



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2017

No. 36

Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of wonder, beyond all majesty, You are worthy of our praise. Today, on this Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, give us the wisdom to reflect on our mortality and to examine our lives. Use our Senators as ambassadors of peace, reconciliation, and justice. May they work to remove malice, envy, revenge, deception, and bitterness.

Lord, inspire them with Your presence until their faith in You is visible and contagious. May they bear witness to Your love even when their motivations are misunderstood by their detractors. Give them the gifts of integrity and authenticity in their relationships with You and with one another.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I think we were all really pleased last night to hear the President's unifying message. It was refreshing for everyone

after such a difficult election season. It was great to see even my friend the Democratic leader occasionally applauding the President last night. It is a reminder that we are all in this together.

Yesterday, I laid out my hopes for his address to Congress. I said that the middle class is ready for a new direction after 8 years of disappointments. I said that we all knew what needed to get done, too—issues like simplifying taxes to create more jobs, reforming regulations to get the economy moving, and repealing and replacing ObamaCare to bring relief to the middle class. It was great to hear the President touch on each of those issues last night.

It was also great to hear him talk about his outstanding nominee to the Supreme Court, Judge Neil Gorsuch—a judge who has earned widespread acclaim and who will be a worthy successor to Justice Scalia on the High Court.

Last night President Trump talked about a new spirit of optimism in our country. He talked about repositioning us for success, both at home and in a dangerous world. He talked about growing opportunity, better jobs, and a thriving middle class. Then, he actually put forward policies that could get us there. What a change from the last 8 years.

He also outlined some of the actions he has already taken to move these priorities forward. For instance, he took action yesterday to send the so-called waters of the United States rule back to the drawing board. He demonstrated that there are realistic ways to protect our Nation's waterways without excessive and duplicative regulations that infringe on the property rights of individuals.

Let me again commend him for protecting the middle class from yet another regulation based more on ideology than fact. It is just the type of thing Americans are so tired of—left-

wing regulations spun as one thing, but that really do another; left-leaning laws that purport to help the middle class, but that actually hurt middle-class families.

A great example of that is ObamaCare. Americans were promised that costs would go down, but, of course, they went up. Americans were promised more choice, but they got less. Americans were promised that they could keep their plans, but that was a broken promise as well.

No wonder Americans were so tired of what they have seen over the last 8 years. They are ready for something entirely new. They are ready to start believing in the future again. The President made clear last night that he is ready to work with Congress on policies that can actually move us forward. He will find many partners in Congress excited to get those things accomplished.

We share his commitment on other issues he outlined too. We agree that our children deserve better than failing schools. We agree that our veterans deserve better than failing bureaucracy. We agree that our brothers and mothers and friends and neighbors deserve better than the scourge of heroin and prescription opioid abuse.

In an era of divided government, Congress took what action we could on those issues. It was often significant action, and we are all proud of it. But we now have a chance to achieve even more. So, of course, we are excited about the opportunity to improve the lives of the men and women who sent us here. That is why we all signed up for this job in the first place.

I am not just talking about Republicans. I know our Democratic friends have different ideas than us on many of these things. I know the far left is pressuring them to burn the place down because it can't accept the results of last year's election. But everyone knows that won't get us anywhere at all.

Let's remember that we have a historic opportunity before us. We can

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S1509

keep refighting the last election over and over and over, or we can heed the President's message of unity last night. We can come together to accomplish big things. We can pull down the barriers of the past. We can uphold, in the words of the Democratic leader himself, our "moral obligation" to "avoid gridlock and get the country to work again."

Now, I know he said that just before the election. I know he hoped the election would turn out differently. But we each have a duty to accept the results. We each have a duty to bring the country together and to move it forward. That is now the challenge before our Democratic friends.

I ask them to meet the moment—to meet the moment. I hope they will because the American people are counting on us all. They are ready for a new start. We are determined to work hard on their behalf. As the President himself said last night, so is he.

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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I get into the substance of my remarks, I was listening to our Republican leader talking about compromise—not that he ever engaged in very much of it when he was leader last year—but compromise requires something to compromise over. We have nothing from the administration, nothing on infrastructure, nothing on trade, nothing even on ACA.

You want to sit down and talk? Let's see what your plans are. See if you can get your own act together before you are pointing the finger at Democrats.

The President's speech—let me say this: This President's speech was detached from this President's reality. The President, in this speech and in so many others, talks like a populist. He talks to the working people of America and promises them things. When he governs, it is nothing like that at all. He is favoring the very powerful special interests, making their lives easier, and putting more burdens on the backs of the middle class and people trying to get to the middle class.

A metaphor for this was his speech at the inauguration. He gave a speech—also aimed at the working people—and within an hour after that, he signed an Executive order that helped the banks

and added about \$500 to the mortgage of every new homeowner.

You can't just talk the talk, Mr. President. You have to walk the walk. On issue after issue, we haven't seen anything—or negative things for the working class.

We heard about infrastructure. A month ago, the Democrats put together an infrastructure plan of \$1 trillion. It was a strong plan. It has a lot of support throughout the country.

Where is the President's infrastructure plan? We haven't heard a peep about it. Some of his White House folks leaked that we will not get to infrastructure until next year. Mentioning it in a speech—infrastructure—is not going to employ a single new worker.

What about trade? The President talked about trade, putting America first. My views tend to be closer to President Trump's than they were to President Bush's or President Obama's on trade. Again, what we hear in the speech and what the President actually does are contradictory.

Throughout his campaign, the President took an issue near and dear to my heart and to the heart of Senator GRAHAM of South Carolina—China manipulating its currency. He had said over and over again in the campaign: On the first day I am President, I will sign an Executive order that labels China a currency manipulator.

They are. We know they manipulate their currency, and it has cost America hundreds of thousands, if not millions of good-paying jobs and caused a load of wealth to flow from our country to theirs.

This one didn't require congressional approval. This one didn't require a single Democrat to join in. All the President had to do was sign the order. We are now 40 days into this administration. Not only has he still not signed the order, but he is saying he may back off.

Last night, the President talked about research, wiping out rare diseases. Yet with the budget they proposed, given that they want to slash domestic discretionary spending by tens of billions of dollars and exempt veterans and Homeland Security, there is no alternative to the fact that the President in his budget, at the same time he is talking about medical research, is going to slash it.

Education. He talked about the great issue of education. The same thing: His budget is going to slash education to smithereens, hurting our students, hurting our teachers, hurting our schools.

Perhaps the most hypocritical of all was draining the swamp. That was one of the President's main themes when he was President-elect: Drain the swamp. Look who is in his Cabinet. His Secretary of Treasury, his Secretary of Commerce, and his NEC adviser are from Wall Street.

Is this the same man who said that we are going to go after Wall Street if we get elected? Wall Street is running

the economic show. The Cabinet is filled with bankers. The Cabinet is filled with billionaires, not people who feel for the average American. In fact, if you add up the net wealth of his Cabinet, it has more wealth than one-third of the American people total—close to 100 million people. That is cleaning the swamp? Give me a break.

The problem with the President's speech is very simple: His actions don't match his words. His words in the campaign are not matched by his actions. His words in his inaugural speech are not matched by his actions, nor are his words in his speech last night.

It was so funny that he spoke to a bunch of cosmopolitan news anchors, and he mentioned that maybe he will change his views on immigration. The media got into a buzz about that. Then, the speech he gave was one of the most virulently anti-immigrant speeches that we have heard any President ever give. He is saying one thing, doing another.

It is not the hypocrisy that bugs us, although it is there. It is the fact that he is not helping middle-class America. It is the fact that he is not making it easier for more people to travel and get into the middle class because he seems to have governed from the hard, hard right. The hard right is very far away from where the average American is.

Mr. Mulvaney's idea of a budget—maybe 10 percent of America, mostly ideologues, would support it. It is even far away from where the average Republican is. Yesterday, when the President proposed his budget, we had one of my colleagues on the Republican side saying it is dead on arrival. We had the majority leader saying that you can't cut the State Department foreign aid in half. He is far over, and that is hurting him and hurting us, hurting the American people.

The first 40 days have been a pretty rough 40 days for President Trump. It hasn't worked out very well. Why? It is not because he hasn't given a few good speeches. It is because he is governing from the hard right. He is governing far away from what the American people want. He is governing way off to the extreme.

A speech isn't going to change that. A speech isn't going to create one job or one infrastructure plan or one trade law that makes our trade laws, which need to be changed, fairer. No, no, it takes action. Unfortunately, when the President takes action, it is quite the opposite of what he says in the speech on the issues that affect the middle-class and working-class people.

If President Trump does not change how he governs—how he governs, not what speeches he gives—in the near future, then these 40 days, which have been of tumult, of contradiction, of turning one's back on the working class, will be 6 months and then will be a year and then will be 2 years.

The problem with the Presidency does not lie in the speeches the President gives, even though I might object

to a lot of the things he puts in them. It lies in how he governs, and he is not governing well. He is not governing down the middle. He is not governing in a way that lends itself to compromise. We Democrats will continue to hold the President accountable. That is our job. That is what the Constitution says we should do, and we will continue until we see the President change his course in governing. No speech is going to change that or affect that.

NOMINATION OF RYAN ZINKE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, one other issue is our nominee today, Mr. ZINKE. I want to spend a minute on him. He is the nominee for Secretary of Interior. One of the most important issues handled by the Interior Department is the stewardship of our national parks. These are some of the great national resources of our country.

When my children were younger, my wife and I would take them to national parks, and we would go hiking. We loved it. We so looked forward to going out West. I remember the reward at the end of a big hike was a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I probably wanted it even more than my kids did. I loved peanut butter and jelly.

From Niagara Falls to the Erie Canalway, to places like Seneca Falls, Stonewall, and Ellis Island, my dear State of New York is home to some of our country's most famous national parks and monuments. They are places I have visited and treasured my whole life. I have been concerned in recent years about the reluctance on the other side of the aisle to properly care for these great national beauties, these great national resources. Currently, there is a \$12 billion maintenance backlog for our national parks. Our Republican majority has not seen fit to address them.

Now, adding insult to injury, the new administration's hiring freeze across Federal agencies has already affected parks like the Women's Rights National Historic Park in Seneca Falls, which I have visited many times. It has had to cancel tours due to insufficient funding.

Most troubling, our Republican colleagues want to make it easier to sell off or give away public lands and expand the footprint of the oil and gas industries on public lands—as usual, helping those narrow special interests, hurting the average American. That seems to be the trademark of this administration, which our friends on the other side of the aisle are happily going along with.

That is the context in which I approach Congressman ZINKE's nomination. He claims to be a conservationist in the spirit of Teddy Roosevelt, a great New Yorker. He has demonstrated support for rules, however, that would make it easier to sell off public lands. It is the opposite of what Teddy Roosevelt wanted.

Congressman ZINKE claims to be a conservationist, but he said he would revisit actions taken by the last administration to use the Antiquities Act to permanently protect endangered places of cultural, tribal significance. He claims to be a Roosevelt conservationist but pledged his support for the Trump administration's energy agenda—once again, centered on efforts to expand drilling and mining on Federal lands and waters. A few big oil companies would be made happy, but America would lose a great resource that is an economic resource as well as a beautiful natural resource.

I would say to Mr. ZINKE: You can't be a Roosevelt conservationist when you vote to make it easier to sell off public lands. You can't be a Roosevelt conservationist when you support opening up public lands to increased extraction and drilling. You are not much of a conservationist when you downplay the authority of the legislation that allows the President to create national monuments.

In sum, Congressman ZINKE says he is a dyed-in-the-wool conservationist but doesn't have the record to back it up. That should concern every outdoor enthusiast, every lover of our great and grand national parks.

Unfortunately, because of his record, I will vote no on Mr. ZINKE's nomination. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of RYAN ZINKE, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

Under the previous order, there will now be 20 minutes of debate, equally divided.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, what a historic day for Montana. As a fellow Montanan, as a member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, I look forward

to working with RYAN ZINKE in his new role as the Secretary of the Interior.

Serving at the helm of the Department of the Interior, I know he will be a strong advocate for our public lands. He will uphold the Federal trust responsibility to Indian tribes, and he will help unleash American energy and will strengthen our water infrastructure.

I have heard all week some friends on the other side of the aisle speak against my good friend from Montana, RYAN ZINKE. I can tell you, I am perplexed. They are concerned that RYAN ZINKE may not uphold the important roles of the Department of Interior—and that is to protect the public interests in land and mineral management—that he will take shortcuts to extract minerals. Let me tell you what RYAN ZINKE will do, and I have known RYAN ZINKE for 38 years. He will finally restore balance to the use and management of Federal land.

Do you know that in Montana we have more recoverable coal than any State in the United States? Yet the Obama administration had planned to block our ability, Montana's ability, to develop these resources. A moratorium is not a responsible policy. It is reckless. It is misguided, leaving the States and the tribes to be reliant on mineral royalties, to lose out on these revenues, and lose out on the good-paying jobs that coal supports. RYAN ZINKE will take a fresh look at our coal programs and see how we can access these untapped resources in an environmentally responsible way.

Let me remind my colleagues that RYAN ZINKE was born and raised in Montana. It is a State where we like to say we get to work where we also like to play. He will restore that balance to the Department so Montanans can gain better access to our public lands.

He will also ensure our public lands work for those who live closest to them, and that means our States and our tribes. RYAN is a Montanan. He grew up in America's public lands. He grew up in the shadows of Glacier National Park. I grew up in the shadows of Yellowstone National Park. He knows we must strike this balance between conservation and responsible energy development, and he understands better than anybody I know that one-size-fits-all policies of Washington, DC, never work for real America.

I look forward to voting for my friend, my colleague, a Navy SEAL for 23 years, and our next Secretary of the Interior, RYAN ZINKE.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I will vote against confirming Representative RYAN ZINKE as Secretary of the Interior, and I would like to take this opportunity to explain why. To put the matter succinctly, Representative ZINKE—if he is confirmed—will be charged with implementing the Trump administration's "energy independence plan," which includes maximizing energy production on Federal lands, including the outer continental shelf,

OCS. I oppose oil and gas drilling off the coast of Maryland and the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay. There is too little to gain and too much to lose.

Last November, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, BOEM, wisely did not include any parcels in the Atlantic in the 2017 to 2022 plan to lease offshore land the Federal Government controls. In December, then-President Obama used his authority under section 12(a) of the 1953 Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act of 1953 to withdraw unleased OCS lands from future lease sales, too.

This makes sense. According to BOEM, the entire Atlantic OCS, from Maine all the way to Florida, has 1.15 billion barrels of “undiscovered technically recoverable” oil and 12.80 trillion cubic feet of “undiscovered technically recoverable” natural gas. These sums sound large, but let’s put them in context. The Gulf of Mexico OCS has more than 40 times as much oil and 10 times as much natural gas.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Geological Survey, USGS, recently determined that the midland basin of the Wolfcamp Shale area in the Permian Basin has 20 billion barrels of oil and the natural gas equivalent of another 1.6 billion barrels. The oilfield stretches over 118 miles from Lubbock to Midland. It is the largest “continuous oil” discovery in the United States, according to the USGS, three times larger than the assessment of the oil in the mammoth Bakken formation in North Dakota.

It doesn’t make any sense to jeopardize the marine life and the fishing and tourism industries along the Maryland coast and Chesapeake Bay when there is so much more oil and gas in other parts of the country.

Deepwater Horizon was a state-of-the-art rig, but it failed, causing the largest oil spill in U.S. waters. Eleven crewman were killed. An oil spill entering the Chesapeake Bay would be a disaster.

An even bigger threat to Maryland and other coastal States is climate change and rising sea levels. We need to accelerate our transition from fossil fuels, not our dependence on them. Two years ago, Oceana concluded that modest levels of offshore wind development over the next 20 years could produce about twice the amount of energy along coastal Atlantic States as offshore drillings and create more than 1.5 times the number of jobs.

There is no provision in the 1953 law that permits President Trump to reverse the Obama administration’s section 12(a) OCS withdrawals, but he is determined to try. When Representative ZINKE was first asked about lifting the moratoria, he responded, “If I am confirmed, I will work to implement President-elect Trump’s policy.”

That is the problem right there.

I appreciate Representative ZINKE’s honorable service to our country, both in uniform as a Navy SEAL and as an elected official in the Montana State Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. He has called himself a

“Theodore Roosevelt conservationist” and supports a permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

It is possible Representative ZINKE will try to resist the Republicans’ zeal for transferring ownership of precious public lands from the Federal Government, although he supported a House rule change at the beginning of this Congress to make it easier. Representative ZINKE is an avid sportsman who appears to appreciate the unique role the Federal Government has in managing these resources for multiple uses—not just energy production—and preserving them for future generations.

While these are all positive factors, I am troubled that Representative ZINKE has received a 3 percent rating from the League of Conservation Voters. He has vacillated on the issue of climate change: in 2010, he was one of nearly 1,200 State legislators who signed a letter to President Obama and Congress calling for “comprehensive clean energy jobs and climate change legislation.” Since then, however, he has repeatedly expressed doubt about anthropogenic climate change. In an October 2014 debate, Representative ZINKE stated: “it’s not a hoax, but it’s not proven science either.” During his confirmation hearing, Representative ZINKE said that humans “influence” climate change, but did not acknowledge the scientific consensus that human activity is a dominant cause of climate change. He also supports using the Congressional Review Act to overturn rules agencies have spent months and even years to develop.

For all of these reasons, but particularly out of concern for the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland’s beautiful shoreline and coastal communities, I will vote against confirming Representative ZINKE as Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I oppose the nomination of Representative RYAN ZINKE to be Secretary of the Interior.

The Department of the Interior is charged with judicious management of our Nation’s public lands. It is responsible for balancing conservation, recreation, and development to ensure that Americans get the best use and best value from our collective natural resources.

President Teddy Roosevelt, one of the greatest stewards of our public lands, once said: “I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.”

The Obama administration took important steps to protect our resources and provide best value to taxpayers. Taking Atlantic Ocean drilling off the table protects our coastal areas and the vital tourism industry up and down the Eastern Shore, including Ocean City. Modernizing the coal leasing process ensures that taxpayers get

proper payment for use of common resources. Preventing methane leakage on public lands stops waste of resources and pollution from a potent greenhouse gas.

