators is unable to make a believable case against a nominee, they tend to just raise every possible issue and hope something gains traction. When in the end nothing works, they cling to whatever allegation came last and hope it is enough to change the outcome. That is why, over the past couple of weeks or so, we have heard an awful lot about ''robo-signing.''

Here is the basic rundown of what has happened on this issue: My friends on the other side got an answer to a poorly and vaguely worded question that was not the answer they wanted to receive. The answer from Mr. Mnuchin, that OneWest Bank did not engage in ''robo-signing'' under his leadership, was truthful and defensible, but it did not conform to the Democratic talking points drafted for this nominee.

Since that time, Senate Democrats have repeatedly referenced new stories that purportedly prove that not only did Mr. Mnuchin run a bank that engaged in the nefarious, yet not well-defined practice of ''robo-signing'' mortgage documents, he lied about it in his answers to the committee. However, I would urge my colleagues on both sides to actually look at the supposed evidence from those news articles.

Put simply, to say that my Democratic friends are trying to make a mountain out of a molehill would be an insult to moles everywhere. There is no molehill to be found here.

To make the case that Mr. Mnuchin was untruthful in his answers, the articles rely on quotes mined from a single deposition of a OneWest employee. Quoted out of context, the employee seems to have said that she rapidly signed several hundred foreclosure-related documents a week without fully verifying their accuracy. That is the supposed smoking gun on the Mnuchin ''robo-signing'' question.

However, if you read the full deposition, the employee makes it absolutely clear that she was not the employee responsible for verifying the accuracy or validity of everything in the documents. She was part of a process that included several steps and multiple employees to verify the accuracy of different parts of the documents. We don't even have to dig for this explanation. It is not a matter of any interpretation. That explanation, in plain

English, is right there in the deposition my colleagues and the news articles have been using as ''evidence'' that Mr. Mnuchin lied to the Finance Committee.

Nothing—not a single thing—in the deposition quoted in those news articles could be considered evidence of ''robo-signing'' on the part of OneWest Bank.

While I can understand that my colleagues don't like seeing or hearing anything that contradicts their preconceived notions, particularly when it comes in the form of an answer to one of their questions, that is no basis or justification to make wild and brazen accusations that a nominee has been lying. And make no mistake, that is precisely what they are doing with Mr. Mnuchin.

On a related note, it is really amazing to me that my friends on the other side are now feigning outrage over alleged lack of responsiveness to their questions after having gone through the last 8 years with Treasury Secretaries who routinely ignored questions and requests for briefings posed by myself and a number of my other Senate colleagues. But I digress.

I certainly sympathize with the many people who suffered through the foreclosure crisis and with Democrats in Congress who were, and continue to be, frustrated that Treasury officials in the Obama administration failed to construct effective homeowner relief programs, despite having made numerous promises to do so.

However, given that frustration, it is odd to me that my colleagues remain so opposed to Mr. Mnuchin's nomination when he was very much engaged in the practice of making mortgage modifications work during his time as the head of OneWest Bank. Moreover, Mr. Mnuchin worked diligently with regulators and others to clean up the system under which foreclosure documents were being processed. You don't have to take my word for it; you can examine the numerous letters of support we have received from a range of people and organizations, from community groups to community bankers, which attest to Mr. Mnuchin's success in turning a bank that was plagued by toxic loans and numerous processing errors into a viable financial services firm that provides jobs and support to communities.

Along the way, Mr. Mnuchin's companies significantly outperformed rivals in the industry in terms of offering loan modifications to help keep Americans facing foreclosure in their homes. Mr. Mnuchin has acknowledged that his efforts were not without errors and that he genuinely regrets any mistakes that were made. He has also made clear that OneWest was committed to providing remediation in order to compensate those who were affected.

It should also be noted that in the vast majority of independent evaluations of OneWest's practices, the banks's error rates were routinely below the average for the industry and often zero.

I think people should quit using false arguments against this man. All of this was discussed out in the open during the Finance Committee's hearing on the Mnuchin nomination. Nothing was hidden. No one was misled.

Unfortunately, rather than focusing on the actual facts surrounding OneWest's performance under the nominee's leadership, my friends on the other side opted to try to smear Mr. Mnuchin. In essence, they have tried to relitigate the foreclosure crisis, with Mr. Mnuchin's company confusingly placed in the crosshairs. This is a company that, according to a letter from Faith Schwartz, former executive director of the Hope Now Alliance, ''was committed to avoiding foreclosures where possible.''

As I said, with Mr. Mnuchin, my colleagues are applying a clear double standard for confirming a Treasury Secretary. For Republican Treasury Secretary nominees, any allegation, no matter how careless or untrustworthy the source, is enough to inspire the Democrats' outrage and trigger a seemingly endless bout of name-calling. For Democratic nominees, on the other hand, even proven instances of questionable actions and poor judgment on the part of the nominee fail to even make a blip on their radar screens.

I have spent quite a bit of time in recent weeks decrying the antics of my Democratic colleagues with regard to President Trump's Cabinet nominations. Frankly, I am tired of talking about it. My colleagues are, of course, free to do whatever they think will help them hobble the new administration and score points with their political base, even if it breaks from the longstanding customs and traditions of the Senate and even if it puts our financial stability and the stability of our relations with Finance Ministers of other countries at greater risk. However, they should know that these tactics do absolutely nothing to help American families seeking greater opportunities and economic growth. They don't help us fix our broken Tax Code, reform our failing health care system, and empower businesses and job creators to grow and expand.

The bottom line is this: Mr. Mnuchin is clearly qualified to serve as Secretary of the U.S. Treasury.

Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle made clear they intend to vote no on the nomination, and that is their right. However, while each Senator has a right to vote according to his or her own judgment, Senators do a disservice to the country and the Senate as an institution when they concoct stories and antics designed merely to delay a vote for the sake of delay. Going forward, I hope my colleagues will recognize the problematic precedence they are setting with regard to these nominees and opt to change course.

I intend to vote in favor of confirming Mr. Mnuchin, and so should everybody else in the U.S. Senate. I urge all of my colleagues to do so.

When I first met Mr. Mnuchin, I hadn't met him before. I didn't even know his name. I have to say I was really impressed.

I said to him: Why are you doing this? You are going to lose a lot of money because you are going to have to sell your holdings and get rid of them. Why are you doing this?

He looked at me, looked me square in the eyes, and he said: I am doing it because I love my country, and I want to help. I want to help turn it around.

I was pretty impressed with that. I have been pretty impressed with Mr. Mnuchin ever since. I think we need a terribly smart guy who is honest, who is decent, who has made a great success of his life, who understands where money comes from and where it goes, who literally is willing to sacrifice and lose some of his savings and money in order to save this country and because he wants to work with our good President, who every day is going through calumny and slanders like I have never seen anybody go through before.

The slowdown in the Senate that is occurring here is unbelievably stupid. Yes, I know they want his first 100 days to not be successful, but gee-whiz, to do this kind of maneuvering and this kind of playing around with the facts is beneath the dignity of my colleagues on the other side.

If my side was doing this, I would be chewing them up. The fact is, we didn't do this. The past two Treasury Secretaries—I personally said ''We are going to support them'' even though we could have pulled this kind of stuff on them, and the facts were true. Both of them were good people. Both of them had made a couple of mistakes. Both of them made mistakes in their filings. But they were good men, good people, and so is Mr. Mnuchin.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if both sides would treat people with respect and dignity? I have to admit, sometimes our side could do better, but what we have been going through for the last almost 2 months now is pathetic. I think it is all done in the hope that they can ruin the first 100 days of this President. Well, there are 200 days, and we are going to keep going.

They are not making any headway with the President where they could make headway. He is someone who actually came from their side of the floor—at least at one time when I knew him long ago. He is a person with an open mind. He is a person who has supreme intelligence. He is a person who is bringing with him some of the best people in this country, not the least of whom is Mr. Mnuchin.

I think they ought to wake up and quit this slandering and even libeling this really fine man who is willing to sacrifice much of his personal fortune to serve in this government as the Treasury Secretary. We are lucky that

people like this are willing to do it, to take all the guff and calumny and slander and libel they have to go through. Thank goodness we have people like Mr. Mnuchin who are willing to do this. I don't intend to see him fail, so I hope we can all vote for him tonight and send a message. I hope some of my colleagues on the other side will vote for him. They should. They should, in good faith. Yes, they can play this game of having a lot of votes against him, but some of them should vote for him. The truly honest, the truly fair, and the truly good people—I think all of them are good people on the other side and on this side, but it is not showing up as well as I would like it to show up in these confirmation fights.

In this particular one, there is a fellow who is willing to sacrifice immensely to be able to help our country, who is known on Wall Street, who is known as one of the bright lights up there, who has been immensely successful, and he has had a wide variety of experiences in the area of finance. We ought to be getting on our knees and thanking him for being willing to go through this and being willing to serve his country.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. 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. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to explain to my colleagues why I will be opposing Steve Mnuchin's nomination for Secretary of the Treasury.

Mr. Mnuchin has an impressive record of accomplishment, and I admire his willingness to serve the public. But because of his advocacy for fiscally irresponsible and unfair fiscal policies, which I believe will add to the deficit of this country, I cannot support his nomination.

Let me go back a while, if I may. I was in the Congress when we passed a budget that balanced the Federal budget, where we were actually reducing the Federal debt. It was controversial at the time because we did it by cutting spending first—and we did—but making sure we had adequate revenues in the Treasury to pay our bills because we recognized that we had a moral obligation to pay our bills, that we are wealthy enough of a nation that we don't have to ask our children and grandchildren to pay for our spending today. We took the steps to balance the Federal budget, and we did it by making some tough votes. I was proud to be in the Congress that took those tough votes that balanced the Federal budget.

After we balanced the Federal budget, we saw unprecedented economic growth because we took the responsible actions. We should take a lesson from the past and recognize that there is no easy way to get our budget in better balance. It requires a fiscal policy that is fair—that is fair to middle-income families, that is fair to our children and grandchildren, that is fair to those who depend upon the services that are financed through the government sector, including our seniors with Medicare and Social Security. We can do that if we work together.

But Mr. Mnuchin's economic plan, the one that he has submitted to Congress, I think, would put us at great risk. The main part of what he is advocating is tax cuts primarily for the wealthy. The top 0.1 percent under the Mnuchin plan will receive in excess of $1 million in tax breaks; the upper 1 percent in excess of $200,000 in tax cuts.

Here is the problem: How do we pay for this? How do we offset the cost of these tax cuts? Because I don't think any of us wants to add to the deficit.

So we asked Mr. Mnuchin that question during the confirmation process. Let me just read for the RECORD the questions that I asked him as to how he would offset the cost of the tax cuts. The Trump plan, including those cuts, is estimated by the Tax Policy Center to add $6.2 trillion to the deficit and by the Tax Foundation to add $3.9 trillion to the deficit.

I asked Mr. Mnuchin:

> In your hearing, you discussed the importance of economic growth in offsetting the revenues lost under the President's tax reform plan. . . . For instance, you've said, ''[s]o we think that by cutting corporate taxes, we'll create huge economic growth and we'll have huge personal income, so the revenues will be offset on the other side.''
>
> Is it your view that the tax cuts in the President's plan will be fully offset by economic growth?

That is the question I asked.

Mr. Mnuchin's answer: ''Our objective is to have any tax cuts offset by economic growth.''

I asked: ''If so, could you please share your team's analysis supporting that position?''

Mr. Mnuchin's answer: ''Our objective is to have any tax cuts offset by economic growth.''

I then asked: ''Will you commit, as we discussed in our meeting, not to put forward a plan that will increase the deficit and put our country in a worse financial position?''

Mr. Mnuchin's answer: ''Our objective is to have any tax cuts offset by economic growth.''

In other words, there is no effort here to offset the cost of this tax cut, other than borrowing money, putting our children and grandchildren at greater risk.

I want to repeat again the estimate that we have heard on the President's tax proposal—that it will add anywhere from $6 trillion to almost $4 trillion in deficit. Those estimates are from progressive and conservative groups, and they do consider that there will be some dynamic score keeping here, that there will be some economic growth. That is in those estimates. So even with economic growth, these proposals will greatly enhance the deficit of this country, something that we should not be doing.

What does that mean? You increase the debt of this country. America has to borrow more. Interest rates go up. Middle-income families have to pay more on mortgage payments or car loans.

Middle income families are the ones who get hurt by this. If we are going to see real economic growth, we have to help the middle class—the growing middle class—the consumers, those who buy the goods, those who are struggling every day to make ends meet. This plan doesn't help them. What they are going to be saddled with is more debt and higher interest costs, which will be a drag on our economic growth.

So for all those reasons, I think what is important to have is an advocate for the President as Secretary of the Treasury, someone who recognizes the balance here.

Let me tell you what else deficits do. They are used as justification to continue to cut our discretionary spending accounts, as well as to take a look at entitlement spending.

I acknowledge that, as part of the strategy to balance the Federal budget, we must look at our spending, but we have to have the revenues in order to make it balance. If you don't have the revenues, and you are taking another $4 to $6 trillion out of the equation, there is going to be a lot more pressure to make irresponsible cuts on the spending side.

I heard Candidate Trump talk about that we are not going to cut Social Security. But can you really have $6 trillion of tax cuts without looking at Social Security? And how about Medicare? These are programs that are vitally important for our seniors. It provides them money to live on so they don't have to live in poverty, so they can pay their medical bills. For a majority of seniors, Social Security is their largest source of income. Are we really thinking about equating that with tax cuts for the wealthiest in this country of over $1 million? I don't think that is fairness. I don't think that is what we should be doing.

When you look at the programs that are financed through government, are we going to take away from our students? They already are suffering too high, as far as the cost of attending colleges. Interest rates are already too high in regards to what they do.

Are we going to put more pressure to make more cuts in regards to how we help our students? Are we going to cut maintaining our highways? We want to spend more on highways, bridges, transit systems, and water infrastructure, which I think we need to do. How do you do that if you cut $4 to $6 trillion of revenue on the revenue side without adding greatly to the deficit, which is something none of us wants to do?

How about something like our national parks? We take pride and want to maintain that, but with the pressure on the budgets that is a result of taking the revenues out of government, we know what is going to happen. We have seen this movie before. We have seen what has happened before. The driving force behind all of this is that the most important thing, the most important part of the economic program, is to have these tax cuts primarily for the wealthy.

No, I think the center of our economic policy needs to be fairness—fairness for middle-income families, fairness so that Americans can afford to raise their families and send their kids to college and can afford to have decent opportunities in this country. That is how we all grow together, and that requires a balanced approach to our Nation's budget—one that, yes, looks at restraining spending but also looks at having a Tax Code that is fair and raises the revenues to pay our bills and not pushing that off to future generations.

I think for all those reasons, we need a person who is going to advocate on behalf of middle-income families and on behalf of a growing economy. I think the plan that Mr. Mnuchin is advocating will not accomplish that. For these reasons and others, I cannot support his nomination for Secretary of the Treasury.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, the Secretary of the Treasury is one of the most powerful positions in our government, as we know. The Treasury Secretary has broad responsibilities—for the economy, for our tax system, trade, our pensions, housing, and so much more. It is critical that anyone who holds that position use their power to help working people. It is clear to me that Mr. Mnuchin's policies will, in fact, hurt middle-class families and working people.

There are also serious ethical concerns that neither he nor my Republican colleagues have been able to address. As a result, I will be voting no on his nomination.

I would like to talk about something that has not received the focus that I think it deserves and certainly that the people of Michigan feel it deserves, and that is the question of pensions and what is happening to pensions in our country.

Mr. Mnuchin has a history of fighting against working people and profiting off their misfortune. As we know, pension funding can have a significant impact on a company's bottom line. But losing a pension can destroy a family's bottom line, and it seems that Mr. Mnuchin doesn't know this. When serving on the board for Sears, Mr. Mnuchin played a critical and direct role in how to fund the company's pensions. So what happened? Sears routinely underfunded the company's plan throughout his tenure. Analysts predicted that Sears ''massively underfunded'' their pension plan. They said their ''massively underfunded'' pension plan was ''a ticking time bomb'' that could even hasten or bring down the financial collapse of the company.

The company used investment return projections that were too optimistic, along with accounting gimmicks so they could avoid paying into the pension fund. They inflated their earnings on paper while contributing less to the pension.

Sears did such a bad job managing their pension fund while Mr. Mnuchin was on their board, that the fund only made a return of 1.5 percent, putting their fund in the bottom 5 percent of all the pension funds over $1 billion. Is this the kind of result the American taxpayers want when he manages their money?

Already, Sears has been cutting its employees' pensions. In 2014, the company eliminated the monthly health care subsidy that helped its retirees afford their health care premiums. That saved Sears and Kmart about $6.2 million a year.

I have received a lot of letters from Michigan families a lot from families who are very concerned about their pensions. One of my constituents who worked in the trucking industry said:

> We took small raises on our paycheck each contract so the company could put more in the pension fund—

That is what people do. They take less every month in their paycheck so they can have more in the pension fund. I know in the Presiding Officer's State and my State, that is what they do. He continued—

> and [we] were told we would receive a certain amount for the rest of our lives. That is what we based our retirement on. Through no fault of ours, over the years, government deregulation of the trucking industry, passing trade agreements and other laws that have devastated the economy, have made our pensions become doubtful.

Can you imagine paying all your lifetime? My brother drives a truck and counts on the fact that he is working hard every day and putting money into a pension fund for his family when he retires, and it is supposed to be there, right? The pension is a promise that is supposed to be there.

Another woman from West Michigan wrote in worried about her Central States Pension Plan. That is the pension plan my brother is in as well. She said:

> My husband retired from Grocers Baking Co. of Grand Rapids and has a pension in Central States Pension Fund. As you know, that pension fund is in critical status and the Treasury Department turned down a plan to save all the pensions. My husband is 74 and I am 78 and we rely on that pension and Social Security to live on. We try to save, but it is difficult. We are hoping that the pension will last more than 10 years, but who knows.

I also hear from people in Michigan all the time about how little accountability there is when it comes to the management of people's pensions.

One man wrote in from Macomb County about his own pension plan:

> Why are none of the trustees being held accountable for the bad investments or failure of the plan? I'm sure they all have their golden parachutes in place for when they retire. Why do we, the hard workers, have to suffer because of their incompetence? I am just an average guy hoping that you can help protect the benefits that are due to me, so I can enjoy retirement when my time comes.

The Treasury Secretary nominee sat on the Sears board when they were making changes that created the investments that were not as good as they should have been, when they underfunded their pension system, cut back on help for health care, and he is asking for a promotion. I wonder what my constituents in Macomb County will be saying about that.

The Treasury Secretary plays a very important role in the security of our pension system—one of the basic tenets in our country, the way we support each other, the way people have trust in the system, you know that when you pay into the pension and then when you retire you get the pension.

The Treasury Secretary oversees implementation of the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act and serves on the board of directors of the pension overseers. I asked Mr. Mnuchin in committee: What is your position on the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act, which Treasury is responsible for administering?

How do you propose to shore up our multiemployer pension system and protect people who are counting on their pensions? His answer was: ''You have my commitment to work with you to find solutions to the multiemployer pension crisis.''

That is it. I resubmitted the question, hoping for a more detailed response.

His response was: ''If confirmed, I will consult with you and other interested parties on the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act of 2014.''

That is not much of an answer for the people whom I represent, who want to know how he feels and what he is going to do to protect their pensions. The American people deserve a better answer than that.

People are struggling, retirees are struggling after trusting the system and paying into their pensions their whole life—the whole time they have been working, paying in, counting on having that dignity in retirement. We need a Treasury Secretary who understands that a pension is a promise. Mr. Mnuchin's actions have not demonstrated that he understands that.

Even when it comes to something as basic as Social Security, during our Finance Committee hearing, Mr.

Mnuchin couldn't tell me the average monthly benefit when I asked him, which, by the way, one-third of our seniors virtually rely on that alone, and the rest are putting together a small pension, and most seniors are counting on Social Security and their pension to have dignity and a quality of life in their retirement. The Treasury Secretary is a key overseer of the laws and management process and accountability for both of those systems. So for me this is a very big deal who is in this spot, in terms of how this affects working people, middle-class families, and retirees.

I didn't mention earlier that when I asked him what the average Social Security payment was—which he could not answer—he also couldn't tell me what he meant about a ''cut'' in Social Security; if he wasn't going to cut, what that meant. Did that mean putting in place a lower cost of living? What did that mean? He did not answer that.

Let me talk about another pretty basic area. Pensions are critically important so is the ability to have a home. Up until the financial crash, the disaster in 2008 and 2009, most families' savings for retirement, savings to put their kids in college, were through the equity in their home. In 2008 and 2009, for millions of Americans, that disappeared.

Mr. Mnuchin has made his career profiting from the misfortunes of working people, and let me talk about the financial crisis and how he benefitted from that as well. During the financial crisis, he put together a group of investors to purchase IndyMac Bank, which was renamed OneWest. During that time, OneWest was notorious for taking an especially aggressive role in foreclosing on struggling homeowners. OneWest Bank pushed people into foreclosure and made their last-ditch efforts to save their homes through a mortgage modification or other means all but impossible.

When their voices were not allowed at the hearing on this confirmation, I was pleased to join with colleagues in putting together a forum where homeowners who had been impacted could share their experience. We held this forum for homeowners who were repeatedly given hope by OneWest that they might be able to avoid foreclosure, only to have it snatched away every time. One small business owner at the forum told us her story of how OneWest defrauded her and ultimately foreclosed on her. She told us that ''despite how difficult OneWest made the process, I did everything I was told, because I wanted to keep my home.''

Twice she applied for a loan modification. She submitted two checks with her new modification offer. OneWest cashed the checks—they cashed the checks—but told her that both offers were never received.

Wait a minute. What is that? They cashed the checks, then told her the offers were not received, and therefore the offer was void.

Eventually, she said: ''I received a knock on my door and a man introduced himself as the owner of my house.'' Unbelievable. Shortly thereafter she had to leave her home. OneWest was Mr. Mnuchin's company. This is one of the many stories about OneWest's abusive conduct. When OneWest Bank sold, Mr. Mnuchin and other investors made about $3 billion off the backs of folks who lost their home and many were like the women we heard from who tried desperately to work it out to keep their home. I wonder if the checks they cashed from her after they said they didn't get them were a part of that $3 billion.

Finally, I want to express my concern over statements that Mr. Mnuchin made at the Finance Committee hearing that just don't line up with the facts; particularly, Mr. Mnuchin was asked whether his bank, OneWest, robo-signed foreclosure documents. To be clear on what this is, the banks, during the foreclosure crisis, had sworn documents robo-signed, automatically signed so they could foreclose on homeowners quickly without anyone even reading the documents. They just signed the papers—signed the papers—nobody reviewed whether they added up or whether they were right, whether they could help them. They just had the machine signing, signing, signing, foreclose, foreclose, foreclose.

Mr. Mnuchin said in the hearing his bank didn't do that. He said his bank didn't do that. The Columbus Dispatch did an investigation that found that OneWest did do that in Ohio. A source in Texas reported that OneWest did do it in Texas. New Jersey temporarily banned OneWest from foreclosing on homeowners at all in New Jersey because of its history of robo-signing documents. Sign, sign, sign—don't look at it, just sign away. We heard the story of one woman who lost her house because of a 27-cent difference. I wonder if she was in one of those piles they just signed away. Mr. Mnuchin said they didn't do that. There is evidence to the contrary.

Mr. Mnuchin also forgot to disclose to the committee that he owned a company organized in the Cayman Islands. When I asked him about that, his best defense was that ''I did not use a Cayman Islands entity in any way to avoid paying taxes myself.'' At the time, I said: Oh, so you just helped other people avoid paying their taxes.

We find out now he did use it to help foreign investors avoid paying U.S. taxes. I have a funny feeling that he made money by helping those investors avoid paying their U.S. taxes.

He also forgot to disclose that he owned $95 million in real estate in various locations. I forget that all of the time. I have so many houses all over the place, it is easy to forget. So $95 million in property that he ''forgot'' to disclose. He said he didn't know his real estate was an asset. He didn't know his real estate was an asset. That is alarming.

I don't mean to be flip, but this is so shocking when I listen to some of this. The idea that we would believe someone who says this, that it somehow is making sense—that is why we as Democrats on the Finance Committee, before this final confirmation vote, asked that he be required to come back in and answer questions, because these are serious questions.

This nominee has not been properly vetted. He supports policies that do not have the interests of the working men and women in Michigan at heart or people across the country. He adheres to policies that don't protect the pensions of hard-working men and women in Michigan and across the country or people's retirement systems. I don't know where he really is on Social Security, which is the other big piece of the promise we made as Americans, where people pay into Social Security and are counting on that being there. He has personally profited off the misfortune of those who need help the most.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I, too, will be voting no on the candidacy of Mr. Mnuchin to become Secretary of the Treasury.

Rhode Island got hit so hard by the mortgage meltdown that Wall Street created. Frankly, I can never forget the Rhode Islanders who lost their homes in the course of that debacle. We were able to help some of them in my office.

As the Presiding Officer knows, when you come to the Senate, you put together a constituent office, and your constituent people work on usual constituent business. In the ordinary course, constituent business is dealing with Federal agencies. It is making sure Social Security is fine, getting people replacement passports that they put into the laundry by accident, dealing with veterans issues and getting veterans their benefits, helping people with Medicare and Medicaid confusion. It is all generally involving people who have gotten somehow fouled up in the Federal programs of which they are beneficiaries.

In our case, we had to open a constituent wing for dealing with the big banks because they were foreclosing so recklessly and in such a mercenary fashion on Rhode Islanders. It was such torture for Rhode Islanders, once the foreclosure process began, because they could never get the same person twice on the phone; there was always a mismatch between what they were being told on the phone and being told on paper. It was a nightmare of bad information and bad practice by these big banks.

What we would often be able to do is to say: Look, at least give this person one person they can deal with, that they can call every time so it is not ''Hi, I am John'' on one phone call and

''Hi, I am Mary'' on the next phone call and ''Hi, I am Joseph'' on the third phone call and nobody ever remembers the other phone calls, nobody ever knew where they were in the process. You can't move the process forward if the person on the other end of the line can't keep track of the conversation. So we were able to get that done, and that actually was able to help Rhode Islanders come to a deal with these big banks and save their homes. But for all the ones we were able to help, there were many, many we were not.

I simply cannot forgive somebody who took a look at that banking crisis, who took a look at the pain Wall Street sent in a wave across all of America, and thought: Oh, here is a great new way to make money—foreclosing on people.

Done. I am out. Sorry, I can't vote for somebody like that.

What I hope, though, is that he will at least show some common sense and some decency when it comes to other issues, and one of them is climate change.

If you go to the financial sector, they are taking climate change pretty seriously. Frankly, the financial sector is probably about as big as the fossil fuel industry, so when the fossil fuel industry comes around bullying and shoving and lying and going through all of its usual climate denial nonsense, the financial guys really don't care. They just do their thing. You are not going to intimidate Goldman. You are not going to intimidate BlackRock. You are not going to intimidate Bank of America. It just doesn't make any sense. So when you look at what these guys are saying, they are being pretty straight up about it.

As long ago as 2013, Goldman Sachs issued a report that said: ''The window for thermal coal investment is closing.'' That is the caption of the report. ''Thermal coal's current position atop the fuel mix for global power generation will be gradually eroded,'' it said. And sure enough, it has been. There was no grief for coal in there; they were just trying to predict the market. In 2015, Goldman Sachs did another report about the low-carbon economy. It was ''Goldman Sachs equity investor's guide to a low carbon world, 2015–25.'' So unless somebody is going to say that Goldman Sachs is in on the hoax, they are taking this pretty seriously. From 2015 to 2025, they expect a low-carbon world.

And it is coming on fast and furious now. Just recently, a global task force was set up by the G20 companies—the 20 biggest economies in the world. They have a group called the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures. They have asked that companies begin to come clean on the climate risk they face.

The news report about this says:

> Concerns among the financial community are growing that assets are being mispriced because the full extent of climate risk is not being factored in, threatening market stability.

The story continues:

> According to Barclays—

Barclays is a significant international banking institution—

> the fossil fuel industry could lose $34 trillion in revenues by 2040 as a global deal to limit temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius reduces demand for oil, coal, and gas, returning reserves into stranded assets.

If, in fact, this is an industry that could lose $34 trillion in revenues by 2040, that explains a lot of their misbehavior around Congress. Obviously, for that kind of money, there is very little mischief these folks wouldn't get up to, and sure enough, they are getting up to all of that mischief, and more, around here. But the financial industry itself is pretty big, and it doesn't care. It is not going to be pushed around and bullied.

This Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosure is described as having 32 members from large banks, insurance companies, asset management companies, pension funds, credit rating agencies, and accounting and consulting firms—32 members representing the 20 biggest economies in the world, and they are saying: Here it comes. Let's get ready.

So I hope colleagues will begin to listen to these folks in the financial services industry and these major market economies about what is going on and stop listening to the self-serving nonsense that the fossil fuel industry insists on trying to jam into our ears around here. It just is bogus. Bottom line: It is bogus.

Most recently, at the end of last year, September 2016, BlackRock, which is one of the most significant investment firms in the world—I think it has more than $1 trillion in assets under management—issued this new report: ''Adapting Portfolios to Climate Change.'' OK. So BlackRock, one of the smartest and biggest companies in the world, is now talking about how we have to adapt to climate change and helping investors plan for it. In this building, can we have a sensible conversation about climate change? No, of course not, because the fossil fuel industry won't even let some of us mention the words, but in the real world, where real money and real decisions are being made by very smart people, they are all over this. Here is BlackRock: ''Adapting Portfolios to Climate Change.''

Sentence No. 1 in the report: ''Investors can no longer ignore climate change.''

Investors can no longer ignore climate change. No, it takes Congress to do that. Investors can no longer ignore climate change, but don't worry, we will, as long as we are following the lead of our fossil fuel industry friends, right over the climate cliff.

The report continues that we can expect more frequent and severe weather events over the long term—something that actually we are seeing already, not only in the United States but around the world. They say that there is a market failure in this area—a market failure—as current fossil fuel prices arguably do not reflect the true costs of their extraction and use.

That is what we are fighting about here. The fossil fuel industry has the best racket going in the world. They are able to pollute like crazy, do immense damage in the world—damage that coastal homeowners in Rhode Island, fishermen in Rhode Island, people who have breathing difficulties and are trying to breathe on a hot summer day in Rhode Island—they all have to pay the price.