Representative ZINKE’s history in Congress casts doubt on his commitment to these important initiatives. He has a mere 3 percent lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters and an F grade from the National Parks Action Fund. I appreciate that he has spoken in opposition to the sale or transfer of public lands to States, but I am deeply concerned about his vote in January in the House of Representatives for a rule change that would make sales and transfers much easier.

As the Sierra Club has said: “Rather than dedicating himself to the preservation of our public lands, Representative Zinke has repeatedly sided with those who would dismantle, degrade, or dispose of them. Mining, drilling, logging, and dirty energy interests have been placed time and again before the public interest”

In an op-ed opposing a Department of the Interior rule to update coal leasing to get better value for American taxpayers, Representative ZINKE said that the Obama administration was “fighting a more aggressive war against American coal than they are against ISIS.” This kind of hyperbole does not bode well for Representative ZINKE’s ability to represent American taxpayers or promote conservation as Secretary of the Interior, should he be confirmed.

In his nomination hearing, Representative ZINKE pledged to support Federal public lands, permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and address the National Parks maintenance backlog. These are important promises from any nominee for the Department of the Interior. Unfortunately, Representative ZINKE’s voting record does not give me confidence in his commitment to fulfill them, and therefore I must vote against his nomination today. I am proud to be a member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, and if he is confirmed, I look forward to working with him to protect our public lands and ensure that American taxpayers get a fair deal for our common resources.

Mr. DAINES. I yield back the time on both sides.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Zinke nomination?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: The Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

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

The result was announced—yeas 68, nays 31, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 75 Ex.]

YEAS—68

Alexander	Flake	Nelson
Barrasso	Gardner	Paul
Bennet	Graham	Perdue
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hatch	Risch
Brown	Heinrich	Roberts
Burr	Heitkamp	Rounds
Capito	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hoeven	Sasse
Cochran	Inhofe	Scott
Collins	Johnson	Shelby
Coons	Kaine	Strange
Corker	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cornyn	King	Tester
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Thune
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	Manchin	Toomey
Cruz	McCain	Udall
Daines	McCaskill	Warner
Donnelly	McConnell	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Wyden
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Murphy	

NAYS—31

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Reed
Blumenthal	Harris	Sanders
Booker	Hassan	Schatz
Cantwell	Hirono	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	
Franken	Peters	

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

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. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table.

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 10 minutes of debate equally divided.

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, it is an honor for me to recommend again Dr. Carson as the Secretary of HUD. Dr. Carson brings a fresh set of eyes to every issue and every problem he faces, and he has an incredible record of success and of achieving outstanding results. We look forward to his bringing that same kind of analytical mind and management to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I don't think there is a better pick that could have been made. I urge my colleagues to support this motion to invoke cloture.

I yield the remainder of our time to the Senator from Montana.

CONFIRMATION OF RYAN ZINKE

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, back in 1979, there was a junior from Bozeman

High School and another junior from Whitefish High School, both headed to Dillon, MT, as Boys State delegates. The keynote speaker that year was a newly elected U.S. Senator named Max Baucus. Who knew that 38 years later the kid from Bozeman would serve as a U.S. Senator and the kid from Whitefish would be our next Secretary of the Interior.

Congratulations to RYAN ZINKE, our new Secretary of the Interior, who was confirmed with very strong bipartisan support. He is the first Montanan to serve in a President's Cabinet since our statehood in 1889.

RYAN, it is truly an honor to be one of the very first to call you Secretary ZINKE. On behalf of the people of Montana and our country, well done, sir.

I yield back my time.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, it is my understanding that there is no one else who wants to speak on either side. So at this time, I yield back all time on both sides.

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

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the 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.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 62, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 76 Ex.]

YEAS—62

Alexander	Cochran	Ernst
Barrasso	Collins	Fischer
Blunt	Corker	Flake
Boozman	Cornyn	Gardner
Brown	Cotton	Graham
Burr	Crapo	Grassley
Capito	Cruz	Hatch
Cardin	Daines	Heitkamp
Carper	Donnelly	Heller
Cassidy	Enzi	Hoeven

Inhofe	Murkowski
Johnson	Paul
Kennedy	Perdue
King	Portman
Lankford	Reed
Lee	Risch
Manchin	Roberts
McCain	Rounds
McConnell	Rubio
Menendez	Sasse
Moran	Scott

Shelby
Strange
Sullivan
Tester
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Warner
Wicker
Young

NAYS—37

Baldwin	Harris	Peters
Bennet	Hassan	Sanders
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schatz
Booker	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Casey	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Coons	Leahy	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	McCaskill	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Franken	Murray	
Gillibrand	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 62, the nays are 37.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I applaud my colleagues for voting in favor of cloture on the nomination of Dr. Benjamin Carson to be the next Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

On January 12, the Senate Banking Committee held its confirmation hearing, and Dr. Carson responded to questions and concerns thoroughly and thoughtfully. Dr. Benjamin Carson was unanimously reported out of the Senate Banking Committee on January 24.

To many Americans, Dr. Carson needs no introduction; however, his impressive resume bears repeating. Dr. Carson was raised by a single mother in an impoverished part of the city of Detroit. He attended Yale University and the University of Michigan Medical School and later became a highly accomplished and respected neurosurgeon. Dr. Carson was named director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1984, at the age of 33—the youngest such director in the Nation.

He gained national fame in the 1980s by becoming the first doctor to lead an operation that separated twins who were conjoined at the head—one of many high-profile operations led by Dr. Carson. He also ran for President this past election and spent months traveling the country, listening to the American people about the problems and the issues they face with respect to housing.

During his testimony before our committee, Dr. Carson highlighted his commitment to carrying forth the

mandate of HUD and to learning more from the people who are directly affected by HUD policies. He has also received bipartisan letters of support from four former HUD Secretaries—Henry Cisneros, former Senator Mel Martinez, Alphonso Jackson, and Steven Preston—who served under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

He has said he plans to continue his conversation with the American people and do a listening tour if confirmed. This is an encouraging sign that Dr. Carson wants to hear from stakeholders and, more importantly, from the American people.

There are many HUD issues to be addressed. Once confirmed, we can begin working on several important issues under HUD's jurisdiction. Streamlining requirements for local public housing authorities, revising certain public housing programs, and strengthening financing for small and rural affordable housing developments are areas that should be addressed. Tackling homelessness, especially among our Nation's veterans, is another issue that is important to me and should be addressed.

It is critical that HUD allow local communities to craft solutions that work best for their needs. There has been bipartisan interest in several of these reforms over the years, and I am confident we can make progress once Dr. Carson is confirmed.

Dr. Carson has consistently demonstrated a commitment to improving the lives of his fellow Americans, and his intellect, leadership, and life experiences are unique, valuable assets for leading an agency like HUD.

I urge my colleagues to vote in support of Dr. Carson's nomination so we can continue the great work of improving America's housing system.

Senator CORNYN very graciously gave me his time, which he was lined up to take first. He has asked if he could take his time at this point.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator CORNYN be next allowed to speak.

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

The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the Chamber is too slowly moving forward on the President's Cabinet nominees. So far, this Chamber has confirmed 16 Cabinet nominees since January 20. I would note that the most recent nominee, Secretary ZINKE, was confirmed by a vote of 68 to 31 and that Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce, was confirmed by a vote of 72 to 27.

Why have we burned 5 weeks of this new administration and denied the President the staff and the help and the team he needs in order to lead the country? It makes no sense whatsoever.

I, once again, implore our friends on the other side of the aisle to stop the foot-dragging and the delay for delay's sake and to let the President have his Cabinet.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

Mr. President, I want to comment briefly on last night's address by President Trump to a joint session of Congress.

I think it is safe to say that the President had an extraordinary night last night. This is not just a view from a partisan, but, I think, on a bipartisan basis, people were enormously impressed by the vision the President laid out.

I have had some private conversations with colleagues on the floor, who have said to me, in essence, that this is an unusual and unconventional President but one who is clearly interested in making progress for the American people. He laid out a broad, welcoming vision of some of the things he wants to accomplish, but he did so in a way that welcomed Democrats and bipartisan support to help make that progress for the American people. I think they were somewhat surprised but gratified to hear the President make those sorts of remarks, and I congratulate President Trump for doing it.

Basically, he articulated an optimistic vision and a new direction for the country. This election, like the election back in 2008, was a change election. We have those every now and then. After one party is in power for 8 years, frequently, people say: We would like to try something different. We would like a change election.

We had a true change election in 2016. The American people made clear that they wanted to get back in the game when they elected President Trump in November—by that I mean in terms of our American prosperity, our American strength, our American leadership in the world. President Trump talked about a new national pride and of cultivating a surge of economic security across the country. I think, at bottom, his speech was a message about confidence—confidence in the American people, confidence in our economic system, which has lifted more people out of poverty than has any other system the world has ever known, confidence that, unfortunately, had been lost during the Obama years that focused so much on self-doubt and America's role in the world—retreating from that role—unfortunately, leaving a void that has been filled, all too eagerly, by tyrants, dictators, and thugs, like Vladimir Putin, for example.

It is also true that this President was elected because, for too long, many people in this country had felt left out and felt like they just were not a part of the conversation we were having here about the great issues of the day. Many felt sidelined, even alienated, by irrelevant policy debates that had nothing to say to their quality of life in America. Many believed they truly didn't have a seat at the table.

President Trump's message throughout the campaign and now—about 5 weeks into his new administration—reflects, I think, the frustration and even

the angst many Americans had felt and the gratification now, as they feel like they have somebody who believes in what they believe and will not leave them on the sidelines.

I believe what President Trump represents is an antidote to what many people saw as wrong with Washington, DC. While it is true that President Trump has never held public office before—by all accounts, he is an unconventional political leader—last night, we heard he will work with all of us to actually do something about the concerns of hard-working American families. He will usher in a new era of renewed confidence in what the American people can accomplish together as we enter into, as he put it, a time of national rebuilding.

This is about restoring faith in the American dream. My parents were part of the "greatest generation"—of those who fought in World War II, who preserved America and a great future for their children and grandchildren. It sickens me, when I read public opinion polling, that too many people today say they do not see that better life—more secure, more prosperous—for their children and grandchildren in the future. What they are saying, in essence, is that we are losing faith in the American dream. I think what President Trump talked about last night is a renewed faith and a renewed commitment to the American dream, which means some sacrifice on the part of the present generation, not just in spending money we do not have and in racking up debt we will never repay and that our children and grandchildren will be saddled with.

Just as one example, President Trump talked about taking on this tepid economic recovery he inherited and turning it into a jobs machine that grows our economy for everyone. This is an optimistic message, as many have noted—it is Reaganesque, really, in its tone—in its talking about building the American economy and reestablishing America's leadership role in the world. I know it is just one indicator.

If you want to look at some objective measure of the American people's hopefulness and optimism about the future, all you need to do is to look at the stock market, as it has gone up 10 percent since President Trump was sworn in and closed at a record high for the 12th day in a row—a record that goes back to 1987. To me, that is saying that the markets and the American people are hopeful about what might be accomplished together under this administration.

One of the things we heard last night, as well, is a reflection of what Vice President PENCE has told us in private gatherings—I have heard him say it in public gatherings as well—which is that the administration is in the "promise-keeping business." Keeping your promises is important. How are you going to maintain the public's confidence when people say one thing when they are campaigning, and then,

once they are sworn into office, they forget about those promises and move on? I am grateful this administration believes in the importance of keeping promises.

We have already seen the President keep his promises to help rein in overreaching regulations; his commitment to reforming the Tax Code, which he talked about last night, so that the economy can grow again and we can all benefit; and his commitment to repealing and replacing the failed experiment of ObamaCare. All of these, he reiterated, he has begun to work on, and he has actually committed to seeing them through to completion. These just aren't talking points, these are promises he has already begun delivering on.

I am personally grateful—and I am sure the Presiding Officer is as well—that he has also reprioritized our national security. National security is just not one on a cafeteria plan that we can kind of walk into and say: I will take a little of this and a little of that. National security is the No. 1 priority for the Federal Government. No one else can do that. At a time when our country faces innumerable threats from all around the world, including terrorism here at home, I appreciate the fact that the President is committed to doing what it takes to restore our national security, to protect our borders, and to restore the rule of law.

I think it is just as simple as this: President is committed to getting back to the basics of governing. He is doing what he said he would do, and I find that reassuring, together with the outstanding Cabinet members he has selected to serve with him in his administration.

What America needs and what my constituents in Texas call, write, and ask me about all the time is a way forward that delivers security to our people, encourages prosperity for everyone, and instills confidence in the job creators and investors so we can enjoy a new era of prosperity for all of our people.

I am confident President Trump, in working closely with Congress, can deliver on these and many more promises he has made to the American people. It is obvious to me, from his comments last night, that he is welcoming and inviting our Democratic colleagues to stop the resistance—to stop the obstruction—and to actually come join us in helping to move the country forward. I find that refreshing and welcome, as I hope some of our colleagues will who still haven't quite gotten over the election on November 8 and the constituents they have who feel they are still in a protest mode. There is a time for competing in elections, and then there is a time for governing. That takes all of us, as adults who care deeply about our country, working together on a bipartisan basis to try to find common ground and move the American people's agenda forward.

I look forward to working with the President to make America a stronger,

safer, and more economically vibrant nation. That is something we all want and something we should all work together to achieve.

As I said, as we go forward, I hope our friends on the other side of the aisle look at the bigger picture. I have been here long enough to experience when people run for election—like many will do in 2018—and have no record of accomplishment to point to. I believe the Presiding Officer knows what I am talking about. Growing our economy and protecting our homeland should be bipartisan. It should be nonpartisan. And, as the President mentioned, now is the time to come together to unify as Americans to make our country stronger.

I hope all of our colleagues will join together, including our Democratic friends, to let us get to the work of legislating, to let us get off of this extended foot-dragging timetable on confirming the President's nominees for his Cabinet, especially when we are seeing votes like we saw on Mr. ZINKE and Mr. Ross—68 to 31, 72 to 27. There is no rationale for delaying those confirmations when our Democratic colleagues are voting to confirm them. We could have done this on January 20.

Mr. President, I thank my friend from Ohio for his courtesy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise in support of Dr. Carson for Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. However, I just can't resist, as I listened to my friend Senator CORNYN—and I do like and respect Senator CORNYN, and I do mean that. It is always said here, but I actually do. I am just amused by the term "obstructionism." This President was 100 yards down the hall speaking last night and still hasn't put any legislative proposals forward—nothing on immigration except Executive orders; nothing on infrastructure even though Democrats have followed the four corners, if you will, of his proposal, \$1 trillion over 10 years—put ink to paper and actually written a real plan that includes public transit, that includes highways and bridges and water and sewer and housing and airports and ports and all of the things we do in doing it right on infrastructure, on public works. So we are all still waiting.

The President has made a lot of speeches. Last night he was not as combative as usual. That was welcome. I think we all, as Senator CORNYN said, applauded that. But we are still looking for substance. We are looking for one bill. Repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act—what does that mean? He still hasn't given us anything specific. They have been voting on replacing and repealing the Affordable Care Act for more than a decade, but they still don't have a plan.

If we listen to the Governor from my home State, the State where the Presiding Officer grew up—they should lis-

ten to our Republican Governor, who admonishes colleagues here: Don't repeal the Affordable Care Act unless you have a way to take care of 700,000 Ohioans who have lost their insurance under Medicaid; not to mention 100,000 who will lose their insurance who are on their parents' health plan; not to mention 100,000 who are on the exchanges; not to mention 100,000 seniors who are saving \$1,100 on their prescription drugs a year; not to mention 1 million Ohio seniors who get free, no copay, no deductible osteoporosis and diabetes screenings and physicals and all the things the Affordable Care Act gives them. They offer no proposals to replace any of those services. They talk about State lines, and they talk about health savings accounts, and they talk about tort reform. That is like this many people compared to this many people. They know that. Yet I still hear this talk of obstructionism. Give us stuff. Give us legislative proposals.

The assistant majority leader started off by talking about I guess a slow-walk of nominees. Now, I am the ranking Democrat, and my friend Senator CRAPO is now the chairman of the committee. He was not chairman then, and he is not mostly responsible for this. But I am on the Banking Committee, and last year, with a Democratic President—I don't want to look back and do tit-for-tat. It is not about that. It is about moving the country forward. But last year—what was it—25 to 30 nominees came from the President. Some were very significant, including the Export-Import Bank. Some were Federal Reserve. Some of them were inspectors general, and most people don't quite know what they do. But all nominees, more than 25, more than two dozen nominees—1 of them was confirmed by the Senate last year, 1 of 28 or so in our committee, and he was confirmed in December, in the 24th month of the 2-year term. So don't lecture us about people slow-walking and obstructionism and all of that. There were more than 25 nominees, and 1 of them was confirmed. SEC, Securities and Exchange Commission, didn't move; Federal Reserve, didn't move; the public transit administrator, didn't move—one after another after another. The Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial crimes didn't move. Even though he was originally a Bush nominee and then was promoted in the Obama years, he didn't even come to a vote because of whatever reason the Banking Committee gave us. So we don't need that lecture.

But more important, on these nominees, we all know the history. When I look at criticism and hear "Why aren't these nominees all passed?" let's look at about 6 or 8 months ago. Every Presidential candidate, until this last election, starts to put together a transition team in August, and President Trump—Candidate Trump began to do that but not with much seriousness. Then the person he had leading his

transition team he fired in November, soon after the election, so he had to start again. So he had no people kind of ready to go on these nominations, what, in fact, he was going to do on all of these Cabinet positions.

After that, he didn't really vet, he didn't really analyze, he didn't really look at the backgrounds of these nominees. So if they didn't do it—usually the President's people look at these nominees and analyze and see how corrupt they are, if they have conflicts of interest, all of that. Well, they didn't do that in this administration because apparently they didn't have time. So they nominated these people, and we have never seen this many conflicts of interest, we have never seen this kind of wealth, and we have never seen this many billionaires appointed to the Cabinet.

Just out of the Finance Committee, the Secretary of Health and Human Services bought and sold health care stocks of companies—on the floor of the House of Representatives, he was working on bills and amendments; yet he bought and sold hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of health care stock, and then he didn't tell the committee the full story.