Under real market theory, the harm of the product has to be in the price of the product for the market to work. That is market 101. Well, they don't want to play by those rules. They want to have everybody else cover the harm in their product, and they just get to shove it out into the marketplace with the biggest subsidy in creation.

The International Monetary Fund is not a bunch of stupid people, and the International Monetary Fund, as far as I can tell, has no conflict of interest with respect to fossil fuel, unlike the fossil fuel companies, which are one massive example of a conflict of interest. The International Monetary Fund says that the subsidy to the fossil fuel industry every year—just in the United States of America—is $700 billion—billion with a ''b.'' Like I said, how much mischief would they get up to for $700 billion? Oh, about $700 billion worth.

Is there a fix to this? Yes, continues the BlackRock report. ''The most cost-effective way for governments to meet emissions reduction targets: Policy frameworks that result in realistic carbon pricing.'' Market 101. Of course, they don't want market 101, they want fossil fuels subsidies 101, and we go along with it because of the mischievous way they behave in politics. But we should not go along with it. It is not proper economics. It is not conservative. It is nothing except traditional, old-fashioned, special interests, special pleading. It is no different from any other polluter who wants to be able to dump their waste into the river or onto their neighbor's yard or wherever it is rather than having to pay for cleaning up the mess they made.

We go on through the report: ''The world is rapidly using up its carbon budget,'' says BlackRock. ''The damage from climate change could shave 5 to 20 percent off global GDP annually by 2100.'' Up to a fifth of global GDP gone. That is a massive economic correction. That is massive economic pain.

''The economic impacts,'' it goes on to say, ''are not just in the distant future. More frequent and more intense extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, flooding, and droughts, are already affecting assets and economies.''

For anybody just tuning in, this is not me making this stuff up, this is BlackRock investments.

They talk about global fossil fuel subsidies—four times as large, they say, as renewable energy support.

Here is an interesting thing: ''Scrapping energy subsidies could save governments some $3 trillion a year, more than they collect from corporate taxes,'' according to BlackRock.

So here we have the fossil fuel industry over there, and they are getting the biggest subsidy in the world—by IMF calculations, $700 billion a year—and the party that says it wants a more efficient government and that ordinarily would like to reduce corporate taxes is defending that subsidy, even though that is taking money out of government more than corporate taxes. It is quite astonishing. The BlackRock report gives such a window into Congress by comparison, frankly. They conclude here by giving some pretty dire warnings about where this goes if people aren't preparing for climate change. They say:

> Risk for the long-term investor . . . could lead to a permanent loss of capital. The effects of climate change need to be part of that equation, we believe.
>
> Yet even short-term investors would do well to integrate climate factors into their portfolio.

So from Goldman Sachs on to BlackRock, some of the most powerful and intelligent financial firms in the world are telling their investors: Get ready for climate change.

The last page of the BlackRock report says:

> [C]urrent market prices arguably do not yet reflect the social costs of burning fossil fuels. . . . This externality is at the core of the climate challenge.

The externality, of course, being that you take the harm that you cause and instead of putting it in the price of your product, you make everybody else around you pay for it by being a polluter.

Then they asked the question:

> What is the correct price of carbon? It is hard to say. A 2015 U.S. government study estimated $36 of economic damages for each metric ton of carbon emitted. Yet estimates are rising: A 2015 Stanford University study points to $220 per metric ton.

I believe that our U.S. social cost of carbon is running at about $45 per metric ton right now. And, by the way, it has been upheld twice—at least twice—by Federal courts. In fact, one court rather insisted that the social cost of carbon had to be baked into the underlying rule; otherwise, the underlying rule couldn't pass the test of being logical and fair and not arbitrary and capricious.

So there is the case from some of our leading financial institutions about climate change. They have real money at stake. They have real clients. They can't engage in the kind of nonsense that we engage in around here about climate change not being real or not being important or being something that there is still debate about or being something that if we try to fix it, it is going to cost too much money. All of that is total bunkum processed through all sorts of advertising-type public relations firms by the fossil fuel industry and sold to a gullible public as if it were true.

A few folks who aren't so gullible—all Republicans—have just come out with a very interesting report. Three of them were Treasury Secretaries. Republican Presidents trusted these folks with the conduct of the U.S. economy: Jim Baker, Secretary of the Treasury under President Reagan; Hank Paulson, Secretary of the Treasury under President Bush; and George Shultz, Secretary of the Treasury under President Nixon. These men have some pretty impressive credentials. Not only was he Secretary of the Treasury, but James Baker was also the Secretary of State. And not only was George Shultz Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of State, he was also Secretary of Labor.

These three former Treasury Secretaries have led a group of other investors, including the former chairman of the board of Walmart, the world's largest retailer and employer; Tom Stephenson, a Republican who is a partner at Sequoia Capital, a very successful venture capital firm out in Silicon Valley; and Greg Mankiw, who was Chairman of George W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, so this is a very Republican group. They have a lot of experience. None of them holds elective office now, so they don't have to worry about the fossil fuel industry threatening to crush them in a primary or spend millions of dollars through phony-baloney front groups against them or any of the usual stuff that politicians have to put up with from the fossil fuel industry as it fights to protect that massive subsidy that we have talked about already.

Let's go through this report by these very senior Republican officials. The first sentence:

> Mounting evidence of climate change is growing too strong to ignore. . . . For too long, many Republicans have looked the other way.

Indeed. They go on to propose a conservative climate solution—what they call a carbon dividends plan—which aligns actually fairly well with my American Opportunity Carbon Fee Act, which I have put forward in the past and am going to put forward in this Congress as well. I hope, given its alignment with this Republican leadership on climate, that we might actually begin to get some conversations going here. We may have to go hide out of State someplace so the fossil fuel folks don't find who is participating in the conversation and start punishing them for doing so, but we will see how that goes.

The recommendation basically is for a carbon tax that collects revenue to offset the cost of pollution that is not in the price of the product and then return it all to the American people through a big dividend.

The report says: ''A carbon tax would send a powerful market signal that encourages technological innovation and largescale substitution of existing energy and transportation infrastructures, thereby stimulating new investment.''

Furthermore, a well-designed carbon dividends plan, the second half, the tax, would stimulate new investment and ''a well-designed carbon dividends plan would further contribute to economic growth through its dynamic effects on consumption and investment.''

They definitely want to protect that one-to-one relationship so that all the money that comes in goes back out. That is the principle of my bill, as well, and I am more than willing to live with it. But the problems of failing to act also need attention.

Since two of these gentlemen were Secretaries of State, we should take some interest when they say: ''Our reliance on fossil fuels contributes to a less stable world, empowers rogue petro-states and makes us vulnerable to a volatile world oil market.''

We have to address this issue for a lot of reasons, and I couldn't be more satisfied that these two Republican Secretaries of State have actually made the connection that Thomas Friedman has made and that the Department of Defense has repeatedly made in its ''Quadrennial Defense Review'' between our overreliance on carbon and between the harms of climate change and a less stable world—a world in which climate change is what the Defense Department has so often called a catalyst for conflict.

They then reflect a little bit on what is going on with their party: ''The opposition of many Republicans to meaningfully address climate change reflects poor science and poor economics, and is at odds with the party's own noble tradition of stewardship.''

You would never know it nowadays, but the Republican Party was once the party of Teddy Roosevelt. They point out that ''64% of Americans worry a great deal or a fair amount about climate change, while a clear majority of Republicans acknowledge that climate change is occurring.''

They go on to point out ''that 67 percent of Americans''—two thirds of Americans—''support a carbon tax with proceeds returned directly to them.''

Two thirds ''of Americans support a carbon tax with proceeds returned directly to them, including 54% of conservative Republicans.''

So let's not pretend that this is a partisan issue. It is not a partisan issue. It is an issue in which a big special interest has thrown incredible weight around to try to crush one side of the debate. But clearly, if 67 percent of Americans supported anything and 54 percent of conservative Republicans supported that, we would probably be having a sensible conversation in the Senate about whatever that thing was. We just can't do it when that thing happens to be climate change because we have the fossil fuel industry out there—powered up by Citizens United, spending all that money—trying to protect that huge, huge subsidy that they enjoy.

Finally, the report points out—and I see the pages lined up here along the

side of the podium: ''Increasingly, climate change is becoming a defining issue for this next generation of Americans, which the GOP ignores at its own peril.''

If this party wants to write off the young generation as they follow the fossil fuel industry off the climate cliff, there will be a very grave price to be paid.

The report concludes: ''With the privilege of controlling all branches of the government comes a responsibility to exercise wise leadership on the defining challenges of our era, including global climate change.''

I don't know where Mr. Mnuchin will lead on climate change at the Treasury Department. There are a number of ways in which the Treasury Department can be influential in this area. To my knowledge, he has never said anything about it yet.

It was not too long ago—2009—that a full-page advertisement ran in the New York Times, a full page advertisement that pointed out that the science of climate change was already, by then, to use the word in the advertisement, ''irrefutable.'' The science of climate change was ''irrefutable,'' the advertisement said.

Then the advertisement went on to say that the consequences of climate change would be ''catastrophic and irreversible.'' That is another quote from the advertisement: The consequences of climate change were to be ''catastrophic and irreversible.''

On the one hand, you have science that is irrefutable; on the other hand, you have consequences of ignoring it that are catastrophic and irreversible. Who signed that advertisement? None other than Donald J. Trump—not only he, but his children, Donald Trump, Eric Trump, and Ivanka Trump, also all signed it.

The year 2009 was not that long ago. It is possible that the Trump family could refer to what they knew in 2009 and perhaps take advice from a Treasury Secretary. I hope they take advice from three Treasury Secretaries, but we will see how that goes.

Perhaps Mr. Mnuchin can be a voice to try to get the GOP out of the fossil fuel hole it is in, aligned with the 67 percent of American voters who want to see a revenue-neutral carbon tax, aligned with the majority of Republican conservative voters who would support that, and aligned with the irrefutable nature of the science, and addressing the catastrophic and irreversible consequences in this strange new administration in which the new normal is abnormal. It is perhaps hard to expect much good to come, but let's hope and let's hope Mr. Mnuchin makes himself a part of the solution rather than just a part of the climate-denial problem that so infects us, particularly here in Congress.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today the Senate will confirm the nomination of Steven Mnuchin to be the Secretary of the Treasury. It is a nomination I simply cannot support.

The Treasury Department plays an essential role in the development of the economic policies that financially secure the United States in world markets, that expand the opportunities available to all Americans, and that help set the stage for a sound and growing economy. Our country's economic engine must be one that is accessible to all Americans, not just the wealthy few. Regrettably, while Mr. Mnuchin may have a knowledge of the inner workings of Wall Street, he seems to know shockingly little of the hardships faced on Main Street. One need look no further than his role during the height of the housing crisis in foreclosing on tens of thousands of American families. Reducing these actions to mere administrative matters belies the true struggles of those who don't boast the personal coffers Mr. Mnuchin enjoys. I simply cannot accept his explanation of his role in these actions.

We cannot forget the devastation and hardship that the recent financial crisis brought upon our country, its people, its neighborhoods, its small businesses, and its communities. People lost their homes and their jobs, and our markets crashed. Many have still have not recovered from those losses. As Congress worked to find the answers, it became clear that many large investment banks and insurance companies hid the insecurity of their finances from stockholders and from the American people. While many people lost their life savings, corporate executives received outrageous severance packages. As the country lurched into a financial downward spiral, Mr. Mnuchin's company, One West, administered aggressive foreclosure tactics that added to the devastation of these families, including veterans. It was wrong. Mr. Mnuchin, in his testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, may have tried to convince the American people that his was an innocent role in the crisis. But given that he could not provide a valid reason for failing to disclose that he was the director of an offshore account worth more than $100 million, domiciled offshore in the Cayman Islands, I just cannot buy what he is selling—and neither can Vermonters.

In 2010, Congress worked hard to pass the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. This legislation included a number of financial reforms to change the way financial institutions and banks take on risk, while adding protections for customers of these institutions, and creating a new regulatory council in order to provide more effective oversight of the industry. President Trump has indicated that he will seek to roll back Dodd-Frank regulations, and Mr. Mnuchin reinforced this pledge in front of the Finance Committee. Since its inception in 2011, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, CFPBP, has received and sent to companies for review upward of 700,000 complaints from consumers across the country, ranging from abuses in debt collection and credit reporting, to student loans. I worry about the future of the CFPB under President Trump's administration. Its value and importance in protecting Americans from predatory practices, like those of OneWest, cannot be overstated. I cannot support a Secretary who would unravel the reforms we worked hard to enact and that protect the American people from the devastation of runaway corporate greed.

For the last 8 years, we have focused with considerable success on rebuilding our economy. The unemployment rate is lower than it was before the financial crisis. Small businesses are growing. It is imperative that we continue to make economic progress and that we find additional ways to help those who have been left behind, without returning to the destructive policies that brought about the crisis in the first place. I am not convinced that Mr. Mnuchin is the right nominee to lead the Treasury Department and to continue this forward progress.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today we consider the nomination of Steve Mnuchin, a multimillionaire former Goldman Sachs executive, hedge fund manager, and investor, to be Secretary of the Treasury. In our Nation's history, the Treasury Secretary was the first Cabinet official to be confirmed by the Senate, when Alexander Hamilton took his post in 1789.

The first Congress valued the Treasury Department highly, giving it more resources than all other government agencies combined. Today the mission of the Treasury Department is to:

> ''Maintain a strong economy and create economic and job opportunities by promoting the conditions that enable economic growth and stability at home and abroad, strengthen national security by combating threats and protecting the integrity of the financial system, and manage the U.S. Government's finances and resources effectively.''

While the Department always serves a critical function, it has been particularly vital in times of financial crisis. In 2008, in the wake of lax regulation and excessive speculation, a financial crash shook our Nation's economy. The Treasury Department was a key player to pull us back from the brink and keep the toxic contagion on Wall Street from spilling over to Main Street. We had to fight to ensure that the colossal failures of irresponsible corporate executives would not wipe out small businesses and citizens' savings.

At that time, my congressional office helped hundreds of homeowners facing foreclosure, working them through the loan modification process, helping track down missing documents, and following up again and again with banks to make sure that paperwork was processed. We held a foreclosure prevention forum to connect people to

housing counselors. For too many, this process was extremely difficult, tremendously confusing, and, in some cases, deliberately misleading. While my office was always ready to help, there was no reason why congressional intervention should have been necessary to help families modify their payments to stay in their homes.

Where was Steve Mnuchin at this time, when families across the Nation were struggling? He was profiting from it. In 2009, he joined a group of billionaire-investors to buy IndyMac, a failed bank that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation had taken over. The investors turned it into OneWest Bank, and they turned it into what the California Reinvestment Coalition called ''a foreclosure machine.''

Though the majority did not permit the California Reinvestment Coalition to testify at an official hearing on Mr. Mnuchin's nomination, the coalition's Paulina Gonzalez spoke with a number of Senators at a forum on Mr. Mnuchin's bank. Ms. Gonzalez told us that OneWest was among the worst. OneWest denied more applications than most for the Home Affordable Modification Program, the government program to help homeowners avoid foreclosure by adjusting their payment schedule. Ms. Gonzalez told us, ''We have labeled OneWest a 'foreclosure machine' not only because it foreclosed on more than 60,000 American families and because of its aggressive foreclosure practices, but because it seemed to do little else.''

Consider some of the heartbreaking foreclosure stories that OneWest left in its wake.

A 90-year-old Florida woman lost her home after making a 27-cent payment error.

Christina Clifford attempted to modify her loan twice. Each time that she sent in her check with the paperwork, OneWest told her that her paperwork was not received—even though the bank cashed the check that was in the same envelope.

A Minneapolis woman was in the process of negotiating a loan modification when she came home in a blizzard and found that her locks had been changed.

OneWest and its subsidiary Financial Freedom were also notorious for what came to be called ''widow foreclosures.'' They lured seniors into reverse mortgages signed by one spouse of a married couple. When the spouse who signed the paperwork died, OneWest and Financial Freedom would immediately begin the foreclosure process, sending out notices in as little as 10 days to widows and widowers.

Another egregious bank practice during the foreclosure crisis was ''robo-signing.'' Mortgage officials would speed through foreclosure documents and sign off without reviewing their accuracy. This practice all too frequently led to the bank powering through as many foreclosures as possible.

Mr. Mnuchin told the Finance Committee that ''OneWest Bank did not 'robo-sign' documents.'' But in a deposition, a OneWest executive admitted to personally robo-signing hundreds of documents, even shortening her signature to her initials to speed the process even further.

Thanks to these draconian practices, Mr. Mnuchin made a tidy $1.5 billion in profit when he and his fellow investors sold OneWest after 6 years.

In the aftermath of the devastating 2008 financial crisis, Congress worked to reform the system with the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Congress intended the law to reduce the kind of risk and recklessness that led to the crisis and strengthen Federal oversight of Wall Street and Big Banks. Congress created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to be a watchdog for everyday Americans and prevent predatory lending and unscrupulous behavior by financial institutions. It began regulation of exotic financial derivatives that contributed to the crisis by masking risk and established the Volcker rule to place limits on ways that banks can invest to minimize conflicts of interest and high-risk transactions.

While Congress can certainly do more to improve consumer and investor protections and ensure that no bank is ever ''too big to fail,'' Dodd-Frank is a critical reform. And since the day it passed, Republicans in Congress have attacked it, seeking to roll back its protections, weaken the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and reduce the oversight of the speculative transactions that increase risk in our financial markets.

President Trump has called Dodd-Frank a ''disaster'' and vowed to ''do a big number on it.'' And last week, President Trump signed an Executive order directing a review of Dodd-Frank regulations.

By his side at that moment was Gary Cohn, who was co-president of Goldman Sachs during the financial crisis. As detailed in a report by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Goldman survived the crash in part by betting against its own customers and sticking them with bad mortgages. In 2006, they saw trouble coming in the subprime mortgage market and realized that they were overinvested. So they packaged the bad deals into new mortgage-backed products and dumped them. In 2009, one analyst called Goldman ''a single underwriter solely interested in pushing its dirty inventory onto unsuspecting and gullible investors.''

President Trump's adviser Gary Cohn was a leader of Goldman Sachs at that time. Now, after walking away from Goldman Sachs with a $285 million payout, he has become chair of the National Economic Council. Mr. Cohn is at President Trump's side to work to unravel the reforms that Congress put in place to stop bad behavior of banks like Goldman Sachs.

Mr. Mnuchin also worked at Goldman Sachs and continued to work in the hedge fund industry. Will he serve as a check on the impulse to reopen banking to greater risk? In an interview with CNN's Squawk Box after his nomination, he said, ''We want to strip back parts of Dodd-Frank and that will be the number one priority on the regulatory side,''—the number one priority.

It is unclear how Mr. Mnuchin, Mr. Cohn, and President Trump plan to reshape financial regulation, how much risk they plan to reintroduce to the markets, and whether they would ensure adequate safeguards for consumers and investors. We do know, however, that Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Cohn are cozy with Wall Street and Big Banks, and it appears now that Mr. Trump's talk about reining in Wall Street was just talk.

In addition to the need to continue sensible oversight of the financial system, the next Treasury Secretary will have to confront one of the greatest challenges of our time—growing income inequality, wealth inequality, and wage stagnation.

According to an Economic Policy Institute Analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Economic Analysis, from 1948 until 1973, worker productivity and compensation rose at roughly similar rates—productivity increased by 96.7 percent and hourly compensation increased by 91.3 percent. Starting in 1973, however, growth in worker productivity and wages began to diverge dramatically. Between 1973 and 2013, productivity increased by 74.4 percent, but hourly compensation increased by just 9.2 percent.

Not everyone, however, saw stagnation. The wages of the top 1 percent of earners grew 138 percent between 1979 and 2013, once again, according to analysis by the Economic Policy Institute. In that same time period, the wages of workers in the bottom 10 percent actually dropped by 5 percent.

In 1965, an average company CEO made 20 times the salary of an average, nonmanagement worker. In 2014, the average CEO made 303 times the salary of an average worker.

Many Americans feel that they are working harder than ever, but they aren't getting ahead. Too often, they are right. They are taking on more and not getting compensated for the extra effort. We need policies to help average workers, like increasing the minimum wage, fair pay, and improvements to the Tax Code to encourage hard work rather than simply rewarding those who make money off of money.

Is Mr. Mnuchin the right person to address this problem? His experience is certainly different from that of the average worker. The son of a Goldman Sachs banker, he has accumulated enough wealth that he forgot to disclose a hundred million dollars in assets to the Finance Committee. He has said little about his ideas for tax reform, except creating what my colleague Senator WYDEN has dubbed the

''Mnuchin Rule.'' In an interview, Mr. Mnuchin said of tax reform: ''Any reductions we have in upper-income taxes will be offset by less deductions, so there will be no absolute tax cut for the upper class.'' I would certainly welcome that outcome. Unfortunately, it is totally inconsistent with the Trump tax plan.

According to Matt Gardner, a senior fellow at the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, President Trump's tax plan is heavily weighted to benefit the wealthy, leading to ''a new era of dynastic wealth.'' A report from the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center concluded that President Trump's plan would ''significantly raise taxes'' for about 8.5 million families, particularly working single parents. In contrast, the wealthiest one percent would receive 47 percent—almost half—of the tax cuts, saving on average $214,000. The 117,000 households in the top 0.1 percent would receive, on average, a whopping $1.3 million each.

In addition to exacerbating the problem of income inequality, the Trump tax plan would add $7 trillion to the national debt over the next decade. It would blow a hole in our Federal budget to give big checks to the superwealthy, provide limited benefit to the middle class, and hurt low-income families.

This is entirely backwards. We have learned over and over again that massive tax cuts for the wealthy do not lead to economic growth for everyone. Trickle down has never worked. We need to build an economy that works for everyone, not just the very wealthy. And we certainly should not be rewarding the wealthy at the expense of everyone else.

Given what little we know of Mr. Mnuchin's policy priorities, we have to look to his career to determine his experience to carry out the mission of the Treasury to create economic and job opportunities and sustain economic growth. Unfortunately, Mr. Mnuchin appears to have had a canny ability to take advantage of the dire circumstances of others to benefit himself, particularly in pushing aggressively for foreclosures at OneWest. It is far from clear that he is willing to now work on behalf of all Americans and especially those who have been working harder and receiving no return. I hope to be proven wrong, but I cannot support his nomination.

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

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

The bill 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.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, on January 20, at his inauguration, President Trump stood before the American people and said: ''For too long, a small group of our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost.''

President Trump is right. The people have borne unimaginable costs: the cost of foreclosure, the cost of inequality, the cost of poverty, and the cost of injustice. Sadly, it doesn't look like that is going to change soon with this administration. Three weeks into this administration, President Trump has already begun to restore power back to Wall Street and the very same people who he said have caused tremendous problems for us. The nomination of Steve Mnuchin, someone who spent his entire career working on behalf of Wall Street at the expense of hard-working Americans, is a clear example.

Let me say at the outset, I have not met him, but I tried to, but we couldn't get an agreement as to when we might be able to get together. I wanted to talk to him about some important issues that many of us remember.

We know what happened with the recession that greeted President Obama when he was sworn into office 8 years ago. We know about the foreclosures. We know of families being literally wiped out, all their savings gone because of misleading tactics by financiers.

I still look at this, and as much as I respect President Obama and his administration, I shake my head and think: Nobody went to jail for all that occurred. People at the highest levels of the financial community on Wall Street and others were engaged in practices that we know now were unfair and just plain wrong and, in many cases, illegal.

I have taken a look at Mr. Mnuchin's record. I have read a lot of stories about him. I have heard from homeowners' personally impacted by his conduct, and let me tell you, what I have seen and heard leads me to believe he is not the right person to be Secretary of the Treasury.

Like most of President Trump's nominees, Mr. Mnuchin was not chosen for his knowledge and experience on critical issues he will face if confirmed as Secretary of the Treasury. He was not chosen for his commitment to work for average working families. He was chosen for his loyalty to the President, the new litmus test in the Republican Party.

Before serving as President Trump's chief fundraiser on the campaign, Mr. Mnuchin worked to help wealthy individuals and powerful special interest groups reap the benefits of what the President has called ''a rigged system.'' He served as an executive at Goldman Sachs and as a hedge fund manager.

Perhaps what troubles me the most about Mr. Mnuchin's experience is his tenure at the helm of a group known as OneWest, which came to be known as a foreclosure machine in America because of the aggressive and questionable practices it used to foreclose on the homes of thousands of American families.

Mr. Mnuchin was the head of the company that was doing the foreclosure. After our country experienced the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, Congress worked around the clock to prevent the economy from going into free-fall and end some of the worst practices that helped bring the American economy to its knees.

As we were working to save American homes, Mr. Mnuchin—like President Trump—saw opportunity to make a profit, personally earning millions from OneWest's success as a foreclosure machine.

As the head of OneWest, Mr. Mnuchin had the power to destroy lives through foreclosure or find ways to help homeowners stay in their homes. He chose to aggressively foreclose on families.

During his nomination hearing, Mr. Mnuchin defended OneWest's foreclosure practices and said he was proud of the work of the bank during the foreclosure crisis.

Let me tell you about some of the stories, and you can decide whether Mr. Mnuchin should be proud of the record of the company he was managing.

Rex Schaffer and his wife Rose lost their home of nearly 50 years, despite having qualified for a loan modification.

Ossie Lofton, a 90-year-old woman, was foreclosed on because she was short 27 cents in her mortgage payment—27 cents.

The locks were changed on Leslie Park's Minneapolis home in the middle of a blizzard.

We have seen how organizations headed by Mr. Mnuchin treat people. If confirmed, Mr. Mnuchin would have the ability to use the power of the U.S. Treasury Department to stand on the side of Wall Street and on the opposite side of millions of working Americans. I don't have confidence, based on his professional record, that Mr. Mnuchin will put the needs of hard-working families first over Wall Street.

While the foreclosure crisis and its aftermath seem like something in the past for so many people, that is not the case in my home State of Illinois. Foreclosures are devastating for the families forced out of their homes, but they are also devastating to surrounding communities and neighborhoods.

If you want to know what a community looks like 50 years after the foreclosure crisis, visit my birthplace, my hometown of East St. Louis, IL, or even some of the neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago, or the west side, for that matter—vacant lot after vacant lot, neglected buildings and homes, an economy devastated. And what is left? Some of the poorest families on earth.

While we have made significant progress since the recession of 2008, many families in my State and across the country are still suffering. There is work to do. If confirmed, Mr. Mnuchin

will be responsible for protecting these families and ensuring that we don't have another financial crisis. All we have seen from him is his ability to profit from the foreclosure crisis and the devastation left in its wake. In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, Congress got together with the President and passed Dodd-Frank. This was Wall Street reform determined not to let another economic crisis follow. The consumer protection act was also passed to prevent these crises and to reform the problems that caused them.

Mr. Mnuchin has made no secret of the fact that his No. 1 regulatory priority is to roll back Wall Street reform, to return the barbarians to the gates. Despite the promises President Trump made during his campaign, including ''not letting Wall Street get away with murder,'' Mr. Mnuchin has an ally in President Trump in undoing Dodd-Frank. President Trump signed an Executive order that would begin rolling back the important consumer and financial system reforms we passed as part of Dodd-Frank. The President signed this order sitting among the biggest beneficiaries of his actions, some of Wall Street's high rollers. Make no mistake, if President Trump gets his way and Steven Mnuchin is confirmed, the banks are going to have the best friend they can think of in the Treasury Department, just like they did before the economic crash of 2008.

It is clear the American people can't count on Mr. Mnuchin, based on his business experience, to decide with them over Wall Street. But, certainly, he should be committed to basic fairness of the Tax Code. He said he was until he wasn't. Shortly after his nomination, Mr. Mnuchin said there would be ''no absolute tax cut for the upper class.'' Yet he has not spoken out against the significant tax cuts the wealthy would receive from the repeal of the Affordable Care Act or under the President's and the House Republican's tax reform plan. We shouldn't be surprised by this because we are asking Mr. Mnuchin to close the loopholes and raise the taxes on the very people he helped to avoid paying taxes by using offshore tax havens as a hedge fund manager.

We are still recovering from the devastation of that financial crisis 8 years ago. We can't afford to have our Nation's top economic official be a man who has only been looking out for Wall Street. For a President who ran on bringing back jobs and being a champion of the working people, the choices of President Trump for his Cabinet are the opposite and have taken advantage of the very system he has derided as rigged against the people.

The American people deserve better. When Mr. Mnuchin's nomination is brought to the Senate floor for a vote, I will vote no, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

NOMINATION OF DAVID SHULKIN

Madam President, I want to take a moment to address the nomination of Dr. David Shulkin to be confirmed soon as the next Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. We all know the Veterans Affairs Department faced a number of challenges in recent years: long waiting times, disability claims backlogs, issues related to accountability, whistleblowers, and the quality of care. The list is too long. As the second largest Federal agency, employing more than 350,000 people across America and serving as our largest integrated health care system, some challenges are unavoidable.

As the VA provides for the brave men and women who fought and sacrificed for this country, as well as their families, it is critical that it be held to a high standard. We in Congress must work to ensure that, in addition to holding the Department to a high standard, we also ensure that it is well funded and that it has the tools and flexibility to do the job.

It is critical that we strengthen the VA system and not weaken it through privatization, which would only lower the quality of health care for our veterans. That is why I am pleased with the nomination of Dr. Shulkin by President Trump to be the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Despite years of people playing politics with the VA—efforts which have only been counterproductive and have made it difficult for the VA to fill critical vacancies—and despite months of President Trump's talking about privatization without offering real solutions, today we have a nominee who appears to understand that, while there is a role for expanded care options, weakening or dismantling the VA is not the answer. I was heartened by Dr. Shulkin's commitment during his hearing in the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on February 1, where he said: ''The Department of Veterans Affairs will not be privatized under my watch.''

Dr. Shulkin may not be a veteran himself, but I am encouraged by the fact that he comes from a military family and has decades of medical experience, including serving for 2 years under former VA Secretary Robert McDonald as head of the Veterans Health Administration after being nominated by President Obama. May I add that he left a lucrative private sector job and took a huge pay cut to join the VA.