The Secretary of the Treasury had a \$100 million investment he forgot to report. Maybe somebody out there would forget if they had a \$100 million investment. They might forget they had it, but most Americans wouldn't forget that. He lied to the committee. He lied to the committee about robo-signings. Hundreds of—and this was directly related to this nomination—hundreds of Ohioans, at least, maybe thousands, lost their homes—including in the Presiding Officer's home city where he grew up—because of these robo-signings.

So that is why this has been slowed down—because many of these nominees are unqualified for the jobs, many of them have conflicts of interest, and many of them have very complex financial holdings and portfolios that take a long time to sort through. That is the reason for the delay, and to accuse us of anything else is just playing politics.

As I said, I am here today to argue for the confirmation of Dr. Carson.

I voted for a number of these nominees when I thought they could offer something to our country. I voted against some of the most corrupt and some of the most out-of-step and some of the most far-right, radical nominees, and that list is, unfortunately, much longer with this President than any President in American history.

Dr. Carson had a distinguished career as a pediatric neurosurgeon. We know that about him, and that is good. His remarkable life story is well known to millions of Americans. We know that about him, and that is good. But he is not the nominee I would have chosen to lead HUD. In fact, he is not the nominee any President in my lifetime would have chosen to lead HUD be-

cause he has no direct experience with the housing and community development fields.

He made troubling statements on public policy issues prior to his nomination. My colleagues and I on the Banking Committee asked Dr. Carson several very direct questions about his views now that he is the nominee for Secretary of HUD. I will give Carson the benefit of the doubt—that is why I will vote for him—because he made commitments to me in person, sitting in my office, across the table, and he made commitments in the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee in his testimony and in his written responses.

Dr. Carson promises to address the scourge of lead hazards that threaten the health and the future of children in Ohio and nationwide.

Under oath, he pledged to uphold the Fair Housing Act and the housing rights of LGBTQ individuals. That wasn't what his past has been. He has made comments that I find offensive or worse about gay people in this country, but he made the commitment under oath to our committee that he would fight any discrimination against people because of their sexual orientation.

He has pledged to advocate for rental assistance and investment to end homelessness. He has pledged to push to include housing in the President's infrastructure plan.

Those are commitments he made. Those are commitments he made under oath. Those are commitments I will hold him to in spite of perhaps his prior philosophy of government and in spite of perhaps some of his comments he might have made in the past. My job is to hold him accountable for this. The job of everybody in this Senate, of both parties, is to hold him accountable.

Dr. Carson's responses to my questions for the record are available as part of the record of the Banking Committee's January 12, 2017, hearing on the nomination of Dr. Carson to be Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I have also made them available online as part of my statement on the Banking Committee's approval of Dr. Carson's nomination on January 24, 2017.

My statement and the link to the questions for the record are available on the Banking Committee's website at <http://www.banking.senate.gov/public>.

Mr. President, as the ranking member of the Banking Committee—and I would emphasize the committee—while the last 2 years, it might only have been called banking, maybe it could have just been called Wall Street for the way it was running, but the full name of the committee is Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. It is important to remember that. We oversee housing policy, and I see how important this Department is for people in Ohio and across our country.

HUD is in charge of enforcing fair housing laws. It has been an essential partner in our national efforts to pre-

vent and end homelessness for veterans—something Senator CRAPO talked about—for the chronically homeless, and for youth and families. The Department's primary rental assistance program helped 4.5 million low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities find a place to call home—something that should be a right in this country.

HUD has assisted cities and towns in their efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and invest in communities and promote lead-safe, healthy housing for children. There is still a great challenge in States like mine where there is deteriorating lead paint in old homes that threaten so many children. In my hometown of Cleveland and where I grew up in Mansfield and in Appalachia and in city after city and community after community in my State, there are lots of older homes. In the city of Cleveland, well over half the homes are at least 60 years old.

I asked somebody from the Cleveland health department: What percentage of those homes have toxic levels of lead? And he said 99. Understand that old homes in this country—homes that are 60, 70, 80 years old—many homes fall into that category, and they overwhelmingly have toxic levels of lead.

My support for Dr. Carson centers around the fact that he may not know much about housing policy yet—I am hopeful that in the tours he takes, including to my State and the chairman's State of Idaho—I hope and I assume he will learn more about housing, but one thing he does know as a brain surgeon is he knows what lead does to the development of children.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported 70 census tracts in Cuyahoga County where as many as one in three children are poisoned because of the age and the condition of the housing stock. One in three children has her or his physical and emotional and mental development sometimes arrested or slowed because of lead poisoning.

Through the Federal Housing Administration, HUD works with lenders to help creditworthy borrowers access stable mortgage credit so they can purchase a home. FHA played a central countercyclical role in providing mortgage credit following the financial crisis when the private sector largely withdrew from the field, as we remember. It has since receded into its typical share of the housing market. It is still essential, though, for home buyers, including many first-time and minority home buyers. HUD'S role will only become more important as housing communities' development challenges have grown. The need for affordable housing has grown dramatically since the great recession. The demand for units has increased while wages have stagnated.

The market alone is not producing sufficient housing for families and those on fixed incomes. Studies have demonstrated that many people who perform essential work—child care

teachers, school bus drivers, retail workers, people working full time, people working just as hard as the staff in front of me, people working just as hard as people who have titles like mine—simply can't afford the rent in the communities they serve. Half of the people who rent pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing.

One-quarter of all renters—25 percent of all renters, 11 million people in this country—pay more than half of their incomes for rent. If you are paying 51, 52, 55 percent of your income in rent, if one bad thing happens—a sick child, your plant lays you off for 2 weeks, your roof leaks, any number of things can happen. When you are living on the edge, when half of your income is for housing, what happens? You lose your home. You get evicted.

These burdens are more severe at the bottom of the income spectrum among extremely low-income renter households—those with incomes at or below 30 percent of median income, and 75 percent may pay more than half of their income in rent.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition identified a shortage of 7 million affordable and available rental units for the Nation's extremely low-income renter households. We are reaching only one out of four of those eligible families. Many end up on years' long waiting lists for lack of funding.

Government extends a hand to some of these families, but not to nearly enough. That needs to change. Despite the growing need for affordable housing, we risk losing the affordable housing resources we have due to physical deterioration or the end of long-term affordability contracts of property owners.

Families burdened by high housing costs have fewer resources available to meet other needs such as transportation for work and food and medicine. They even face eviction and homelessness; 500,000 people were homeless on any given night in January of 2016—550,000, actually.

The Department of Education data, which includes families doubled up for economic reasons, indicates that 1.4 million school children and their families were homeless at some point during the 2013–2014 school year. Think about that. Some of these kids were exposed to lead and have learning disabilities. Others don't get enough to eat, in spite of the family school breakfast and lunch program, because they don't eat so well on weekends and at night and on summer vacations or whenever. In addition, 1.4 million are homeless.

Matthew Desmond wrote a book called "Evicted." He is a gentleman I have gotten to know a little bit. He lived in Milwaukee, a poor White neighborhood, a poor Black neighborhood. He wrote about people he got to meet and got to know, and he spent enough time where he got to know people. When he signed this book, he wrote: Home equals life. If you don't

have a decent place to live—and I would imagine that none of us in this Chamber has that challenge. When you don't have a place to call home, your life can be upside down. With all of the challenges and all of the things that can happen, when you get evicted, your kids have to move to a new school district. You don't know where you are going to end up. You lose the few possessions you have when you're evicted. This book is recommended reading for anybody who works on housing issues. It is a book called "Evicted" by Matthew Desmond.

One last point: I look forward to working with colleagues in the administration on the President's proposed \$1 trillion investment and infrastructure, including housing. To jump-start the conversation about the President's proposed infrastructure package, my colleagues and I announced a blueprint to rebuild America's infrastructure.

I find it interesting, again, that the assistant majority leader talked about Democrats' intransigence and Democrats' obstruction when the President has put nothing out there on infrastructure, nothing out there on housing, nothing out there about healthcare—repeal and replace—none of those kinds of legislation.

We don't even know what he is talking about, other than saying "\$1 trillion." Democrats acted responsibly and put out our \$1 trillion 10-year plan, hoping the President's \$1 trillion 10-year plan can match up and we can work together. This blueprint talks about ways we invest in American infrastructure to improve the Nation's transportation, water, housing, and community infrastructure and create thousands of good-paying union jobs in construction and manufacturing jobs with strong "Buy American" provisions.

Even though the President in his prior life as a businessman wore suits, sold suits, sold tableware, and sold glassware made overseas, and even though this suit I wear is made by union workers 10 miles from my house, the President, now that he is President—the issue is not his own private business or his family's own private business where they outsource jobs to do production so they make more money. I don't like that, but that is no longer our business. What is our business is that the President steps forward with "Buy American."

"Buy American" means if there is steel in an infrastructure project, it should be made by steelworkers in Youngstown or Lorain, OH, or somewhere in Ohio. If there is iron in these projects, if there is aluminum in these projects, if there is concrete, if there is any kind of product, if taxpayers are paying for it, it should be made by American workers.

Our blueprint is central to HUD's mission. It includes \$100 billion to rebuild Main Street and communities. It includes ideas to address affordable housing challenges, eliminate blighted

properties that bring down local property values, and remediate lead hazards that threaten children. We are ready to work on real infrastructure.

As I said, I am going to vote for Ben Carson for Secretary of HUD. He is not an inspiring choice, but he is someone who is an accomplished man. I count on him to help us address this terrible lead problem. I count on him to stand with us, as he pledged, to address the scourge of lead. I count on him to uphold the Fair Housing Act and the housing rights of LGBTQ individuals. I count on him to advocate for rental assistance and investment and homelessness. I count on him to push to include housing in the President's infrastructure plan. I count on him to fight the President. If the President is going to increase defense by \$50 billion and cut a whole host of housing and urban programs, I count on this nominee. He promised our committee. He said it. He said it in private meetings. He said it in public meetings. We will hold him accountable. I plan to vote yes.

To reiterate, I rise today to speak on the pending nomination of Dr. Benjamin Carson to be the new Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD.

Dr. Carson is not the nominee I would have chosen to lead HUD, due to both his lack of direct experience with the housing and community development fields, and his often troubling public statements prior to his nomination.

Despite my reservations, and my disagreements with some of his positions, I will give Dr. Carson the benefit of the doubt based on commitments he has made to me in person and to the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee in his testimony and written responses.

This includes Dr. Carson's promises to:

Address the scourge of lead hazards that threaten the health and futures of children in Ohio and nationwide; Uphold the Fair Housing Act and the housing rights of LGBTQ individuals; Advocate for rental assistance and investment to end homelessness; And push to include housing in the President's infrastructure plan. Let me be clear: I will do everything in my power to hold Dr. Carson accountable for making good on his promises.

Role of HUD. As the ranking member of the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee responsible for housing policy, I have seen how important the Department is for people in Ohio and across the country.

HUD is charged with enforcing our fair housing laws. It has been an essential partner in our national efforts to prevent and end homelessness for veterans, the chronically homeless, and youth and families.

The Department's primary rental assistance programs help over 4.5 million low-income households of families, the elderly, and people with disabilities find a place to call home.

It assists cities and towns in their efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and invest in communities; and promotes lead-safe, healthy housing for children.

Through the Federal Housing Administration, HUD works with lenders to help creditworthy borrowers access sustainable mortgage credit so they can purchase a home.

The FHA played an essential, countercyclical role in providing mortgage credit following the financial crisis, when the private sector largely withdrew from the field.

It has since receded to its typical share of the housing market, but it is still essential for many homebuyers, including first-time and minority homebuyers.

HUD's role has only become more important as our housing and community development challenges have grown.

The need for affordable housing has grown dramatically since the Great Recession, as demand for rental units has increased and wages have stagnated.

The market alone is not producing sufficient affordable housing for families and those on fixed incomes.

A person with a full-time job would need to earn an hourly wage of \$20.30 in order to afford a modest, two-bedroom rental at HUD's national average fair market rent.

This "housing wage" is far above the minimum wage, income available to people with disabilities who rely upon Supplemental Security Income, or even the median wage earned by renters.

Studies have demonstrated that people performing essential work—like child care teachers, school bus drivers, and retail workers—are often unable to afford rent in the communities they serve.

Half of all renters—over 21 million households—paid more than 30 percent of their incomes towards housing in 2014. And a quarter of all renters—over 11 million—paid more than half their incomes for rent.

These burdens are more severe at the bottom of the income spectrum. Among extremely low income renter households—those with incomes at or below 30 percent of area median income, 75 percent pay more than half their incomes on rent.

In 2016, the National Low Income Housing Coalition identified a shortage of 7.2 million affordable and available rental units for the nation's ELI renter households.

We are reaching only one out of four eligible families. Many end up on years-long waiting lists for lack of funding.

Despite the growing need for affordable housing, we risk losing the affordable housing resources we have due to physical deterioration or the end of long-term affordability contracts with property owners.

Public housing alone needs an estimated \$26 billion in major repairs. HUD estimates that we are losing 10,000 units of public housing every year due to physical obsolescence.

According to Harvard's Joint Center on Housing Studies, nearly 2.2 million units of HUD-assisted and low income housing tax credit-supported housing will reach the end of their affordability periods by 2025. Families burdened by high housing costs have fewer resources available to meet other needs like transportation to work, food, and medicine, and they may even face eviction and homelessness.

Nearly 550,000 people were homeless on a given night in January 2016. Department of Education data, which include families doubled up for economic reasons, indicate that nearly 1.4 million school-age children and their families were homeless at some point during the 2013–2014 school year.

The hardships stemming from evictions and homelessness make it harder for families to climb the economic ladder.

As Matthew Desmond, author of *Evicted*, points out: "Eviction is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty."

Trump Urban Renewal Plan. Throughout his campaign, President-elect Trump promised to rebuild America's "inner cities," which he labeled "hell holes."

Mr. Trump spelled out his views in his, quote, "New Deal for Black America, With a Plan for Urban Renewal."

The plan covers issues such as school choice, investing in law enforcement, tax reform, trade, and infrastructure investment.

At a time when more than 11 million families are paying more than half their income toward rent, and half a million people have no place to call home, the President-elect's plan does not mention this housing crisis.

In addition, cities, like Black Americans, are not monolithic.

In recent years, many cities have seen a wave of population growth and investment that have led to greater economic activity, tighter rental housing markets, and rising rental housing costs.

As a result, many lower-income families and businesses who endured challenging decades in their communities are finding themselves priced out of their long-time neighborhoods just when additional economic opportunities are opening up.

Loss of housing in urban neighborhoods can push residents away from access to jobs, transit, and local support networks such as hospitals and child care.

In many of these neighborhoods, federally-assisted housing may be coming to the end of long-term affordability contracts or at risk of loss due to physical deterioration and HUD will be called on to help low-income people access the opportunity that has finally come to their neighborhoods.

HUD will need to respond to a diverse set of challenges across the country.

Dr. Ben Carson is a distinguished pediatric neurosurgeon. His remarkable life story is well known to all of us,

and to millions of Americans beyond this room. He is an inspiration and a testament to the American dream.

Dr. Carson's experience, while impressive, does not automatically qualify him to lead HUD.

In reviewing Dr. Carson's nomination, I had the opportunity to question him extensively about his plans as Secretary. His answers were responsive, in contrast to many of President Trump's nominees.

Dr. Carson committed to: Address the scourge of lead paint hazards that threaten the future of too many of Ohio's children; Uphold the Fair Housing Act and housing rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals; Advocate for rental assistance and investment to end homelessness; and Push to include housing in the President's infrastructure plan.

Some of Trump's appointees have taken positions antithetical to the agencies for which they would be responsible. In his testimony, Dr. Carson did not seem to be in this camp.

At that hearing, Carson stated that he plans to go on a listening tour across the country and at HUD to learn what is working and what is not. And he promised to surround himself with pragmatic, bipartisan, senior advisers.

He said: "I will surround myself with people who have a passion for improving the agency, not breaking down its programs."

In many cases, Dr. Carson moderated or reversed controversial positions he had taken previously.

I will discuss a few of the commitments Dr. Carson made during our committee process.

Lead Paint Poisoning. Dr. Carson promised to work to end the scourge of lead poisoning that threatens the health and futures of too many children in Ohio and across the country.

There is a growing realization that safe, affordable housing is a platform for good health.

Whether that is healthy housing that protects kids from lead and asthma-inducing mold, accessible units that help seniors safely age in place and avoid expensive institutional care, or housing that enables people with disabilities to live in the community.

As Dr. Carson said in his written statement: "There is a strong connection between housing and health . . . Housing (and housing discrimination) is a "social determinant" of health . . . These problems occur across America—in cities as well as suburbs and rural areas . . . We cannot have social mobility without a strong healthy foundation in the home."

When Dr. Carson and I met privately, we discussed the tragic effects of lead in Ohio and nationwide. He knows—from a medical perspective—the terrible price that children and society pay for the legacy of lead in water, industrial settings, and, all-too-often, deteriorating paint in their homes.

While we have rightly focused on lead in water in Flint, MI, and Sebring, OH,

the most prevalent source of childhood lead poisoning is lead-based paint in homes built before the federal government stepped in to prohibit its use in 1978.

Approximately 23 million older homes have significant lead paint hazards, 3.6 million of which house children under six who are most susceptible to the effects of lead paint poisoning. This is a great challenge in states like mine that have a lot of older homes.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported that there are nearly 70 census tracts in Cuyahoga County, where I live, where as many as 1 in 3 children are likely poisoned because of the age and condition of the housing stock.

This is a tragedy not just for these kids and families, but for society. We all absorb the increased costs of medical care, education, criminal justice, and lost economic potential that stem from childhood lead poisoning.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Dr. Carson to address the avoidable tragedy of childhood lead paint poisoning.

Fair Housing. Dr. Carson pledged to uphold the nation's fair housing laws, which includes the requirement that HUD's grantees affirmatively further fair housing.

At the hearing, Dr. Carson was clear about his support for the Fair Housing Act, stating:

I think the Fair Housing [Act] in 1968 was one of the best pieces of legislation we had. It was modified 1988. LBJ said no one could possibly question this, I agree with him.

I asked Dr. Carson about a 2015 Washington Times Op-Ed in which he objected to HUD's rule implementing the Fair Housing Act's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing provision, likening it to a failed socialist experiment.

The rule, which implements a requirement of the Fair Housing Act, was adopted after a two-year public comment period and responds to GAO criticism of HUD's previous guidance in this area.