It is no surprise that a number of veterans service organizations actively support his nomination. Although progress has been made in recent years, there are still challenges at the VA that we need to continue to address. I worry about the veterans' health care, education, homelessness, accountability, and a host of other issues. I look forward to working with Dr. Shulkin on these matters.

But we must not forget that, overall, in terms of health care, the VA is consistently found to provide care in key areas that is better than or on par with care in the private sector. It is significantly more cost effective, as well. And most veterans across the country prefer their veteran-centric health care that they receive in the VA. Despite what some may claim, most of them do not support privatization. I want to be clear that this includes a myriad of efforts under the guise of expanding access or choice.

So I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting Dr. Shulkin to be the next VA Secretary. I shared then-President Obama's sentiment that he was the right person to head up the Veterans Health Administration back in 2015, and I believe he is the right person to head the VA today.

Just 3 days ago, I was in Marion, IL, and visited our veterans hospital there. I met with the administrator. Ms. Ginsberg told me she knew of Dr. Shulkin and had high regard for him. That came as high praise from someone who is on the front line of serving thousands of deserving veterans in southern Illinois every single day. So her endorsement helped me to come forward today and to commit that I will be voting to make sure that Dr. Shulkin gets this opportunity to head the Veterans Affairs agency.

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. MERKLEY. 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. MERKLEY. Madam President, even now, more than 2 months after then President-Elect Trump nominated Steven Mnuchin to be Treasury Secretary, I still find it hard to believe. Month after month out on the campaign trail, President Trump attacked Wall Street. He said, time after time, that he was going to take on Wall Street. He attacked his opponents in the primaries and in the general election by saying that they were too close to Wall Street and, specifically, too close to Goldman Sachs.

He said, regarding Secretary Clinton: She will never reform Wall Street. I know the guys at Goldman Sachs; they have total control. But he countered this by saying that he would do it differently. He promised to take on Wall Street. He promised to fight for middle-class Americans. He promised to drain the swamp and reduce and eliminate the powerful entrenched special interests here in Washington, DC.

But what a change can happen within a few weeks. Less than a month after winning the Presidency—I should point out, winning the electoral college but losing by a massive margin the popular vote, the citizen vote—who does Mr. Trump pick to be Treasury Secretary? A 17-year Goldman Sachs veteran, a foreclosure king—Steve Mnuchin.

So here tonight, not even a decade after the second worst financial crisis

in U.S. history, we will be holding a vote on whether Steve Mnuchin is a fit character to be Secretary of the Treasury.

What is particularly puzzling is not only the Goldman Sachs background, in contrast with the President's campaign promises, but also that this individual was a contributor to many of the predatory practices that nearly destroyed our economy in 2008, and he is someone who made a fortune throwing struggling American families out of their homes and onto the streets.

I am somewhat shocked we are here tonight and that some of my colleagues are considering voting to put a man in charge of our Nation's financial system who played such a role in bringing it to its knees just a couple of years ago.

Let's remember the massive impact on American families. They lost jobs by the millions. The unemployment rate soared. They lost their retirement savings and often they lost their homes—not just because they lost their jobs and couldn't pay their mortgage but because of the predatory design of the mortgages.

So I am shocked that I am here tonight and we are holding this vote and that we are particularly considering an individual who worked to tear down the protections and throw American families to the Wall Street wolves.

Maybe we should have a Treasury Secretary who succeeded in the past to build up the economy, not one who participated in tearing it down. Maybe we should have a Treasury Secretary who worked hard to put tens of thousands of people into homes, rather than someone who personally profited by throwing tens of thousands of American families out of their homes. I would be feeling much better about the vote we are holding tonight if that was the case because the American people have endured too much pain and suffering at the machinations of Wall Street.

I thought we had perhaps learned our lesson. We worked hard to pass the Dodd-Frank reforms that would end those predatory mortgages, that would end those liar loans, that would end those teaser rate-exploding interest rate loans that brought families to their knees, that would end the securities designed in such a fashion that you couldn't evaluate whether they were AAA or AA, that would end this process and this formulation that turned the dream of American homeownership into the nightmare of American homeownership—this nightmare in which, instead of building wealth for American families, homeownership became a predatory instrument for draining wealth from American families.

What was Steve Mnuchin doing when the Banking Committee was working to save the economy he had helped to tear down? Well, he was foreclosing on more than 36,000 struggling homeowners, conducting more than one-third of all the reverse mortgage foreclosures, running a bank with a record of discriminating against minority home buyers, running a bank with a record of discriminating against minority neighborhoods.

So for all these reasons, this is the wrong man; the wrong man because he does not fit the promise the President made to take on Wall Street; the wrong man because he participated in destroying our economy, which harmed millions of American families; and the wrong man because he wants to dismantle Dodd-Frank, which had been put together specifically to end the predatory practices, including the illegal robo-signing he participated in.

This individual has no business overseeing the financial future of the American people so I will be voting no on his confirmation, and I passionately urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

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

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to speak about the nomination of Steve Mnuchin to be Secretary of the Treasury and the concerns I have about his nomination.

I want to start with a Pennsylvania story. It is a story we wish we didn't have to highlight, but it is relevant to the discussion and debate on this nomination.

I am looking at a document that is a written summary of a television investigative news report from January of this year. It is from the Pittsburgh television station WTAE, and it is dated January 16, 2017. The headline on the document is ''Trump Pick for Treasury Secretary Foreclosed on Hundreds of Homeowners in Western Pennsylvania.'' The article says in pertinent part about this one Pennsylvanian:

> Nellie Mlinek lost her husband to cancer. She lost her son to an overdose. And then she lost her home to OneWest Bank.

It goes on to describe the interaction between this individual and the bank, and of course this is the bank of which Steve Mnuchin was a part owner.

I also want to read what she said about the circumstance she was in. She was hoping that because of the circumstances with regard to her home, that she would be able to work with the bank instead of having foreclosure. That was not to be.

The article goes on to talk about others in the region who had foreclosures as well. A house in White Oak, PA, was foreclosed in 2014; a house in North Versailles was foreclosed in 2013; a house in Penn Hills in 2012; a Pittsburgh house was foreclosed in 2011. These are all communities in Allegheny County, Southwestern Pennsylvania, and Nellie was from Westmoreland County, which is just to the east of Allegheny County. So that is what the article summarizes—foreclosures throughout a corner of Southwestern Pennsylvania, as the headline says, hundreds of foreclosures.

The article starts with this line: ''Critics say President-elect Donald Trump's pick for treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, ran a foreclosure machine at a major bank,'' and it goes on from there. That is one in Pennsylvania, and then references to foreclosures that I read from are summaries of what happened to some others.

Then we go to the other end of the State. This is in Southeastern Pennsylvania, the region within which Philadelphia sits. In this case, the individual is Ruth Guerriero. Ruth is from South Philadelphia, and she remembers the day she got the letter that ''scared me to death.'' The letter threatened a foreclosure because of a reverse mortgage that she didn't know existed. The headline of this article is ''Reverse-mortgage nightmare can start after borrower dies.''

In this case, Ruth lost her husband. The article says that this particular piece of mail in October 2013 was from OneWest Bank, informing Ruth that it was foreclosing on the house in the 2800 block of South Hutchinson Street that she and her late husband had bought in 2006 for $200,000. Without her knowledge, Ruth Guerriero said, her husband, 23 years her senior, had taken out a reverse mortgage in September 2007. It goes on from there.

So anyone who has had that experience of losing a home or becoming the victim of a reverse mortgage when you didn't have prior knowledge can relate to what has happened to these individuals. This is part of the debate. These are not the only considerations we weigh, but when you have, in this case, a nominee for Treasury Secretary who comes into the nomination process not having held public office or not having held appointed government office, this is part of the record you are to review. It is really the only record—the record in this case as a banker or a businessperson, and in his case, his work on Wall Street.

I had the opportunity, of course, as a member of the Finance Committee, to meet Mr. Mnuchin in my office and to question him more than once in the question period for the Finance Committee. In our meeting, I asked him, for example—and these are other relevant questions in terms of presenting accurate information, presenting information that will fully answer questions—I asked him how many times his financial institution chose to modify mortgages as opposed to foreclosing, and he told me that there were about 100,000 mortgage modifications. Yet we

know the documented evidence tells a different story; it is about one-third that number, closer to 35,000 modifications.

I realize that someone could not remember the exact number, but I was surprised at how far off he was in something so substantial in someone's life, whether it was a person like Nellie or other individuals. A mortgage foreclosure, as opposed to a modification, which is a better result for an individual or family—that is a substantial difference in their lives. And I would hope that when you are in any way involved in a foreclosure, as a banker or as a part of an entity that is foreclosing, that you would carefully weigh the consequences before you choose to pursue foreclosure or pursue a different path, the path of modification, which, of course, everyone would prefer in that circumstance.

I asked Steve Mnuchin how many Americans his bank had foreclosed on during the financial crisis, and he has yet to provide an answer to that question. I know others may have asked a similar question, and I wonder if they got an answer. We will see what the public record shows.

Mr. Mnuchin was also asked to provide a copy of a letter he said he sent to the Department of Housing and Urban Development raising concerns about the impact of the company's reverse mortgage guidance. It was almost a month ago that we asked for that information to be produced, that letter, and we still haven't seen it. So I wonder about the statement he made with regard to information from HUD.

I also asked Mr. Mnuchin whether his financial institution engaged in the predatory practice of so-called robo-signing, and this is a question which was asked by a couple of Senators. I asked him for that information, and he said that wasn't the case. But now we know from the documented evidence in an answer that he later changed that there was robo-signing taking place at the time we alleged that it did.

So when you ask a question in a hearing and you get an answer that was wrong or incomplete or misleading or otherwise, that is one thing. You could sometimes have a circumstance where someone didn't intentionally want to mislead or tell a lie, or they may have answered a question imprecisely or without a lot of information. But I think it is a little different when you ask a question in writing, where the individual had the time to analyze a question and provide an answer in writing with some time to reflect, some time to consult some other sources of information before they draft their answer and then submit it to you as part of the nomination process. In this case, Mr. Mnuchin had a different answer than the facts showed, and I will go through that a little bit later.

At some level, there is a question of accuracy, maybe even rising to the level of trust, and that is something we have to consider when we are making a determination about a nominee, because almost any Cabinet agency has to transmit information, very specific, detailed information. People have to be able to rely upon the information, the accuracy of it and the completeness of it. And if he has had problems in his nomination process, that causes us to raise some real questions.

I wanted to start with OneWest Bank—another entity called Financial Freedom. I don't know how far we will get into this in the limited time we have. In 2009, Mr. Mnuchin and his business partners bought OneWest Bank at the height of the financial crisis for $1.6 billion, paying about 5 cents on the dollar for the bank's assets. Mr. Mnuchin was able to buy the bank at such a significant discount in part because he was entrusted to modify as many home mortgages as possible so homeowners could stay in their homes. He foreclosed on more than—I should say OneWest Bank foreclosed on more than 40,000 Americans, so we are told.

We don't know how many foreclosures they engaged in in Pennsylvania, but, as I read a couple moments ago from an investigative report from WTAE, it is at least hundreds in one region of the State. We have 67 counties. Depending on where you draw the line, Southwestern Pennsylvania is 10 counties, 12 counties, somewhere in that range, maybe as high as 15 if you went as far north as Erie. Let's say it is 15 counties. Hundreds of foreclosures in that region is substantial.

Later, after all of those thousands of foreclosures across the country, Mr. Mnuchin sold OneWest Bank for $3.4 billion in 2015. The sale itself yielded the group of individuals, including Mr. Mnuchin, billions of dollars—that would be Mr. Mnuchin and also investors.

I mentioned the foreclosures before and the individuals involved. I wanted to go a little deeper into the particular circumstances.

I mentioned and highlighted Nellie's story. Here is what took place in that circumstance—or what she had hoped would take place. Nellie was hoping that she would be able to work something out with the bank, so she asked OneWest to help her keep the house by adjusting her payment. That often happens when a bank initiates a foreclosure. It begins a process but works something out with a homeowner, and that would be called a modification. In this case, Nellie asked OneWest to help her keep her house by adjusting her payment, but she said the bank refused and then foreclosed on her. She said: ''They should have worked with me to meet a payment that I could make.'' She filed for bankruptcy, but even that did not save her house. She said it cost her ''a lot of depression.'' That is what Nellie said about her own circumstances, and I mentioned the other communities in Western Pennsylvania.

That is the reality foreclosure brings to bear on the life of one individual who is struggling, who, in Nellie's case, has had a series of setbacks, deeply personal, tragic circumstances compounded by the foreclosure. The same is true of Ruth in South Philadelphia, in terms of the impact of that decision. We have a lot of ways to summarize information like this, and I will just highlight maybe one or two.

For example, according to the National Consumer Law Center, in March of 2012, a Philadelphia senior citizen with a reverse mortgage from a wing of Mr. Mnuchin's bank—in this case, the name of the entity was Financial Freedom—sought assistance because he had been served with a preforeclosure notice. The reverse mortgage company owned by Mr. Mnuchin gave this individual 30 days to pay almost $5,000.

What was the bill for? Well, without his knowing it, Financial Freedom charged him over $2,000 for forced-placed insurance coverage from 2010 to 2012. Financial Freedom threatened to go forward with the foreclosure unless this senior citizen made immediate monthly payments equal to almost 35 percent of his monthly income. With legal assistance, those payments were reduced.

I would hope you would not need to hire a lawyer to get those payments reduced, but sometimes when you are up against a powerful financial institution, that is the only way to proceed.

Instead of immediately informing this senior citizen of his lapsed coverage, Financial Freedom charged excessive amounts for forced-placed coverage. Financial Freedom then waited 2 years to begin collection, but it expected this senior, who was living on a fixed income, to pay within 30 days. Financial Freedom also did not tell this senior citizen he could apply for a longer repayment plan due to his low income.

According to the National Consumer Law Center, in 2015, Financial Freedom notified a Pennsylvania reverse mortgage holder's heirs that the only way to avoid foreclosure on the family home was by repaying the loan balance or selling the property for at least 95 percent of its appraised value. They said the appraised value for the Pennsylvania home was $170,000, even though their own appraisal of the property just one month earlier was $67,000. There is a big difference between $170,000 and $67,000. It seems that $170,000 was the appraised value at loan origination, way back in 2007. Now, of course, it is years later, and that was, of course, before the market collapsed. So for the purposes of preforeclosure notice, Financial Freedom used an appraisal over $100,000 more than the actual value of the home. They were trying to force the heirs to pay more than $100,000 above the home's value to prevent foreclosure of the family home.

So these are a couple of Pennsylvania stories—Ruth and Nellie and then some others, whose names aren't in the text of my remarks, but give similar stories about some of the foreclosure practices

that Mr. Mnuchin was part of when he had these individual banks.

Here is the question on robo-signing that I mentioned earlier. I submitted a question for the record in writing and gave it to him, and here is what his response was to the question. The question was this:

> One of the most significant scandals during the financial crisis was the practice of ''robo-signing'' whereby bank employees rapidly approved foreclosure documents without thorough review. Many were wrongfully foreclosed upon on account of these practices. Did OneWest Bank ''robo sign'' documents relating to foreclosures and evictions?

His response was pretty shocking:

> OneWest Bank did not robo-sign documents, and as the only bank to successfully complete the independent foreclosure review required by Federal banking regulators to investigate allegations of robo-signing, I am proud of our institution's extremely low error rate.

The reason I say that it was a shocking answer is because he had signed his name to a 2011 document that found that OneWest Bank did, in fact, robo-sign. The findings from the Office of Thrift Supervision does not explicitly state robo-signing—that is not a legal term of art—but it does set forth a fact pattern for robo-signing, which involves an employee signing foreclosure documents without reviewing them. Instead of reviewing the details of each, robo-signers assume the paperwork is correct and sign it automatically. Almost anyone who lived through the financial crisis of 2008 knows what robo-signing is, and many were victims of this practice.

So that is a problem, obviously, when you answer a question in a manner that is totally inconsistent with the facts.

I know I am low on time, and I want to wrap up. What I will do for the record—or if we have time to come back later—is to get into some other issues. But one of the real concerns I have about his nomination is not just his record as a banker, as a person working on Wall Street and working in that world. It is one thing to say you did something in your prior life, but once you put on the mantle of public service and the heavy responsibilities of Treasury Secretary, you set aside that other work you did or that other position you had, maybe, on some issues. But, apparently, some of his work—or at least some of his points of view—will continue in the Treasury Department, because I think it is pretty clear, based upon some reporting back at the end of November, that Mr. Mnuchin believes that one of his prime responsibilities is to begin to dismantle, or substantially alter, what we know as the Dodd-Frank legislation.

We know what happened prior to that. We know what happened to the economy. We know that the United States lost about $19 trillion in household wealth. That is $19 trillion, with a ''t.'' More than 8 million jobs—by one estimate, 8.7 million jobs—were lost. So I would hope that as Treasury Secretary, were he to be confirmed, he would make sure that we never go down that path again—that before you dismantle Dodd-Frank, you better think about the consequences to real people's lives.

So I will wrap up because I know we have to go, but I will put more information in the RECORD.

Let me conclude with one thought before we move on. One of the concerns I have about his nomination, also, is not something you can point to in a document. It is just a gut instinct or a judgment that I have made, and it is a judgment that can be summarized this way: I have a real concern about his commitment to public service. Why do I say that? It seemed that, in this whole process of disclosing financial information—turning over documents, answering questions, answering follow-up questions—Mr. Mnuchin was kind of resistant to scrutiny or seemed to be burdened by this, and that somehow he was disclosing too much. His demeanor, when you would ask him some questions, appeared to me to be a demeanor that was not consistent with what public service must be about. When you are in public service, whether you are elected or appointed, you are, in fact, a servant. You don't work for a bank, you don't work for a financial institution, and you don't work for a company. You don't even work for a President. You work for the people.

I was taught a long time ago that the closer you can get to this ideal—which is inscribed on a building in our State capitol in Harrisburg: ''All public service is a trust, given in faith and accepted in honor''—the way you accept your public duties is not only to disclose what you should disclose, to answer questions which you must answer, but to do it in a manner where you are doing it with a belief that you are a public servant and with the spirit of public service. If you are labored and if you are chafing under that or resisting, you should probably do something else with your life.

I hope I am wrong about that. I hope once he is in office—and it appears that he may be confirmed—and if he is confirmed, we see a different approach to the duties of public service and the burdens of public service. I hope I am wrong about him, but my instincts tell me otherwise.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in opposition to President Trump's nominee to serve as Secretary of the Treasury, Steve Mnuchin.

From his days at Goldman Sachs, on the frontlines of developing the very products that brought our economy to its knees, to his reign as chairman of OneWest Bank, quantified by tens of thousands of foreclosures and qualified by years of despair, to his plan to get rich off cash-strapped seniors, to his investments in Sears that stripped pension benefits from low-wage-earners, Mr. Mnuchin made a career out of exploiting the financial turmoil of hard-working American families, never once stopping to consider the impacts of his profiteering on the people of this country.

At every step of the way, Mr. Mnuchin's mantra has been to privatize profits and socialize losses.

While our President spent much of his campaign railing against Goldman Sachs and Wall Street's stranglehold on Washington, it should be lost on no one that Wall Street has the majority vote in this administration. With friends like Mr. Mnuchin and Gary Cohn in high places, the country's largest and most complex financial institutions can rest easy, knowing this administration is firmly committed to their bottom lines. As Treasury Secretary, Mr. Mnuchin will be a chief architect of the GOP's ''Wall Street First'' policy.

Despite his self-described humble beginnings at Goldman Sachs in the 1980s, Mr. Mnuchin was on the frontlines of developing the now-infamous collateralized debt obligations known as CDOs and credit default swaps.

I urge my colleagues not to be fooled by Mr. Mnuchin. He was part of the cadre of corporate raiders that brought our economy to its knees.

In its 2011 report on the great recession that wiped out nearly $13 trillion in household wealth and cost nearly 9 million Americans their jobs, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations described Goldman Sachs' role in the crisis as follows:

> Goldman engaged in securitization practices that magnified risk in the market by selling high risk, poor quality mortgage products.

It said:

> Conflicts of interest related to proprietary investments led Goldman to conceal its adverse financial interests from potential investors, sell investors poor quality investments, and place its final interests before those of its clients. . . .''

Despite the damage they caused, Mr. Mnuchin never learned his lesson, and, as recently as 2012, he praised these instruments, calling them ''an extremely positive development in terms of being able to finance different parts of the economy and different businesses efficiently.''

Now, after he left Goldman Sachs, Mr. Mnuchin started a hedge fund, Dune Capital, which started investing in an exotic financial instrument called life settlements, which are made up of life insurance policies purchased from cash-strapped seniors. The investor, Mr. Mnuchin's hedge fund, had a plan to pay the premiums on the policies until the seniors died, at which point they would cash in on the insurance claims.

So let's be clear. Under Mr. Mnuchin's plan, the sooner seniors died, the more money his hedge fund would make. While the markets for

this product collapsed before Mr. Mnuchin could cash in, we have to ask ourselves if this is the type of leader whom we want at the helm of our economy? Do we really want a Treasury Secretary who had a plan to get rich off of dying seniors?

That brings us to the end of 2008 and early 2009. Wall Street had brought our economy to the brink of collapse, and 13.2 million Americans were facing unemployment. Home values were plummeting, having fallen 12.5 percent in just one quarter. And where was Mr. Mnuchin? He was negotiating the deal of a lifetime. In the darkest days of the financial crisis, when Rome was burning, Mr. Mnuchin and his friends were looking for stores to raid.

Boy, did they find a gem in IndyMac. He purchased IndyMac's $23.5 billion of assets for a mere $1.55 billion in March of 2009. With the FDIC, Federal Deposit Insurance entity backing, its too many loans went south. So he had a governmental guarantee for $23.5 billion of assets for about $1.5 billion, and he had the government's guarantee. All that Mr. Mnuchin had to do was to agree to help homeowners struggling with their mortgages, but Mr. Mnuchin didn't hold up his end of the bargain. He wanted more. Apparently, the profit margins of foreclosure were just too sweet to ignore.

After buying IndyMac and renaming it OneWest Bank, Mr. Mnuchin was installed as chairman. But instead of working to achieve sustainable loan modifications and workouts for struggling borrowers, as Mr. Mnuchin had committed to doing, OneWest's business model centered on kicking borrowers out of their homes at the first sign of default.

In April of 2011, the former Office of Thrift Supervision hit OneWest Bank with a consent order because the bank was actually putting homeowners on a fast track to foreclosure, robo-signing foreclosure documents.

In a sworn deposition in 2009, a OneWest vice president admitted to robo-signing 750 foreclosure documents a week without ever reading or reviewing them. In 2014, an independent government review of OneWest's foreclosure activities in 2009 and 2010 alone identified more than 10,000 homeowners, including dozens of active-duty servicemembers, who were owed $8.5 million in damages due to the bank's foreclosure practices.

OneWest's practices were especially egregious when it came to seniors with reverse mortgage loans. During Mr. Mnuchin's tenure at the bank, OneWest's reverse mortgage subsidiary, Financial Freedom, had approximately 17 percent of the reverse mortgage shares but was responsible for nearly 40 percent of reverse mortgage foreclosures. In other words, Mr. Mnuchin cornered the market on focusing and foreclosing on seniors in America. Whether it was foreclosing on a 90-year-old woman over a 27-cent—27-cent—missed payment or threatening to kick an 84-year-old widow out of her home of 54 years, Mr. Mnuchin was ruthless.

What did Mr. Mnuchin have to say about all of this when we asked him during his confirmation hearing in the Senate Finance Committee? He dodged responsibility at every step. First he blamed IndyMac for the quality of mortgage loans; then he blamed government regulations, which he falsely claimed forced his bank to kick people out of their homes. If that wasn't enough, Mr. Mnuchin had the audacity to tell us that his bank did not robo-sign documents despite clear evidence to the contrary.

To make matters worse, Mr. Mnuchin had the gall to call OneWest a loan modification machine. He repeatedly misled the committee that OneWest provided more than 100,000 loan modifications when, in fact, they modified less than one-quarter of that amount.

On top of misleading the committee, Mr. Mnuchin has been unwilling to provide information on the number of borrowers who lost their homes during the time that he ran the bank. We believe that number is at least 60,000 families and seniors, but those numbers could even be higher.

At the end of the day, this is about much more than numbers. It is about the seniors who are barely hanging on to their homes—their only source of wealth. It is about communities that were hit with a one-two punch of subprime loans in the years leading up to the crisis, only to face banks like OneWest with unrelenting foreclosure practices that stopped at nothing until they had kicked people out of their homes.

It is about people like Sylvia Oliver of Scotch Plains, NJ. After her employer cut her hours in 2009, like so many other hardworking Americans at the time, she ran into difficulty paying her mortgage. Despite the fact that Ms. Oliver found a full-time job and applied eight—eight—times for loan modifications, Mr. Mnuchin's bank denied each and every one of her applications. Ms. Oliver has been fighting to save her home for 7 years. She is hanging on by a thread. Her own words speak volumes about Mr. Mnuchin. She said:

> It's been very painful and stressful not knowing if my kids and my family are going to have a home to live in, or if it's going to be foreclosed on. I would ask you to remember my experience when you consider whether Mr. Mnuchin is qualified to lead the Department of the Treasury. As the CEO and Chair of OneWest Bank, Mr. Mnuchin had the opportunity to help families like mine with responsible loan modifications, and he didn't. I don't think this is a track record that anybody should be proud of.

Ms. Oliver is right. Mr. Mnuchin's record is not only undeserving of pride, it is shameful. While Mr. Mnuchin's business formula proved toxic for tens of thousands of hard-working American families and seniors, it was incredibly lucrative for Mr. Mnuchin and OneWest's investors. He sold OneWest for $3.4 billion, a profit of $1.85 billion over just 6 years, making around $200 million for himself. That is a pretty nice return on investment.

While I am gravely concerned about Mr. Mnuchin's history of exploiting hard-working Americans to line his own pockets, I am equally concerned about his plan to unchain Wall Street. Mr. Mnuchin has made it his No. 1 priority to roll back Wall Street reform.

As my friend Senator BROWN has often said, our colleagues seem to have contracted a case of collective amnesia about the great recession. Just 8.5 years after the worst financial collapse in 80 years, which put taxpayers on the line for billions in bailouts, the President, Republicans in Congress, and Mr. Mnuchin are champing at the bit to take down the very protections that were put in place to prevent another catastrophe. I ask them, Have we learned nothing?

We know what this administration wants. It wants what the industry wants. On the day the President signed his ''Wall Street First'' Executive order, Goldman Sachs' shares soared 4.6 percent, a $4 billion gain. At the end of the day, Mr. Mnuchin is nominated to serve in a position to ensure the financial stability of the American economy, but his only experience is betting on the financial instability of American families.

Not only did he profit off the backs of struggling homeowners, he also stands to profit off of pensions he mismanaged while on the board of the Sears company. From the time Mr. Mnuchin joined the board of Sears, the company lost billions of dollars, including more than $8 billion since 2011 alone. Rather than invest in growth and its workers, he decided to strip the company of its most valuable assets and keep them for themselves and their friends.

While Sears seemed to lose in this transaction, there were some that certainly appeared to profit. Not surprisingly, Mr. Mnuchin and his hedge fund friends were those profiteers. As a shareholder lawsuit contended, they gobbled up the most valuable and profitable assets, and they saved golden parachutes for themselves to escape if the company crashed. This might sound complicated, but it is a move that would make Gordon Gecko from the movie ''Wall Street'' proud. Just replace Bluestar Airlines with Sears, and fiction becomes reality. In the world of both men, greed is good.

But this isn't a movie. It is the real world with real-life consequences for 200,000 people who work at Sears. Stripping Sears of $12 billion worth of its most valuable assets contributed to the devaluation of the company, which further jeopardized the pensions of more than 200,000 Americans. According to the most recent filing, this pension fund is now underfunded by an alarming $2 billion after they stripped $12 billion of its most valuable assets. These retirees, who rely on pensions to live, who worked hard all of their lives and played by the rules, have already

had their benefits cut by Mr. Mnuchin and the Sears finance board. In fact, the pension situation has become so dire that the government, through the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, or the PBGC, felt compelled to step in to protect the pension benefits for these 200 people.

As if his past mismanagement of pensions isn't bad enough, as Treasury Secretary, Mr. Mnuchin would oversee the decision whether to bail out the pension. Mr. Mnuchin would have to decide whether to protect his personal hedge fund investments in Sears, which he refuses to divest, or to protect the Federal Government and those 200,000 retirees.

To be fair, when I asked Mr. Mnuchin about his inherent conflict of interest during his confirmation hearing, he pledged to recuse himself from any decision by the PBGC regarding Sears. But we have heard that song before. Mr. Mnuchin can't avoid a conflict of interest by recusing himself any more than President Trump can avoid a conflict by supposedly letting his children run his businesses. The only true firewall against a potential conflict of interest is through a full divestiture, which Mr. Mnuchin refuses to do. As a private citizen and executive at Sears, Mr. Mnuchin showed a total disregard for the earned pension benefits of hundreds of thousands of hard-working Americans. I have no reason to think he will have a change of heart as Treasury Secretary.

Not only does Mr. Mnuchin want to let banks write their own rules and let executives profit when they cut pensions, but he also wants to cut taxes on the rich so he and his friends can keep more of their ill-gotten gains. After helping raise millions of dollars from Wall Street and big corporations for President Trump's campaign, they are now expecting a big return on their investment—and, boy, do they win big league under the Mnuchin-Trump tax plan. This ill-conceived proposal would give large corporations, which are already earning record profits, an additional $2.5 trillion. That is $2.5 trillion taken away from transportation, from schools, from the middle class, and given directly to multinational corporations. It would eliminate the estate tax and gift taxes, giving a nearly $200 billion windfall to the wealthiest 5,000 family dynasties in the country—$200 billion to the wealthiest 5,000 family dynasties in the country—and 99.99 percent of all Americans will not see a penny from this giveaway. But we know who would benefit: Mr. Mnuchin and President Trump.

It doesn't stop there. On top of all of this, the Mnuchin-Trump proposal would also give the top one-tenth of 1 percent—the wealthiest of the wealthy, the corporate CEOs and hedge fund managers who make around $4 million per year or more—$1 million back each and every year. This group of elite earners already take home a whopping 184 times the average pay and has the same combined net worth as nearly 90 percent of all American workers. These 160,000 of the richest families in the country have as much wealth as 144 million families in America.