Carson stated that his op-ed had been "distorted by many people." He went on to say that he has no problem with "affirmative action or . . . integration" but that he does have a problem with people dictating policy when they don't know the area when we have "local HUD officials . . . who can assess what the problems are in their area and, working with local officials, can come up with better solutions."

The fair housing rule is such a locally driven conversation, because it requires HUD grantees to analyze their own situations and develop locally driven plans to address their fair housing challenges.

Finally, Dr. Carson stated in writing that he would enforce the Fair Housing Act and support HUD's 2015 rule.

If Dr. Carson were to reverse the fair housing rule, it would violate his commitments at the hearing and in writing.

LGBTQ Housing Rights. During the Committee's process, I sought information on Dr. Carson's views of the housing rights of LGBTQ individuals.

In the past, Dr. Carson has made troubling comments about LGBTQ people that raised questions about whether LGBTQ people should enjoy the same rights as everyone else.

Dr. Carson's views in this area are important because the HUD Secretary oversees the housing rights of all Americans, including LGBTQ people. LGBTQ people face housing discrimination, bullying, and an alarmingly high incidence of youth homelessness.

In his written statement, Dr. Carson clearly stated that he wants to improve the lives of all families and communities "no matter their race, creed, color, or orientation."

In light of his previous statements, my colleague and I asked further questions.

I asked Dr. Carson whether he believes that HUD has a duty to take actions that promote equal access to housing opportunities for LGBTQ people. In response, he stated that he believes that "all Americans . . . should be protected by the law," but went on to say that no one gets "extra rights."

To clarify his meaning, I asked whether he could think of any instances where protecting equal access to housing opportunities for LGBTQ people would mean providing them "extra rights."

His response was "I cannot."

I also asked whether he believes that HUD provides "extra rights" to LGBTQ people that need to be withdrawn.

His response was "I do not."

In other statements, Dr. Carson also clearly pledged to protect the LGBTQ community from discrimination and to continue to support and enforce HUD's equal access rules.

These rules ensure that all individuals have equal access to the Department's programs "without regard to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status" and in accordance with their gender identity.

If Dr. Carson is confirmed, any actions that he or the agency take to discriminate against or limit the housing rights of LGBTQ individuals and families would be contrary to his statements to me and the Committee.

Rental Assistance. Dr. Carson promised to be an advocate for HUD rental assistance.

During the hearing, Dr. Carson backed away from his previous position calling for 10 percent across-the-board cuts to Federal programs as a budget-cutting measure.

At our hearing, Dr. Carson noted that he had revised his position to 1 percent across-the board cuts as a way to achieve budget savings. While I do not subscribe to this policy, it shows moderation of Dr. Carson's previous position.

With respect to HUD programs, he recognized the value of HUD rental as-

sistance programs in meeting the needs of the lowest income individuals, stating:

When it comes to deep affordability, though, removing all regulatory barriers won't get you there. It comes down to subsidy. . . . I think we can all agree that we will all make sure housing is a key consideration in every appropriations bill . . . If confirmed I will be a vocal advocate internally for funding, but prioritization will continue to occur in this Administration as it did in the last.

Dr. Carson also recognized the value of the important safety net provided by HUD programs, stating that "the rental assistance program is essential" and that "safety net programs are important. I would never . . . advocate abolishing them without having an alternative route for people to follow."

Ending Homelessness. In 2010, Opening Doors, the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, set out goals to end homelessness for veterans, the chronically homeless, families, children, and youth and all other homelessness.

Through a combination of bipartisan federal investments in appropriate housing solutions particularly permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless and HUD-VASH vouchers for veterans and improved practices at the federal and local levels, we have made real progress toward these goals. Since 2010, such investments have helped reduce chronic homelessness by 27 percent and veterans' homelessness by 47 percent.

Yet, more remains to be done.

According to HUD's "2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report" to Congress, approximately 549,928 people were homeless on a given night in January 2016. Nearly 195,000 of the homeless on this night were in families including at least one child.

Stating that "No one can argue with the goal of ending homelessness," Dr. Carson said he intends to build on the progress we have made toward ending homelessness. He also said he will "call for continued investment to end homelessness for veterans, the chronically homeless, and children and families."

Dr. Carson also praised the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, which coordinates Federal efforts to efficiently and effectively combat homelessness and helps facilitate local communities' coordinated efforts.

Housing and Infrastructure. The President's promised \$1 trillion investment in infrastructure is one of the pillars of the President's Plan for Urban Renewal. This is an area where I have said I would like to work with the new administration.

Our grandparents built an infrastructure for us that was the envy of the world and became the foundation of our economy for years to come. But after decades of neglect, we need to re-invest.

My colleagues in the Democratic caucus and I are taking the President up on his call for a \$1 trillion investment in American infrastructure.

To jump-start the conversation about the President's promise, we announced "A Blueprint to Rebuild America's Infrastructure."

This blueprint talks about ways we can invest in American infrastructure to improve the Nation's transportation, water, housing, and community infrastructure while creating thousands of construction and manufacturing jobs in Ohio and across the country.

Our blueprint includes \$100 billion to rebuild our main streets and communities, which is central to HUD's mission.

This includes ideas to address affordable housing challenges, eliminate the blighted properties that bring down local property values in neighborhoods, and remediate lead hazards that can set children back for life and increase public costs.

We need to invest in the infrastructure of our communities.

I've talked about the need to address lead-based paint to prevent childhood lead poisoning.

In communities across Ohio and the country, blighted properties are holding our neighborhoods back. They reduce neighbors' property values, reduce tax base necessary to support public services, and create crime and safety threats.

A 2015 report from Policy Matters Ohio estimated Ohio alone would need \$750 million to address the State's residential demolition needs.

Our public housing alone needs an estimated \$26 billion in repairs.

When we met, Dr. Carson said that he is supportive of investing in our public housing infrastructure.

In questions following the hearing, I asked Dr. Carson whether he would work with the President to ensure that there is a real infrastructure package to address the needs of our urban and rural communities and that it includes funding for preserving and creating affordable housing.

In response, Dr. Carson responded by saying, "I will absolutely commit to advocating for the inclusion of housing in the President Elect's infrastructure package."

I look forward to working with Dr. Carson to ensure that the administration supports these job-creating investments in our housing and other infrastructure.

Support Despite Reservations. As I stated at the outset, Dr. Carson is not the nominee that I would have chosen to lead HUD.

I do not agree with all of his positions.

For example, Dr. Carson wants to help people increase their incomes so that they can become self-sufficient. I also believe we should do everything we can to help families escape poverty and find good, middle-class jobs that can sustain a family.

However, Dr. Carson seems to believe that this can be done without raising the minimum wage and without the

Labor Department's overtime rule that would help 100,000 workers in my state get the pay they deserve. He believes incomes will rise just by creating the right "environment."

I believe that the Federal Government should stand on the side of workers rather than advancing a billionaire agenda.

But despite my reservations and my disagreements with some of his positions, I am voting to confirm him, based on the commitments he made to the committee that I discussed here today.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition, or NLIHC, is a leading national organization advocating for safe, affordable housing for low-income people, including the residents of HUD-assisted housing.

NLIHC recently circulated a statement that reads:

Despite our initial concerns about Carson's lack of experience with and knowledge of the HUD programs that he would oversee, NLIHC does not oppose his nomination:

As demonstrated in his Senate confirmation hearing, Carson has clearly taken the time to begin to understand and come to appreciate the importance of HUD's programs.

Once confirmed, NLIHC is committed to working with Dr. Carson to ensure that the lowest income people in America have decent, affordable and accessible homes.

In the coming years, I will do everything in my power to hold him to his promises and to advocate for HUD's important work.

I Hope the Administration Helps Him Succeed. Even if Dr. Carson and I shared the exact same views, I would be concerned about what the next few years bodes for HUD and our communities.

On January 23, the Trump administration adopted a hiring freeze and called for a reduction in the Federal workforce.

HUD already experienced the greatest percentage drop in career employees across the government from 2005 through 2014, and now HUD faces the highest percentage career employees eligible to retire by 2019.

According to HUD's FY 2017 budget justifications, "This retirement wave can cause a loss of leadership and institutional knowledge at all levels."

Such a loss could also cause a failure to ensure that the Department is upholding its duties to taxpayers by ensuring the quality of federally-assisted housing, fair housing enforcement, and overseeing FHA lending programs, for examples.

Dr. Carson says he wants to learn from and be on the side of HUD's career staff. Let's hope the administration gives him sufficient staffing to accomplish his mission.

I am also very concerned about HUD's budget going forward.

The Senate recently confirmed Mick Mulvaney, an ideologue who threatened to default on our debt and wants to gut our retirement safety net, to lead the President's Office of Management and Budget.

There have been reports that the administration has been considering using Heritage Foundation budget blueprints as the basis for its budget proposals.

Heritage has proposed budget outlines that would literally zero out the HUD rental assistance programs and the Community Development Block Grant Program.

We are also hearing reports that the Trump administration is making plans to cut nondefense discretionary programs by \$54 billion in fiscal year 2018—about a 10 percent cut—in order to fund increased defense spending.

This cut would come on top of the sequestration-related cuts to nondefense discretionary, or NDD, programs that will kick in in FY 2018 if we don't do something to stop them.

NDD programs at HUD have already absorbed cuts. Since 2010, funding for public housing has fallen 21 percent, while funding for the HOME program has fallen by more than 50 percent.

Sequestration cuts in FY 2013 reduced the number of housing vouchers by more than 80,000. In recent years, Congress and local agencies have been able to restore many of these lost vouchers, but further cutbacks will reverse this trend.

At a time when our families are facing growing affordable housing needs, the administration may be considering cuts that would devastate our housing safety net and leave families, seniors, formerly homeless veterans, and communities reeling.

All of this is coming at the same time that they are repealing the ACA and working to repeal rules that protect workers, consumers, and retirees.

At our hearing, Dr. Carson himself walked away from previous comments he had made in support of 10 percent across-the-board cuts.

At the nomination hearing, Dr. Carson stated:

I want to advocate for the HUD budget. . . . In the process of doing a listening tour and in talking to the people who were there already I want to put together a world-class plan on housing in this country and then I want to come to you with that world-class plan and I want to convince you all that this is what we need to do.

I hope that the administration and those setting budget priorities here in Congress will give Dr. Carson and HUD the tools they need to fulfill their mission.

If not, I hope my colleagues and citizens across the country will work with me to ensure that we have a housing and community development policy that meets the needs of all Americans.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONGRATULATING THE STATE OF NEBRASKA ON THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADMISSION OF THAT STATE INTO THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise to recognize a pivotal moment in our Nation's history. On this day, 150 years ago, the Territory of Nebraska became the 37th State to enter the Union.

Let me tell you the story of Nebraska. In a deep and powerful way, it is the story of America. America grew up in Nebraska. We were the first State admitted after the Civil War, but our admission was first vetoed by President Andrew Johnson. It was the only time in American history that this had happened. The reason? President Johnson disagreed with a fundamental condition of Nebraska's statehood—that Black men be allowed to vote.

Fortunately, Congress overrode this veto, and on March 1, 1867, Nebraska became a State. I said before that Nebraska's statehood was a pivotal moment for our country. Nebraska gave America a chance to be better.

By bringing Nebraska into the Union, our country turned away from slavery forever. We turned toward the truth about humankind—that everyone is precious in Heaven's eyes. By making Nebraska a State, America reached for a future more closely aligned with that truth.

Since that new birth of freedom, our Nation has taken many more steps—some bold strides, some stumbles—but always we seek to be more fully the country we were made to be. At a crucial moment, Nebraska strengthened our commitment to do that. Nebraska renewed America's identity.

As a State, Nebraska had not only hard but also humble beginnings. They called it the Great American Desert. In the early 1800s, the famous military officer and explorer Zebulon Pike shrugged us off, saying simply: "Not a stick of timber." A few years later, geologist Edwin James and MAJ Steven Long gave us this review: "The land was uninhabitable by a people depending on agriculture."

Today, wagon ruts can still be seen on Windlass Hill on the Oregon-California Trail, where settlers passed through. They were looking for greener pastures.

Well, last year Nebraska ranked No. 1 in the Nation in beef exports. The State ranked No. 1 in both the number of mother cows and cattle on feed. We are the beef State. We are Corn Huskers. With both corn and cattle, we produce high quality protein products that are sought by consumers all around this globe. We are No. 1 in the Nation in great northern bean production, popcorn production, and irrigated acres of cropland. Nebraska agriculture is diverse and it is expansive.

We also have more miles of river than any other State. As we sit over the great High Plains in the Ogallala Aquifer, water flows to seven other States from Nebraska. Our abundant

supply of groundwater makes us leaders in producing soybeans, wheat, pork, and grain sorghum.

But I am getting ahead of myself.

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act. It made Americans really a simple offer: Strike out west, cultivate 160 acres of surveyed government land for 5 years, and at the end of that time, the land would be theirs. Families crossed the plains in covered wagons to take Mr. Lincoln up on that offer, and this time they stayed. In fact, the law's very first claimant was a doctor and a Civil War veteran named, fittingly enough, Daniel Freeman. So powerful was his dream that Dr. Freeman filed his paperwork just a few minutes after midnight on New Year's Day, 1863, the day that law went into effect. His homestead lies just outside of Beatrice, NE, where today we find the Homestead National Monument of America. In this vast and ruthless land, the homesteaders made the American dream real. They tilled the earth, first to feed themselves and then to feed the world.

Nebraskans made the Great American Desert into one of the greatest agricultural exporting regions in world history. They did this in part by scientific discovery. Developments in agricultural technology, including the center pivot, pioneered in Nebraska, have allowed Nebraska ag producers to lead the Nation in center pivot irrigation technology, and today we are home to the four largest irrigation companies in the United States.

Other technological breakthroughs came in transportation, especially rail. These developments helped us to connect our communities and our country. The route of the First Transcontinental Railroad runs through my State. Today, Bailey Yard in North Platte is the world's largest railroad classification yard. In addition, Nebraska now connects her families by 97,000 miles of public roads. Well, that is a far cry from those wagon ruts. These improvements allow us to continue that noble work which we gladly accept of feeding the world.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on something. Nebraska not only helped America find its moral compass again, but our State also shows what wonders a free and virtuous people may work, and it reveals the relationship between the two. When you seek the right thing first and you work at it hard, amazing things follow. This is true not only in our rural areas but also in our cities.

Omaha began as the "Gateway to the West." Pioneers and immigrants made it a mighty city in its own right. From the former stockyards to the strong family businesses and Fortune 500 companies that you will find there today, the fingerprints of hardworking, dedicated people cover every inch of concrete.

Omaha leads in banking, insurance, telecommunications, transportation,

and in medicine. Last year, the University of Nebraska Medical Center was ranked fifth in America among the best medical schools for primary care. I think Dr. Daniel Freeman, America's first homesteader, would be proud of that, but I doubt if he would be surprised. This is what happens when we work hard and let ourselves be guided by goodness.

It happened in Lincoln, our State capital, which was renamed after President Lincoln was assassinated. It happens in our Nebraska Panhandle towns and in our cities along the broad and braided Platte River, all along our I-80 corridor, and in so many rural small towns across our State. Nebraskans are a people who are engaged in manufacturing, technology, ag business, education, and the arts. We are strong people, and we build strong communities.

I have to say another word about doing the right thing. In 1879, Nebraska was the site of the first time that American Indians had their day in court, when Standing Bear made his famous statement: "I am a Man." The U.S. district court eventually ruled what we all know to be absolute truth—that a person is a person. Here again, Nebraska gave America the opportunity to be better. There are many other moments.

Nebraska was the first State in which women were the two major party candidates for Governor, when Kay Orr, a Republican, defeated Helen Boosalis, a Democrat, in 1986.

I am on the Senate floor honoring the State I love on its 150th anniversary. I encourage you to come and see what the good life is about. See our cities—their industry, their creativity, their culture—where our innovators work new wonders, so much so that we are now called Silicon Prairie. Feel the thrill of Memorial Stadium, which becomes our third largest city on a game day. Shout "Go Big Red" and cheer on the Huskers. Delight in our opera and ballet. Breathe in our small towns. Stop in at a family-run bakery. Have lunch at a local cafe. Enjoy some of the national food sensations that began in Nebraska: Kool-Aid, our Reuben sandwich, and, of course, runzas.

Enjoy local favorites, like kolache, kuchen, fried tacos, and pork chili. Enjoy a Nebraska rodeo. Ride out to our rural areas, where, as Poet Laureate Ted Kooser says, the "pickup kicks its fenders off and settles back to read the clouds." Be awed by the vastness of Nebraska, which gives us perspective on things great and small. Learn from Chimney Rock, our western buttes, and the Pine Ridge, how to stand tall no matter the weather or the season of life. Be soothed by the Sandhills—the largest grass-covered sand dunes in the world and God's own cattle country. Find peace in the song of the Sandhills cranes. Take in the Central Flyway, where millions of migratory birds fly, including our State bird—the western meadowlark. See our gently rolling eastern hills. Canoe our

rivers, fish our trout streams, and relax on our lakes. Follow the trails that tell the story of our history and the roads that lead to a bright future. See Nebraska at night, under a sky filled with stars. Know why people travel from all across the world simply to stargaze.

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Willa Cather, who grew up in Nebraska, wrote of the West: "Elsewhere, the sky is the roof of the world; but here the Earth was the floor of the sky."

We are a people of the Great Plains, the prairie, the Sandhills. We remember our enduring sources of strength—faith in God, reliance on family, and a habit of hard work. These things give us a sure footing.

For America for 150 years, Nebraska has been a place to look up and begin again, a land of vast possibility, of opportunity, a place to dream and to realize dreams—a model for America and the envy of the world.

Congratulations to the people of the great State of Nebraska as we celebrate our rich history, the exciting present that we are building, and the brighter future we will have in our next 150 years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, if I could just begin with a hearty "amen" to the great words of my senior Senator, it felt like old home week there for a moment, with the quote about the Nebraska sky. My kids—I have one of them with me almost every week in DC. We commute, and I bring somebody with me. Another two of them are almost surely going to be exploring along the Platte River later this afternoon, as happens almost every day. As for the comments about the 1986 campaign between Kay Orr and Helen Boosalis, it was the first time in America that two women had run for Governor of any State. I worked for Kay, the Republican Governor; it was the first campaign I had ever worked on as a 14-year-old. And then, most fundamentally, were her great words about the Homestead Act and the settling of America. I am a fifth generation Nebraskan and descended from homesteaders in the exact counties that the Senator was talking about engaged in Jefferson County.