I have nothing against wealthy people. I have nothing against millionaires and billionaires. Many worked hard for their money, and they played by the rules. I applaud their success. But I don't think the wealthy, who are doing just fine right now, need an extra million dollars or more than the middle class. I don't think we should be borrowing trillions more from China just to give the top one-tenth of 1 percent another million dollars. This is fundamentally backward.

They say we can't afford to invest in infrastructure, we can't afford to help our graduates with mounting college debt, we can't afford to give a whole host of resources to things we think are critical to compel our Nation to be the continuing global economic leader, but we can afford to give $1 million away to all the millionaires and billionaires in the country. This warped order of priorities is a perfect metaphor for Mr. Mnuchin's school of economics: Give the rich more and more because they know best.

Unfortunately, this theory of trickle-down economics hasn't worked in the past and will not work now. The American people are sick and tired of getting fleeced. They are tired of working hard every day and playing by the rules only to fall further behind. They are tired of losing in a rigged system.

But a Treasury Department led by Mr. Mnuchin will only deliver more of the same: more tax breaks for the wealthiest in the country, more borrowing from China, more income inequality. These are not the principles Americans want or need.

In conclusion, you can tell a lot about a person based on how they handle a crisis. When Wall Street crashed and the country plunged into recession, where was Mr. Mnuchin? Was he warning regulators that they were asleep at the wheel and hard-working Americans were being exploited? Was he working to reform the broken system? No. He was looking for stores to raid with one goal in mind: profits.

Some would like to either ignore or whitewash this past, but if we don't learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it. The American people cannot afford a repeat of that past. We cannot afford a return to the Wild West of Wall Street—when the middle class was held hostage to the earnings reports of the biggest banks, when the cure for income inequality was simply more tax cuts for the wealthy.

We need a Treasury Secretary who will stand up to Wall Street, not take orders from them. We need a Treasury Secretary who understands that the strength of our country has come and will always come from the middle class, not from the CEOs and the hedge funds. Unfortunately, Mnuchin is not that person.

I urge may colleagues to oppose his nomination.

I yield the floor.

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

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I rise today, along with many of my colleagues, to speak out against the White House nominating Steven Mnuchin to be the next Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. President Trump has nominated the former CEO of OneWest Bank—who before that for 17 years was a Goldman Sachs executive—to run the Federal agency tasked with crafting and implementing U.S. economic policy. So much for draining the swamp.

I want to start, however, by sharing the story of a good friend, Lola Orvik, whom I met when I was attorney general of Nevada.

In 2013, Lola's mortgage on her townhouse in Henderson was underwater. Like thousands of other Nevadans, she needed to refinance, but five different loan modification applications had all been rejected by her bank. Lola was desperate for a solution and on the verge of losing her home. She received a telephone call offering help that was too good to be true, and it was. After calling my office, she thankfully discovered that it was a scam. I am so glad she called my office. Our staff referred her to a new program we had created, the Home Again Homeowner Relief Program. It is a one-stop shop to help struggling homeowners. It helped Lola finally get a loan modification, reduce her principal by $37,000, slash her interest rate from 5.7 percent to 2 percent, and keep the house she had lived in for nearly 20 years.

The Home Again Program helped thousands of Nevada homeowners understand all the State and Federal housing resources available to them. It has helped folks like Lola restructure their loans to ensure more affordable monthly payments. That simple hotline number has gone a long way.

Because we were there to help her, Lola got her life back. However, not everyone was as fortunate as Lola. In fact, some families are still trying to overcome the continuing destructive impact of the foreclosure crisis in Nevada and across this country.

In the depths of the great recession, Lola's predicament was not unique. Nevada was ground zero for the housing crisis. Property values plummeted. ''For sale'' signs lined the streets. Foreclosure notices hung on doors throughout the State. Thousands of families lived in constant fear of losing their homes.

In 2008, Nevada had the highest foreclosure rate in the Nation, with more than 77,000 homes getting a notice at the door saying they were at risk for eviction. We led the Nation in the terms of foreclosure rate for 62 straight months during the recession.

Things got so bad that by 2010, nearly 70 percent of Nevada homeowners were underwater on their homes, meaning

that they owed more on their mortgages than the current value of their property.

As Nevada's attorney general, I fought the big banks, Wall Street institutions, and default servicing companies to secure more than $1.9 billion to help hard-working families get back on their feet. That money helped to fund the Home Again Program.

More than just getting that money back, this was about changing the conduct and predatory practices of the big banks when working with homeowners. For instance, we made dual tracking an illegal practice so that banks could no longer foreclosure on a home while simultaneously considering their request for a loan modification and then charging them fees every step of the way. We demanded that a homeowner have a single point of contact within the financial institution so the homeowner would no longer get shuffled around from person to person and told to resubmit their loan modification application over and over again. We demanded that the banks demonstrate that they had personal knowledge of the foreclosure documents they filed to prevent robo-signing and unlawful foreclosures of a home.

Unfortunately, not every bank was willing to do everything possible to help the millions of Nevadans and Americans who were suffering. Mr. Mnuchin's OneWest Bank—formally known as IndyMac—was one such bank. Instead of trying to help homeowners, OneWest enforced predatory and unforgiving practices that only served to line the pockets of Mr. Mnuchin and his co-owners.

Steven Mnuchin purchased IndyMac from the Federal Government after it collapsed and took control of the thousands of mortgages the bank managed. Mnuchin rebranded the bank as OneWest and went to work using questionable foreclosure practices, like dual tracking, so he could make more money. That is not right.

Instead of working to help these homeowners stay in their homes, OneWest Bank, under Mnuchin's leadership, became a foreclosure machine. The bank had one of the highest denial rates for applications to the Home Affordable Modification Program. A judge in Wisconsin cited OneWest's ''harsh, repugnant, shocking, and repulsive'' practices when deciding a suit against them. Recent documents show that the company used robo-signing to deny modification claims, proving that it did not fairly consider loan modification applications for tens of thousands of homeowners.

When confronted with these facts at his Senate confirmation hearing, Mr. Mnuchin lied. He denied that OneWest used robo-signing, offered empty excuses, and shifted blame for his company's heinous practices. And during his confirmation hearing, Mr. Mnuchin repeatedly refused to say how many homes OneWest foreclosed on in Nevada.

However, according to new data, during the foreclosure crisis and its immediate aftermath, OneWest made $3 billion in profit while evicting 3,654 Nevada families from their homes. This includes 181 foreclosures on seniors who had taken out reverse mortgages. When he eventually left the bank, Mr. Mnuchin received a $10.9 million payout. This is on top of the annual compensation of $4.5 million he has received since 2015, when OneWest was bought by other investors. Let me repeat that. Some 3,654 Nevada families lost their homes because Mr. Mnuchin's OneWest put profits over people. That is a snapshot and a statistic which does not do justice to how much pain that caused for those families.

I want to spend some time on these accusations of robo-signing, both because Mr. Mnuchin clearly lied and also because this was an issue I took on when I was attorney general during and after the crash.

First, let's be clear what this is. Robo-signing is a procedure used by mortgage companies to sign foreclosure documents without reviewing them. This is a reckless practice used by banks to cut corners and forge documents, to rush things along, and it caused thousands of families to be wrongfully evicted from their homes.

Like OneWest, the banks were involved in a massive robo-signing scheme in my home State of Nevada, and I went after them aggressively as the State's attorney general. Nevada led the Nation in foreclosures every month for more than 4 years.

Mr. Mnuchin's company did not care that middle-class families were losing their homes during the crisis. In fact, during his confirmation hearing before the Senate, he admitted:

> I never wanted to be in the mortgage servicing business. I didn't want to be in the reverse mortgage business, I wanted to build a regional bank.

In other words, Mr. Mnuchin had to convince his investors that they would make money—a point that Mr. Mnuchin admitted at the hearing, saying: ''Yes, my investors made a lot of money on OneWest.''

Not only did his investors make a lot of money, Mr. Mnuchin did so as well. Since leaving the bank, he has pocketed nearly $20 million. Mr. Mnuchin was making millions, while thousands of Nevadans were losing their homes and their dignity, Nevadans like Heather McCreary of Sparks, who came to Capitol Hill last month to share her heart-wrenching story of how she applied to OneWest for a loan modification in 2010 after she and her husband lost their jobs as a result of the financial crisis. Despite three applications and following all instructions, the bank kept Heather's family dangling and then suddenly foreclosed on their home. I want to read some of Heather's testimony. It is moving and heartbreaking and deserves to be heard by every Member of this body.

Here is what she told us at the hearing:

> In 2008, when the economy started to get worse, I was laid off. The following year, in 2009, my husband Jack was laid off too. Though Jack was able to find another job pretty fast, he had to take a big pay cut—from about $25 an hour to $8.50 an hour. Between the cut in Jack's pay and the loss in income I experienced when going on unemployment insurance benefits after I got laid off, we were pinched and we were drowning financially.
>
> However, we were determined to keep our dream home, so Jack and I were tenacious about doing whatever we could to get help. We sought help from the Hope Now Alliance, which is an alliance of HUD-approved counselors who provide free foreclosure help, and from the Washoe County Senior Law Project.
>
> We worked side-by-side with both organizations to do everything required of us by our mortgage servicer IndyMac, which later became OneWest. When we first asked for help, OneWest gave us a short forbearance and allowed us to make a smaller payment for several months with the goal of a reduction in our monthly mortgage payments through the Home Affordable Modification Program (or HAMP).
>
> By applying for the HAMP program, we thought we were back on the road to keeping our home. We complied 100 percent with OneWest requirements for HAMP—we were incredibly nervous about being able to keep our house, so we were extremely careful to make sure we did everything we could to keep the process going forward. Our application for HAMP was processed and we were approved for our modification. I sent in the signed paperwork and the first payment under the modified payment amount along with it.
>
> But then the process started to fall apart. After a whole 30 days, OneWest returned our personal check and told us that only certified checks would be accepted, so they were now voiding the modification offer. We had followed the instructions to the letter on OneWest paperwork, crossing our ''T''s and dotting our ''I''s. But in the end, this didn't matter—and OneWest's rejection of our HAMP application put us on the road to foreclosure.
>
> We applied two more times for loan modifications over the next six months because we were given assurances by people at OneWest that they would approve our application. We again complied with every request OneWest made of us, taking care to send in extra documents whenever OneWest requested them.
>
> But as far as I can tell, OneWest never attempted to process the loan modification. The foreclosure went through and we lost our home on September 10, 2010. The foreclosure left us without a home; and finding a new rental was extremely difficult because of our credit. Juggling the demands of raising our twins was so hard—the foreclosure even meant that our kids had to miss school. Eventually we did find a new place, but we had to pay an outrageous rent, even though it was not a good home for us at all.
>
> It's hard to explain the shame, embarrassment, and grief that Jack and I felt. I've cried a river of tears over this. I really didn't think we were asking too much: We wanted to hang on to our home for the sake of our kids, and we did everything we could to stay in our home. And while I will probably never know exactly what OneWest did, the outcome of my story proves that Steve Mnuchin's company had no interest in helping us. They wanted to foreclose because they were focused on their profits.

Heather's story is just one of thousands that highlight just how wrong

Mr. Mnuchin is to be our next Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. The Treasury Department has the vital mission of promoting the conditions that enable economic growth, stability, job opportunities, and the ability to buy a car or own a home. Their actions directly affect the lives of every American.

Our next Treasury Secretary should have a proven record of fighting to expand economic opportunities for everyone. That is what Americans deserve. Yet, from where I stand, Mr. Mnuchin falls far short of that test.

President Trump's choice of Mr. Mnuchin to lead the U.S. Treasury is a slap in the face for Nevada families like Heather's. Her story makes it crystal clear: This is not someone who will be looking out for working people when he implements our Nation's economic policy.

In many ways, President Trump's unfortunate choice of someone like Mr. Mnuchin should not surprise us because in 2006 the President said he ''sort of hoped'' the real estate market would tank, and in 2007 he said he was ''excited'' for the housing market crash. The motive was the same: profits.

We cannot afford to return to the misguided policies that brought us to the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Families cannot afford to lose their homes again. But that is exactly what we can expect if Stephen Mnuchin is confirmed as President Trump's Treasury Secretary.

When I ran for the Senate, I promised Nevadans that I would fight for them, that I would stand up for them and be their voice here in Washington. Today, I am that voice, and that is why I rise with my colleagues in opposition to the ''Foreclosure King,'' Mr. Mnuchin.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOOKER. 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. BOOKER. Mr. President, I rise today to join a chorus of my colleagues in speaking out against the nomination of Steven Mnuchin to serve as Secretary of the Department of the Treasury.

What I believe is, if you look at Mr. Mnuchin's record, he has spent a lot of time benefiting from—in fact, even exploiting—families who are struggling homeowners in my State.

I would like to read into the RECORD a report by NPR from November of last year which makes his pattern stunningly clear.

During the depths of the financial crisis, Mnuchin was looking to make profits from the ruins of the housing bust. In 2009, he put together a group of billionaire investors and bought a failed California-based bank called IndyMac. It had been taken over by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation after its sketchy mortgage loans went seriously bad.

Mnuchin and his partners bought IndyMac on the condition that the FDIC agree to pay future losses above a certain threshold. They renamed the bank OneWest Bank, and after running it for 6 years, they sold it last year for a profit, estimated at close to $1.5 billion.

Kevin Stein of the California Reinvestment Coalition, a housing advocacy group, says that profit was made on the backs of suffering Californian homeowners.

This is not in the text here, but homeowners who were suffering from a massive mortgage collapse that was created in many ways or stimulated by the greed and avarice of bad actors. I witnessed this myself in Newark, NJ, watching people feed upon a subprime mortgage environment where they were pushing bad loans on unsuspecting borrowers.

Back to the text:

In essence what they did is they bought a foreclosure machine.

According to the coalition, OneWest foreclosed on more than 36,000 homeowners under Mnuchin. During that time, the FDIC made payments to OneWest totaling more than $1 billion. Those payments went to the billionaire investors of OneWest Bank, says Stein, to cover the cost of foreclosing on working-class everyday American folks, many of whom lived in California.

So this was what we saw at the height of the financial crisis. Mr. Mnuchin, already very wealthy, already very successful, did not see Americans struggling, did not join efforts to try to empower, support, or deal with this crisis. What he saw was an opportunity to take over a financial institution and continue, if not accelerate, the foreclosures that were going on.

It has become painfully clear that in what Mr. Mnuchin oversaw in the operations of this bank that, as its business model, he set out to explicitly mislead and manipulate homeowners into foreclosure.

This one article that I read has been repeated by organizations and by news outlets all over the spectrum, talking about how Mr. Mnuchin, in this environment, worked very hard to accelerate foreclosures and take advantage of this and make a profit. From elderly widows, the stories continue, to families, to small business owners, to Active-Duty servicemembers, there were many, many victims of Mr. Mnuchin's bank's predatory tactics, taking advantage of folks in a crisis, as opposed to trying to figure out a way to support folks through it.

I would like to read one more from the Minneapolis StarTribune, an article that documented one instance of the disturbingly prevalent practices of Mr. Mnuchin's company.

The headline reads: ''Negotiating on foreclosure, then locked out in a blizzard.''

A Minneapolis woman who was negotiating with a lender to find a way to stay in her foreclosed house—

Stepping back from the text, this is someone who is working hard to do the right thing in negotiations.

Back to the text:

They arrived home from work during Tuesday night's blizzard to find that the locks had been changed. After spending the night at her mother's, Leslie Parks went Wednesday to Hennepin County Housing Court, where a referee ordered that she be allowed back into her mother's former duplex at 3749 Park Avenue while negotiations continued. Locksmiths on Wednesday reconfigured the locks that had been changed Tuesday by a contractor for OneWest Bank.

These are the kind of tactics that were being used, the kind of hardball tactics that were being used by Mr. Mnuchin's company that really undermined a lot of hard-working Americans from a variety of backgrounds in many, many different States.

His record is clear. Mr. Mnuchin not only advocated in support of this company and its tactics, but even now he talks about trying to roll back the kind of protections that have been put in place to try to protect average Americans. Many of them are in the Dodd-Frank legislation that helped to protect against the creation of an environment in which such predatory practices can take place.

This position that Mr. Mnuchin has been nominated for, which is the Secretary of Treasury, has a critical role within our economy. But one of those roles has to be the idea that average Americans will be protected from the kind of financial victimization that was going on during the recession—actually, which lead into the recession.

We see that we can prevent Wall Street from burdening Main Street with the costs while they reap the rewards. This is the broken system that we saw in the past that needs fixing and needs healing. We don't need one of the architects of the system that caused so much pain to be in one of the most important positions in our land.

The head of this vital agency must be someone who understands their responsibility to look out for the struggling American trying to make it by playing by the rules and someone who is qualified and willing to direct the Department to fiercely protect the economic security of our Nation, the economic well-being of the American people, and the integrity of our financial system.

I don't believe Mr. Mnuchin is that person. He has made it clear in his decades-long career that he is willing for a profit to work hard to exploit hard-working families and shortchange homeowners for that personal gain. This is unacceptable. Mr. Mnuchin has built a career and has reaped literally millions of dollars of success by pushing people, by exploiting people, and by hurting people.

The American people cannot afford to suffer through another financial crisis. We can't afford to have a master Wall Street manipulator put in the position that we should be relying on to protect us from that kind of financial manipulation.

This is a difficult economy where people in our country are still struggling under challenging financial

times. I believe that we can make a nation where people can do good and do well at the same time, where we should not elevate or celebrate people who really fed off of the misery and the challenges of others, but, instead, that we can have a nation where we put people, regardless of their political background, in positions like the Department of Treasury to celebrate the best of who we are, the best of our values—people who are public servants, people who have shown a commitment to not only serve but even sacrifice for one another.

What we saw amidst this crisis—amidst a crisis that, in many ways, was aggravated and caused by greed and avarice in the mortgage industry and the banking industry, among rating agencies—was that many people showed who they were in a time of American struggle and American crisis. We saw with clarity where people's priorities were. Was it exploiting people? Was it manipulating systems for their own avarice and their own benefit, or was it for being there for our country, trying to make thing things better, trying to give people bridges that could carry them from financial struggle and strain to stability, or people that were trying to crumble those bridges and have people free fall in financial distress.

This is, unfortunately, what we see here today. We have President Trump trying to elevate someone who has not shown a record of someone who wanted to help but instead has shown a record of someone who wants to hurt. That to me is unacceptable, especially at this time where so many American families are still struggling to get back on their feet to find financial security and find the pathway to their American dream.

It is for this reason and more that I cannot support this nomination.

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. WYDEN. 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. WYDEN. Mr. President, there are communities across this country that are still waiting for the recovery from the great recession to show up. In many of those towns and cities, the storefronts are boarded up, the factories are shuttered, and, in what could be the most lasting scar of the crisis, homes—many homes—have been foreclosed. A lot of people in those communities cast their votes in November based on a Trump message that real change was coming.

Heads are going to be spinning tonight with the news from the Senate. In just a few minutes, this body will vote to confirm as Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, known by many as the ''foreclosure king.'' That is whom the President chose as his Treasury Secretary. Mr. Mnuchin turned the bank he bought into a cash cow, and they set a land speed record for foreclosures.

I have supported nominees for this position from both parties. I voted for Paul O'Neill. I voted for John Snow, and Hank Paulson, who served under President George W. Bush. I don't expect to see eye to eye on each issue with every Treasury Secretary. I do expect to have confidence that the Treasury Secretary is going to work on behalf of all Americans—all Americans—and not just the well healed, not just the fortunate, not just the powerful.

After considering Mr. Mnuchin's qualifications and background, I just don't believe he would be that kind of Treasury Secretary. In Mr. Mnuchin's response to questions from members of the Finance Committee, he denied that his bank, OneWest, engaged in a practice known as robo-signing. The public record says that is just dead wrong. In fact, a OneWest vice president who worked under Mr. Mnuchin, Erica Johnson-Seck, admitted under oath that she ran an office that churned out roughly 6,000 sets of foreclosure documents a week.

She said she personally signed more than 750 disclosure documents a week without even reading them, and there was no notary present during the process. That is a violation of the law. When asked how much time she spent executing each foreclosure document, Ms. Johnson-Seck replied:

> I changed my signature considerably. It's just an E now. So not more than 30 seconds.

Now, on the eve of the Finance Committee mark-up for Mr. Mnuchin, the Columbus Dispatch in Ohio reported documented examples of robo-signing in Ohio. Now, on the eve of Mr. Mnuchin's confirmation vote in the Senate, another such story has broken. This time it is in the State of Washington, more evidence of robo-signing that directly contradicts what Mr. Mnuchin told the Finance Committee and the public.

Mr. Mnuchin also withheld foreclosure data requested by two Democratic members of the Finance Committee, Senators BROWN and CASEY. He did, apparently, give similar information to Senator HELLER, one of the committee's Republican members. That is on top of $100 million worth of property and more than a dozen positions with various business entities missing from his disclosures to the Finance Committee.

My own view is, if not for the committee's minority investigations team, I don't believe any of that information, none of it—$100 million, the other disclosures—would have ever come to light.

I am going to turn from missing disclosures and misleading testimony to a broken promise. The day after news of Mr. Mnuchin's nomination was leaked, he appeared on television and, in effect, debuted a new tax policy. I have come to call it the Mnuchin rule, and I will quote Mr. Mnuchin directly with respect to what he said.

Mr. Mnuchin said: ''Any reductions we have in upper income taxes would be offset by less deductions, so there would be no absolute tax cut for the upper class.''

I will repeat the last part of the Mnuchin rule: ''no absolute tax cut for the upper class.''

When I first called this the Mnuchin rule during the Finance Committee's hearing on his nomination, Mr. Mnuchin said he took it as a great compliment, comparing it to the Volcker rule and the Buffett rule. Well, you would think a fellow who proudly embraced having a rule named after himself would actually stick to it.

The Mnuchin rule didn't last for very long before it was abandoned. The very first act of the 115th Congress in a unified Republican government, repealing the Affordable Care Act, would shatter the Mnuchin rule. Then it is set to take another hit later this year. That is with the majority working on plans to fast-track a second, even bigger tax break for those who are the most fortunate. The Trump plan, in fact, would hit millions of middle-income families with tax increases by wiping out key personal exemptions and eliminating head of household filing status.

So I want to be really clear what this means to people in Oklahoma and Oregon and all across the country, working families: Working families would get hurt by the Trump plan. They would lose key personal exemptions. They would eliminate the head of household filing status while those who were more fortunate would be in a position to get tax breaks, additional tax breaks beyond what they already have in the Tax Code.

The fact is, the Tax Code today is a tale of two systems. For the firefighter in Coos Bay, OR, or the retail worker in Roseburg, your taxes come straight out of each and every paycheck. That is the way it works in Oklahoma, the way it works all across the country. The Tax Code for working people is compulsory. Once or twice a month, your taxes come directly out of your paycheck—no special dodges, no special loopholes. Nobody is able to hide their pay in a Cayman Islands account if they are a firefighter or a retail worker.

But there is a very different Tax Code in America for the well-connected and the powerful. They have a whole array of lawyers and accountants who specialize in helping them shrink their tax bills. And with the right advice, the fact is, those people can, to a great extent, decide what they are going to pay, when they are going to pay it, and sometimes be in a position to not pay much, if anything at all.

The fact is, the tax system today punishes working Americans because it treats them very differently than it treats the most fortunate. And the administration and the majority in Congress don't seem to be doing much in terms of fixing this disparity.

The Mnuchin rule just hasn't held up. It is beyond being on the ropes. It is not going anywhere at all. In fact, the early proposals only make this extraordinary unfairness, the unfairness at the heart of America's Tax Code, even worse.

So what we have is another Trump nominee who, in my view, doesn't meet the test of standing up for working families in those communities all across the country who are waiting for economic recovery to show up in their neighborhood. They are the ones who have seen the factory close and seen the foreclosures and seen their neighbors laid off. And they would like to see people in these positions advocate for them, advocate for them because they need somebody who is going to stand up for them, and they were told in the campaign that is what they were going to get.

The fact is, Mr. Mnuchin is yet another Trump nominee who, instead of standing up for those working families, has a different set of priorities and, in addition to that, has the ethics alarm bells sounding.

He appears to be withholding information requested by Members of this body. My view is, he misled the Finance Committee and the public about his bank's foreclosure tactics. The Mnuchin rule—the first promise he made, the very first promise he made on policy, which he was proud to have described as a rule named after him, already has been broken.

So I am not going to be supporting Mr. Mnuchin to lead the Treasury Department. I urge my colleagues as well to reject this appointment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Mnuchin nomination?

Mr. HATCH. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 63 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Cochran	Inhofe	Sasse
Collins	Isakson	Scott
Corker	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Strange
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Crapo	Lee	Thune
Cruz	Manchin	Tillis
Daines	McCain	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young
Fischer	Murkowski	

NAYS—47

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Harris	Peters
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Sanders
Brown	Heitkamp	Schatz
Cantwell	Hirono	Schumer
Cardin	Kaine	Shaheen
Carper	King	Stabenow
Casey	Klobuchar	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Franken	Murray	

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on the nomination, and I move to table the motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The question is on agreeing to the motion to table.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of David J. Shulkin, of Pennsylvania, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I want to make a statement that has not been heard much around these Halls or these Chambers in a couple of years. But on February 7—this month—the Veterans' Affairs Committee reported by a vote of 17 to 0 the name of David Shulkin to be the next Secretary of Veterans' Administration. That is a unanimous vote. Nine Republicans and eight Democrats—everybody voted for this man to be Secretary of the VA. I am going to ask each Member in the Chamber today: Let's do it as an entire body and find one person, one thing we agree upon.

They are not Republican veterans or Democrat veterans; they are American veterans who went to the battlefield and fought for us. It is time we fought for them.

Dr. Shulkin is the right man at the right time for the Veterans' Administration. On March 15, 2015, we hired him to come in and take over and be Under Secretary of Veterans Health. The President looked around to find the best man to run the VA and found him in David Shulkin.

David Shulkin is committed to the following: fixing the problems at the Veterans' Administration, making sure the Choice Program works, making sure every veteran gets the care they deserve, the care we all want them to get, and seeing to it they get it from us.

I am going to ask each Member to cast their vote today for David Shulkin but also cast their vote for our veterans. This is a time for us to send a message to them: We don't want to privatize the VA. We don't want to reorganize the VA. We want to make the VA work, to give our veterans access to every bit of care they can possibly get, and follow in the line of the great leaders who have been in the Veterans' Administration before.

I am very pleased to serve with JON TESTER of Montana as my ranking member. We have worked together as a team—Democrats and Republicans—to make this happen.

I yield the remainder of my time to JON TESTER of Montana on the nomination of David Shulkin to be Secretary of the VA.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise, as did the Senator from Georgia, in support of the nomination of Dr. David Shulkin to be Secretary of the VA.

First, I wish to take this opportunity to thank Senator ISAKSON for his leadership of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and throughout this confirmation process—and throughout the many processes—as chair of the committee.

Look, I think it is critically important that we have a Secretary of the VA to serve our veterans. I think Dr. Shulkin is the perfect person for that position. The solutions to the VA's problems should be based on common sense rather than partisanship or an extreme agenda. I think Dr. Shulkin recognizes that. He is committed to our Nation's veterans above all. Through the conversations I have had with him over the last year and a half, I think he understands the challenges ahead of us in the VA.

The Choice Program, for example, which has been a wreck by anybody's standards, is looming with dramatic funding shortfalls and is a program we need to work on here in Congress—and we will on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee—to fix, and I think Dr. Shulkin is on top of it.

I have many letters from veterans across Montana about how the Choice Program has not worked. It is not that it isn't a good idea. When we passed it, we all agreed that it was a good idea. But it needs to be changed to fix the needs of our veterans and make it more workable.

One other thing is a big problem, and that is the workforce problem we have within the VA. The hiring freeze has made this problem even worse. We all talk about the backlog, and the backlog is real. But we need to make sure the VA has the people they need to serve the veterans in this country, whether reducing that backlog or whether it is making sure they get the care they need.

Finally, and Johnny talked about this: privatization. He has reassured me he will oppose efforts to privatize the VA. Typically, this isn't a problem, but the administration has talked about it extensively. I think it would

be a path that is reckless for our veterans, and I think the veterans service organizations would tell us that.

Again, I express my support for the nomination of Dr. Shulkin to be VA Secretary. I believe he will stand up for our veterans. I believe he will put them above politics.

Moving forward, I look forward to working with him and other Members in this body to make sure we serve our veterans the best we possibly can. Our veterans deserve no less.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as the Senate has spent the last few weeks considering controversial nominee after controversial nominee, it is a refreshing break to consider Dr. David Shulkin to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Shulkin is a man defined by his professionalism, competence, and dedication to the mission of the agency he is tapped to lead.

The son of an Army psychologist and an experienced hospital system administrator, Dr. Shulkin was selected by President Obama to restore trust and confidence at the Veterans Health Administration after years of struggles punctuated by the horrible scandal of wait times in Phoenix. Under his leadership, the VA has made great progress. Amid a sea of questionable Cabinet nominations, Dr. Shulkin is one about which I have no question.

Of course, Dr. Shulkin will face immense challenges. The VA needs significant overhaul, not just in its practices and policies, but in its facilities and technology. In eliminating the backlog for access to health care and in the midst of tackling the backlog in claims, facilities have been shortchanged with respect to needed improvements and upgrades, while experiencing increased usage. New technologies provide new opportunities for providing care, but they also require new investments.

Areas that are finally receiving the attention required include mental health, posttraumatic stress, and other lingering invisible wounds of war. It has been one of my priorities to ensure that the best science and practices with respect to mental health and posttraumatic stress can be spread to the communities where veterans live and work, like the rural communities of Vermont. Only then will we see progress in improving the lives of veterans in those areas.

Dr. Shulkin must also rebuild the confidence of a VA workforce that has been unfairly targeted and vilified by some for the actions of a few. The Federal employees who work at the VA are among the most dedicated anywhere. Their devotion to improving care for veterans is inspiring, but their jobs have been made more difficult by both the disappointing actions of some individuals and the frustrating policies and organizational structures that sometimes get in the way of them serving veterans.