Our State on its 150th anniversary, looks back on a history built by grit from homesteaders, as Senator FISCHER mentioned, to a football team at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln. Today, we celebrate all of those things that make Nebraska special: hard work, resolve, and love and care for our neighbors.

Millions of men and women settled Nebraska when our State was still known as the Great American Desert. The Homestead Act made land ownership accessible to anyone—to widows, to former slaves, to immigrants. People of totally different backgrounds could legally own 160 acres of American land, and as long as they worked and

lived on that land for 5 years, they would get the deed. Your care of the land is what mattered, not your background, not your status, not your family name, but your willingness to work and to contribute and to feed the world as our State still does today.

Today, Nebraska is the breadbasket of the world, exporting more than \$6 billion a year of agricultural products. We have cared about the land for this last century and a half, but we care even more about our neighbors. Two towns tell that story well.

During World War II, North Platte launched a hospitality initiative that reached 6 million American troops as they would head for Pacific and European theaters in World War II. Folks in the town saw trains stop in North Platte every day and decided that they would cheer those servicemen who were on their way to the war to fight for our freedom.

On Christmas Day in 1941, a young woman named Rae Wilson, a 26-year-old saleswoman, founded the North Platte Canteen. For 4 years, volunteers would meet each train—full of troops and passing through North Platte—with candy, with fruit, with smiles, with hugs, and with encouragement, thanking those men for how they were going to fight to defend the freedoms that made places like Nebraska and the rest of this Nation great. Some soldiers would go on to become POWs, including the first train of men that went through North Platte on Christmas Day in 1941. They had been sent off by these women of North Platte with food and with encouragement for their fight. Some never returned home. Who knows how much the kindness of those women meant to people from all of the States as they passed through Nebraska on the way to their deployments.

In recent years, that same generosity has shown up in Pilger, NE. In June of 2014, twin tornadoes ripped through this small Nebraska town, killing two and leveling the entire town—destroying 78 buildings. Only in the two corners of the town were structures left standing. Some people might not consider a town of 352 people a top priority, but those folks are not from Nebraska. From all across our State, thousands of volunteers just began driving to this town where tornadoes had destroyed people's livelihoods and their homes, bringing meals and sorting through rubble with people who had been strangers until the volunteers arrived and became family.

Young and old, Nebraskans from all across our State pitched in 2½ summers ago. One retired teacher would drive 180 miles every day round trip to serve in this community, helping people dig out of the rubble. One little girl sent \$70 in from her lemonade stand. Pilger became the town known as the town too tough to die.

When we are not coming together to help our neighbors, we are usually coming together to celebrate Husker

football. Our team represents something much bigger than just a typical collegiate sports team. It is about toughness, and it is about community. The Bugeaters, as the Nebraska Cornhuskers were first known in the 1890s, started with a volunteer coach and now boast many Heisman Trophy winners, five national titles, and a sell-out streak that dates to October of 1962.

For those of you who think there are football teams in your States—and I say this with all due respect to the Presiding Officer, who comes from a State that has passable football—and for those of you who think you are from States where football is taken seriously, there has not been a seat available to a game in Nebraska since October of 1962. Nebraska has had, by far, the biggest winning streak—the winningest team—over the course of the last half century in American college football.

Nebraskans know and love this team, not just because of the prowess on the field but because Nebraska football is the undisputed champion of Academic All-Americans in the country, having a 43-award lead over the second closest team in the history of Academic All-American Awards and American life.

That is Penn State, not North Carolina, that is in second place, I say to the Presiding Officer.

We live, we breathe, and we love our football team. After each Husker win, church attendance goes up, and crime goes down. Literally, for generations, half of the boys in Nebraska grew up wanting to play quarterback for Tom Osborne in the option offense. Why only half, you ask? It is because the other half wanted to play Blackshirts defensive football to smack the snot out of whoever was going to line up against the Huskers on a given Saturday.

Success on the field is great, but the real reason Nebraskans are so proud of this team is that the Cornhuskers embody the hard work, resolve, teamwork, passion, and sportsmanship of the Nebraska people. While these are the trademarks and hallmarks of our football, they are really the hallmarks of our community associations—of Nebraska's pioneers, of our farmers, our ranchers, our teachers, our small business men and women, our churches, and our Rotary clubs.

Do you know what? We could not be any more proud of that heritage. On this 150th anniversary, I join my senior Senator in saying, please, come visit, and "Go Big Red."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in legislative session.

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

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 74, submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 74) congratulating the State of Nebraska on the 150th anniversary of the admission of that State into the United States.

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

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 74) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS AND RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last night, I joined most of the Members of Congress to hear President Trump give his first address to a joint session. His speech lasted about 60 minutes, and I listened carefully, as did everyone in the Chamber, to the President's first remarks from that historic setting as he addressed a joint session of Congress.

There were some omissions, which I found very interesting. Not once—not one time—in the course of an hour did President Trump ever say the word "Russia"—not one time—even though we have been told by 17 of our intelligence agencies that Russia made an overt effort to influence the outcome of the last Presidential campaign. That has never happened before in American history. A foreign country attacked the sovereignty of the United States in the election process for the highest office in the land. I think that is noteworthy. It is certainly historic. It would certainly be worth at least a mention when a President speaks to a joint session of Congress just a few months after that election. Instead, there was radio silence, mute button, crickets—nothing about Russia.

What do we have in terms of congressional response to the possibility that Vladimir Putin was trying to pick our next President? We have the suggestion by the Republican leaders in the Senate and the House that this matter should be taken up by the Intelligence Committees.

It sounds reasonable on its face. Having served on Intelligence Committees, I can tell you it is an awesome responsibility and assignment. I can also tell you we have some extraordinarily gift-

ed, talented, patriotic members of those committees from both political parties in the Senate and in the House, but there is a fundamental flaw to this approach. If you went searching on Capitol Hill to find the room in which the Senate Intelligence Committee meets, you would come up empty. There is no sign on the door. It is basically kept clandestine, confidential, and secret. For 4 years, I entered that door, sat down in closed hearings, with no one from the public able to hear or even appreciate what we were doing. It is a lonely assignment—unlike any other committee on Capitol Hill.

I wonder: Is that what we want to do to explore the involvement of Vladimir Putin in our Presidential campaign—to go behind closed doors in secret and meet clandestinely? I think not.

There is an aspect of this that will require some intelligence gathering, some discussion of intelligence—and certainly that would be secret—but there is much more of it that is public in nature that will never be disclosed if we rely on the Senate Intelligence Committee. It is an invisible process, and that invisible process does not serve the needs of a democracy that wants the truth—the straight talk, the answers.

Secondly, the work of an Intelligence Committee ends up in a report that is classified, which means the public doesn't get to see it. We have seen some renditions of it—heavily redacted pages, where one or two words might escape being crossed out.

How do you move from a classified document on Putin's involvement in our Presidential campaign to a public document the people can understand? It takes declassification. Who makes the decision on whether we declassify the information from the Intelligence Committee investigation? The White House.

So, with the possibility—and I underline that word—with the possibility that some people in the President's campaign may or may not have been involved in this, the President has the last word as to the American people ever hearing the results of an Intelligence Committee report.

Many of us believe this is serious, and many of us believe there should be an independent, transparent commission, just like the 9/11 Commission. Let's call on people we respect, such as GEN Colin L. Powell, Sandra Day O'Connor, a former Supreme Court Justice, and many others just like them, who could get to the bottom of this and answer the basic questions: What were the Russians up to? We hear they had 1,000 trolls sitting in offices in Moscow dreaming up ways to hack into the computers and Internet of the United States and to disclose information to try to influence the outcome of the election. It is not a new tactic from Russia. They have done it over and over again.

The last couple of weeks I visited Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine. They know

these tactics oh so well. Under Soviet times and since, Russia has tried to invade their space when it comes to election decisions—overtly, covertly, through propaganda, through cyber attacks. They have done it in many countries around the world. Sadly, they are good at it. Now they have decided they can do it in the United States. They can decide who our President will be or at least try to. Are we going to take this sitting down?

November 8, 2016, election day, was a day that will live in cyber infamy in the United States. The Russians invaded the U.S. election process. The President of the United States spoke to the American people last night and never mentioned one word—not a single word—about this.

How many Republican Senators and Congressmen have come to the floor? I don't know about in the House, but I can tell my colleagues I know about the Senate. None. Not one has come to the floor to even address this issue.

So when President Trump ignored it last night, refused to even mention it, I wasn't surprised, but it is not going away. It is a fact.

We currently have an investigation underway in our intelligence agencies. I just met with former Senator Dan Coats of Indiana. He has been designated by the President to be the DNI—the Director of National Intelligence. He made a statement publicly yesterday before a hearing in Congress that he is going to cooperate with the committees and with Congress in disclosing information they have accumulated in our intelligence agencies as to this Russian involvement in our election.

We also know the Federal Bureau of Investigation is involved in this same exercise to find out exactly what happened and to disclose as much as possible and take action—prosecutorial action—if necessary.

There is a problem, though. The Federal Bureau of Investigation works for the Attorney General. The Department of Justice has the power to impede or stop any FBI investigation. Our former colleague Jeff Sessions was deeply and personally involved in the Trump Presidential campaign. He should recuse himself. He has an obvious conflict of interest on this issue. For the integrity of the office and for his own personal integrity, he should step aside and appoint a special prosecutor who can follow up, if necessary, with this FBI investigation.

This is a serious matter that was not addressed at all last night by the President of the United States speaking to a joint session of Congress.

The Associated Press went through some of the claims that were made by the President last night, and I want to give them credit for their homework on this. It is important for the RECORD that some of the things the President said be explained.

The President said:

According to the National Academy of Sciences, our current immigration system

costs American taxpayers many billions of dollars a year.

The Associated Press writes:

That's not exactly what the report says. It says immigrants "contribute to government finances by paying taxes and add expenditures by consuming public service."

The report found that while first-generation immigrants are more expensive to governments than their native-born counterparts, primarily at the state and local level, immigrants' children "are among the strongest economic and fiscal contributors in the population." This second generation contributed more in taxes on a per capita basis, for example, than non-immigrants in the period, 1994–2013.

The report [that the President unfortunately mischaracterized] found that the "long-run fiscal impact" of immigrants and their children would probably be seen as more positive "if their role in sustaining labor force growth and contributing to innovation and entrepreneurial activity were taken into account."

So to argue, as the President did yesterday, that the National Academy of Sciences, as he said, stated that our current immigration system costs American taxpayers many billions of dollars is, at best, incomplete and misleading.

The President then went on to say during the course of his speech last night:

We've saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars by bringing down the price of the F-35 jet fighter.

I remember when he said that.

The Associated Press says as follows:

The cost savings he persists in bragging about were secured in full or large part before he became President.

He has taken credit for something he didn't do.

According to the AP:

The head of the Air Force program announced significant price reductions in the contract for the Lockheed F-35 fighter on December 19—after [candidate] Trump, [President-Elect Trump] had tweeted about the cost but weeks before he met with the company's CEO.

The AP goes on:

Pentagon managers took action even before the election to save [this] money. . . . Richard Aboulafia, an analyst with the aerospace consulting firm Teal Group, said there is no evidence of any additional cost savings as a result of President Trump's actions.

Here is another statement made by the President last night:

We will provide massive tax relief for the middle class.

I remember that one. That is something I hope we all can aspire to, but let me tell my colleagues what the Associated Press says about that claim.

Trump has provided little detail on how this would happen. Independent analyses of his campaign tax proposals found that most of the benefits would flow to the wealthiest families. The richest 1 percent would see an average tax cut of nearly \$215,000 a year, while the middle one-fifth of the population would get a tax cut of just \$1,010, according to the Tax Policy Center, a joint project with the Brookings Institution and Urban Institute.

Here is another statement the President made last night:

Ninety-four million Americans are out of the labor force.

The Associated Press says:

That's true, but for the vast majority of them, it's because they choose to be. That 94 million figure includes everyone aged 16 and older who doesn't have a job and isn't looking for one. So it includes retirees, parents who are staying home to raise children, high school and college students who are studying rather than working.

They are unlikely to work regardless of the state of the economy. With the huge baby boomer generation reaching retirement age many of them retiring, the population of those out of the labor force is increasing and will continue to do so, most economists forecast.

It's true that some of those out of the workforce are of working age and have given up looking for work. But that number is probably a small fraction of the 94 million President Trump cited.

Another statement the President made: He said his budget plan will offer "one of the largest increases in national defense spending in American history."

I will not dwell on this other than to say that the absolute number—a \$54 billion increase, or about 10 percent, is the largest single number. On a percentage basis, there have been larger increases in previous years, like 2002, 2003, and 2008.

Here is another claim made by the President last night:

Since my election, Ford, Fiat-Chrysler, General Motors, Sprint, Softbank, Lockheed, Intel, Walmart, and many others have announced they will invest billions of dollars in the United States and will create tens of thousands of new American jobs.

The Associated Press reports that "many of the announcements reflect corporate decisions that predate [Trump's Presidential] election," making it unlikely his administration "is the sole or even primary reason for the expected hiring. . . . In the case of Intel, construction of the Chandler, Arizona, factory referred to by Trump actually began during Barack Obama's presidency. The project was delayed by insufficient demand for Intel's high-powered computer chips, but the company now expects to finish the factory within four years because it anticipates business growth.

Another statement made by President Trump last night in his speech:

We will stop the drugs from pouring into our country and poisoning our youth, and we will expand treatment for those who have become so badly addicted.

The facts:

Addicts and mentally ill people who gain access to treatment programs for the first time as a result of ObamaCare—the Affordable Care Act—are worried about repeal that President Trump has called for. Repeal could end coverage for 1.8 million people who have undergone addiction or mental health treatment, cut \$5.5 billion on spending on such services according to estimates by economist Richard Frank, a former administration official under Barack Obama, now with the Harvard Medical School.

The AP goes on to say:

The key question is what will happen to Medicaid as a result of changes Republicans

are pursuing? Broadly speaking, Republicans want to transform the health insurance program for low-income people from an open-ended Federal entitlement to a system that provides States with a limited amount of financing and gives them latitude on how to spend it.

The AP goes on to say:

If Congress is too stingy with State allotments, States would be hampered dealing with the emergencies like the opioid epidemic.

The next statement by President Trump last night:

According to data provided by the Department of Justice, the vast majority of individuals convicted for terrorism-related offenses since 9/11 came here from outside of our country. We have seen the attacks at home, from Boston to San Bernardino to the Pentagon, and yes, even the World Trade Center.

The Associated Press responds:

It's unclear what Justice Department data the President is citing. The most recent government information that has come out doesn't back up his claim. Just over half the people President Trump talks about were actually born in the United States, according to Homeland Security Department research. That report said of 82 people the government determined were inspired by foreign terrorist groups to attempt to carry out an attack on the U.S., just over half [of them] were [born in the United States] native-born citizens.

The AP goes on to say:

Even the attacks Trump singled out weren't entirely the work of foreigners. Syed Rizwan Farook, who along with his Pakistani wife killed 14 people in the deadly 2015 attack in San Bernardino, California, was born in Chicago.

It's true that in the immediate aftermath of September 11, the FBI's primary concern was with terrorists from overseas feared to be plotting attacks in the United States. But that's no longer the case. The FBI and Justice Department have been preoccupied with violent extremists from inside the U.S. who are inspired by the calls to violence and mayhem of the Islamic State group. The Justice Department has prosecuted scores of Islamic State-related cases since 2014, and many of the defendants are U.S. citizens.

Another statement by President Trump last night:

ObamaCare is collapsing . . . imploding Obamacare disaster.

The AP writes:

There are problems with the 2010 health care law, but whether it's collapsing is hotly disputed.

One of the two major components of the Affordable Care Act has been a spike in premiums and a drop in participation from insurers. But the other component, equally important, seems to be working fairly well, even if its costs are a concern.

Trump and congressional Republicans want to repeal the whole thing, which risks leaving millions of people uninsured if the replacement plan has shortcomings. Some critics say GOP rhetoric itself is making things worse by creating uncertainty about the future.

The health law offers subsidized private health insurance along with a state option to expand Medicaid for low-income people. Together, the two arms of the program reach more than 20 million people.

Republican governors whose states have expanded Medicaid are trying to find a way to persuade Congress and the administration to keep this expansion, and maybe even build on it, while imposing limits on the long-term costs of Medicaid.

While the Medicaid expansion seems to be working, the markets for subsidized health insurance are stressed in many states. Also affected are millions of people who buy individual policies outside the government markets, and face the same high premiums with no financial help from the health law. Larry Levitt of the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation says “implosion” is too strong a term. An AP count found that 12.2 million people signed up for this year, despite the Trump administration’s threats to repeal the law.

I might add, that it is despite all of the speeches made on the floor of the Senate and the House, promising that it would be repealed as well.

The last point I want to make is this. I was troubled last night by a recurring theme in the President’s speech. It was a theme about immigration in the United States. We are a nation of immigrants. My mother was an immigrant to this country. I am proud to serve as a Senator from the State where she and her family settled. I am proud of the struggle they went through—coming to this country, not knowing the language, going through some pretty rough times, facing poverty, taking the dirtiest and toughest jobs. Because of that, the second generation of my family—the one I represent—has brought some great people to this world in our own families and perhaps even added to the benefits of the United States for others.

Last night, if you listened to the characterization of immigrants, it was negative, virtually from start to finish.

In the audience last night, I had a young lady as my guest. She is an extraordinary lady. Her name is Aaima Sayed. She is Pakistani, and she was brought to the United States at the age of 3 by her parents from Pakistan. They settled in Chicago and eventually moved to New Jersey. It turns out the family had its difficulties and the mother and father split and separated. When the father left, he left behind his paperwork—which was in place or at least in the process—of trying to legalize the presence of his family, and nothing was done.