I believe that Dr. Shulkin is up to this challenge. It is evident from his testimony before the Veterans Affairs Committee and through his public statements that he believes in the VA and in the importance of its mission. It is evident that he understands the value of looking to the community for health care answers when that makes sense and that he also understands that the Nation should never ignore its solemn responsibility to care for veterans through all possible avenues. I am also reassured by his pledge not to dismantle the VA or turn its delivery of care into a voucher system. It is evident that he intends to speak his mind about what makes the most sense for leading a missive health care system focused on providing quality care to each individual veteran.

I will support Dr. Shulkin's nomination, and I look forward to working with him.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I am proud to support Dr. David Shulkin's nomination for Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, faces massive challenges in delivering care to our veterans, but I believe that Dr. Shulkin is well equipped for the task at hand.

Dr. Shulkin has committed to fully implementing the Veterans Choice Program as Secretary and will work to expand this program to provide a network that meets the needs of veterans, their families, and providers in the community—every veteran deserves access to care, whether that be at the VA or in the community.

Through the Veterans Choice Program, we have seen more than 7 million appointments made for veterans in their communities, a network expanded by 350,000 providers and over 1.5 million veterans that have benefitted from using the Choice Card. I will seek to build and expand upon this progress and look to Dr. Shulkin's support for legislation that would bring care in the community under an integrated and coordinated system that utilizes a Veterans Choice Card. This will ensure access to timely, flexible, and quality care that our veterans have earned and deserve.

I believe that Dr. Shulkin is the person that can repair the culture of the VA to focus on the veteran and restore honesty and accountability to the Department. I thank him for accepting this challenge to serve our Nation and look forward to working with him in the days ahead.

Thank you.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I support the nomination of David Shulkin to be Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

President Obama nominated Dr. Shulkin, a medical doctor, to be Under Secretary for Health for the Department of Veterans Affairs and Chief Executive of the Veterans Health Administration. The Senate confirmed Dr. Shulkin in June 2015 by a voice vote. Since then, he has led the VA's health care system, with more than 1,700 care sites and 9 million veterans using the system each year.

Before joining the VA, Dr. Shulkin served as president and CEO of Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City and president at Morristown Medical Center, Goryeb Children's Hospital, and Atlantic Rehabilitation Institute, and the Atlantic Health System Accountable Care Organization. Dr. Shulkin also previously served as the chief medical officer of the University of Pennsylvania Health System, the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University Hospital, and the Medical College of Pennsylvania Hospital. He had been chairman of medicine and vice dean at Drexel University School of Medicine. And Dr. Shulkin founded and was the chairman and CEO of DoctorQuality, a consumer-oriented source of information for quality and safety in health care.

Veterans groups are cautiously optimistic that Dr. Shulkin will continue to improve the timeliness and quality of medical care our veterans receive. They are also hopeful that he will begin much-needed reforms in the administration of veterans' benefits, including the reform of the appellate review process.

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides important services, care, and peace of mind for our Nation's 21 million veterans. The VA has more to do to make sure that the care that it provides is worthy of those who served our Nation. I believe that Dr. Shulkin's experience and training has prepared him well to continue that effort, and I support his nomination.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic time has been yielded back.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Montana and urge every Member of the Senate—Republican, Independent, Democrat—to cast their vote for our veterans, cast their vote for our country, and cast their vote for David Shulkin to be the new Secretary of the Veterans' Administration.

I yield back the remainder of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Shulkin nomination?

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 100, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 64 Ex.]

YEAS—100

Alexander	Bennet	Booker
Baldwin	Blumenthal	Boozman
Barrasso	Blunt	Brown

Burr
Cantwell
Capito
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Cassidy
Cochran
Collins
Coons
Corker
Cornyn
Cortez Masto
Cotton
Crapo
Cruz
Daines
Donnelly
Duckworth
Durbin
Enzi
Ernst
Feinstein
Fischer
Flake
Franken
Gardner
Gillibrand
Graham
Grassley
Harris
Hassan
Hatch
Heinrich
Heitkamp
Heller
Hirono
Hoeven
Inhofe
Isakson
Johnson
Kaine
Kennedy
King
Klobuchar
Lankford
Leahy
Lee
Manchin
Markey
McCain
McCaskill
McConnell
Menendez
Merkley
Moran
Murkowski
Murphy
Murray
Nelson
Paul
Perdue
Peters
Portman
Reed
Risch
Roberts
Rounds
Rubio
Sanders
Sasse
Schatz
Schumer
Scott
Shaheen
Shelby
Stabenow
Strange
Sullivan
Tester
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Udall
Van Hollen
Warner
Warren
Whitehouse
Wicker
Wyden
Young

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 16, MICK MULVANEY to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of MICK MULVANEY, of South Carolina, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

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 bill 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 nomination of Mick Mulvaney, of South Carolina, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Rounds, Tim Scott, Johnny Isakson, James M. Inhofe, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, Michael B. Enzi, Lindsey Graham, David Perdue, Orrin G. Hatch, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch, James Lankford, John Hoeven, Chuck Grassley.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 15, Scott Pruitt to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Scott Pruitt, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

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 bill 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 nomination of Scott Pruitt, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Rounds, Tim Scott, Johnny Isakson, Lindsey Graham, James M. Inhofe, David Perdue, Shelley Moore Capito, Roger F. Wicker, Orrin G. Hatch, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch, James Lankford, John Hoeven, John Thune, Deb Fischer.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 3, Wilbur Ross to be Secretary of Commerce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce.

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 bill 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 nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce.

Mitch McConnell, John Hoeven, Deb Fischer, John Thune, Johnny Isakson, Tom Cotton, Marco Rubio, Dan Sullivan, Mike Rounds, James M. Inhofe, Tim Scott, Lindsey Graham, Jerry Moran, Pat Roberts, John Barrasso, John Kennedy, Patrick J. Toomey.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 8, RYAN ZINKE to be Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of RYAN ZINKE, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

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 bill 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 nomination of Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

Mitch McConnell, Roger F. Wicker, John Boozman, Orrin G. Hatch, Roy Blunt, Steve Daines, Tim Scott, Chuck Grassley, John Hoeven, Michael B. Enzi, John Barrasso, John Thune, Mike Rounds, Mike Crapo, James M. Inhofe, Joni Ernst, John Cornyn.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 5, Ben Carson to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

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 bill 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 nomination of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Mitch McConnell, Johnny Isakson, Jeff Flake, Steve Daines, James Lankford, Roger F. Wicker, Dan Sullivan, Thom Tillis, Rob Portman, John Thune, John Hoeven, Deb Fischer, James M. Inhofe, Tim Scott, Lindsey Graham, Jerry Moran, Pat Roberts.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 9, James Richard Perry to be Secretary of Energy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.

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 bill 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 nomination of James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.

John Boozman, Chuck Grassley, Johnny Isakson, John Cornyn, James Lankford, James M. Inhofe, Michael B. Enzi, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, Lamar Alexander, Bill Cassidy, John Barrasso, Orrin G. Hatch, Jerry Moran, David Perdue, John Thune, Mitch McConnell.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for these cloture motions be waived.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. 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.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, on behalf of myself and Senator CANTWELL, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the rules of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for the 115th Congress be printed in the RECORD.

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

RULES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

GENERAL RULES

Rule 1. The Standing Rules of the Senate, as supplemented by these rules, are adopted as the rules of the Committee and its Subcommittees.

MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

Rule 2. (a) The Committee shall meet on the third Thursday of each month while the Congress is in session for the purpose of conducting business, unless, for the convenience of Members, the Chairman shall set some other day for a meeting. Additional meetings may be called by the Chairman as he may deem necessary.

(b) Hearings of any Subcommittee may be called by the Chairman of such Subcommittee, Provided, That no Subcommittee hearing other than a field hearing, shall be scheduled or held concurrently with a full Committee meeting or hearing, unless a majority of the Committee concurs in such concurrent hearing.

OPEN HEARINGS AND MEETINGS

Rule 3. (a) All hearings and business meetings of the Committee and all the hearings of any of its Subcommittees shall be open to the public unless the Committee or Subcommittee involved, by majority vote of all the Members of the Committee or such Subcommittee, orders the hearing or meeting to be closed in accordance with paragraph 5(b) of Rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

(b) A transcript shall be kept of each hearing of the Committee or any Subcommittee.

(c) A transcript shall be kept of each business meeting of the Committee unless a majority of all the Members of the Committee agrees that some other form of permanent record is preferable.

HEARING PROCEDURE

Rule 4. (a) Public notice shall be given of the date, place, and subject matter of any hearing to be held by the Committee or any Subcommittee at least one week in advance of such hearing unless the Chairman of the full Committee or the Subcommittee involved determines that the hearing is noncontroversial or that special circumstances require expedited procedures and a majority of all the Members of the Committee or the Subcommittee involved concurs. In no case shall a hearing be conducted with less than twenty-four hours' notice. Any document or report that is the subject of a hearing shall be provided to every Member of the Committee or Subcommittee involved at least 72 hours before the hearing unless the Chairman and Ranking Member determine otherwise.

(b) Each witness who is to appear before the Committee or any Subcommittee shall file with the Committee or Subcommittee, at least 24 hours in advance of the hearing, a written statement of his or her testimony in as many copies as the Chairman of the Committee or Subcommittee prescribes.

(c) Each Member shall be limited to five minutes in the questioning of any witness until such time as all Members who so desire have had an opportunity to question the witness.

(d) The Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee or Subcommittee or the Ranking Majority and Minority Members present at the hearing may each appoint one Committee staff member to question each witness. Such staff member may question the witness only after all Members present have completed their questioning of the witness or at such other time as the Chairman and the Ranking Majority and Minority Members present may agree. No staff member may question a witness in the absence of a quorum for the taking of testimony.

BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA

Rule 5. (a) A legislative measure, nomination, or other matter shall be included on the agenda of the next following business meeting of the full Committee if a written request by a Member of the Committee for such inclusion has been filed with the Chairman of the Committee at least one week prior to such meeting. Nothing in this rule shall be construed to limit the authority of the Chairman of the Committee to include a legislative measure, nomination, or other matter on the Committee agenda in the absence of such request.

(b) The agenda for any business meeting of the Committee shall be provided to each Member and made available to the public at least three days prior to such meeting, and no new items may be added after the agenda is so published except by the approval of a majority of all the Members of the Committee on matters not included on the public agenda. The Staff Director shall promptly notify absent Members of any action taken by the Committee on matters not included on the published agenda.

QUORUMS

Rule 6. (a) Except as provided in subsections (b) and (c), eight Members shall constitute a quorum for the conduct of business of the Committee.

(b) No measure or matter shall be ordered reported from the Committee unless twelve Members of the Committee are actually present at the time such action is taken.

(c) One Member shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting a hearing or taking testimony on any measure or matter before the Committee or any Subcommittee.

VOTING

Rule 7. (a) A rollcall of the Members shall be taken upon the request of any Member. Any Member who does not vote on any rollcall at the time the roll is called, may vote (in person or by proxy) on that rollcall at any later time during the same business meeting.

(b) Proxy voting shall be permitted on all matters, except that proxies may not be counted for the purpose of determining the presence of a quorum. Unless further limited, a proxy shall be exercised only upon the date for which it is given and upon the items published in the agenda for that date.

(c) Each Committee report shall set forth the vote on the motion to report the measure or matter involved. Unless the Committee directs otherwise, the report will not set out any votes on amendments offered during Committee consideration. Any Member who did not vote on any rollcall shall have the opportunity to have his position recorded in the appropriate Committee record or Committee report.

(d) The Committee vote to report a measure to the Senate shall also authorize the staff of the Committee to make necessary technical and clerical corrections in the measure.

SUBCOMMITTEES

Rule 8. (a) The number of Members assigned to each Subcommittee and the division between Majority and Minority Members shall be fixed by the Chairman in consultation with the Ranking Minority Member.

(b) Assignment of Members to Subcommittees shall, insofar as possible, reflect the preferences of the Members. No Member will receive assignment to a second Subcommittee until, in order of seniority, all Members of the Committee have chosen assignments to one Subcommittee, and no Member shall receive assignment to a third Subcommittee until, in order of seniority, all Members have chosen assignments to two Subcommittees.

(c) Any Member of the Committee may sit with any Subcommittee during its hearings but shall not have the authority to vote on any matters before the Subcommittee unless he is a Member of such Subcommittee.

NOMINATIONS

Rule 9. At any hearing to confirm a Presidential nomination, the testimony of the nominee and, at the request of any Member, any other witness shall be under oath. Every nominee shall submit the financial disclosure report filed pursuant to title I of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978. Such report is made available to the public.

INVESTIGATIONS

Rule 10. (a) Neither the Committee nor any of its Subcommittees may undertake an investigation unless specifically authorized by the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member or a majority of all the Members of the Committee.

(b) A witness called to testify in an investigation shall be informed of the matter or matters under investigation, given a copy of these rules, given the opportunity to make a brief and relevant oral statement before or after questioning, and be permitted to have counsel of his or her choosing present during his or her testimony at any public or closed hearing, or at any unsworn interview, to advise the witness of his or her legal rights.

(c) For purposes of this rule, the terms ''investigation'' shall not include a review or study undertaken pursuant to paragraph 8 of Rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate or a preliminary inquiry, undertaken at the direction of the Chairman or the Ranking Member, intended to determine whether there is substantial credible evidence that would warrant an investigation.

SWORN TESTIMONY

Rule 11. Witnesses in Committee or Subcommittee hearings may be required to give testimony under oath whenever the Chairman or Ranking Minority Member of the Committee or Subcommittee deems such to be necessary. If one or more witnesses at a hearing are required to testify under oath, all witnesses at such hearing shall be required to testify under oath.

SUBPOENAS

Rule 12. The Chairman shall have authority to issue subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses or the production of memoranda, documents, records, or other materials (1) with the agreement of the Ranking Minority Member, (2) when authorized by a majority of all the Members of the Committee, or (3) when within the scope of an investigation authorized under Rule 10(a).

CONFIDENTIAL TESTIMONY

Rule 13. No confidential testimony taken by or any report of the proceedings of a closed Committee or Subcommittee meeting shall be made public, in whole or in part or by way of summary, unless authorized by a majority of all the Members of the Committee at a business meeting called for the purpose of making such a determination.

DEFAMATORY STATEMENTS

Rule 14. Any person whose name is mentioned or who is specifically identified in, or who believes that testimony or other evidence presented at, an open Committee or Subcommittee hearing tends to defame him or otherwise adversely affect his reputation may file with the Committee for its consideration and action a sworn statement of facts relevant to such testimony or evidence.

BROADCASTING OF HEARINGS OR MEETINGS

Rule 15. Any meeting or hearing by the Committee or any Subcommittee which is open to the public may be covered in whole or in part by web, television, or radio broadcast or still photography. Photographers and reporters using mechanical recording, filming, or broadcasting devices shall position their equipment so as not to interfere with the seating, vision, and hearing of Members and staff on the dais or with the orderly process of the meeting or hearing.

AMENDING THE RULES

Rule 16. These rules may be amended only by vote of a majority of all the Members of the Committee in a business meeting of the Committee: Provided, that no vote may be taken on any proposed amendment unless such amendment is reproduced in full in the Committee agenda for such meeting at least three days in advance of such meeting.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Committee on Environment and Public Works has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 115th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules for the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the committee rules be printed in the RECORD.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

JURISDICTION

(Pursuant to Rule XXV, Sec. 2, Standing Rules of the Senate)

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works is one of sixteen standing committees established by Rule XXV of the Senate, under which committee jurisdictions were last revised by the adoption of S. Res. 4, Senate Committee Reorganization, February 11, 1977.

Section 2 of Rule XXV as amended on January 7, 1993 provides that the Committee shall consist of seventeen Senators.

The pertinent section of Senate Rule XXV follows:

(h)(1) Committee on Environment and Public Works, to which shall be referred all proposed legislation, messages, petitions, memorials, and other matters relating to the following subjects:

1. Air pollution.
2. Construction and maintenance of highways.
3. Environmental aspects of outer continental shelf lands.
4. Environmental effects of toxic substances, other than pesticides.
5. Environmental policy.
6. Environmental research and development.
7. Fisheries and wildlife.
8. Flood control and improvement of rivers and harbors, including environmental aspects of deepwater ports.
9. Noise pollution.
10. Nonmilitary environmental regulation and control of nuclear energy.
11. Ocean dumping.
12. Public buildings and improved grounds for the United States generally, including Federal buildings in the District of Columbia.
13. Public works, bridges, and dams.
14. Regional economic development.
15. Solid waste disposal and recycling.
16. Water pollution.
17. Water resources.

(2) Such committee shall also study and review, on a comprehensive basis, matters relating to environmental protection and resource utilization and conservation, and report thereon from time to time.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Rule 1. Committee Meetings in General

(a) Regular Meeting Days: For purposes of complying with paragraph 3 of Senate Rule XXVI, the regular meeting day of the committee is the first and third Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m. If there is no business before the committee, the regular meeting shall be omitted.

(b) Additional Meetings: The chair may call additional meetings, after consulting with the ranking minority member. Subcommittee chairs may call meetings, with the concurrence of the chair, after consulting with the ranking minority members of the subcommittee and the committee.

(c) Presiding Officer:

(1) The chair shall preside at all meetings of the committee. If the chair is not present, the ranking majority member shall preside.

(2) Subcommittee chairs shall preside at all meetings of their subcommittees. If the

subcommittee chair is not present, the ranking majority member of the subcommittee shall preside.

(3) Notwithstanding the rule prescribed by paragraphs (1) and (2), any member of the committee may preside at a hearing.

(d) Open Meetings: Meetings of the committee and subcommittees, including hearings and business meetings, are open to the public. A portion of a meeting may be closed to the public if the committee determines by roll call vote of a majority of the members present that the matters to be discussed or the testimony to be taken—

(1) will disclose matters necessary to be kept secret in the interests of national defense or the confidential conduct of the foreign relations of the United States;

(2) relate solely to matters of committee staff personnel or internal staff management or procedure; or

(3) constitute any other grounds for closure under paragraph 5(b) of Senate Rule XXVI.

(e) Broadcasting:

(1) Public meetings of the committee or a subcommittee may be televised, broadcast, or recorded by a member of the Senate press gallery or an employee of the Senate.

(2) Any member of the Senate Press Gallery or employee of the Senate wishing to televise, broadcast, or record a committee meeting must notify the staff director or the staff director's designee by 5:00 p.m. the day before the meeting.

(3) During public meetings, any person using a camera, microphone, or other electronic equipment may not position or use the equipment in a way that interferes with the seating, vision, or hearing of committee members or staff on the dais, or with the orderly process of the meeting.

Rule 2. Quorums

(a) Business Meetings: At committee business meetings, and for the purpose of approving the issuance of a subpoena or approving a committee resolution, seven members of the committee, at least two of whom are members of the minority party, constitute a quorum, except as provided in subsection (d).

(b) Subcommittee Meetings: At subcommittee business meetings, a majority of the subcommittee members, at least one of whom is a member of the minority party, constitutes a quorum for conducting business.

(c) Continuing Quorum: Once a quorum as prescribed in subsections (a) and (b) has been established, the committee or subcommittee may continue to conduct business.

(d) Reporting: No measure or matter may be reported to the Senate by the committee unless a majority of committee members cast votes in person.

(e) Hearings: One member constitutes a quorum for conducting a hearing.

Rule 3. Hearings

(a) Announcements: Before the committee or a subcommittee holds a hearing, the chair of the committee or subcommittee shall make a public announcement and provide notice to members of the date, place, time, and subject matter of the hearing. The announcement and notice shall be issued at least one week in advance of the hearing, unless the chair of the committee or subcommittee, with the concurrence of the ranking minority member of the committee or subcommittee, determines that there is good cause to provide a shorter period, in which event the announcement and notice shall be issued at least twenty-four hours in advance of the hearing.

(b) Statements of Witnesses:

(1) A witness who is scheduled to testify at a hearing of the committee or a subcommittee shall file 100 copies of the written testimony at least 48 hours before the hearing. If a witness fails to comply with this requirement, the presiding officer may preclude the witness' testimony. This rule may be waived for field hearings, except for witnesses from the Federal Government.

(2) Any witness planning to use at a hearing any exhibit such as a chart, graph, diagram, photo, map, slide, or model must submit one identical copy of the exhibit (or representation of the exhibit in the case of a model) and 100 copies reduced to letter or legal paper size at least 48 hours before the hearing. Any exhibit described above that is not provided to the committee at least 48 hours prior to the hearing cannot be used for purpose of presenting testimony to the committee and will not be included in the hearing record.

(3) The presiding officer at a hearing may have a witness confine the oral presentation to a summary of the written testimony.

(4) Notwithstanding a request that a document be embargoed, any document that is to be discussed at a hearing, including, but not limited to, those produced by the General Accounting Office, Congressional Budget Office, Congressional Research Service, a Federal agency, an Inspector General, or a nongovernmental entity, shall be provided to all members of the committee at least 72 hours before the hearing.

Rule 4. Business Meetings: Notice and Filing Requirements

(a) Notice: The chair of the committee or the subcommittee shall provide notice, the agenda of business to be discussed, and the text of agenda items to members of the committee or subcommittee at least 72 hours before a business meeting. If the 72 hours falls over a weekend, all materials will be provided by close of business on Friday.

(b) Amendments: First-degree amendments must be filed with the chair of the committee or the subcommittee at least 24 hours before a business meeting. After the filing deadline, the chair shall promptly distribute all filed amendments to the members of the committee or subcommittee.

(c) Modifications: The chair of the committee or the subcommittee may modify the notice and filing requirements to meet special circumstances, with the concurrence of the ranking member of the committee or subcommittee.

Rule 5. Business Meetings: Voting

(a) Proxy Voting:

(1) Proxy voting is allowed on all measures, amendments, resolutions, or other matters before the committee or a subcommittee.

(2) A member who is unable to attend a business meeting may submit a proxy vote on any matter, in writing, orally, or through personal instructions.

(3) A proxy given in writing is valid until revoked. A proxy given orally or by personal instructions is valid only on the day given.

(b) Subsequent Voting: Members who were not present at a business meeting and were unable to cast their votes by proxy may record their votes later, so long as they do so that same business day and their vote does not change the outcome.

(c) Public Announcement:

(1) Whenever the committee conducts a rollcall vote, the chair shall announce the results of the vote, including a tabulation of the votes cast in favor and the votes cast against the proposition by each member of the committee.

(2) Whenever the committee reports any measure or matter by rollcall vote, the report shall include a tabulation of the votes cast in favor of and the votes cast in opposition to the measure or matter by each member of the committee.

Rule 6. Subcommittees

(a) Regularly Established Subcommittees: The committee has four subcommittees: Transportation and Infrastructure; Clean Air and Nuclear Safety; Superfund, Waste Management, and Regulatory Oversight; and Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife.

(b) Membership: The committee chair, after consulting with the ranking minority member, shall select members of the subcommittees.

Rule 7. Statutory Responsibilities and Other Matters

(a) Environmental Impact Statements: No project or legislation proposed by any executive branch agency may be approved or otherwise acted upon unless the committee has received a final environmental impact statement relative to it, in accordance with section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act, and the written comments of the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, in accordance with section 309 of the Clean Air Act. This rule is not intended to broaden, narrow, or otherwise modify the class of projects or legislative proposals for which environmental impact statements are required under section 102(2)(C).

(b) Project Approvals:

(1) Whenever the committee authorizes a project under Public Law 89–298, the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1965; Public Law 83–566, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act; or Public Law 86–249, the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended; the chairman shall submit for printing in the Congressional Record, and the committee shall publish periodically as a committee print, a report that describes the project and the reasons for its approval, together with any dissenting or individual views.

(2) Proponents of a committee resolution shall submit appropriate evidence in favor of the resolution.

(c) Building Prospectuses:

(1) When the General Services Administration submits a prospectus, pursuant to section 7(a) of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended, for construction (including construction of buildings for lease by the government), alteration and repair, or acquisition, the committee shall act with respect to the prospectus during the same session in which the prospectus is submitted.

A prospectus rejected by majority vote of the committee or not reported to the Senate during the session in which it was submitted shall be returned to the General Services Administration and must then be be resubmitted in order to be considered by the committee during the next session of the Congress.

(2) A report of a building project survey submitted by the General Services Administration to the committee under section 11(b) of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended, may not be considered by the committee as being a prospectus subject to approval by committee resolution in accordance with section 7(a) of that Act. A project described in the report may be considered for committee action only if it is submitted as a prospectus in accordance with section 7(a) and is subject to the provisions of paragraph (1) of this rule.

(d) Naming Public Facilities: The committee may not name a building, structure or facility for any living person, except former Presidents or former Vice Presidents of the United States, former Members of Congress over 70 years of age, former Justices of the United States Supreme Court over 70 years of age, or Federal judges who are fully retired and over 75 years of age or have taken senior status and are over 75 years of age.

Rule 8. Amending the Rules

The rules may be added to, modified, amended, or suspended by vote of a majority of committee members at a business meeting if a quorum is present.

TRIBUTE TO DR. JEFFERY P. HOLLAND

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I wish to commend Dr. Jeffery P. Holland for 37 years of service to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Dr. Holland will soon retire as the Director of the Research and Development and Director of the Corps Engineer Research Center, ERDC, headquartered in Vicksburg, MS. He is capping his career with a highly successful management term leading one of the most diverse research organizations in the world—an organization that includes seven laboratories in four States with more than 2,000 employees, including more than 1,200 Federal engineers and scientists.

As director of R&D and chief scientist for the Corps since 2010, Dr. Holland has effectively promoted its research missions, including warfighter support, military installations, the environment, water resources, and information technology. His work has enhanced our Nation's knowledge and sparked innovation related to military and civilian missions of the Department of Defense and other agencies.

His leadership in research and development led to numerous achievements, among them increased soldier survivability and improved unit protection in combat zones. He distinguished himself within the Senior Executive Service with his work to establish excellence in human capital benchmarks, to develop an enterprise knowledge management and technology transfer plan for the Corps, and to develop a science and technology initiative to improve Defense Department acquisition.

Over his long career, Dr. Holland earned a reputation as a strong leader and coalition builder, who empowered thousands of engineers and scientists to find new ways to solve problems. His career has resulted in significant and lasting contributions to the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, the Vicksburg community, and the Nation.

His distinguished tenure and outstanding accomplishments are in keeping with the highest standards of civilian service and reflect great credit upon him, the Department of the Army, and the Department of Defense.

I am pleased to commend Dr. Holland for his many years of service and to wish him well in the years ahead.

PERSPECTIVE OF RURAL AMERICA TOWARD THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, there is a very good radio reporter in smalltown Iowa named Robert Leonard, or ''Dr. Bob,'' as he is known, who interviews me every month. I recently read an opinion piece he wrote in the New York Times where he gives his take on the perspective of rural America toward the role of government. This perspective is often lost in policy debates in our Nation's Capital. In this piece, Dr. Bob gives very thorough and intellectually honest commentary that more people should read.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the New York Times article entitled, ''Why Rural America Voted for Trump'' by Robert Leonard dated January 5, 2017.

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

[From the New York Times, Jan. 5, 2017]

WHY RURAL AMERICA VOTED FOR TRUMP

(By Robert Leonard)

KNOXVILLE, IA.—One recent morning, I sat near two young men at a coffee shop here whom I've known since they were little boys. Now about 18, they pushed away from the table, and one said: ''Let's go to work. Let the liberals sleep in.'' The other nodded.

They're hard workers. As a kid, one washed dishes, took orders and swept the floor at a restaurant. Every summer, the other picked sweet corn by hand at dawn for a farm stand and for grocery stores, and then went to work all day on his parents' farm. Now one is a welder, and the other is in his first year at a state university on an academic scholarship. They are conservative, believe in hard work, family, the military and cops, and they know that abortion and socialism are evil, that Jesus Christ is our savior, and that Donald J. Trump will be good for America.

They are part of a growing movement in rural America that immerses many young people in a culture—not just conservative news outlets but also home and church environments—that emphasizes contemporary conservative values. It views liberals as loathsome, misinformed and weak, even dangerous.

Who are these rural, red-county people who brought Mr. Trump into power? I'm a native Iowan and reporter in rural Marion County, Iowa. I consider myself fairly liberal. My family has mostly voted Democratic since long before I was born. To be honest, for years, even I have struggled to understand how these conservative friends and neighbors I respect—and at times admire—can think so differently from me, not to mention how over 60 percent of voters in my county could have chosen Mr. Trump.

Political analysts have talked about how ignorance, racism, sexism, nationalism, Islamophobia, economic disenfranchisement and the decline of the middle class contributed to the popularity of Mr. Trump in rural America. But this misses the deeper cultural factors that shape the thinking of the conservatives who live here.

For me, it took a 2015 pre-caucus stop in Pella by J. C. Watts, a Baptist minister raised in the small town of Eufaula, Okla., who was a Republican congressman from 1995 to 2003, to begin to understand my neighbors—and most likely other rural Americans as well.

''The difference between Republicans and Democrats is that Republicans believe people are fundamentally bad, while Democrats see people as fundamentally good,'' said Mr. Watts, who was in the area to campaign for Senator Rand Paul. ''We are born bad,'' he said and added that children did not need to be taught to behave badly—they are born knowing how to do that.

''We teach them how to be good,'' he said. ''We become good by being reborn—born again.''

He continued. ''Democrats believe that we are born good, that we create God, not that he created us. If we are our own God, as the Democrats say, then we need to look at something else to blame when things go wrong—not us.''

Mr. Watts talked about the 2015 movie theater shooting in Lafayette, La., in which two people were killed. Mr. Watts said that Republicans knew that the gunman was a bad man, doing a bad thing. Democrats, he added, ''would look for other causes—that the man was basically good, but that it was the guns, society or some other place where the blame lies and then they will want to control the guns, or something else—not the man.'' Republicans, he said, don't need to look anywhere else for the blame.

Hearing Mr. Watts was an epiphany for me. For the first time I had a glimpse of where many of my conservative friends and neighbors were coming from. I thought, no wonder Republicans and Democrats can't agree on things like gun control, regulations or the value of social programs. We live in different philosophical worlds, with different foundational principles.

Overlay this philosophical perspective on the American rural-urban divides of history, economy and geography, and the conservative individual responsibility narrative becomes even more powerful. In my experience, the urban-rural divide isn't really so much a red state versus blue state issue, it's red county versus blue county. Rural Iowans have more in common with the rural residents of Washington State and New Mexico—places I've also lived—than with the residents of Des Moines, Seattle and Albuquerque.

Look at a national map of which counties went for Democrats and which for Republicans: Overwhelmingly the blue counties are along waterways, where early river transportation encouraged the formation of cities, and surround state capitals. This is also where most investment in infrastructure and services is made. Rural Americans recognize that this is how it must be, as the cities are where most of the people are, yet it's a sore spot.

In state capitols across America, lawmakers spend billions of dollars to take a few seconds off a city dweller's commute to his office, while rural counties' farm-to-market roads fall into disrepair. Some of the paved roads in my region are no longer maintained and are reverting to gravel. For a couple of generations now, services that were once scattered across rural areas have increasingly been consolidated in urban areas, and rural towns die. It's all done in the name of efficiency.

In cities, firefighters and E.M.T.s are professionals whose departments are funded by local, state and federal tax dollars. Rural America relies on volunteers. If I have a serious heart attack at home, I'll be cold to the touch by the time the volunteer ambulance crew from a town 22 miles away gets here.

Urban police officers have the latest in computer equipment and vehicles, while small-town cops go begging.

In this view, blue counties are where most of our tax dollars are spent, and that's where all of our laws are written and passed. To rural Americans, sometimes it seems our taxes mostly go to making city residents live better. We recognize that the truth is more complex, particularly when it comes to social programs, but it's the perception that matters—certainly to the way most people vote.

To make matters worse, jobs are continuing to move to metropolitan areas.

Small-town chamber of commerce directors and mayors still have big dreams, and use their perkiest grins and tax abatements to try to lure new businesses, only to see their hopes dashed, time and again. Many towns with a rich history and strong community pride are already dead; their citizens just don't know it yet.

Many moderate rural Republicans became supporters of Mr. Trump when he released his list of potential Supreme Court nominees who would allow the possibility of overturning Roe v. Wade. They also think the liberal worldview creates unnecessary rules and regulations that cripple the economy and take away good jobs that may belong to them or their neighbor. Public school systems and colleges are liberal tools of indoctrination that go after what we love and value most—our children.

Some of what liberals worry about they see as pure nonsense. When you are the son or daughter of a carpenter or mechanic and a housewife or secretary who lives paycheck to paycheck, who can't afford to send kids to college, as many rural residents are, white privilege is meaningless and abstract.

It's not just older people. The two young men at breakfast exemplify a younger generation with this view. When Ted Cruz campaigned in a neighboring town in 2015, I watched as a couple of dozen grade-school pupils sat at his feet, as if they were at a children's service at church. His campaign speech was nearly a sermon, and the children listened wide-eyed when he told them the world is a scary place, and it's godly men like him who are going to save them from the evils of President Obama, Hillary Clinton and their fellow Democrats.

While many blame poor decisions by Mrs. Clinton for her loss, in an environment like this, the Democratic candidate probably didn't matter. And the Democratic Party may not for generations to come. The Republican brand is strong in rural America—perhaps even strong enough to withstand a disastrous Trump presidency.

Rural conservatives feel that their world is under siege, and that Democrats are an enemy to be feared and loathed. Given the philosophical premises Mr. Watts presented as the difference between Democrats and Republicans, reconciliation seems a long way off.

TRIBUTE TO KEVIN CONCANNON

Mr. KING. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate Kevin Concannon on his retirement and distinguished career. The fact that Kevin Concannon retired is not news—he has done that several times before, and each time, he moved onto more exciting and challenging positions.

In 2016 Kevin Concannon retired from the USDA as the Undersecretary of Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services after 8 years of service.

Kevin is a tireless advocate of people—all people. His work to assure that every effort was made to address hunger in this country is an indicator of his compassion, understanding of both the issues and solutions, and his unwavering faith in the ability of this great country to care for those who are struggling—whether it is food insecurity or earlier in his career on mental health issues, long-term care, and child welfare.

At USDA, Kevin worked tirelessly to increase options for SNAP beneficiaries to access fresh local foods at Farmers Markets; he was determined that children should have more access to nutritious foods in WIC, schools, and childcare. While Kevin and I agree on that goal, I must add that, as a native Mainer, Kevin may have missed the mark on where white potatoes fit into those meal plans.

Kevin Concannon came to USDA with an amazingly broad spectrum of experience. From 1987 to 1995, he served as the director of Oregon Department of Human Resources; after having served commissioner of Maine Department of Mental Health and Corrections. In 1995, I was fortunate to be able to bring him back to his home State of Maine to serve as the commissioner of Maine's Deparment of Human Services. At the time, I commented that he was the Dan Marino of commissioners and welcomed him back. I would point out that Dan Marino is now serving as the VP of the Dolphins, and I expect that, in the same way, Kevin Concannon will find ways to continue his public service—and that will benefit us all.

Kevin led efforts throughout his career to improve child welfare, expand Medicaid and child health insurance, integrate programs of public health and medical care, and improve systems for long-term care for elders and people with disabilities. Many of those efforts were national in scope, and he was selected by his peers to serve as the president of the American Public Welfare Association from 1994 to 1995.

In every role, in every effort, Kevin Concannon has been an exemplary public servant and leader.

Margaret Chase Smith said it best: ''Public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation.'' Kevin Concannon is the personification of total dedication, honesty, and determination to make the world a better place; that has been the hallmark of his work each and every day.

Congratulations and best wishes to Kevin Concannon, and welcome home.

REMEMBERING ROBERT JUSTIN STEVENS

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I rise today in fond memory of Robert Justin Stevens, a former staffer of mine who recently passed away—entirely too young—after a long, arduous fight with cancer.

Justin was exemplary in his desire to serve and his love for public policy and politics. He was a dedicated public servant who worked tirelessly to improve the lives of Americans. Over the last few years, Justin managed Federal policy and advocacy for homeland security, public safety, and military-related issues as legislative director with the National Governors Association.

Before that, Justin worked with me, and later with Senator Scott Brown, as a professional staff member at the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security. There, he helped us to identify and address waste, fraud, and abuse in government spending and financial improvement, audit readiness, and business transformation at our Federal agencies. During my 2008 Presidential campaign, Justin served as a senior advance team lead. It was in that context that I was first introduced to Justin's boundless love of life and energy.

Justin also served as the director for candidate operations and advance for the Scott Brown for Senate 2012 campaign; a financial systems analyst with the EMCOR Group; and a Navy/NASA university faculty fellowship program manager with the American Society for Engineering Education, ASEE.

Justin never took his young life for granted. An avid runner and adventurous soul, Justin sought to improve himself by taking courses in furtherance of a master's in national security and strategic studies at the U.S. Naval War College, after having received a B.S. in business administration from the University of Florida and graduated East Lake High School. Also, unbowed by his continuing struggle with cancer and always filled with hope, Justin married the love of his life, Elizabeth.

Justin will be forever remembered for the joy he brought to the lives of his family, friends, and colleagues with his humor, energy, and selflessness. Throughout his young life, Justin always made sure that those closest to him knew how important they were to him.

Cindy and I extend our warmest condolences to Justin's wife, Elizabeth; his mother Jean Nowakowski; his stepmother Karen Stevens, with whom Justin was exceptionally close; his siblings Bryan and Damon; his niece Magdalena and nephew Jackson. Thank you.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL ILITCH

• Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, today I wish to honor a champion for Detroit and for Michigan, Mike Ilitch. Everyone from Michigan knows his life story: the son of Macedonian immigrants, he founded Little Caesars Pizza, one of the largest pizza chains in the world, and rebuilt both the Detroit Tigers and the Detroit Red Wings into world class, winning franchises. He led the Red Wings to four Stanley Cups and brought the Tigers to the World Series twice.

The story of Mike Ilitch is the story of never doing anything halfway. He embodies the American dream: he served as a marine, built a business empire, and had an eye for perfection that led him to incredible success.

For him though, it wasn't enough to be satisfied with success in business or

sports; it was all about giving back. He said it himself: ''I was raised in Detroit. I came from zero. This community helped make me. It's nice to give something back.''

He loved Detroit and worked to revitalize the city while maintaining its cultural history. His company, Olympia Entertainment, purchased the Fox Theater and restored it in 1988. He built Comerica Park, home to the Tigers. His recent $40 million donation to the Wayne State University School of Business will help build their state-of-the-art facility on Woodward Avenue, next to the new home of the Red Wings and the Pistons, Little Caesars Arena.

Detroit is better off because of the work that he did. And the people of Detroit are better off because of his work. From his philanthropic organization that has given to those in need and the program he started through Little Caesars that helps honorably discharged veterans get employed, Mike Ilitch gave people a chance to succeed and to thrive.

Mike will be sorely missed by all of us. His legacy is shared by his loving wife of over 61 years, Marian, and his seven children, but it is also shared by everyone in Michigan and all of those who love Detroit. Thank you.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 6913, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China: Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Co-Chairman, Mr. PITTENGER of North Carolina, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, and Mr. HULTGREN of Illinois.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the British-American Interparliamentary Group: Mr. COLE of Oklahoma.

The message also announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276h, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group: Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Chairman, Mr. DUFFY of Wisconsin, Vice-Chairman, Mr. HURD of Texas, and Mr. PEARCE of New Mexico.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276d, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group: Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan, Chairman, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. POLIQUIN of Maine, and Mr. CRAMER of North Dakota.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 4 of the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission Act (Public Law 114–224), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission: Mr. MACARTHUR of New Jersey and Mrs. LOVE of Utah.

The message further announced that pursuant to 36 U.S.C. 2302, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council: Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN of Florida, Mr. ZELDIN of New York, and Mr. KUSTOFF of Tennessee.

The message also announced that pursuant to Executive Order No. 12131, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the President's Export Council: Mr. TIBERI of Ohio, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. REICHART of Washington.

The message further announced that pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 6968(a), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Board of Visitors to the United States Naval Academy: Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania and Mr. DESANTIS of Florida.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 2(a) of the National Cultural Center Act (20 U.S.C. 76h(a)), amended by Public Law 107–117, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: Mrs. COMSTOCK of Virginia.

The message further announced that pursuant to section 603 of the Department of State Authorities Act, Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114–323), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following individual on the part of the House of Representatives to the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission: Ms. Mary Bono of Washington, DC.

The message also announced that pursuant to 44 U.S.C. 2501, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission: Mr. MEADOWS of North Carolina.

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. HATCH:

S. 351. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for comprehensive student achievement information; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. CORKER (for himself, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. ALEXANDER, and Mr. KAINE):

S. 352. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Master Sergeant Rodrick ''Roddie'' Edmonds in recognition of his heroic actions during World War II; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 353. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to extend the rural add-on payment in the Medicare home health benefit, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. COTTON (for himself and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 354. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the Diversity Visa Program, to limit the President's discretion in setting the number of refugees admitted annually to the United States, to reduce the number of family-sponsored immigrants, to create a new nonimmigrant classification for the parents of adult United States citizens, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 355. A bill to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for a lifetime National Recreational Pass for any veteran with a service-connected disability; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

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

S. 356. A bill to amend title XXI of the Social Security Act to improve access to, and the delivery of, children's health services through school-based health centers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 357. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain public lands in San Bernardino County, California, to the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, and to accept in return certain exchanged non-public lands, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. RUBIO, and Ms. WARREN):

S. 358. A bill to establish a designation for jurisdictions permissive to terrorism financing, to build the capacity of partner nations to investigate, prosecute, and hold accountable terrorist financiers, to impose restrictions on foreign financial institutions that provide financial services for terrorist organizations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. NELSON (for himself and Mr. RUBIO):

S. 359. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a reduced excise tax rate for portable, electronically-aerated bait containers; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 360. A bill to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to require States to provide for same day registration; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. LEE):

S. 361. A bill to amend section 349 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to deem

specific activities in support of terrorism as renunciation of United States nationality, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 362. A bill to provide that 6 of the 12 weeks of parental leave made available to a Federal employee shall be paid leave, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. HOEVEN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. LEAHY, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. PETERS):

S. 363. A bill to revise the authorized route of the North Country National Scenic Trail in northeastern Minnesota and to extend the trail into Vermont to connect with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

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

S. 364. A bill to amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to exempt certain recipients of Department of Agriculture conservation assistance from certain reporting requirements, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. ROUNDS:

S. 365. A bill to amend the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 to remove the funding cap relating to the transfer of funds from the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System to the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. ROUNDS:

S. 366. A bill to require the Federal financial institutions regulatory agencies to take risk profiles and business models of institutions into account when taking regulatory actions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. HOEVEN, and Mr. UDALL):

S. Res. 60. A resolution designating May 5, 2017, as the ''National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls''; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 63

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 63, a bill to clarify the rights of Indians and Indian tribes on Indian lands under the National Labor Relations Act.

S. 92

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) were added as cosponsors of S. 92, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to allow for the personal importation of safe and affordable drugs from approved pharmacies in Canada.

S. 102

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 102, a bill to direct the Federal Communications Commission to commence proceedings related to the resiliency of critical communications networks during times of emergency, and for other purposes.

S. 109

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 109, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage under the Medicare program of pharmacist services.

S. 178

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) were added as cosponsors of S. 178, a bill to prevent elder abuse and exploitation and improve the justice system's response to victims in elder abuse and exploitation cases.

S. 241

At the request of Mrs. ERNST, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 241, a bill to prohibit Federal funding of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

S. 251

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 251, a bill to repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board in order to ensure that it cannot be used to undermine the Medicare entitlement for beneficiaries.

S. 253

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 253, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps.

S. 324

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 324, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the provision of adult day health care services for veterans.

S. 326

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 326, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the tax-exempt financing of certain government-owned buildings.

S. 338

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 338, a bill to protect scientific integrity in Federal research and policymaking, and for other purposes.

S. 347

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 347, a bill to amend the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 to increase the percentage of loans guaranteed for small business concerns that are manufacturers.

S.J. RES. 13

At the request of Mrs. ERNST, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 13, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by the Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients.

S.J. RES. 14

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 14, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Social Security Administration relating to Implementation of the NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007.

At the request of Mr. STRANGE, his name was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 14, supra.

S.J. RES. 16

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 16, a joint resolution approving the discontinuation of the process for consideration and automatic implementation of the annual proposal of the Independent Medicare Advisory Board under section 1899A of the Social Security Act.

S. RES. 58

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 58, a resolution congratulating the New England Patriots on their victory in Super Bowl LI.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 357. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain public lands in San Bernardino County, California, to the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, and to accept in return certain exchanged nonpublic lands, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to reintroduce the Santa

Ana River Wash Plan Land Exchange Act. This legislation directs the Bureau of Land Management, BLM, to exchange land with the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, the District, in San Bernardino, CA, as part of a regional land management plan.

The bill is the culmination of years of collaboration between numerous Federal and State agencies, private industry, and municipalities representing mining, flood control, water supply and wildlife conservation, among other interests.

Included among the supporters of this land exchange are county of San Bernardino; city of Redlands; city of Highland; San Bernardino Water Conservation District; San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District: East Valley Water District; Endangered Habitats League; CEMEX Construction Materials Pacific; Robertson's Ready Mix and Inland Action

In 1993, representatives from this diverse group formed the Wash Committee to address mining issues in the upper Santa Ana River wash area.

The role of the committee subsequently expanded in 1997 to consider the broad range of land uses in the area, including natural resource conservation.

The Wash Committee developed a strategy that focused best uses for more comprehensive planning and not on private property boundaries that would segment the area. The result is a forthcoming Land Management and Habitat Conservation Plan expected to cover 4,500 acres.

This land exchange will take place in a designated region within the Santa Ana Wash, at the junction of the Santa Ana River and Mill Creek.

Currently, land within the Santa Ana Wash is owned by both the District and BLM.

The land parcels owned by the district are currently used for recharging the local groundwater aquifer through more than 77 basins and also provide critical Riversidian sage scrub habitat for a number of State and federally listed species. In addition, under this plan, new land would be set aside for conservation purposes near land already managed by BLM.

The exchange of land between the district and BLM will connect a current patchwork of separately owned land parcels into a consolidated open space for conservation purposes and will optimize the efficiency of mining operations and water conservation efforts.

The land transfer resulting from this legislation will lead to increased habitat protection, improved connectivity in the wildlife corridor, expanded groundwater recharge for water supply, and the future establishment of public access and trails.

Additionally, the legislation will allow the continued use of land and mineral resources while maintaining the biological and hydrological resources of the area in an environmentally sensitive manner.

I want to applaud diverse members of the Wash Committee that worked together, including the cities of Highland and Redlands, East Valley Water District, the County of San Bernardino, Robertson's Ready Mix, CEMEX, the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, and the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, along with the Federal, State and local stakeholders, for their continued efforts on the Wash Plan.

This group has demonstrated that, while it takes significant time, funding, and cooperation, it is possible to simultaneously protect the environment and support local jobs, business, and community interests.

I would also like to thank my colleagues, Representatives PAUL COOK and PETE AGUILAR, for introducing similar legislation in the House.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass the Santa Ana River Wash Plan Land Exchange Act.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 60—DESIGNATING MAY 5, 2017, AS THE ''NATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS FOR MISSING AND MURDERED NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS''

Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. HOEVEN, and Mr. UDALL) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 60

Whereas, according to a study commissioned by the Department of Justice, in some tribal communities, American Indian women face murder rates that are more than 10 times the national average murder rate;

Whereas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, homicide was the third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women between 10 and 24 years of age and the fifth-leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Native women between 25 and 34 years of age;

Whereas little data exist on the number of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women in the United States;

Whereas, on July 5, 2013, Hanna Harris, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, was reported missing by her family in Lame Deer, Montana;

Whereas the body of Hanna Harris was found 5 days after she went missing;

Whereas Hanna Harris was determined to have been raped and murdered, and the individuals accused of committing those crimes were convicted;

Whereas the case of Hanna Harris is an example of many similar cases; and

Whereas Hanna Harris was born on May 5, 1992: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates May 5, 2017, as the ''National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls''; and

(2) calls on the people of the United States and interested groups—

(A) to commemorate the lives of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women whose cases are documented and undocumented in public records and the media; and

(B) to demonstrate solidarity with the families of victims in light of those tragedies.

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, February 14; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session as under the previous order.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator RUBIO.

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

The Senator from Florida.

VENEZUELA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I come here this evening to speak on the issue of human rights in Venezuela and developments today in regard to all these issues. It is part of the broader effort my office has undertaken for a while now. It is the hashtag ''Expression NOT Oppression'' campaign.

Every week we come here to the floor of the Senate when in session and highlight political prisoners and dissidents whose lives are being destroyed by oppressive regimes around the world.

Today, I will be highlighting the case of Leopoldo Lopez, a Venezuelan opposition leader who, 3 years ago this week, led peaceful demonstrations against the regime of Nicolas Maduro, and he was thrown in jail for it.

I am honored that this week we will be visited here in Washington by Lilian Tintori, Leopoldo's wife and the mother of their two children. She is an incredibly brave woman who does not rest as she continues advocating for her husband's release and the release of all political prisoners and continues to fight for a free and democratic Venezuela. So I want to recognize her as she visits Washington this week to ask for our government's continued help.

Before I get into Leopoldo's case, I want to take a few moments to talk about what is happening in our own Western Hemisphere and in Venezuela specifically.

For decades, the Western Hemisphere has been neglected by our foreign policy—sadly, by administrations of both

parties. As we see all over the world, when America fails to lead and engage on the world stage, bad actors emerge and they grow emboldened, while our enemies and adversaries rush to fill the void. We see democracy under assault and with it, an assault on the universal, God-given rights and dignity of citizens throughout this region.

Despite the one-sided concessions of the past 2 years, Castro's Cuba remains as repressive as ever. In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega ran for and won an unconstitutional third term, with his wife as the Vice President. Of course, we are growing increasingly familiar with the economic, social, and political disaster in Venezuela, which I shall elaborate on shortly.

By the way, I am also concerned about the impact of ongoing, rampant corruption in the region, which will undermine democratic governments and their institutions.

There is another major issue plaguing the region and threatening the security of the United States, and that is rising insecurity stemming from narcoterrorist drug cartels. In recent years, we have seen the worst of them—the FARC in Colombia—brought to their knees and to the negotiating table by the Colombian Government's efforts. But Mexico and other countries throughout Central America continue to be threatened by organizations such as these.

A third problem in the region is the lack of economic opportunity. It is simply in America's interest to have more prosperous neighbors, people to sell to and trade with. Ultimately, if people can't earn enough money to feed their families and live in a safe neighborhood, they will either pick up and leave by any means necessary, including illegal immigration, or they will join drug gangs.

I know that too often there is a tendency to overlook what is happening in our own region. Some might say: I have enough problems here at home to worry about what is going on in other countries. But I hope that everyone remembers that all of this I have described and am about to talk about ultimately has direct consequences on us here in the United States and on our people. When you have a breakdown in any of these areas, people in these countries look to leave. The first place they often look to is the freest and the most prosperous country in the region—in the world—the United States of America. Because it also happens to be relatively close, that creates immigration pressures on our borders and on our communities.

When economies aren't functioning, it means American workers and entrepreneurs have fewer customers abroad to sell products and services to. And when you have all of this instability, vacuums are created that foreign enemies or adversaries like North Korea, Iran, China, and Russia seek to fill, not to mention terrorist organizations. It allows for the rise of tyrants and authoritarians like Castro and Chavez, Maduro, Ortega, Morales, Correa, and others.

Today in Venezuela, all these problems have come together to bring this country—one of the richest countries in the world in terms of resources—to the verge of becoming a failed state, and today the people of that proud country are living a nightmare.

Not that long ago, Venezuela was a vibrant democracy. It had strong democratic and independent institutions. It had free and fair elections. But today in Venezuela, democracy and human rights are under assault. The country is ruled by an incompetent strongman—a criminal, a human rights abuser, someone who has perverted every independent institution in the country, and is incompetent, whether it is the judiciary, the military, intelligence, or the media—in order to entrench himself and his cronies in power.

Here in the United States, when we have disagreements, people use different rules at their disposal to prolong debates and slow things down. We are aware of that here in the Senate. In Venezuela, when people have disagreements, especially with the government, they just try to stop debates completely. For example, after the opposition party in Venezuela miraculously won the last legislative election—despite every effort by the Maduro government to steal that election—the Venezuelan state police then blocked the new members of the Parliament from going to work.

Imagine for a moment 2, 4 years ago, 2012, when President Obama was elected, if he had ordered—in 2014, when Republicans took control of the Senate, imagine if at that time the President had ordered the police to stand at the door of the Chamber and not allow Senators from the Republican Party to enter the Chamber. That is what happened in Venezuela. Then that same government in Venezuela ordered their hacks on the kangaroo supreme court to invalidate laws passed by the National Assembly to free political prisoners.

Venezuela also has a drug cartel problem. In fact, there are officials in the highest levels of the Venezuelan Government who have even been linked to drug cartels. Among them is the former head of the National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, and the Vice President of that country, Tareck El Aissami. I will talk about him in a moment.

We also learned last week—and I came to the floor to discuss the CNN report confirming what my office had been gathering for a while. By the way, that is going to be airing tonight on CNN, the second part of that series. We learned that organized crime syndicates in Venezuela, with the tacit approval of the Government of Venezuela, of Maduro, are running counterfeit passport rings, with counterfeit Venezuelan passports being sold to terrorists and to individuals with links to terrorism.

But it is Venezuela's economy that is perhaps the saddest story of all. The failures of Chavez-style socialism in Venezuela led to misery for people there of all ages. Not that long ago, Venezuela was a relatively rich economy. It is a rich country blessed with oil and other natural resources, and it has long had a well-educated population and vibrant middle class. But under Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro, Venezuela has been crumbling. Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, has become the murder capital of the world. It is one of the most dangerous cities on the planet. Venezuela is defaulting on its loans. In fact, it will owe about $6 billion in April. They will not be able to make those payments. In Venezuela, the grocery shelves are bare—a rich country, and they are completely bare. Everyday products, like toilet paper, are scarce, as is food. The people of Venezuela are literary starving, so much so that a recent Miami Herald article from last week detailed how people have turned to hunting and eating flamingos for food. By now, many of us have seen the images of newborn babies being put in cardboard boxes at the hospital because these hospitals can no longer afford cribs.

So it comes as no surprise that the Venezuelan people, living in misery like this—robbed of their dignity and aspiring for more than this disaster—would choose to speak up. They began to do so in full force 3 years ago this week. That is when Venezuelan students took to the streets to protest the violence and the scarcity of basic necessities due to the negligent, incompetent policies enacted by the Maduro regime. What began as a student protest soon became something bigger. It became a movement.

Government thugs responded to this movement with violence, and the peaceful demonstrations came to look like a combat zone: 43 people dead, 600 people injured, and approximately 3,400 people detained. Among those detained was Leopoldo Lopez, a Venezuelan opposition leader. The government of Maduro outrageously accused him of being responsible for all of this violence, and they threw him in jail and he has been there ever since. It has been about 1,100 days. To put that number into context, Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian was held prisoner by the Iranian regime for 544 days. The Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 lasted 444 days. In September 2015, Leopoldo Lopez was sentenced to 13 years, 9 months, 7 days, and 12 hours for his participation in the protests. In jail he has suffered physical and psychological torture.

He is the father of two young children, and he is married to Lilian Tintori. He was the mayor of Chacao, and the leader of Popular Will or Voluntad Popular political party. He will be a critical part of building a

freer, more democratic, and more prosperous Venezuela, but for now, sadly, he languishes in prison.

He is not alone either. In Venezuela today, there are at least 108 political prisoners. Like Leopoldo, they each have a lot to contribute to make Venezuela a better place, but the Venezuelan Government is robbing them of their freedom, and it is robbing their families of the memories every child and spouse deserves to create with their father, husband, and loved ones.

All these political prisoners should be free. I have encouraged, publicly and privately, our new Secretary of State and the administration to make the freedom of these political prisoners their cause and to make it a priority. I know we are trying to work through our top-level Cabinet nominations here in the Senate, but we need to get people in place in other key roles throughout the administration; for example, our next Ambassador to the Organization of American States, where the United States needs to recommit to making its voice heard in that forum as a voice for democracy and human rights and for holding Venezuela's regime accountable for violations of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

I am also pleased that today the administration announced a new round of sanctions against a key Venezuelan official. Specifically, Venezuela's Executive Vice President Tareck Zaidan El Aissami Maddah, El Aissami, as I talked about him earlier, and Venezuelan national Samark Jose Lopez Bello were sanctioned under the Kingpin Act for international narcotics trafficking.

Aissami's primary front man was Samark Jose Lopez Bello, whom I just discussed. He was designated for providing material assistance, financial support or goods and services, and support of international narcotics trafficking activities and acting for or on behalf of El Aissami. Five U.S. companies owned or controlled by Lopez Bello have been blocked as part of today's action.

All five of them are located in my home State of Florida. In fact, all five of them have mailing addresses in South Florida where I live. Among the properties seized: A U.S.-registered aircraft with the tail number N200VR. It has been identified as block property owned or controlled by PSA Holdings, LLC, controlled by Lopez Bello and by El Aissami, with funds that were able to get by conducting prohibited transactions dealing with drug traffickers.

It is an outrage that the Vice President of a country in our hemisphere not only is a narcotrafficker but is also in the business of selling passports and travel documents to people with links to terrorism.

For years now, I have been talking about how Venezuelan regime officials were committing crimes in Venezuela, stealing from the people of Venezuela, and then they spend their riches living in the lap of luxury in my hometown of Miami. These announcements today further confirmed how true this is and the extent to which corrupt regime officials have been allowed to freely travel and prance around free U.S. soil with impunity.

I am hopeful this is only the beginning of the sanctions today, to make sure the Maduro regime feels pressured to cease its illicit activities, to free all of its political prisoners, to tolerate dissent, and respect the will of the Venezuelan people who voted to abandon the disastrous past of Chavez and Maduro.

I am hopeful this is only the beginning of making sure the Maduro regime feels pressure to cease its illicit activities and everything it is doing that has placed Venezuela on this disastrous path.

We in this country are a blessed people, to have a vibrant democracy that serves as an example to the world. With those blessings come the responsibility of speaking out when we see others yearning to be free but repressed by their government. In recent years, this body, the Senate, has spoken unanimously in support of the Venezuelan people's aspirations, and we have spoken unanimously against the Maduro regime's brutality.

Today I come to the Senate to renew that support. To Leopoldo Lopez, all of Venezuela's political prisoners, and all in Venezuela who are fighting for a better life, we stand with you, and we will continue doing everything in our power to make sure your cause is supported by this Congress and by this administration.

TRIBUTE TO TIM TEBOW

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, finally, on a separate topic, I did want to take this moment to recognize someone I am proud to represent in the Senate. He is a fellow Floridian and a constituent by the name of Tim Tebow. By now, a lot of people know I am proud to be a University of Florida alum. So as a proud Gator fan, I have been rooting for Tim Tebow since he first stepped foot on campus in 2006.

He went on to win two national championships, becoming the first sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy, and in the process he rewrote the record books. When I was the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, we hosted the Gators championship team. One of my favorite memories of my time in State government was catching a pass from Tim Tebow—No. 15—on the floor of the Florida House. It was not a great pass, but I caught it. The rules are a little different in the Senate. I wish it were OK to throw passes in here, but it was a great pleasure to be able to do that.

From the moment Tim arrived in Gainesville, we football fans saw that he was as good as advertised on the field, but we also started learning that as good a football player as he is, he is an even more extraordinary human being off the field.

He is a man to much has been given, whether it was the chance to be born to two great parents, an incredible support network, and of course God. He has been given much, and he has given back even more. We saw this once again this past Friday, when the Tim Tebow Foundation held its Night to Shine Initiative, an annual prom for special needs students from all over the world.

All told, 375 churches participated as Night to Shine hosts in all 50 States, 11 countries, and on 6 continents. There were 150,000 volunteers, and 75,000 special needs students were the guests of honor at events across the world. I encourage those of you here today or watching this or watching this in the future to Google search Night to Shine, to visit Tim Tebow's Facebook page, or to see the hashtag ''Night to Shine'' on Twitter. There you will see all of the photos that have been shared from Friday night's events. You will see 75,000 young people with special needs having the time of their lives. You will see volunteers and teachers and especially parents overcome with joy and emotion at the sight of their children feeling as loved, as important, and as special as each and every one of them truly is.