It wasn’t until she was in high school that this young lady realized that she was undocumented. That creates obstacles for any young person. In her case, a special obstacle was the cost of higher education. As an undocumented child in America, she didn’t qualify for government assistance—Federal Government assistance—and limited State assistance. Yet she aspired to go on to school and to borrow the money, if necessary, at high interest rates from private sources in order to finish her education. She graduated from Rutgers University magna cum laude and then wanted to go to medical school.

There weren’t many medical schools accepting undocumented students, but there was one. I am proud to tell you that it was Loyola University of Chicago, the Stritch School of Medicine. There were about 65 undocumented young people in medical school in the United States, and 30 of them were at

Loyola in Chicago. I have met most of them. Each and every one of them is more inspiring than the next.

They opened up the competition. They didn’t give them slots to fill. They said: Compete with everyone. These students were so outstanding from across the United States that they made it to Loyola.

This young lady, in her third year, faces another 6 years of education before she completes her medical degree. When she is finished with those 6 years, it isn’t over. In Illinois, we told her she could go to school, but it was part of a contract. She could attend school, and we would reduce the interest payments at a later part in her life if she gave us 1 year of service in an underserved community in Illinois for each year of medical school. She has 6 years of school left and 4 years of serving in a rural community or an underserved neighborhood clinic in the city of Chicago or nearby.

She signed up for it. She is an amazing young person. She is determined to get this medical degree—despite the debt, despite the obstacles. The only reason she can do this is because she is protected by something called DACA.

Let me explain. Some 16 years ago, I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act. It said that if you were brought to the United States, like she was, under the age of 16, you had a good life, no criminal record or history of a problematic nature, and completed your education, you can stay in the United States and eventually work your way toward legalization.

President Obama took it up and created an Executive order called DACA and said to the young people in that situation: Come and apply, pay a \$600 filing fee, then go through a criminal background check, and if you make it, we will give you 2 years to live in the United States without fear of deportation, with a work permit.

She signed up. That is how she can go to medical school. You need to work to go to medical school. She is going through a clinical experience where she is actually working in these hospitals. Without a work permit, she wouldn’t be able to complete medical school.

The obvious question is this: What is going to happen to this program under President Trump? In fairness, the President has said positive things about DACA and DREAMers. I thanked him personally. I have only met him three times, but I thanked him personally twice for doing that. I hope that it means that ultimately there will be some path for the 750,000 young people, just like her, who are simply asking for a chance to be educated and be part of America’s future.

I hope that, as people who listened to the speech last night think about immigrants to the United States, they will think about this young woman, as well, who has worked so hard her entire life to better herself and to be able to help others at a later point in life.

She is an extraordinary person, and there are so many more just like her.

They are immigrants to this country. In this case it is Muslim immigrant to this country who someday will be an exceptional doctor, who is going to give 4 years of her life back to my home State and then is going to help others all across the United States. That, to me, is an image of immigrants that shouldn’t be lost with the negative connotations that were raised last night.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

MINERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today to call for immediate action on the Miners Protection Act. Today, as we sit here, 22,600 miners have received letters. This is a copy of the letter, and I am going to read it to you. This is a letter they received today letting them know their healthcare benefits will be terminated at the end of April. This letter basically says:

The UMWA 1993 Benefit Plan notified you in December 2016—

This is one of multiple letters they received. Can you imagine getting a 4-month extension? Then by law you have to have 90 days before they can terminate you. Every time you get an extension, within 30 days you get another letter saying you are going to be terminated. That is the inhumane treatment our retired miners and mostly widows are receiving—

that the U.S. Congress had passed the Continuing Health Benefits for Miners Act, which provided for the transfer of federal funds to the Plan to cover the health care benefits you receive through April 30, 2017. The Plan cautioned that further Congressional action would be necessary in order for the Plan to provide health care coverage to you after April 30. At this time, Congress has not taken the action needed to continue your benefits. Unless Congress acts before the end of April, the 1993 Benefit Plan will not be able to provide you with the health benefits that you have been receiving from the 1993 Plan, and those benefits will terminate effective May 1, 2017. In addition, your Funds’ Health Service Card will no longer be valid.

Can you imagine a 75- or 80-year-old woman—a lady, a widow—who has lost her husband, probably because of black lung, and all the work he did for our country and for himself and his family, and she has received that three times or more now—not knowing what in the world or why they can’t do something that we promised, something that was done in 1946, where the Krug amendment and the Krug act basically said that we would take care of our miners so that they would have permanent healthcare and a pension. It was not done by taxpayers’ dollars. It was done by the coal they mined. For every ton of coal, there would be so much set aside. Then we had the bankruptcy laws happen in the 1980s, which basically destroyed a lot of companies for paying into it. Then we had the crash of 2008, which took it further down.

Now we stand here today, and we have a fix coming out of the AML, the

abandoned mine lands, coming, again, from coal that was mined to pay for the miners' pension and benefit plan, and we can't get it done.

I will tell you, if that piece of legislation was allowed to be voted on tonight, we would have well over 60 votes, bipartisan. My Republican colleagues and all of our Democrat colleagues here understand the importance of the working people.

President Trump is speaking about this every time. Last night he shouted out to miners. I was so pleased. I have not heard that since I have been here—anyone saying: Thank you for the job you have done. We are not leaving you behind. You have given to this country the energy through the toughest of times, and we appreciate that.

I was very, very appreciative to see that type of recognition. I can't tell you how much more appreciative I would be right now to see us as a bipartisan group—Democrats and Republicans—standing up for the working people that we talk about every day and saying: Listen, as to the pension guarantee act, which basic to the Miners Protection Act, we are going to pass that. We are going to put this aside. We don't have to worry about this anymore. We have done it.

That is all we are asking for. Everybody who has joined me in this journey understands that we are all fighting for the working people, which is what we were sent here to do, from your wonderful State of South Carolina to my beautiful State of West Virginia. They depend on us. The retired miners are walking our halls. Maybe you have seen them. If not, I am sure they will come by and say hi to you. They are very appreciative of the consideration we are all giving them. They are hoping we finally get this done.

I am doing it for them and for their families and what they have done for our country. The 4-month extension is not even humane. I have said that. My reason for saying that is that these people can't comprehend it. I can assure you that, when I go back to my office after I leave the floor, I will get phone calls: JOE, they are going to take my healthcare again. What am I going to do?

I keep saying: Ma'am, please, trust us; hold tight.

We could have had this fixed before. We kicked the can down the road 4 months. Now I have been told—and we all seem to accept it—that they are going to do a permanent healthcare fix. I am appreciative of that. The bottom line is that we have pensions out there hanging, which is going to be a bigger albatross around us if we don't something, and we have a chance to fix it all and put that aside.

I spoke to President Trump, and I am hopeful that he will speak out on this, and he has spoken out. He has told me that he supports it.

I said: Please, Mr. President, speak to our friends on the other side—our

leadership—and let them know how much you support this, and let us put this behind us because we can fix it once and for all.

We were told to get a legislative hearing, and we did that. We were told to go through regular order. We went to the Finance Committee, and it was passed out—bipartisan, overwhelmingly bipartisan.

I know we have the 60 votes. I was told we have to reintroduce it again. So here we are. I reintroduced it, and we have bipartisan support again. We are ready to go.

Why do we put these people through this type of agony? I don't know. We have so many other challenges, and we have to come together. This is one we have already agreed we are together on and can't move it.

I know you have always been a dear friend and supportive, and you know the hard work our people have done, and I appreciate that. However, it is time to act. It is time to get this done. If we wait until April, that is exactly when our continuing resolution is coming up, and, basically, we have no budget to work off of. So we have to do another extension until we can get something more permanent. They could get caught up in that CR again. We are going to say: We are sorry; we couldn't get it done, but we will give you another 2, 3, or 4 months.

I can't go home and continue to tell these wonderful people who have been so good and so patient that I am sorry, but we just have to wait another few months.

When is enough enough? When are those few months going to be up and we do the right thing? I am asking all of you; I am asking all of my colleagues: Please, this is one time when we can do something and feel good about it and go home over the weekend and go back to our constituents and tell them that this one is finished, that we fixed this.

I am asking for that vote. I would encourage all of my colleagues to do the same, to speak to the leaderships to make sure that we can move the miners protection and make sure the miners get the healthcare and the pension benefits they were guaranteed and they have been promised and which has been kept until now, and that we are not going to let them down.

With that, Mr. President, I thank you, and I thank all of my colleagues for the support we have been receiving. I am asking the majority leader to please let us have this vote and put it on the floor. Let's go from there and see what happens. I am willing to do that.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

FAMILY PLANNING PROVIDERS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, thank you, and thank you to some of my colleagues who are going to be joining me on the floor this afternoon.

The day after President Trump was inaugurated was one of the most inspiring I have ever gotten a chance to be part of. Millions of people, men and women, marched in Seattle, in Washington, DC, and in cities and towns in between. They carried signs, they chanted, and they made it absolutely undeniably clear that when it comes to women's rights and healthcare, people across the country do not want to go backward. Since then, they have continued to speak up and stand up.

But we are here today because Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress simply are not getting the message. I want to discuss one crucial example in particular—the possibility that in a matter of days, Senate Republicans could roll back a rule protecting family planning providers from being discriminated against and denied Federal funding.

Let me start by explaining a bit about what family planning providers mean to our community. These providers—part of the Title X program, which has bipartisan history—deliver critical healthcare services nationwide but are especially needed in rural and frontier areas. In 2015 alone, Title X provided basic primary and preventive healthcare services, such as Pap tests, breast exams, birth control, and HIV testing, to more than 4 million low-income women and men at nearly 4,000 health centers. In my home State of Washington, tens of thousands of patients are able to receive care at these centers each year. They often have nowhere else to turn for healthcare. In fact, 4 out of 10 woman who receive care at health centers funded by Title X consider it to be their only source of healthcare.

Taking resources away from these providers would be cruel. It would have the greatest impact on women and families who are most in need. But that is exactly what the law passed in the House, which is now on its way to the Senate, would mean. It would undo a valuable effort by the Obama administration to ensure that healthcare providers are evaluated for Federal funding based on their ability to provide the services in question, not ideology. In doing so, the bill would make it even easier for States, led by extreme politicians, to deny family planning providers Federal funding, not because of the quality of the care they provide or the value to the communities they serve but based on whether the politicians in charge agree that women should be able to exercise their constitutionally protected rights to safe, legal abortion.

It is the 21st century. It is time for politicians to stop telling women what they can and can't do with their own bodies. That is what the women and men who have been marching and speaking up all over our country believe. That is what I believe. It is what Democrats believe.

If Leader MCCONNELL thinks he can rush this harmful legislative effort through without a fight, we are here to say he is wrong. He can expect Democrats and maybe even some Republicans who are concerned about losing healthcare providers in their own States to fight back. So today I am calling on the leader to commit right now to drop this effort and agree not to bring this bill to the floor. It is well past time that extreme Republicans end their damaging political attacks on women. I think the opportunity to start that is right this minute. So we urge him to take this action and not bring this to the floor. We want him to know that we are going to fight back every step of the way if he does.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to join my colleague and friend Senator MURRAY to say that I, too, am ready for this fight to oppose S.J. Res. 13, which would allow the discrimination against Title X family planning providers. This is a misguided measure that would leave millions of women and families with fewer healthcare options. It would drastically decrease women's access to basic primary and preventative health services, including lifesaving cancer screenings and HIV testing.

Make no mistake, as Senator MURRAY said, the primary target of this legislation is Planned Parenthood. For years now, Republican leaders in Congress have tried to keep women from choosing Planned Parenthood as their healthcare provider—this at a time when Planned Parenthood serves millions of women nationwide, including nearly 12,000 women in New Hampshire, my home State. Most of the women in New Hampshire have incomes below or near the poverty line. Many of those women live in rural areas where they don't have other options for healthcare coverage.

The sad irony of this attack on Planned Parenthood is that study after study has shown that cutting back access to birth control and to other family planning methods actually increases the number of abortions. So I understand that opponents are interested in supporting this legislation because they think Planned Parenthood provides abortions, but the coverage Planned Parenthood is providing to women in New Hampshire and across this country with Federal dollars does not allow for abortions. So what we are doing is taking away women's access to contraception and to other family planning services and saying: You have no choice now.

More than ever right now, facts matter. Research matters. Talking away women's access to birth control and family planning will lead to more abortions, not fewer abortions. Yet this legislation is part and parcel of a broader national campaign against Planned Parenthood, whose clinics have been the target of vilification, of threats, and of violence. In October of last year, the Planned Parenthood clinic in Claremont, NH, was vandalized not once but twice. The second attack, a breaking-and-entering incident, caused extensive damage. It forced the clinic to close for 5 weeks.

I have great admiration for the courage of doctors and other healthcare providers at the Claremont clinic. Despite threats and attacks, they are determined to continue serving women across the Connecticut River Valley, many of whom have no alternative to the Claremont clinic. They are typical of the dedicated healthcare professionals at Planned Parenthood clinics all across our country.

The good news is that, according to poll after poll, the American people across the political spectrum—from Independents, to Libertarians, to Democrats, to Republicans—strongly support Planned Parenthood and oppose efforts to take away women's ability to choose Planned Parenthood as their healthcare provider.

At last night's Presidential address to Congress, I was honored to have as my guest Jennifer Frizzell of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England. Jen knows exactly what is at stake for women if President Trump and Republican leaders succeed in closing hundreds of Planned Parenthood clinics across the United States.

So let's be clear again: Supporting family planning clinics is not about abortion, which by law is never funded by taxpayer dollars—something that I think is often misrepresented by some of our colleagues here in Congress. What this is about is ensuring that American women have access to the basic healthcare they need. For 40 percent of women, their visits to a family planning center is the only care they receive annually. In 2015 alone, Title X provided basic primary and preventive healthcare services, such as Pap tests, breast exams, birth control, and HIV testing, to more than 4 million women and men at nearly 4,000 health centers.

I am sure that every one of our colleagues is receiving letters and emails and phone calls from constituents on this issue. They are pleading with us not to take away their access to Planned Parenthood and the healthcare they trust and depend on.

I received this message from Caitlin Parnell of Hampstead, NH. She said:

As a young mother of a 2-year-old, my husband and I knew we wanted to wait to have more children. We were both working full time but barely making ends meet. The companies we worked for offered health insurance, but they were small companies, and the monthly cost was well more than we could afford. So we went without. With no

insurance, I turned to Planned Parenthood for birth control. With the sliding pay scale, I was able to get exams and birth control within my budget. We were able to decide the best time to have more children, which also allowed us to responsibly manage our finances as well. An unplanned pregnancy at that point would have destroyed the little financial stability we had. I don't know where our family would be without Planned Parenthood.

Karla Canderhoof is a stay-at-home mother in Newfields, NH. She wrote this:

After being diagnosed with ovarian cyst issues that caused debilitating pain, I turned to Planned Parenthood for treatment. In my case, the treatment for ovarian cysts was birth control. At the time (during my college years) I could not afford the cost of birth control due to my lack of insurance. But Planned Parenthood gave me birth control free of charge.

Amanda Arel of Rochester, NH, sent this message:

During the ages of 22 to 25, I utilized Planned Parenthood for my annual exams and birth control. As I did not have insurance and was in college, I was not able to afford most medical care. Planned Parenthood not only provided me with essential care, they made it very comfortable for me and were very knowledgeable and answered any questions I had. They provided birth control for me that, if it wasn't for them, I would not have been able to get, at a cost I could afford.

I still support Planned Parenthood because they provide safe, affordable healthcare for all, and that is so important.

We need to listen to our constituents, those who are speaking out in passionate support of Planned Parenthood and other family planning clinics.

As Senator MURRAY said so eloquently, this is about respecting women's access to healthcare services, including those millions of vulnerable women who have nowhere else to turn for essential care. This is also about respecting women's constitutionally protected right to make our own reproductive choices. We must not allow Congress to strip away Federal investments in family planning clinics by allowing States to discriminate against providers like Planned Parenthood.

I urge our Republican colleagues, don't bring S.J. Res. 13 to the floor. If it does come to the floor, I certainly intend to join in the fight with my colleagues—Senator MURRAY, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and so many other Democrats and, I believe, Republicans—to defeat this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am proud and honored to follow my very distinguished colleague from New Hampshire, Senator SHAHEEN, and Senator MURRAY of Washington in this cause which invokes a line that I think the President used last night in his address to us, pledging cooperation for causes where we can make a common cause.

Surely no cause is more important than healthcare, no goal is more important than preventive services for

women so we can all avoid the costs not only in dollars and cents but the cost of human suffering and foreclosed futures that will come when women are denied these kinds of basic services.

I met this morning with a group from Planned Parenthood, patients and providers working in clinics across New England. They told me their story—some of them patients, some of them service providers and volunteers—about the kind of transformative effect that primary care, examinations and screenings, can have for women who would otherwise lack those services. The community health centers cannot substitute for them.

Family planning programs under title X are often the only Federal programs dedicated to providing comprehensive services in family planning but also in related preventive health services.

Over the past year alone, title X providers have provided cancer and HIV screenings, contraceptive services, and other primary and preventive services to over 4 million women and men at nearly 4,000 health centers in New England and across the country. This network of healthcare providers is a safety net. They compose a network, the title X network, including providers of State and local health departments, federally qualified health centers, and family planning councils. They create a network that provides a critical source of healthcare to people who otherwise would be denied it. They are trusted providers who are willing to serve the uninsured, the uninsured and low-income individuals who risk losing all access to healthcare if it was not for this network.

These clinics are often the only healthcare providers in rural areas and other parts of the country. So the political attacks on providers that provide abortion services would mean a loss of access to all family planning and preventive healthcare in these parts of the country—rural, metropolitan, suburban. Not only are these services necessary, but family planning services are really good investments, especially when it comes to the money that otherwise would be spent when illnesses or diseases become more serious.

In 2010, the \$1.14 billion that was spent in this country on family planning resulted in more than \$8 billion in gross savings. That is a clearly worthwhile investment.

The resolution that passed the House last month that Senator MCCONNELL is considering bringing to the Senate floor would eliminate protections that prevent discrimination against these very providers, discrimination based on facts or sometimes nonfacts that have nothing to do with the quality of care or the worthiness of the investment in these clinics and healthcare providers.

The regulation that Republicans are seeking to eliminate ensures that no qualified providers will be excluded from eligibility for Federal funding for discriminatory reasons outside of that

provider's ability to provide care. That is really the criterion that matters. The ones who want to eliminate this regulation apparently would rather risk limiting access to healthcare in order to score political points. Unfortunately, it is really that simple.