Personally, I was very moved. So I wanted to take a few minutes this evening to recognize Tim Tebow, the Tebow Foundation, the churches and the volunteers who participated, and all of the incredible students and parents who inspire us every day. I know I speak on behalf of the entire Gator Nation—I should say the entire State of Florida—in saying that we are proud of Tim. We are even prouder of all he has done and continues to do.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8:20 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, February 14, 2017, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate February 13, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

STEVEN T. MNUCHIN, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

DAVID J. SHULKIN, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING JONATHAN R. ELAM

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Jonathan (Jon) Elam on the occasion of his retirement as General Manager of Tamalpais Community Services District (TCSD) after twelve years of stellar service.

Starting in 2005, after a professional career in public works and city management, Mr. Elam was hired as General Manager of TCSD, where he served the residents of Tamalpais Valley and Marin County at large with distinction for a dozen years.

Under his leadership as General Manager, he reinvigorated the refuse collection program and created numerous new programs, including food waste collection and popular collection programs such as e-waste, batteries, printer ink cartridges, eyeglasses and medical disposal, as well as two paper shredding days per year for the TCSD service area. From upgrading park and recreation facilities, to installing new fire safe efforts, to working to ensure our agencies are compliant with EPA regulations, Mr. Elam established a productive track record for getting things done.

Mr. Elam's commitment to environmental stewardship has been a common thread throughout his work and volunteer service. Not only did Mr. Elam serve as the Delegate for the California Climate Registry to the United Nations climate meetings, but he also has participated in a variety of local organizations, including the Carbon Cycle Institute, the San Anselmo Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Marin County Solid Waste JPA Advisory Council. He also served in a number of volunteer roles in the community including his recent role as the president of the Marin Conservation League.

Mr. Elam's professional and civic contributions leave a lasting and positive legacy that will continue to benefit the local residents and regions for years to come. He is a true environmentalist, and I'm sure he will continue to fight the good fight in retirement.

Please join me in congratulating Mr. Elam on his retirement and expressing our deep appreciation for his long and exceptional career and outstanding civic engagement.

HONORING FRANK LUCIA'S 107TH BIRTHDAY

HON. JOSH GOTTHEIMER

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish a very happy birthday to Frank Lucia, a treasured member of our North Jersey community. Frank recently celebrated his 107th birthday, a tremendous milestone in a very special life. Frank is an outstanding father and a true blessing to our Demarest community. I am sure he and his family had a wonderful time celebrating, dancing, and singing in Italian. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Frank and wishing him many more years of good health and happiness.

IN HONOR OF MR. GARY SCHNEIDERS

HON. ROD BLUM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. BLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable teacher and citizen from Waterloo, Iowa. Mr. Gary Schneiders has taught History, Social Studies, and Economics at Waterloo Columbus Catholic High School for 39 years. Over those 39 years, Mr. Schneiders has made an enormous impact on the lives of his students and members of the community.

Mr. Schneiders's devotion goes beyond the classroom with his annual trip to the hallowed ground of Europe's battlefields. This trip is no European vacation. Students walk the trenches of the Western Front, and explore battlefields with a twelve mile hike one day and twenty mile bike-ride another day. Prior to their departure, students are given reading assignments and must complete a 20 page essay. While in Europe, the students have nightly homework assignments. This annual trip is highly anticipated and one that many Waterloo Columbus students work toward their entire high school career.

The itinerary also includes visits to several American cemeteries and memorials honoring our fallen heroes, and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery. On the final day, the students visit the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial where they clean the grave markers, plant an American Flag, and lay a rose on the grave of every Iowan. At the end of the day, students lay their final wreath of the trip at Normandy as Taps sounds in the background.

Upon their return to Iowa, the students give presentations to their families, fellow students, and residents of Waterloo and Cedar Falls; with a special invitation extended to the local Veteran community.

Over the past 39 years, Mr. Schneiders has shown his students what cannot be taught in a classroom—the meaning of sacrifice and love of country. Today, we honor his devotion that extends far beyond the classroom and helps to ensure the preservation of American values for generations to come.

IN RECOGNITION OF SHEILA STEPHENS' RETIREMENT

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Sheila Stephens, who is retiring from public service after 44 years with the City of Keller. Ms. Stephens started working for the city in 1972 as an assistant to the Water Department Manager. At that time, there were only 1,500 residents and 25 people employed by the city. She was appointed by the city council to be city secretary in 1977. During her 39 years in the position, Ms. Stephens demonstrated a level of professionalism and expertise in municipal government that she has exhibited with colleagues in the City of Keller as well as in other municipalities.

During her tenure, the City of Keller's population has grown to over 44,000 people and city staff has expanded to 300 people to serve the needs of the community. In her almost four decades with the city, Ms. Stephens supervised 76 elections, recorded countless meetings, documented 2,900 deaths and 100 births in addition to fulfilling 2,960 open records requests. She has faithfully served under 12 mayors and 12 city managers providing needed continuity and depth. Current Keller Mayor Mark Matthews declared December 30, 2016 as "Sheila Stephens Day" to thank Sheila for the hard work and time she dedicated to her community.

I would like to express my appreciation for the 44 years of exemplary service Sheila Stephens gave to our community and extend best wishes upon her retirement. It is my privilege to represent the residents of Keller in the United States House of Representatives.

IN RECOGNITION OF REV. LEE WON SANG

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to honor the life of Reverend Lee Won Sang, a Pastor Emeritus of the Korean Central Presbyterian Church in Virginia's 10th District. Throughout his life, Rev. Lee was a respected leader in the community, served with admiral purpose, and placed a strong importance on education.

Rev. Lee was born in Manchuria, China in 1937. He began his higher education and path to service by earning a bachelor's degree in Theology from Keimyung University and a master's degree in Theology from Kyungbuk University. In the early 1970s, he moved to the United States to further his education, where he attended the Dallas Theological Seminary to study the Old Testament. After

graduating from that program, he started working for the Korean Central Presbyterian Church, but also was pursuing a Doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. After retiring, he went on to receive a Ph.D. from the University of Wales in the U.K. at the age of 72, a true testament to the importance Rev. Lee placed on continuous education and growth.

Outside of his education, Rev. Lee is known for his 23 years of work and leadership at the Korean Central Presbyterian Church in Centreville, Virginia where I have frequently visited. The congregation has grown to almost 9,000 members at its main location, many of whom are my 10th District constituents. In addition to his work at the Korean Central Presbyterian Church, Rev. Lee took on many other projects to advance the church globally and help within his community. He founded the Central Missionary Fellowship (CMF) in 1988, which later evolved into SEED International, an organization which helped establish 12 overseas missionary groups. SEED International was the first Korean Missionary organization to become a member of the Mission NEXUS organization. Additionally, Rev. Lee founded Prassion, which is a SEED International affiliate and independent mission organization focused on prayer movement nationally and internationally.

In Washington, D.C., Rev. Lee helped establish the Washington Youth Foundation and even was afforded the opportunity to lead the opening prayer for the 107th U.S. Congress on October 10, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing Rev. Lee's years of community service. Today, we honor and celebrate the contributions the Reverend has made not just within the 10th District, but on a global level.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE WONDERFUL COMPANY

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today and am joined by Mr. MCCARTHY and Mr. COSTA of California, to commend The Wonderful Company for receiving the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's 2016 Corporate Citizenship Award for Best Community Improvement Program.

The Best Community Improvement Program Award honors businesses for the many ways they influence and enhance local communities. Companies from around the world compete for this award, making it an extraordinary acknowledgment of outstanding corporate social responsibility. The Wonderful Company was presented with the esteemed 2016 U.S. Chamber Foundation Corporate Citizenship Award for Best Community Improvement Program.

Since 1979, The Wonderful Company has quickly grown and become known worldwide for its almonds, bottled water, citrus fruits, flower bouquets, pistachios, pomegranates, and wines. However, its legacy does not stop there. Investing nearly $200 million in education, environmental technologies and sustainability research, and health and wellness programs, The Wonderful Company has an extensive history of philanthropy and community involvement.

The Seventeenth Annual Chamber of Commerce Corporate Citizenship Awards recognized The Wonderful Company for its work in Lost Hills, California, home of the company's largest pistachio plant, which serves as the economic backbone of the local community. In fact, more than fifty percent of households in Lost Hills have family members who work at the Wonderful Pistachio plant. Always committed to the wellbeing of the local community, The Wonderful Company has made significant investments in Lost Hills, investing more than $15 million in transportation and infrastructure projects, such as roads and sidewalks, bus shelters, storm drains, and streetlights. It has also rejuvenated the community park with two community centers, two soccer fields, volleyball and basketball courts, playgrounds, and a broad range of community activities and events. The Wonderful Company has also helped build affordable housing, assisted with financing and construction of the town's first sit-down restaurant, and recently received approval from the Kern County Board of Education to open a charter school in the community next fall.

This prestigious honor recognizes the hard work and significant investment made by Mr. and Mrs. Stewart and Lynda Resnick, owners of The Wonderful Company. They have dedicated their lives not only to growing a successful and sustainable business, but to improving the lives of so many across the globe, especially those in the communities The Wonderful Company calls home.

Mr. Speaker, we ask our colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join us in congratulating The Wonderful Company for receiving the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's 2016 Corporate Citizenship Award for Best Community Improvement Program. The Wonderful Company's altruistic leadership provides an exceptional example of corporate responsibility and we look forward to their future initiatives that continue to make the world a better place, one community at a time.

HONORING THE LIFE OF PETER VINCENT BELEZZUOLI

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today along with my colleague Mr. VALADAO, to honor the life and achievements of Peter Vincent Belezzuoli. Peter passed away on December 15 at the age of 61. He will be remembered as a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, auctioneer, dairyman, and friend to all who knew him.

Peter was born on August 22, 1955 in Tulare, California to Pete and Louise Belezzuoli. In 1959, the Belezzuolis moved to Hanford, California after his father purchased Overland Stockyard. From a young age, Peter worked with his father to learn all aspects of the cattle business. He graduated from Hanford High School in 1973. During his years at Hanford High he was a member of 4–H and FFA, in addition to playing on the basketball team. It was his father's business partner Hoke Evetts that taught him the art of auctioneering. Following high school, Peter attended College of the Sequoias and graduated from Missouri Auction School as a Colonel in 1974.

Peter took over his father's role at Overland Stockyard following Pete's sudden death in 1983. Peter continued his father's legacy through the passion he put into his work each and every day. Peter became very well known in the dairy cattle, and beef cattle sales industry both locally and throughout the country. He was an innovative businessman, utilizing internet video auction capabilities, allowing buyers from all over the country to participate in auctions held in Hanford.

Peter had a number of hobbies that brought him joy. In his spare time he enjoyed visiting his home in Shell Beach, riding his pontoon boat through Shaver Lake and barbecuing for his many family and friends.

Peter enjoyed giving back to the community he loved so dearly. He frequently used his talents as a skilled auctioneer for local charity groups, including the Kings County Fair and the Fresno Fair. He was also a lifelong member of St. Brigid Catholic Church in Hanford.

Peter is survived by his wife of 35 years, Lisa and their children Julie, Daniel and Douglas, their spouses and three grandsons, Bryson, Korban and Peter.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to join Mr. VALADAO and myself in honoring the life of Mr. Peter Belezzuoli. He will be remembered as a man of great character, who valued his family above all else. His presence in the San Joaquin Valley and in the local dairy community will truly be missed. We join his family in honoring his life, service to his community and tremendous legacy he leaves behind.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE VINEYARD AND WINERY AT LOST CREEK

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and commend my constituents, Todd and Aimee Henkle, on their victory in the 2017 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. This win not only speaks to the hard work, entrepreneurship and expertise of Todd and Aimee Henkle, but also the growing and transforming Virginia wine industry.

In 1998 the two visited Bordeaux, France for their honeymoon, where they decided that one day they wanted to own their very own winery and vineyard. In 2007, corporate jobs brought them to northern Virginia, and they quickly became very impressed with what DC's Wine County had to offer. In 2012, they had an opportunity to buy a plot of land in Leesburg, between Route 15 and the Potomac River, from an old vineyard owner, and with Todd's business background and Aimee's passion for wine, The Vineyard and Winery at Lost Creek was born.

Since opening five years ago, their hard work has certainly come to fruition. They have been recognized nationally and most recently

have won the Best in Class in the chardonnays priced between $26 and $29.99 category with their wine, Lost Creek Reserve Chardonnay.

In today's society, family owned small businesses are crucial to the future of our nation and my constituents in the 10th District are proud they call Loudoun County their home. It is families like the Henkles that help foster strong, local economies by establishing successful business practices that can be carried out for multiple generations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding Todd and Aimee Henkle on their great accomplishment and successful small business. I wish Todd, Aimee, and their children, Evan and Ryan, the best in their future endeavors.

HONORING THE LIFE OF KITTY MOON EMERY

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, there are those who live their lives with distinct intentionality. They have the ability to inspire their communities by bringing innovation and change in their relentless pursuit to make the world a better place. They use their creativity to bring beauty and encourage leaders to reach their fullest potentials. I am saddened by the loss of my friend, Kitty Moon Emery. I was fortunate to have met her early in my career and always appreciated her advice and counsel as she was one of those special leaders.

Kitty was a Nashville native who had an endearing love for Tennessee and our country. She worked as one of only two female press secretaries in the Senate under Senator Bill Brock. She later went on to become the Assistant National Director of Advertising for the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan. Kitty was eventually appointed by Secretary Henry Kissinger to a United Nations Advisory Committee. In these spheres she broke many barriers by filling positions that were not traditionally held by women.

Kitty was a treasured advisor to many. She served as the chairman for the Metro Sports Authority and played a vital role by serving on many boards including the Country Music Association, the CMA Foundation, the Rotary Club of Nashville, and Leadership Music. More recently she founded the consulting firm Kitty Moon Enterprises to support leaders in the Middle Tennessee Region.

Kitty's presence in Nashville will be deeply missed. Her love and devotion to community brought people together and made Tennessee a much better place to live. I rise today to celebrate her lasting achievements and ask my colleagues to join with me in honoring her life.

RECOGNIZING FANNIN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

HON. DOUG COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Fannin County Public Library and to commend its Food for Fines program. The Fannin County Public Library started this initiative a decade ago, and this year's program runs through the end of the month. Food for Fines is a smart, creative way to give back to the community. It allows individuals with overdue fines to donate non-perishable food items in lieu of a fee. For every food item donated, the library forgives one dollar of fines.

All of the donations from this food drive will go to support the Fannin County Family Connection. The program benefits individuals in need and library patrons alike. Last year the library estimated that it collected nearly $500 worth of non-perishable food items. Over the years, it has become commonplace for those who donate to do so in excess of their fine out of support for this community cause.

Mr. Speaker, the ongoing success of this program speaks to the investment that the Fannin County Public Library staff and library patrons have made in their community. It is a privilege to represent such civic-minded individuals and to recognize their service to their neighbors. The Fannin County Public Library's Food for Fines program is an example of the inclusive service I see throughout Northeast Georgia.

IN HONOR OF THE HILLSBORO TOWN EXPANSION

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge my constituent, the Honorable Roger Vance, Mayor of the Town of Hillsboro, Vice Mayor Steve Morgart, Council Member at Large John Dean, Council Member at Large Joseph Gertig, Council Member at Large Amy Newton Marasco, Council Member at Large Matt Parse, and the Town Clerk, Sherry Vance on their historic boundary line expansion. Not only did this expansion triple the town's size from 55 to 171 acres and increase the population from 80 to 115 residents, but it also created more economic opportunity, improved walkability, and added businesses and neighbors that have long considered themselves residents of Hillsboro.

Hillsboro, located in Western Loudoun County, was first settled in the mid-1750s by a small group of Quakers as a milling town. Given the town's location and its position on the Short Hill Mountain formed by the North Fork of Catoctin Creek, the small group of houses and mills became known as the Gap, a term still widely used today. After many years of growth and development, the Gap became an incorporated town in 1802 called Hillsborough. Many years later in 1893, the name was shortened to Hillsboro.

Thanks to the work of Mayor Vance and the Town Council, today Hillsboro is among the best-preserved rural towns in the country, and with this successful expansion the town will be able to expand and improve the historic area. This improvement, along with the town's ongoing initiatives to increase economic opportunity, will help build a sustainable future for Loudoun County (careful we have other rural towns in Loudoun).

Mr. Speaker, I now ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing the Town of Hillsboro, Mayor Roger Vance, Vice Mayor Steve Morgart, Council Member at Large John Dean, Council Member at Large Joseph Gertig, Council Member at Large Amy Newton Marasco, Council Member at Large Matt Parse, and the Town Clerk, Sherry Vance on the historic boundary line expansion. Today, we honor and celebrate the town's history as one of Loudoun County's most important assets.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS AND PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICE VOLUNTARY SEPARATION INCENTIVE PAYMENTS ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduce the District of Columbia Courts and Public Defender Service Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments Act. The bill, which passed the House in the 114th Congress, would make a small but important change to the authorities of the District of Columbia Courts (D.C. Courts) and the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (PDS), placing these entities in the same position as their federal counterparts for more effective management and operation.

The bill would give the D.C. Courts and PDS the same authority federal agencies and federal courts already have to offer voluntary separation incentive payments, or buyouts, to their employees. The fiscal year 2016 omnibus bill already gives D.C. Courts buyout authority, but my bill would make this authorization permanent, and would extend it to PDS in addition to the D.C. Courts. Buyouts would allow the D.C. Courts and PDS to respond to future administrative and budget needs, and would provide the flexibility to extend buyout offers to their employees.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has determined that voluntary separation incentive payments may be made only where statutorily authorized. Federal agencies and federal courts already have the statutory authority to offer buyouts, and PDS and the D.C. Courts need the same express authority in order to manage their workforce as budget conditions and needs change.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

IMPORTANCE OF A U.S.-U.K. TRADE DEAL

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this past summer British citizens chose to reclaim their independence. In a landmark referendum they decided to leave the European Union and take charge of their economic future. Now, in the wake of Brexit, it is important that we preserve, as Winston Churchill first put it in 1946, the special relationship between the U.S. and the U.K.

Our two nations are bound together by a shared history, a common language, and a friendship that reaches back hundreds of years. Now our two countries got off to a rough start. The Crown opposed our independence and then burned the Capitol and the White House in the War of 1812. But Great Britain is not only our oldest enemy but our oldest ally. For over two hundred years our two countries have partnered together to preserve peace and security. From the trenches of WWI to the mountains of Afghanistan, our men and women have spilt blood together on the battlefield. Our relationship is deep and special.

A trade deal represents yet another opportunity to deepen our relationship. The previous Administration threatened to put the U.K. ''at the back of the queue'' for a trade deal. But that kind of snub to our greatest ally is exactly the opposite of what we should be doing.

A bilateral agreement will enhance the flow of commerce and boost the welfare of our economies. Trade deals that do not help the United States are things of the past. A bilateral trade agreement can be in both our interests.

The U.K. shares many values and business practices with the U.S. Our similarities will help ensure a smooth negotiation process as neither side will be forced into making hard concessions. For example, because Britain's workers are paid at about the same rate as Americans, we do not have to worry about American manufacturers moving factories to the English countryside. Jobs will not be sent overseas. We will be able to streamline regulations and reduce barriers to trade. That means more consumers for U.S. goods. Our two countries already enjoy close economic ties. No country receives more investment from Britain than the United States. And the United States is the largest investor in the United Kingdom.

In my home state of Texas, the U.K. is the number one foreign direct investor. It sends over $2.5 billion dollars a year into the Texas economy. This investment has helped to bring more than 87,000 jobs to hardworking Texans. Texas is a great place to do business. The British people see that. But these kinds of gains are not limited to Texas alone. Every day over a million Americans go to work for British companies based in the U.S. It is critical that we turn our backs on trade. Houston is dependent on the free flow of goods. Over 50 percent of the city's economy is based on the Port of Houston. But that does not mean the United States has to give away the farm to get a trade deal done. We can have free and fair trade. We can level the playing field for American businesses, give American goods better access to consumers around the world, and increase American jobs.

The new Administration has expressed its preference for bilateral deals over more cumbersome multilateral agreements. A bilateral deal with the U.K. is a great place to start. Once the U.K. is able to throw off the shackles of the EU's restrictive trade policies, there will be better opportunities for job growth and investment.

A free trade deal between the United Kingdom and the United States will be an important symbol of our dedication to promoting economic freedom. Together we can come up with the gold standard of trade deals. This deal could serve as a model for future deals or maybe even opened up for other nations to join.

The geopolitical effects of a trade deal may be just as important as the deal itself. This deal can send a message to those opposed to our shared values of freedom and liberty that the United States and the United Kingdom are standing strong together.

And that's just the way it is.

IN RECOGNITION OF VED VENGSARKER ACHIEVING A PERFECT SCORE ON THE AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Briar Woods High School's very own Ved Vengsarker on achieving a perfect score on the American College Test (ACT)—a respected college admissions test in the United States. Ved, now a high school junior, began studying diligently last summer in preparation, reviewing his ACT books during the week and taking several practice tests each weekend. His perfect score is not only a testament to his hard work and dedication, but also the exemplary teachers and faculty at Briar Woods High School located in Ashburn, Virginia who helped cultivate Ved's intellectual intrigue.

Each year less than one-tenth of a percent of the ACT test-taking population receive a perfect score. Ved is a self-driven individual who understands the need to prepare early and continue practicing until you achieve your goal. It is young, hardworking students like Ved who will help Loudoun County, Virginia's 10th District, and even the United States grow tremendously in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Ved Vengsarker for achieving a perfect score on the ACT test. It is a privilege to represent him, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF BOBBIE SUMMERS

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALFIORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Bobbie Summers for her outstanding work with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and to congratulate her on her retirement after 40 years of dedicated service.

Bobbie began her career with the Social Security Administration in 1976. She was hired for a Claims Representative position in Hanford through the outstanding Scholar Program. After her time in Hanford, Bobbie worked as a Claims Representative in Southeast Fresno, West Fresno, Fresno Downtown and as Operations Supervisor for the Madera SSA office. In 1984, Bobbie was promoted to an Operations Supervisor position in the Fresno SSA office. In 1990, she was promoted to Branch Manager in Carmel. Bobbie returned to Fresno in 1993 as an Operations Supervisor. In 2003, Bobbie was accepted for the Regional Leadership Development Program where she worked in the SSA Office of Public Service and Operations Support on the SDW ramp up initiative. In 2004, she was promoted to Assistant District Manager in the Fresno office, and later that year, she accepted a yearlong detail to the SSA Office of Public Service and Operations Support where she worked on the cross program recovery project. Bobbie was promoted to Level 1 District Manager position in the Southeast Fresno SSA office in 2005 where she served until 2008. In 2008, she was given a detail in the SSA Central Office to assist with the transition for the newly formed SSA Office of Disability Determinations Division. She returned to her Level 1 District Manager position in 2009.

Bobbie's ongoing hard work and dedication resulted in many awards throughout the years. Some of the awards she received are: The Commissioner's Citation, Deputy Commissioner's Citation, Regional Citation and Commissioner's Team Award.

In is with great pleasure that I applaud Bobbie Summers for her many years of tireless work on behalf of the United States government.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that in addition to her countless gifts to the Social Security Administration and our community, Bobbie has been a true champion for my constituents. In my office, a majority of our constituent casework involves the Social Security Administration. These are sensitive cases that can sometimes take a great deal of time to resolve. One member of my Fresno staff, Ms. Kelly Gill has worked closely with Bobbie Summers on Social Security issues for over twenty years and proudly recollects Bobbie always being available to discuss cases and work together on issues of concern. I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing the commitment, dedication and success of Bobbie Summers and wish her well as she embarks on new endeavors.

HONORING COWGIRL CREAMERY

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Cowgirl Creamery and its founders, Sue Conley and Peggy Smith, in honor of the 20th anniversary of this artisan cheese company, which has over the past two decades been a leader in the evolution of the local, state, and national artisan cheese market.

Opened in 1997, the idea of Cowgirl Creamery began years earlier when Sue and Peggy, each with twenty years of culinary experience, settled in Point Reyes Station in West Marin, California. Inspired by local agricultural matriarch Ellen Straus and her son, Albert Straus, who established organic milk producers west of the Mississippi, Sue and Peggy decided to combine their culinary expertise and environmental stewardship ethos to create an artisan cheesemaking business. Several years after purchasing a barn in downtown Point Reyes Station, and after renovating, restoring, and acquiring the permits to open Tomales Bay Foods as a distribution company, Cowgirl Creamery was opened.

Over the next twenty years, Cowgirl Creamery became an organic-certified creamery known for its award-winning cheeses, and its founders became leaders in sustainable food and artisan cheese movement in the North Bay. With over ten different types of cheeses produced from milk from neighboring dairies and two creameries with a staff of nearly 100, the company is still growing its business and influence in the region. At the time of its opening, there were few cheese companies in Marin and Sonoma. Today, the West Marin region is considered a dairy and cheese appellation, and the region's artisan cheese industry has bloomed thanks in large part to the success of Cowgirl Creamery. There are 28 cheesemakers in the region and more in the making, and the Marin-Sonoma Cheese Trail boasts a large following.

Not only did the founders of Cowgirl Creamery serve as advocates and mentors for local agriculture and cheese producers, they engaged with non-profit organizations supporting sustainable agriculture and with government officials to advance the interests and growth in the environmentally-responsible food movement. Sue served on the board of Marin Agricultural Land Trust for 18 years and is on the board of the California Artisan Cheese Guild. Peggy serves as President of the American Cheese Society, a national platform that provides educational resources for other cheesemakers, retailers, distributors and cheese enthusiasts.

Inducted into the Guilde des Fromagers in 2010, Cowgirl Creamery has earned the respect of international cheese experts in addition to their robust reputations in the regional and national artisan cheese marketplace.

From producers to consumers, Cowgirl Creamery occupies an unparalleled space in its influence on artisan cheesemaking worldwide. Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of their 20th Anniversary it is fitting to honor and thank Peggy, Sue, and Cowgirl Creamery for their impressive success and generosity, and to wish them success in the decades to come.

CONGRATULATING BEACON HILL VILLAGES ON THEIR 15TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. STEPHEN F. LYNCH

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 15th Anniversary of Beacon Hill Village in Boston. It's an anniversary with significance for the whole Nation and they are to be congratulated on reaching this special milestone.

Mr. Speaker, Beacon Hill Village was created by, and for, neighbors determined, as they aged, to continue to thrive and grow in the neighborhood they loved. There was no ready model. A core goal of Beacon Hill Village members was keeping independent. There isn't much choice about growing old, but there are choices about where and how to do so. A little help with the ordinary business of living is always welcome, yet Beacon Hill Village's philosophy was from the start all about choice: its members are quite capable of figuring out what they need and when.

But the revolution in aging our nation is experiencing also presented an extraordinary opportunity beyond better managing daily life. Most of our nation's elders will live many years after retirement: Their goals for those years are to be productive, engaged and open to new people, new experiences, and new ideas. Its members quickly and clearly understood how Beacon Hill Village could advance those goals.

Almost from the start, word of Beacon Hill Village's success serving its own members spread. More and more communities, from near and far, were soon flooding Beacon Hill Village with requests for help in creating villages of their own. In response, just a few years after it opened in 2002, Beacon Hill Village was the chief force behind the creation of the Village to Village Network, dedicated to helping communities everywhere design their own villages reflecting local needs and using local resources. Today that Network has more than 350 open and developing villages serving members numbering over 40,000. These villages are all across the nation, in 45 states and the District of Columbia, and in six countries abroad.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced, that the best days of Beacon Hill Village, the Village to Village Network and the villages of the nation, are still ahead of them. Their message is simple, forceful and optimistic: aging should be to each individual's own design. No one, as they age, should be told where to go or how to live. Villages can help their members take responsibility for their own aging and make choices resulting in vibrant, purposeful lives lived on their own terms, in their own homes and communities. With this message the village movement is changing how elders experience aging and how our society perceives aging. Every American benefits from these changes.

On February 13th in Boston, Dr. Atul Gawande, whose celebrated 2014 book Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End continues to sustain a lively national conversation about living well and ending well in old age, will speak at a public forum to salute and conclude Beacon Hill Village's fifteenth-year celebrations. Being Mortal has generous things to say about how Beacon Hill Village and villages inspired by it provide a valuable model for such living and ending well. Dr. Gawande's remarks will be simulcast nationally to more than 150 villages where more than 5000 will participate remotely in the celebration.

One of the great issues worldwide today is how to support and care for aging populations. By 2030, twenty percent of our nation's population will be over 65, an estimated 83 million people. The numbers are even larger in many countries around the world. The Village concept and Dr. Gawande's profound understanding of the importance of community and choice offer valuable insights and solutions for this challenging phenomenon.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the positive impact that the village movement has had on the experience of aging, I ask that my colleagues join me in saluting Beacon Hill Village and villages throughout the nation by designating Monday, February 13, 2017 as National Villages Day.

IN HONOR OF LIZ THOMAS

HON. DONALD NORCROSS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. NORCROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Liz Thomas, a smart and savvy businessperson, a wonderful friend and someone who always supports organizations and causes near and dear to her heart.

On Saturday, February 11, 2017, Liz's friends, family and colleagues will gather together to celebrate at the Hearts of Gold Samaritan Gala and to honor her as she receives the Samaritan Healthcare and Hospice Circle of Excellence Award.

Ms. Thomas began her communications career in the press office of New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean. Then, she moved on to serve as Deputy Director of the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism. In 1989, she opened her first public relations firm and she has been working hard in that field ever since.

In her professional capacity as co-founder and CEO of Thomas/Boyd, Ms. Thomas is frequently called upon to use her extensive knowledge of communications, government relations and event management to ensure that businesses, non-profit organizations, professional societies and service companies have successful events and communication campaigns throughout the area.

Ms. Thomas has received numerous honors and recognitions throughout her professional career. She was named a Person to Watch by SJ Magazine and was a member of NJBiz's inaugural class of Best 50 Women in Business.

In addition to her professional accomplishments, Ms. Thomas is proud to lend her name, time and talents to a variety of organizations throughout the area and is the Vice Chair of New Jersey Public Media, the Chair of the Samaritan Healthcare and Hospice's Board of Trustees, and Vice Chair of the New Jersey Governor's Women's Conference. She is also a member of many great organizations, such as the Salvation Army Kroc Community Center Capital Campaign and the New Jersey Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

It is all altogether fitting that we congratulate Liz Thomas on receiving the Samaritan Healthcare and Hospice Circle of Excellence Award and thank her for her contributions to the State of New Jersey and the many organizations that she devotes so much of her time and talent. Ms. Thomas continues to give back to her community both personally and professionally and I wish her continued success in all her endeavors.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE SHORT HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize my constituents of the Short Hill Historical Society, formerly the Hillsboro Community Association (HCA), for their preservation and restoration efforts in one of the oldest, historic cities in Virginia's 10th District—Hillsboro, Virginia.

Over 40 years ago, the Old Stone School in Hillsboro was saved from being demolished by the HCA, a non-profit comprised of area residents and alumni. Since 1976, the HCA has made it their mission to preserve and restore the Old Stone School and to identify and restore other historic landmarks in the Hillsboro area. More recently, the organization began to operate under the name Friends of the Old Stone School, as they placed an even stronger focus on the landmark building. In 2006, the town government took over full management of the building from the HCA.

Now with the school in good hands, the HCA, under the new name, the Short Hill Historical Society, is planning to expand their restoration efforts immensely. The group contributed an estimated $15,000 worth of furniture and equipment to the school and also provided over $19,000 for management and operations.

This year, the Short Hill Historical Society has planned a plethora of events and concerts to raise money and also garner support for new restoration projects. It is strong, community-focused groups, like the Short Hill Historical Society, that will help Western Loudoun County retain its rich history, and I look forward to their future projects and endeavors.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Short Hill Historical Society for their years of dedication and hard work. I wish them all of the best in their future endeavors.

IN RECOGNITION OF RICHMOND FREE PRESS

HON. A. DONALD McEACHIN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. McEACHIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Richmond Free Press, an independent, black-owned, weekly newspaper, that recently celebrated their 25th anniversary. The paper was founded by Raymond H. Boone, a former Howard University associate professor and reporter who tirelessly served as editor and publisher until his death in June 2014.

The Richmond Free Press serves as a voice for all people and since its inception has altered the media landscape of Richmond, the former Capital of the Confederacy. Their mission is to, ''provide solid, fair-minded news stories and informed opinion to empower its readers to motivate them to take enlightened action on important issues that touch their lives.''

Positively impacting the community through news stories and editorials, the Richmond Free Press is instrumental in providing honest coverage that has contributed to a gubernatorial pardon on behalf of a man wrongly convicted of a murder charge; and rewriting city code that purged unfair gender references leading to the resignation of a Richmond judge who posted racist comments on the internet.

Through the leadership of Mrs. Jean Patterson Boone, advertising director and wife of the late founder Raymond Boone, the Richmond Free Press is an award-winning publication that has been recognized by the Virginia Press Association, the National Newspaper Publishers Associations, the NAACP and countless other organizations.

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that this recognition come during Black History Month, for the Richmond Free Press does not only chronical history, it has made history for the last 25 years.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES PAID PARENTAL LEAVE ACT

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today, I am proud to reintroduce the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act, bipartisan legislation to grant six weeks of paid parental leave to hardworking federal employees.

In the Presidential campaign, both candidates voiced strong support for a workplace that makes sense for hardworking parents. This bipartisan legislation is a great place to start.

The federal government is our nation's largest employer, and should be setting the trend for commonsense, family-friendly policies. Paid parental leave would give a boost to the almost two million people who work for the federal government across the country, and would help our government recruit and retain a talented workforce.

The growing costs of caring for a new child, the expensive diapers, bottles, baby carriers, they all add up very quickly. The USDA found that in the first two years a new child can cost families an average of nearly $13,000.

Paid leave makes sure that families can start out on the right foot, not forcing them into debt, or making devastating choices between caring for a child and the paycheck they need.

I am proud that versions of this legislation have passed the House twice before, and urge my colleagues to support this commonsense proposal.

HONORING MS. DONNA MARIE GLAPION, QUEEN ZULU 2017

HON. CEDRIC L. RICHMOND

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of Ms. Donna Marie Glapion, a native of my hometown of New Orleans, Louisiana. I especially wish to congratulate her on becoming the Queen of the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club for 2017. It is my distinct privilege to recognize her for this accomplishment.

Ms. Glapion has been a member of the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club for 15 years. Over the years she has shared her creative talents, having decorated numerous events for Zulu Members, Characters and the organization. She has served as the First Lady of the Mighty Mayor's Krewe, participated for many years with Zulu's Toys for Tots program, and has served as Co-Modiste to the Zulu Maids from 2012–2014.

In addition to her work with Zulu, Ms. Glapion is dedicated to her family and has been active in her community. She is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and for the past seven years she has positively impacted the lives of children in the community through her work as a character school operations manager. From 2009 to 2015, she has worked tirelessly on behalf of the students at James M. Singleton Charter School and since July 2015, hmerved as the Operations Manager at William J. Fischer School. Ms. Glapion is a graduate of McDonogh No. 35 Senior High School and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, earning a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication. She completed post graduate work in language studies at the Universidad Iberoamericana, in Mexico City, Mexico. Ms. Glapion began her professional career as an Administrative Assistant in the office of the late City Councilwoman Dorothy Mae DeLavallade Taylor and as Operations and Finance Manager for the Mary L. Landrieu for Governor Campaign.

Ms. Glapion has served as an Operations Manager in the Corporate Real Estate/Facilities Management Department at Whitney National Bank, and from 2001 to 2005, she was part of a research team at Tulane University School of Medicine as the Administrator of the Hematology/Oncology Section.

In closing Mr. Speaker, the hard work and dedication of Ms. Donna Marie Glapion gives us hope and promise for the future of our city and I wish to congratulate Ms. Glapion on her coronation as Queen Zulu and wish her a successful reign in 2017.

IN HONOR OF JOHN S. SEDLAK

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge my constituent, Mr. John S. Sedlak, who will be departing from his position as Technical Advisor in the Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance this month after a 20-year career of distinguished public service. Mr. Sedlak has made tremendous contributions to his community and country as both an active duty serviceman in the U.S. Coast Guard and as a civilian employee.

Mr. Sedlak graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in 1974, beginning a long career in active duty service that included assignments to a Coast Guard Cutter, multiple Marine Safety Offices, and a Staff Engineer position at the Coast Guard Headquarters. After serving as Staff Engineer, Mr. Sedlak earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Naval Post Graduate School of Monterey, California and served his final tour of active duty as the Electrical Branch Chief handling operations at the Coast Guard Marine Safety Center.

Following his departure from active duty service, Mr. Sedlak assumed his current position as Technical Advisor in the Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance in 2002. As one of only three Technical Advisors in CVC and an internationally recognized expert in his field, Mr. Sedlak developed national policy in a number of passenger ships and offshore vessel areas. While developing these policies, Mr. Sedlak routinely collaborated with other Federal Agencies and represented the Coast

Guard in international meetings and conferences.

Mr. Sedlak has been an integral member of the U.S. Coast Guard throughout his career, and his contributions in both active duty service and as a civilian employee are greatly appreciated by all members of the district and community.

At this moment, Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in extending our sincerest thanks to Mr. Sedlak for his service to our nation and all the work he has done for the CVC.

HONORING THE LIFE OF ROSELYN BAKER

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Roselyn Baker, who passed away January 5, 2017. Roselyn was a wonderful mother, wife and friend, whose presence will be greatly missed.

Roselyn was born in Fresno, California in 1926 to Kourken and Varsenig Shabaghlian, both survivors of the Armenian Genocide. The family initially lived in the heart of downtown Fresno before relocating to San Francisco when Roselyn was a young child. There her parents operated several grocery stores. You would frequently find Roselyn by her father's side at the stores, assisting with deliveries and getting to know the customers.

Roselyn attended Girls High School in San Francisco, where her love of classical music was born and fostered by her teachers. Roselyn graduated high school in 1944 and enrolled in San Francisco City College. Roselyn began working in the ladies glove department for Roos Brothers and Ransahoff's Department Stores in downtown San Francisco.

Roselyn met the love of her life George F. Baker, a veteran who was attending the College of Physicians & Surgeons Dental School on the GI Bill. George and Roselyn were married in 1947 at St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco. The couple moved to Fresno, where George would open a dental practice in the Tower District. Roselyn served as the office manager and dental assistant in her husband's practice. Roselyn was a devoted mother, frequently serving as a volunteer teacher's aide. Roselyn enjoyed reading books and keeping up with current events. She was an avid San Francisco Giants fan, rejoicing when the team finally won the World Series in 2010.

Roselyn is survived by her two devoted children, Dr. Timothy G. Baker and Bethany R. Baker, in addition to family and close friends. Timothy practices dentistry in the same building in the Tower District as his father.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in memorializing the life of Roselyn Baker.

HONORING MR. ADONIS CHARLES EXPOSE, KING ZULU 2017

HON. CEDRIC L. RICHMOND

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of Mr. Adonis Charles Expose, a native of my hometown of New Orleans, Louisiana. I especially wish to congratulate him on becoming the King of the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club for 2017. It is my distinct privilege to recognize him for this accomplishment.

Mr. Expose has been a member of the Zulu organization since 2002 and has actively participated on every level in various leadership capacities. In 2008, he represented the Zulu organization as Mayor of Zululand. He has also had the honor of serving as Parliamentarian of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, Inc. for six years.

In addition to his work with Zulu, Mr. Expose is a dedicated family man and has been active in his community. He is a proud member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and former board member of Young Audiences, Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Louisiana and Heart N Hands, Inc. He has been a member of the Pines Village Neighborhood Association, Mayor's Office Task Force Committee for Blighted Housing and an alumnus of the Committee for a Better New Orleans/Metropolitan Area Committee along with being involved with Forever Our Children, Inc. and the Young Leadership Council.

Mr. Expose is a graduate of McDonogh No. 35 Senior High School and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communications with a minor in English. He earned a Master of Arts degree in Public Administration from Southern University A&M College. He began his professional career at the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) where he served as a Strategic Planning Analyst and was later promoted to Director of Communications for the agency. Currently, he is employed by the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in the Office of Procurement and Contracts. The commitment that Mr. Expose shows to his family and community is an example to all of us.

In closing Mr. Speaker, the hard work and dedication of Mr. Adonis Charles Expose to improving the community gives us hope and promise for the future of our city and I congratulate him on his coronation as King Zulu and wish him a successful reign in 2017.

STANDING FOR A STRONG AND SOVEREIGN MACEDONIA

HON. DAVID A. TROTT

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. TROTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to underscore my support of a strong and sovereign Macedonia.

The nation of Macedonia has been a critical partner in advancing U.S. national security efforts around the world. Furthermore, the Macedonian diaspora in the United States has been a critical part of our community and has contributed to the diversity and advancement of our entire nation.

As co-chair of the Congressional Macedonia and Macedonian-Americans Caucus and Representative for Michigan's 11th district, the Macedonian people in Southeast Michigan are a vibrant and esteemed part of our community.

A sovereign and strong Macedonia and Macedonian people serves to benefit our mutual interests and we must support, not undermine, our important ally.

TRIBUTE TO FRAN KAPLAN

HON. GWEN MOORE

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Fran Kaplan who has served as a mentor, educator, community leader, social worker, translator, writer, administrator and self-described "social justice activist" for nearly five decades. Fran Kaplan turned 70 on February 9, 2017 and in her retirement has volunteered hundreds of hours a year serving as coordinator of America's Black Holocaust Museum's (ABHM) online presence at www.abhmuseum.org. She helps curate the 2900+ exhibits covering 400 years of African American history, and co-facilitates ABHM's film/dialogue series, helping Americans understand the past in order to heal the present.

Fran was born in Lafayette, Indiana and at an early age came to believe that racial/ethnic hatred and power struggles were the principal cause of suffering in the U.S. and around the world. She had experienced the ways that racism distorts the psyches and lives of both victim and victimizer while growing up Jewish in a small Indiana town.

Dr. Kaplan was able to participate in a field work placement as a graduate student at the University of Michigan with New Detroit, a black led organization that arose to revive the city after the uprisings in 1971. Fran is a fluent Spanish-speaker and is Jewish and was tasked to conduct anti-racism training and organizing for whites and other non-blacks.

Since that internship, she continued to find many opportunities to apply what she learned there. The focus of her life's work has been the rights of women, children, minorities and the poor, and ensuring access to community resources for marginalized groups. Dr. Kaplan has founded and administered a number of community organizations, among them a women's health center, a farm worker self-help organization, and a training center for Spanish-speaking early childhood educators. Fran is also a published writer and the producer of award-winning short and feature films. Her co-authored screenplay, Fruit of the Tree, about the life of lynching survivor James Cameron, founder of the ABHM, has won awards in national and regional competitions. The international trainer-consultant for a global parenting education program, Fran authored and co-produced its Spanish-language videos, books, and games. With Dr. Robert Smith, Dr. Kaplan curated and edited Lynching: An American Folkway, a digital transmedia anthology distributed by Biblioboard, Inc. to libraries across the country.

Fran has been recognized by various organizations in Milwaukee and Wisconsin for promoting racial justice and providing leadership

in children's and human rights, but perhaps her finest achievement is being able to do all that while taking part in the growth and development of several wonderful young people as a mother, foster parent, and "bubbe" (grandma).

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Dr. Fran Kaplan on her 70th birthday. She has left a legacy of advocacy and compassion. She is a true trailblazer and my friend for nearly 40 years. And now, Fran has returned to direct anti-racism organizing and education, her first true calling, at ABHM and has finally come home. The citizens of the Fourth Congressional District, the State of Wisconsin and the nation have benefited tremendously from her dedicated service. I am honored for these reasons to pay tribute to Dr. Fran Kaplan.

RECOGNIZING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. ADRIANO ESPAILLAT

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Black History Month, also known as African American History Month during this month of February.

This is an opportunity to celebrate the countless contributions that African Americans have made to our great nation throughout its history. First recognized in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Black History Month allows us to reflect on the collective strength that diversity continues to bring to our great nation today and the many days to come.

New York's thirteenth congressional district has a rich history that celebrates the contributions of African Americans to New York City, and the legacy of African American history in the United States. The Apollo Theater, opened in 1914, introduced the world to the transcendent voice and talent of Ella Fitzgerald, James Brown, and Lauryn Hill.

The Audubon Ballroom where the late Malcolm X (Malcolm el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz) was assassinated now stands in memoriam to his legacy and is also a venue for community organizing.

Even after his passing, in his name the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center has become a landmark for my constituents and visitors alike seeking reflection and enrichment.

Known to locals and across the country, Harlem's famous Sylvia's Restaurant founded by Sylvia Woods—the Queen of Soulfood—for 55 years stands proudly as a window to the rich culinary history of African Americans throughout the country. These institutions are cultural landmarks that help tell the story of the African American experience that runs throughout communities across the land.

During this month of reflection, as a representative of New York's 13th district, it is incumbent on me to highlight and celebrate the history of my predecessors. That history begins with the Honorable Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Congressman Powell was the first African-American to represent any district of New York in the U.S. Congress.

First elected in 1944, Congressman Powell served the Harlem community for more than two decades during which he worked tirelessly to raise the minimum wage, supported education and training for the hearing impaired, bolstered vocational training and endeavored to provide continued aid to elementary and secondary schools and public libraries.

His presence as an African-American in the U.S. House of Representatives was not just poignant for symbolisms' sake. In 1951, Congressman Powell rose to become the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor. For his efforts, President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966 wrote that Congressman Powell's record, "represents the successful reporting of 49 pieces of bed-rock legislation. And the passage of every one of these bills attests to your ability to get things done."

President Johnson continued "Even now, these laws which you so effectively guided through the House are finding abundant reward in the lives of our people." Most striking was his affirmation that "only with progressive leadership could so much have been accomplished by one committee in so short a time. I speak for millions of Americans who benefit from these laws when I say that I am truly grateful."

Congressman Powell's example and work to build Harlem (formerly New York 22nd district) and provide opportunities for the African American community remain enshrined today. Most well-known is Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard running through Harlem and the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building in Harlem. While these share his name, his contributions reached beyond Harlem. Congressman Powell successfully coordinated the merger of Freedman's Hospital locally in Washington, D.C. with Howard University. Howard University has the largest concentration of black faculty and student scholars in the country and its College of Medicine stands today as a proud institution whose legacy contributing to African American society will continue to stand the test of time.

To my new colleagues, the Honorable Charles B. Rangel is no stranger to any of you. He has represented Harlem for almost 50 years beginning in the New York State Legislature and then in the U.S. House of Representatives. In this chamber, Congressman Rangel was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus. For over 40 years, this esteemed organization has served to "promote the public welfare through legislation designed to meet the needs of millions of neglected citizens." Where Congressman Powell rose to chair the House Committee on Education and Labor, Congressman Rangel in his own right rose among his peers to chair the House Committee on Ways and Means; where his chairmanship represents the "most powerful gavel ever held by an African American in Congress."

Congressman Rangel's place in African American history transcends Harlem and New York City. In 1965 Congressman Rangel joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the historical march from Selma, AL to Montgomery, AL to advance equal civil rights for African Americans. The poignancy of this grand action over those five days guided a career advocating for nondiscrimination, developing urban neighborhoods and protecting veterans like himself from disfranchisement.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have been given the opportunity share with my colleagues the virtues of African American Heritage Month and time to celebrate the contributions of African Americans in New York's 13th Congressional District.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN JENKINS

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 13, 2017

Ms. JENKINS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I was absent from Roll Call votes 86 and 87 on the evening of February 13, 2017. I would have voted in favor of H.R. 244 which encourages the hiring and contributes to the well-being of our veterans, as well as provide community and charitable services supporting the veteran community. Lastly, I would have voted in favor of H.R. 974 which would boost veteran employment as the VA would be directed to give preference to organizations that employ a higher percentage of full-time employees when awarding contracts. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 86 and YEA on Roll Call No. 87.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Tuesday, February 14, 2017 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

FEBRUARY 15

10 a.m.

Committee on Armed Services

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

To receive a closed briefing on Anti-Access Area Denial challenges in Europe.

SVC–217

Committee on Environment and Public Works

To hold an oversight hearing to examine modernization of the Endangered Species Act.

SD–406

Committee on Foreign Relations

To hold hearings to examine ending modern slavery, focusing on building on success.

SD–419

10:30 a.m.
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
To hold hearings to examine mental health care, focusing on examining treatments and services.
SD–138

2:30 p.m.
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security
To hold hearings to examine stakeholder perspectives on our multimodal transportation system.
SR–253

Special Committee on Aging
To hold hearings to examine stopping senior scams, focusing on developments in financial fraud affecting seniors.
SD–562

2:45 p.m.
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
To hold hearings to examine government operations susceptible to waste, fraud, and mismanagement.
SD–342

FEBRUARY 16

9:30 a.m.
Committee on Armed Services
To hold hearings to examine reshaping the United States military.
SD–G50

10 a.m.
Committee on Finance
To hold hearings to examine the nomination of Seema Verma, of Indiana, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services.
SD–215

Committee on Foreign Relations
To hold hearings to examine the nomination of David Friedman, of New York, to be Ambassador to Israel, Department of State.
SD–419

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
To hold hearings to examine the nomination of Andrew F. Puzder, of Tennessee, to be Secretary of Labor.
SD–430

Committee on Rules and Administration
Organizational business meeting to consider committee rules, an original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee during the 115th Congress, and the omnibus budget resolution for Senate Committees.
SR–301

10:30 a.m.
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security
To hold hearings to examine stakeholder perspectives on improving the Transportation Security Administration for the security of the traveling public.
SR–253

2 p.m.
Select Committee on Intelligence
To hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters.
SH–219

2:45 p.m.
Committee on Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues
To hold hearings to examine democracy and human rights, focusing on the case for United States leadership.
SD–419

FEBRUARY 28

2 p.m.
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of the Disabled American Veterans.
SD–G50

MARCH 1

10 a.m.
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of The American Legion.
SD–G50

2 p.m.
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
SD–G50

MARCH 8

10 a.m.
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
To hold an oversight hearing to examine the Federal Communications Commission.
SH–216

MARCH 9

10 a.m.
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of multiple veterans service organizations.
SD–G50

MARCH 22

10 a.m.
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of multiple veterans service organizations.
SD–G50

Daily Digest

HIGHLIGHTS

Senate confirmed the nomination of Steven T. Mnuchin, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

Senate confirmed the nomination of David J. Shulkin, of Pennsylvania, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S1095–S1133

Measures Introduced: Sixteen bills and one resolution were introduced, as follows: S. 351–366, and S. Res. 60. **Pages S1129–30**

Mulvaney Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Mick Mulvaney, of South Carolina, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget. **Page S1123**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur on Wednesday, February 15, 2017. **Page S1123**

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session. **Page S1123**

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination. **Page S1123**

Pruitt Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Scott Pruitt, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. **Page S1123**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Mick Mulvaney, of South Carolina, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget. **Page S1123**

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session. **Page S1123**

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination. **Page S1123**

Ross Nomination–Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce. **Page S1123**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Scott Pruitt, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. **Page S1123**

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session. **Page S1123**

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination. **Page S1123**

Zinke Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior. **Page S1123**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce. **Page S1123**

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session. **Page S1123**

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination. **Page S1123**

Carson Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. **Page S1124**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior. **Page S1124**

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session. **Page S1124**

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination. **Page S1124**

Perry Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy. **Page S1124**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. **Page S1124**

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session. **Page S1124**

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination. **Page S1124**

McMahon Nomination—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that at approximately 10 a.m., on Tuesday, February 14, 2017, Senate begin consideration of the nomination of Linda E. McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration, under the previous order.

Nominations Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nominations:

By 53 yeas to 47 nays (Vote No. EX. 63), Steven T. Mnuchin, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury. **Pages S1121, S1133**

By a unanimous vote of 100 yeas (Vote No. EX. 64), David J. Shulkin, of Pennsylvania, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs. **Pages S1122–23, S1133**

Messages from the House: **Page S1129**

Additional Cosponsors: **Page S1130**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S1130–31**

Additional Statements: **Pages S1128–29**

Record Votes: Two record votes were taken today. (Total—64) **Pages S1121–23**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 12 noon and adjourned at 8:20 p.m., until 10 a.m. on Tuesday, February 14, 2017. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S1131.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Armed Services: Committee announced the following subcommittee assignments:

Subcommittee on Airland: Senators Cotton (Chair), Inhofe, Wicker, Tillis, Sullivan, Cruz, Sasse, King, McCaskill, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Warren, and Peters.

Subcommittee on Cybersecurity: Senators Rounds (Chair), Fischer, Perdue, Graham, Sasse, Nelson, McCaskill, Gillibrand, and Blumenthal.

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities: Senators Ernst (Chair), Wicker, Fischer, Perdue, Cruz, Heinrich, Nelson, Shaheen, and Peters.

Subcommittee on Personnel: Senators Tillis (Chair), Ernst, Graham, Sasse, Gillibrand, McCaskill, and Warren.

Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support: Senators Inhofe (Chair), Rounds, Ernst, Perdue, Strange, Kaine, Shaheen, and Hirono.

Subcommittee on SeaPower: Senators Wicker (Chair), Cotton, Rounds, Tillis, Sullivan, Strange, Hirono, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Kaine, and King.

Subcommittee on Strategic Forces: Senators Fischer (Chair), Inhofe, Cotton, Sullivan, Cruz, Graham, Donnelly, Heinrich, Warren, and Peters.

Senators McCain and Reed are ex officio members of each subcommittee.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 28 public bills, H.R. 1011–1028; and 9 resolutions, H.J. Res. 71; and H. Res. 1141–115, 117–122 were introduced. **Pages H1124–25**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H1126–27**

Report Filed: A report was filed today as follows:

H. Res. 116, providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by States for non-governmental employees, and providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 67) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees (H. Rept. 115–11). **Page H1124**

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Meadows to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H1101**

Recess: The House recessed at 12:10 p.m. and reconvened at 2 p.m. **Page H1103**

Member Resignation: Read a letter from Representative Price, wherein he resigned as Representative for the Sixth Congressional District of Georgia, effective at 9 a.m. on February 10, 2017. **Pages H1103–04**

Whole Number of the House: The Chair announced to the House that, in light of the resignation of the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Price, the whole number of the House is 432. **Page H1104**

Recess: The House recessed at 2:06 p.m. and reconvened at 4:29 p.m. **Page H1104**

Suspensions: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

Designating the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, as the "Abie Abraham VA Clinic": H.R. 609, to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, as the "Abie Abraham VA Clinic"; **Pages H1104–06**

Working to Integrate Networks Guaranteeing Member Access Now Act: H.R. 512, amended, to title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees; **Pages H1106–08**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: "To amend title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees, and for other purposes.". **Page H1108**

Honoring Investments in Recruiting and Employing American Military Veterans Act of 2017: H.R. 244, amended, to encourage effective, voluntary private sector investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual presidential awards to private sector employers recognizing such efforts, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 409 yeas to 1 nay, Roll No. 86; and **Pages H1109–11**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: "To encourage effective, voluntary investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual Federal awards to employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes.". **Page H1111**

Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act: H.R. 974, to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, to give a preference to offerors that employ veterans, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 407 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 87. **Pages H1111–12**

United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker's appointment of the following individuals on the part of the House to the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission for a term expiring on December 31, 2018: Mr. Larry Wortzel, of Williamsburg, Virginia and Mr. Robert Glenn Hubbard of New York, New York. **Page H1112**

Creating Options for Veterans' Expedited Recovery Commission—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker's appointment of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Creating Options for Veterans' Expedited Recovery Commission: Captain John M. Rose, U.S. Navy, Retired, of Kenosha, Wisconsin, and Lieutenant Colonel Jamil S. Khan, U.S. Marine Corps, Retired, of Janesville, Wisconsin. **Page H1112**

National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker's appointment of the following individual on the part of the House to the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service: Mr. Thomas Kilgannon of Centreville, Virginia. **Pages H1112–13**

Medal of Valor Review Board—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker's appointment of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Medal of Valor Review Board for a term of four years: Mr. Brandon Clabes of Choctaw, Oklahoma and Mr. Brian Murphy of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. **Page H1113**

American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker's appointment of the following individual on the part of the House to the Board of Trustees of

the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress for a term of six years: Ms. Patricia A. Atkinson of Carson City, Nevada. **Page H1113**

Recess: The House recessed at 5:23 p.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m. **Page H1113**

Senate Message: Message received from the Senate by the Clerk and subsequently presented to the House today appears on page H1104.

Quorum Calls—Votes: Two yea-and-nay votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H1113–14, and H1114–15. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 12 noon and adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Committee Meetings

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURE

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: Full Committee held a markup on H.J. Res. 27, disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the Death with Dignity Act of 2016. H.J. Res. 27 was ordered reported, without amendment.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION DISAPPROVING THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATING TO SAVINGS ARRANGEMENTS ESTABLISHED BY STATES FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES; HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION DISAPPROVING THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATING TO SAVINGS ARRANGEMENTS ESTABLISHED BY QUALIFIED STATE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES

Committee on Rules: Full Committee held a hearing on H.J. Res. 66, disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by States for non-governmental employees; and H.J. Res. 67, disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees. The committee granted, by record vote of 8–3, closed rules for H.J. Res. 66 and H.J. Res. 67. The rule provides one hour of debate on each joint resolution equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of each joint resolution. The rule provides that each joint resolution shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in each joint resolution. The rule provides each joint resolution one motion to recommit. Testimony was heard from Representatives Walberg and Francis Rooney of Florida.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2017

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Armed Services: to receive a closed briefing on long-term defense challenges and strategies, 9:30 a.m., SVC–217.

Subcommittee on Personnel, to hold hearings to examine Department of Defense single servicemember and military family readiness programs, 2:30 p.m., SR–222.

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: to hold hearings to examine the Semiannual Monetary Policy Report to the Congress, 10 a.m., SD–106.

Select Committee on Intelligence: to hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters, 2:30 p.m., SH–219.

House

Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee, hearing entitled "The Evolving Threat of Terrorism and Effective Counterterrorism Strategies", 10 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, hearing entitled "Restoring Balance and Fairness to the National Labor Relations Board", 10 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection, hearing entitled "Self-Driving Cars: Road to Deployment", 10:15 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, hearing entitled "Defeating Terrorism in Syria: A New Way Forward", 2 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, hearing entitled "The Future of FEMA: Stakeholder Recommendations for the Next Administrator", 10 a.m., HVC–210.

Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet, hearing entitled "Judicial Transparency and Ethics", 10 a.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Full Committee, markup on H.R. 195, the "Federal Register Printing Savings Act of 2017"; H.R. 624, the "Social Security Fraud Prevention Act of 2017"; the "Searching for and Cutting Regulations that are Unnecessarily Burdensome Act of 2017"; the "Regulatory Integrity Act of 2017"; the "OIRA Insight, Reform, and Accountability

Act''; the ''DC Courts and Public Defender Service Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments Act''; and H.R. 653, the ''Federal Intern Protection Act of 2017'', 10 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Committee on Rules, Full Committee, hearing on H.J. Res. 69, providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Department of the Interior relating to ''Non-Subsistence Take of Wildlife, and Public Participation and Closure Procedures, on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska''; and H.J. Res. 43, providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients, 3 p.m., H–313 Capitol.

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Subcommittee on Research and Technology, hearing entitled ''Strengthening U.S. Cybersecurity Capabilities'', 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, hearing entitled ''Exploring National Work Queue's Impact on Claims Processing'', 10:30 a.m., 334 Cannon.

Committee on Ways and Means, Full Committee, markup on the committee's Authorization and Oversight Plan for the 115th Congress; Views and Estimates on the Fiscal Year 2018 Federal Budget; and ratification of subcommittee assignments and appointments to the Joint Committee on Taxation, 10:15 a.m., 1100 Longworth.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

10 a.m., Tuesday, February 14

Senate Chamber

Program for Tuesday: Senate will begin consideration of the nomination of Linda E. McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and vote on confirmation of the nomination at approximately 11 a.m.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10 a.m., Tuesday, February 14

House Chamber

Program for Tuesday: Consideration of H.R. 428—Red River Gradient Boundary Survey Act (Subject to a Rule).

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