At a time when Republicans continue to try to push ahead with repealing the Affordable Care Act, which also includes essential support for preventive healthcare, they also want to disrupt the country's healthcare system for this kind of women's healthcare.

Just last night, after President Trump claimed he wanted to work with Members of both parties to invest in women's health, we are threatened with this step to eliminate an important regulation that protects women's health. I ask the President and my colleagues across the aisle to join in this common cause, which should unite us on a bipartisan basis. If they want to continue these attacks, we are ready for the fight, but we would much rather cooperate and collaborate in the cause of women's healthcare.

I urge my Senate colleagues to listen to the kind of providers and patients whom I met with this morning, the kind of provider that Senator SHAHEEN brought with her last night as her guest, the kind of providers and patients and volunteers who work in these clinics all across the country, whether it is Planned Parenthood or other kinds of clinics. I ask them to listen to the advocates here, supporters, like the National Coalition of STD Directors, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the ACLU, and the American Medical Student Association. They are just a few of the stakeholders who advocate strongly that this regulation be continued and who oppose the step the House passed and that the majority leader may bring to the floor.

These people have dedicated their lives and their careers to assisting the vulnerable, whether they are providing healthcare or legal services or other kinds of support, and they are saying to us: Do not eliminate this regulation. I think we ought to listen to them. I hope my colleagues will.

I am determined that we will fight tooth and nail if we need to do so, but I would much rather that we follow the President's offer and that we collaborate to stop the elimination of this regulation, which is so important to making sure that women's healthcare is based on quality, not on discriminatory reasons based on political motive.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise to oppose S.J. Res. 13, which is a Congressional Review Act resolution to undo the regulations which protect title X health centers. I believe this resolution, although well meaning, will have the opposite effect of its intention.

I particularly want to discuss the organization known as Planned Parenthood, but, more generally, these women's health centers, these title X health centers, No. 1, provide many healthcare services to women, particularly low-income women. They are the choice of those women. They are a place they have chosen to go to receive their healthcare treatment.

I do think that one of the problems with this whole debate is the use of the term "funding" of Planned Parenthood. What we are talking about here is not funding, as in a budget line or a budget provision that says: Planned Parenthood gets \$58 million or \$100 million or \$10, whatever it is. That is not the way it works. What we are talking about is reimbursement for women's healthcare services provided on an individual, case-by-case basis, and this does not include abortion. It does not include abortion.

These organizations in Maine—Planned Parenthood, for example, serves 10,000 people. Ten thousand women choose to get their healthcare services from Planned Parenthood.

The other piece of this debate I have never understood is why those who are opposed to abortion would be so opposed to organizations that allow women to make choices about pregnancies and provide contraception and contraception advice, which statistically we know reduces abortion.

In Maine, because of the access to organizations like Planned Parenthood and other women's healthcare clinics, we have seen our teen pregnancy rate drop 58 percent in the last 20 years or so—58 percent. That is a significant reduction, and it is attributable, at least in some significant part, to the availability of the services provided by these organizations.

It has always struck me as ironic, in the extreme, that someone who says they are against abortion should be against an agency that provides contraception and family planning services that prevent pregnancy and therefore prevent abortion.

I subscribe to President Clinton's formulation that abortion should be safe, legal, and rare. It should not be something that is chosen just casually—and of course it isn't. This is a terribly difficult decision for a woman, but that is not the subject today. The subject today is curtailing the reimbursement for women's healthcare services to an organization or organizations that may also provide abortion services.

It is contrary to the very idea of trying to prevent abortion, but it is also denying healthcare services of choice to thousands of women in Maine and millions across the country.

I have sat in this body for 4 years and heard people talking about how consumers and patients should be able to choose their physicians, they should be able to choose their healthcare options. This was a basic principle. It is one of the arguments we have heard as we have been discussing other healthcare

issues in this body. This Congressional Review Act provision would take away that choice. I think that is a great disservice to those citizens, many of whom are low income, many of whom are covered by Medicaid, many of whom do not have private health insurance. To take this step that this resolution would entail would be very shortsighted, and I believe it is a violation of the rights of those people to choose their healthcare providers.

It also does not achieve the ends that the sponsors want to achieve. That is why I believe that this resolution—although it may be denominated as something to do with being anti-abortion, I think it is just the opposite. If this resolution passes and these healthcare centers under Title X, including Planned Parenthood, are unable to deliver these services, there will be more unwanted pregnancies and more abortions. I think that is a sad and unfortunate outcome to be perpetrated by people who say they are trying to oppose abortion.

Planned Parenthood provides women's healthcare services. It provides contraceptive services. I know the people in Maine who work for this agency, and I know this is a terribly controversial issue, but I believe that if what we want to do is minimize the number of abortions, then it makes no sense whatsoever to somehow indiscriminately strike out at the funding of the agencies that provide healthcare services.

Nobody in this body is talking about Federal funds for abortion. That is not what the issue is. If that were the issue, this would be an entirely different debate. The issue is taking reimbursement away from the Planned Parenthood clinic or Title X clinic for mammograms, cervical exams, or other women's healthcare services. Why would we want to do that in the name of achieving some other goal that won't even be achieved? In fact, it will be made a more widespread issue.

I hope the Senate will realize that whatever the motivation behind this provision is, it just makes no sense. It makes no sense from the point of view of preventing abortion. It makes no sense in terms of the taxpayers. Preventive services, contraceptive services, cost about \$200 a patient; a Medicaid birth costs about \$10,000. If it is a Medicaid patient, those are taxpayer dollars. We are talking about saving taxpayers money.

This goes to the healthcare system in general: Why would we want to undo prevention, whether prevention of unwanted pregnancies or prevention of a disease? Prevention is part of the solution to the healthcare crisis in this country because of the excessive cost.

Here is a specific case. Again, we are not talking about funding abortions. We are not talking about funding Planned Parenthood. We are not talking about funding these Title X health centers. We are talking about protecting them in terms of their reim-

bursement for women's health services delivered. That is what this vote is about. If you vote for this, you are voting to take away reimbursement for health services that are necessary to protect the health and well-being of women across this country.

I hope my colleagues will vote no on this resolution, and I believe it will serve the public and it will even serve those people who are concerned most deeply—and I understand—about abortion. If you want fewer abortions, fund Planned Parenthood. It seems to me that is a fairly clear correlation, and it is one we should respect. But we also should respect the rights, needs, and choices of those millions of women who rely on these clinics for their healthcare needs aside from the issue of reproductive rights, just straight healthcare needs. That is what this vote is all about.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here today for the 158th time to ask this Chamber to wake up to the mounting evidence of climate change. The sad truth is that, in Congress anyway, this issue has turned starkly partisan thanks to a torrent of dark political money that the fossil fuel industry uses to both threaten and reward the Republican Party in a dirty, dark money game of stick-and-carrot. Republicans in Congress ignore climate change for the simple reason that the fossil fuel industry has become their political life support system. It does not have to be this way.

Outside this Chamber, even Republicans see things very differently. In the investment sector, where people have to make decisions based on real facts and where duties to shareholders limit overly creative accounting, the Republican signal is clear.

An impressive group of Republican former Treasury Secretaries and Republican former Presidential economic advisers recently proposed a conservative, market-based climate solution. Republican Presidents trusted these folks with the conduct of the U.S. economy. Jim Baker was Secretary of the Treasury under President Reagan, Hank Paulson was Secretary of the Treasury under President George W. Bush, and George Shultz was Secretary of the Treasury under President Nixon,

in addition to other distinguished offices that they held. Joining those three were Martin Feldstein, Chairman of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, and Greg Mankiw, who held that position for President George W. Bush; Rob Walton, the former chairman of the board of Walmart, the world's largest retailer and employer; and Tom Stephenson from Sequoia Capital, the venture capital firm out in Silicon Valley. This Republican group proposed a "carbon dividends" plan. It combines a carbon tax on fossil fuels—which reflects harm from carbon emissions which market economics ordinarily requires to be built into the price of the product—with a big dividend returning all of the revenues to the American people, and a reduction of regulations, which may be mooted by a good enough carbon fee. This idea is actually not so different from my own American Opportunity Carbon Fee Act.

In their report, they all note that the "mounting evidence of climate change is growing too strong to ignore." Many would say that it grew too strong to ignore a good decade ago, but it is important that these Republican leaders have acknowledged this.

They also said: "Economists are nearly unanimous in their belief that a carbon tax is the most efficient and effective way to reduce carbon emissions."

This report lines up with many other Republicans outside Congress who support a revenue-neutral carbon fee. It is the favorite climate solution in conservative economic circles. Indeed, it is the only widely accepted climate solution among Republicans.

The Niskanen Center, a Libertarian think tank that spun off from the Cato Institute, last month wrote this:

The case for climate action is now so strong that one would be hard-pressed to find a serious academic economist who opposes using market forces to manage the damage done by greenhouse emissions.

Like the Treasury Secretaries, economists and investors throughout the financial community are saying loud and clear: We can no longer ignore climate change.

Goldman Sachs, for instance, in 2015 did a report on the low-carbon economy. It was called: "Goldman Sachs equity investor's guide to a low carbon world, 2015–2025." So unless somebody here is going to say that Goldman Sachs is in on the hoax, Goldman Sachs is taking this pretty seriously.

Last year, the investment firm BlackRock, with more than \$1 trillion in assets under management, issued a report titled: "Adapting Portfolios to Climate Change."

I don't think investors trust \$1 trillion to a firm that falls for hoaxes. BlackRock, like Goldman, knows that climate change is real and is helping its investors plan for the economic fallout.

BlackRock warns in its report: "Investors can no longer ignore climate

change. . . .” Parenthetical editorial comment: That is the job of Republicans in Congress.

BlackRock also had something to say about a price on carbon. They said this: “Higher carbon pricing would help address [externalities from fossil fuels] and would be the most cost-effective way for countries to meet their Paris agreement pledges.”

So in the real world, where real decisions are being made by very smart people backed by real money, they are telling their clients: You must take climate change seriously, and you must take carbon pricing seriously.

The BlackRock report had this data on prices that companies are setting on carbon internally—in their own internal accounting—across sectors, including healthcare and energy and utilities. As we can see, the price per metric ton ranges from a low of about \$10 in information technology, up to over \$350 per metric ton—internal costs of carbon accounting in these industries.

The point ought to be pretty clear. The business community is acting, investors are insisting on it, and a price on carbon is a key part of the program.

The legendary Wayne Gretsky’s rule was to “skate to where the puck is going to be.” These major firms recognize where the carbon economy is heading. We should too. We would, if it weren’t for the political mischief wreaked in Congress by the fossil fuel industry.

BlackRock and Goldman Sachs are not alone. The insurance and reinsurance industry is one of the world’s biggest investors, as well as one of the world’s best analyzers of risk. Munich Re and Swiss Re, and others in property casualty and reinsurance, warn us that climate change is real and portends huge costs for society. Munich Re’s head of risk accumulation in the United States said in 2015: “As a nation, we need to take steps to reduce the societal impact of weather events as we see greater variability and volatility in our climate.”

One of the biggest investors in the housing market is the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, Freddie Mac. Freddie Mac has warned about climate change impact on the real estate sector: “The economic losses and social disruption may happen gradually, but they are likely to be greater in total than those experienced in the housing crisis of the great recession.”

When we think of what we went through in the housing crisis of the great recession, wow, Freddie Mac is warning that the economic losses and social disruption from climate change in our housing markets are likely to be worse.

These are all serious investors and they have serious warnings for us, and ignoring all of them just to please fossil fuel industry patrons is a big, big mistake.

Even President Trump’s nominee to head the Securities and Exchange Commission, Jay Clayton, thinks we need

action. For years, his law firm has encouraged clients, including ExxonMobil, to disclose climate change-related risks to the SEC and to investors. If he is confirmed, I hope he will enforce the SEC’s existing disclosure requirements for climate risk and clarify that public disclosures should include asset valuations based on global compliance with international treaties. Investors need climate change risks disclosed against a “reality check” baseline that assumes international compliance with the Paris climate commitments. An assumption that we fail should not be acceptable.

Slowly, investor disclosures are improving. Last year, New York attorney general Eric Schneiderman forced Peabody Energy to restate its disclosures. Just last week, Chevron acknowledged to its investors in an SEC filing that, lo and behold, some of its products “may be considered pollutants,” noted “new conclusions about the effects of the company’s operations on human health or the environment,” and they acknowledged “an increased possibility of governmental investigations and, potentially, private litigation against the company.”

It is better late than never, I suppose. Now it is time for the rest of the industry to report fully and fairly, first on the risks that shareholders bear from assets that are wrongly valued now—that are falsely valued in their reports—and, second, on the company’s potentially culpable behavior in climate denial.

Institutional investors are joining in those efforts. Our Rhode Island pension fund, managed by our treasurer, Seth Magaziner, is pushing for greater transparency on political and lobbying spending at large energy companies like Exxon, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, and Devon. For the resolution filed at ConocoPhillips, Rhode Island was joined by over 20 other cofilers, including the State of Connecticut, Senator MURPHY’s home State, whom I see here on the floor.

Just recently, the G20 nations—the 20 biggest economies in the world—set up a group called the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures. It is made up of 32 members from large banks, insurance companies, asset management companies, pension funds, credit rating agencies, and accounting and consulting firms—you know, liberal extremists. And they are saying: Here it comes; let’s get ready. They have asked that companies begin to come clean on the climate risk they face.

The big energy companies need to come clean on how much they are spending to deny climate science and where they are spending it, because, ultimately, it is their own investors who will be hurt by their irresponsibility. Ultimately, all the phony climate denial they pay for is a fool’s errand because the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology aren’t going away, and a day of reckoning for all this mischief

and nonsense they have paid for inevitably will come.

We in the Senate have a duty to the American people to find a way to combat climate change. I realize this body will need help in that task. We will need help from the business community, which can apply its understanding of market forces and risk analysis to this challenge. It would help if the fossil fuel industry would focus on the long term health of its shareholders rather than on short-term gain. The fossil fuel industry should stand down the relentless political opposition it has maintained to any climate solution, and it should stand down the phony climate denial operation it continues to support.

It will take all of us coming together—companies, investors, regulators, governments, citizens, Republicans and Democrats—to achieve Donald Trump’s once-stated goal of combating the “catastrophic and irreversible effects of climate change”—his quote: “catastrophic and irreversible effects of climate change.”

I did not misquote President Trump, although he was Donald Trump then. It was 2009, and this full page advertisement was taken out in the New York Times declaring that the science of climate change was “irrefutable” and the consequences of climate change would be “catastrophic and irreversible.” It was signed by none other than Donald J. Trump, as well as his children, Donald Trump, Jr., Eric Trump, and Ivanka Trump. They were right then. If they get back to this, they will be right now.

The evidence and the science have only piled up since 2009. It is time for all of us to heed the advice of our universities, our scientists, and the people who actually know what they are talking about, and put the arguments of the fossil fuel industry where they belong—in the trash bin of history. We need to wake up before it is too late.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, last night, President Trump began his speech with an appropriate reference to the anti-Semitic attacks that have occurred all over the country. Two bomb threats were called into a Jewish community center in the New Haven area in Connecticut. I visited that center and the staff and the kids of that center, who are now being housed in a nearby synagogue. He also condemned, in strong terms, the murder of a young man in Kansas City, the victim of an apparent hate crime, targeted for simply being a foreigner or being of a different religion. We can’t know exactly what the reason was, but it was an attack based on hate.

I want to tell my colleagues a little bit about that young man, to begin with, as a means of, once again, coming to the floor of the Senate to tell my colleagues about the victims of gun violence in this country—the 86 or so

people every day who are taken by guns, suicides, and murders and accidental shootings; the 2,600 people a month whose lives are taken through gun violence, and the 31,000 a year. By the way, that number is just the number of people who are killed. Those are the lives that are eliminated. There are another 75,000 every year who are injured by gun fire, whose lives are irrevocably altered by that act of violence.

Srinivas Kuchibhotla was a 32-year-old engineer. He was working for Garmin. He was just hanging out at a bar. It was Austin's Bar and Grill, and he was enjoying the company of friends. Witnesses saw a man enter the bar. He was agitated, and he was drunk. He was a patron of the bar. He had left and he reentered, and he began shooting at Srinivas and his friend. Witnesses say that the shooter told Srinivas to "get out of my country" before killing him and then critically injuring his friend and an unbelievably brave bystander who tried to stop the shooter.

Hundreds of grief-stricken family members and friends gathered in his hometown in India for this young man's funeral. In accordance with Hindu tradition, his body was carried on a carriage and his ashes were laid to rest. Friends said that his mother was absolutely wailing as the carriage went by.

His mother had wondered whether America was a safe place for her son. Months before the shooting, she asked him to return to India if he was feeling insecure, but he told her he was safe, that he was fine. His wife also wondered how safe it would be to stay in the United States, but she said that Srinivas always assured her that only good things could happen to good people.

He undoubtedly was a good person. His family members remember him as the kindest person you would meet. He was, in their words, "full of love, care and compassion for everyone. He never uttered a word of hatred, simple gossip, or a careless comment."

His friends and family members remember him as "brilliant, well-mannered and simply an outstanding human being."

He was "a very sharp, top-of-his-class kind of guy," said one of his classmates at the University of Texas at El Paso where Srinivas earned a master's degree in electrical and electronic engineering. He was also an avid cricket player and a big fan of cricket as well.

He was 32 years old. He was sitting at a bar, enjoying time with his friends when a man who was at the bar, who probably saw Srinivas, thought that he looked different from him and, filled with hate, walked back into the bar and shot and killed him.

That is only one story from that day. On average, there are 85 other stories across the country in which people lose their lives to gunfire. What made me so mad last night was that after that moment—that appropriate moment in

which President Trump talked about this horrible shooting—moments later, he referenced the daily slaughter that happens in our cities. He spoke in front of the joint session for, it seemed, nearly an hour and a half and offered absolutely no solutions to do anything about the cascading gun violence that is enveloping our Nation.

Irony of all ironies, the same week that he is lamenting, eulogizing Srinivas's death in Kansas City, he is signing a law passed by this body that would allow for more people with serious mental illness to get their hands on guns.

We don't know the full story of Adam Purinton yet, but you have to imagine that this was someone who was deeply disturbed. Maybe he was just drunk, but in order to decide to pull out a gun in a bar and shoot someone just because they look different than you do probably means that there is something going on—more than a few beers. Mr. Purinton probably had some stuff going on. He might have been mentally ill.

When I got here, I thought that one of the few things we agreed upon—Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives—was that if you were seriously mentally ill, you probably shouldn't be able to buy a weapon, not because people with a mental illness are inherently dangerous—that is not true at all—but because erring on the side of caution when it comes to someone who is seriously ill would probably be the safe thing to do. That used to be a bipartisan commitment.

A few weeks ago, this body passed a law to allow tens of thousands of people who have serious mental illness, who have been judged by a government agency to be so sick that they can't manage their own financial affairs, they literally can't cash a check, their Social Security check has to be sent to someone else because they can't manage their affairs—we passed a law to allow those people to buy guns.

Spare me your concern for the victims of gun violence if you are not willing to do anything about it and, in fact, you are going to take steps to make gun violence more likely rather than less likely in this country. So 31,000 people a year, 2,600 a month, 86 a day—there is no other country in the world in which this happens. There is no other country in the world in which these numbers of people are dying from guns. It is our fault because week after week, month after month, year after year, we do nothing about it, and now we are making it worse.

In the 4 years after Sandy Hook happened, I went back to tell people that we had done nothing. That was embarrassing enough. Now I have to go back to the families of Sandy Hook and tell people that when Congress thinks about gun violence, we think about making changes in the law to make gun violence more likely, to put more guns into the hands of dangerous people. We are going backward now.

Teresa Robertson owned a floral shop in a beauty shop in Fairfax, OK. Fairfax is a really small town, a really tight-knit community. It is still on edge because about a week ago, Teresa's estranged husband walked into the store, started shooting at Teresa, and then barricaded himself inside city hall, firing shots at the local police, who returned fire, fatally killing Teresa's husband.

She had filed a protective order against her husband about 2 weeks before because she feared for her life. She filed for divorce a week later, and a week following that, he shot her.

Laws can protect against something like that, right? We have the power to stop that. In Connecticut, if you file a protective order against a spouse who you believe is going to harm you, the police have the ability to take those weapons away for the period of time in which you were adjudicating that protective order.

If that law had been in effect in Oklahoma, maybe Teresa Robertson would still be alive today and maybe her husband would still be alive and maybe their two kids—ages 13 and 16—wouldn't be without both of their parents.

The fact is, every single day, domestic partners—women primarily—are killed or are shot by boyfriends or estranged husbands. It often plays out just like this: protective order, divorce filing, murder. That is on us.

We have the ability to protect women from their estranged husbands. There are laws. We can't stop every shooting, but it certainly can cut down on these numbers.

Two days later, emergency responders found 26-year-old Michael "Shane" Watkins bleeding profusely from a gunshot wound to the head on Berkshire Avenue in Bridgeport, CT. He died shortly after arriving at the hospital. The police are still investigating the shooting, but they believe that Shane was an innocent victim of a robbery that went bad.

His friends said that Shane was someone who was always laughing, who was always smiling, who had a good heart, was a caring person. A neighbor said that Shane was "always upbeat, always joking, always smiling." This was a good kid.

He was a dedicated family man. He was a long time employee of the local Stop & Shop. He was 26 years old. This was a robbery gone bad. Shane Watkins was one of those 86.

Twelve-year-old Kanari Gentry Bowers was playing basketball with friends in Chicago, IL, at Henderson Elementary School. A stray bullet hit her on February 11. For 4 awful, agonizing days, Kanari sat lying unconscious in the hospital with a bullet lodged in her 12-year-old spine before she died on February 15.

Her family released a statement that said: "Please keep your children close and do whatever it takes to protect them from the senseless gun violence in our city."

That doesn't sound exceptional, does it? "Please keep your children close and do whatever it takes to protect them." Think about that idea. Think about the idea that you can't let your children get far away from you in Chicago today because they are not at risk of getting lost; they are at risk of being shot.

The little girl had dreams of becoming a judge. That is not something that a lot of 12-year-old girls are thinking about, but Kanari wanted to be a judge. She was described as a vivacious young girl.

I hear President Trump talk about Chicago all the time. He talks about Chicago as though he cares, but he doesn't propose anything that would reduce the trajectory of gun violence, the horror of living in neighborhoods that you can't let your child stray more than a few feet from you without fearing for their lives. He has proposed nothing to do with making that city safer.

People say Chicago has some of the toughest gun laws in the Nation, yet it is one of the most violent places. Exactly, exactly: Chicago has some of the toughest gun laws in the Nation. New York City has some of the toughest gun laws in the Nation. They are still violent places. Why? Because the vast majority of guns in those cities, the illegal guns that spread throughout the city like poison ivy come from outside of Chicago. They come from Indiana. In New York, they come from South Carolina. They come from North Carolina. They come from places in which it is easy to buy a gun without a background check at a gun show or on the internet. They flow into these cities and become used in murder after murder.

If you don't have a Federal requirement that background checks have to be conducted wherever you buy a gun, no matter how strong the laws of Chicago are, they can't be protected; 12-year-old girls can't be protected.

This was all in February, by the way. This was all in the last 3 weeks.

On February 20, some friends got together at a local church in Pomona, CA, and all of a sudden, gunshots started firing through the windows and the walls of this church—a drive-by shooting.

You know who was dead at the end of that? An 8-year-old little boy named Jonah. He was adopted from an orphanage in Taiwan. He had been in the United States for only 3 years. His adoptive parents and his friends—you should read what they say about this kid: "He had an infectious smile and loved everyone and everything."

He was still learning English, but with his playful demeanor, he had adapted almost immediately to life in the United States. He loved wrestling with his adoptive dad, running, laughing. He loved superheroes. He was always injuring himself jumping off of something. He loved living in this country.

He was a 5-year-old in an orphanage in Taiwan, and then he was in the United States with a dad and with superhero action figures, and now he is dead because somebody fired bullets randomly into a church in Pomona, CA.

Why don't we do anything about this? We are not so coldhearted as to be unable to understand what life is like for a mom and a dad who lose an 8-year-old child. We are not so brain-dead as to not be able to comprehend the fact that every time someone is shot, there are at least 20 people whose lives are permanently altered.

The post-traumatic stress involved in one shooting has enormous ripple effects. I have talked at length on this floor about the constant grief that envelopes my town of Sandy Hook because of what happened there. It will never end.

Now, instead of defending the status quo, we are talking about making it easier for deeply mentally ill people to get guns. A bill was just introduced on the floor of the Senate this week that would allow for someone to carry a concealed weapon anywhere in the Nation, regardless of what that local State jurisdiction wanted. If you had a concealed weapon permit in Texas, you would be able to walk into Manhattan without any way for the local police to check you out. There is even an effort to make silencers legal.

Mr. President, 31,000 a year, 2,600 a month, 86 a day. I have come down to the floor I don't know how many times—certainly not as many as Senator WHITEHOUSE but many times to tell the stories of the victims. I told a few more this afternoon because if the data doesn't move you—again, only in this country; in no other country in the world does this happen—then maybe the stories of these victims will move you. Maybe being able to put yourself in the shoes of a mom who lost a child, of a husband who lost a wife way before their time, will move you to action.

This is only controversial here. Ninety percent of the American public wants us to move forward with the universal background checks. The majority of Americans think these super-powerful military weapons should stay in the hands of the military and law enforcement. Everybody out there wants to give law enforcement the tools and the funding necessary to carry out the existing law. It is not controversial out in the American public; it is only controversial here.

It is about time that we do something about this epic level of carnage that continues to plague our Nation and have some response to these voices of victims that seem endless.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to enter into a colloquy with the Senator from Delaware.

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

RUSSIA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I am here to discuss, along with the Senator from Delaware, the issue of Russia. I know it has been at the forefront of much of the debate that is ongoing in this country. I wanted to begin by commending the Vice President and Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Homeland Security and Secretary of State for the strong message of support for NATO. That includes the President last night and their strong support, by the way, for the Transatlantic Alliance that these individuals outlined during their respective visits to the Munich Security Conference and meetings with allies in February.

At that Munich Security Conference on February 18, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, said: "I hope [he means the world] will choose a democratic world order, a post-West one, in which each country is defined by its sovereignty." I think that based on recent history, it is clear that when a Russian leader says "post-West," we should interpret that as a phrase to mean post-America.

So I would ask the Senator with regard to this, what are his views with regard to Vladimir Putin's desire to establish spheres of influence in Europe and the Middle East, create divisions with our allies. How should we view the Russian world view as it compares to the national interests of the United States?

Mr. COONS. I would like to thank my friend, the Senator from Florida, my colleague on the Foreign Relations Committee and on the Appropriations Committee. I would like to answer his question by saying, it seems clear to all of us on the Foreign Relations Committee who have had the opportunity to travel to Eastern Europe to visit with our NATO allies that Vladimir Putin has a world view and an agenda that is in sharp contrast with our own.

Vladimir Putin dreams of returning Russia to the days of the Russian Empire, to reexerting influence over a broad geographic region from the Baltic Sea and Poland and Ukraine to the Caucasus and Central Asia. He has internally used the West and NATO as a scapegoat for Russia's internal economic woes. He has, as we know, launched invasions or extended his influence through forces and supported illiberal and separatist fighters in Georgia and Ukraine and Moldavia, former Soviet republics, and has launched cyber attacks and propaganda campaigns and coordinated the use of all his tools of state power against our NATO allies in the Baltic region and Central and Western Europe.

All of these things suggest a very different world view, a different set of values than we have in the United States and a different set of values in a way that really worries me. As my colleague from Florida has suggested, when Foreign Minister Lavrov talks about a world order defined by sovereignty, he is challenging us. He is challenging what the West really stands for, what we in America stand for.

I believe what we stand for is the universal values on which we forged the Transatlantic Alliance more than 70 years ago, a Transatlantic Alliance that has been a force for stability and good in the world, a Transatlantic Alliance that has secured peace in Western Europe, North America ever since the close of the Second World War but a Transatlantic Alliance that is rooted in values, values of freedom of speech, freedom of press, rule of law and democracy, and in opposition to authoritarianism.

We support American leadership because a stable and prosperous world makes us safer and more economically secure. So I would ask my friend from Florida what he views as the agenda or the objective of Russia and whether we can be hopeful, in any way, that Vladimir Putin's Russia has an agenda that is harmonious with ours, that can be put in the same direction as ours or whether it is fundamentally at odds.

Mr. RUBIO. To answer that question, I would begin by reminding everyone that when we are talking about Russia, we are not talking about the Russian people. We are talking about Vladimir Putin and the cronies who surround him and their goals for the future. We have no quarrel with the Russian people, who I actually believe would very much want to have a better relationship with the United States and certainly live in a world in which their country was more like ours than the way their government now runs theirs.

The second thing I would point to is, it is important to understand history. At the end of the Second World War, Nazism had been conquered, and the Japanese Empire and its designs had also been ended, fascism defeated. The United States and the world entered this period of a Cold War, a battle between communism and the free world. The United States and our allies stood for that freedom. At the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Soviet bloc, the fall of communism, the world we all hoped had entered into this new era, where every nation had a different system—maybe some had a parliamentary system, maybe some had a republic, such as ours—but in the end, more people than ever would have access to a government responsive to their needs.

That was the growing trend around the world, up until about 7, 8, 10 years ago. We now see the opposite. We see a rising arc of the totalitarianism, and within that context is where I believe Vladimir Putin's world view is constructed. He views the values we stand

for, which some may call Western values, and perhaps that is the right terminology, but I really believe in universal values: the idea that people should have a role to play in choosing their leader, that people should have a freedom to worship as they see fit, that people should be able to express their opinions and ideas freely without fear of retribution or punishment by the government.

These are the values I think we have stood for and that our allies have stood for and that we had hoped Russia would stand for in this new era, but Vladimir Putin viewed that as a threat. In particular, over the last number of years, he has decided the best way for him to secure his place in Russian politics is through an aggressive foreign policy in which he views it as a zero-sum game.

That is not the way we view it. We actually view the world as a place where we can help rebuild Japan; we can help rebuild Germany. They are stronger, and we are stronger. It isn't one or the other.

He does not see it that way. He views the world as a place where in order for Russia to be greater, America has to be less; in order for him to be more powerful, we have to be less powerful, and it is a world in which he has to undermine democratic principles and try to expose them as fraudulent.

That is why you saw the Russian intelligence services meddle in our elections in 2016. One of the main designs they had was to create doubt and instability about our system of government and to not just discredit it here at home but to discredit it around the world.

I just returned from Europe a week ago. Germany and France, which both have upcoming elections of their own, are seeing an unprecedented wave of active measures on the part of Russian intelligence to try to influence their elections. In the Netherlands, we have seen some of the same. So this is very concerning.

Our European allies are very concerned about the weaponization of cyber technology to strategically place information in the public domain for purposes of undermining candidates, steering elections, and undermining policymaking.

I want everybody to understand this is not just about elections. The exact same tools they used in the 2016 Presidential election, they could use to try to influence the debate in the Senate by attacking individual Senators or individual viewpoints and using their control over propaganda to begin to spread that.

I will give you just one example, and that is in May of 2015, the German intelligence agencies reported an attack on the German Parliament, on energy companies, on universities. They attribute that to Russian hackers.

In Montenegro, the Prime Minister has sought membership in NATO, an action we have supported in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which

both of us serve on, but Russian intelligence has plotted at a very aggressive level to disrupt their elections late last year.

Moscow has used TV and Internet outlets like Russia Today, or RT, and Sputnik to launch propaganda campaigns to galvanize anti-EU extremists ahead of the Dutch elections. The list goes on and on. There is no shortage of them.

The point is, we are in the midst of the most aggressive, active measures ever undertaken by a foreign government to not just meddle in American policy debates and American elections but in those throughout the free world, and it is deeply concerning.

I think another matter that I would love to hear the Senator's opinion on is on the issue of human rights violations because, on top of being a totalitarian state, what goes hand in hand with totalitarianism are human rights violations. In fact, totalitarianism is, in and of itself, a human rights violation; that there can be no dictatorship, no repressive regime, no totalitarian leader who can maintain themselves in power without violating the human rights of their people.

So I would ask the Senator—I would love to have his comment on whether or not, indeed, Vladimir Putin is a serial human rights violator and what our policy should be in terms of outlining that to the world.

Mr. COONS. We have worked together on a number of bills in this area. Let me respond to my friend the Senator by saying it is clear that Vladimir Putin's Russia has been a serial human rights violator. When we talk about human rights, we talk about things that belong to everyone, and they are necessary as a check on state power. When nations break these rules, we believe they should be held accountable.

Russia continues to engage in efforts, as my colleague said, that undermine democracy in free elections throughout Europe. We have shared concerns about the upcoming elections—the Dutch elections, French, and German elections—where there are overt actions and covert actions by Russia to influence the outcome of those elections, but part of why they are doing that, part of why they are violating these norms around Europe is because they are seeking to distract from their brutal rule at home.

The reality is, many of the critics of Putin's regime end up dead or incapacitated.

Boris Nemtsov, a Russian politician who supported the introduction of capitalism into the Russian economy and frequently criticized Vladimir Putin, was assassinated 2 years ago, on February 27, on a bridge just near the Kremlin in Moscow.

Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Russian politician and journalist, was apparently poisoned last month, the second time in recent years. He had been actively promoting civil society and democracy in Russia.

Back in September of 2012, Putin threw USAID out of Russia altogether, claiming that U.S. efforts were undermining Russian sovereignty when, in fact, we had been working in Russia since the nineties, supporting human rights, independent journalism, and promoting fair elections.

Most importantly, in my view, Russia doesn't just violate the human rights of its own citizens, it exports brutality.

Russia's support for Bashar al-Assad's murderous regime and brutal war in Syria continues. Their military has targeted hospitals, schools, and Syrian first responders. They have blocked the provision of food and medicine to starving families and children. Russia's diplomats have vetoed any efforts at the United Nations to act to stop the suffering in Syria. Also, Russia, having illegally invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea, continues to promote violence and instability in eastern Ukraine, in the Donbas region, leading to the deaths of thousands.

All of these human rights violations within Russia and in countries around its sphere of influence, in its region, suggest to us that they need to be held accountable for these violations of basic human rights.

Like the Senator from Florida, I led a codel to Eastern and Central Europe. Mine was not last week. It was last August, but with two Republican House Members and two Democratic Senate Members, the five of us went to the Czech Republic, to Ukraine, and to Estonia. We heard widespread concern about this record of human rights and a disrespect for democracy in Russia and about this aggressive hybrid warfare campaign that threatens Ukraine's very stability and existence, that puts Estonia, our NATO ally, on warning, and that is putting at risk Czech independence and Czech elections all across Central and Western Europe.

We have heard from Ambassadors, experts, those who have testified in front of committees on which we serve, about a Russian campaign—a brutal campaign—to undermine human rights within Russia and to undermine democracy throughout Western Europe, with a larger strategic goal of separating the United States from our Western allies and undermining the Transatlantic Alliance that has been so essential to our peace, security, and stability for 70 years. We cannot let this stand.

There is no moral equivalence between Russia and the United States. If we believe in our democracy and if we believe in our commitment to human rights, we must stand up to this campaign of aggression. So I ask my colleague what he believes we might be able to do on the Foreign Relations Committee, on the Appropriations Committee, or here in the Senate, what we might do, as voices working in a bipartisan way, to stand up to these actions undermining democracy and human rights?

Mr. RUBIO. That is the central question. The first is what we are doing now, which is an important part: shining the sunlight on all of it, making people aware of it. For example, we know in France two of the leading candidates have views that I think the Kremlin would be quite pleased with, if that became the foreign policy of France—a third, not so much. He is a very young candidate running as an independent. His last name Macron. Suddenly, as he began to surge in the polls, all these stories started appearing, ridiculous stories about his personal life, about his marriage, things that are completely false, completely fabricated. Fortunately, French society and the French press understands this and has reported it as such.

It is important for us. This is happening and is real, and it is unprecedented in its scope and in its aggression. So shining a light on the reality and understanding, as I always tell my colleagues—I said this last October, that this is not a partisan issue.

I am telling you that—to my Republican colleagues who might be uncomfortable about discussing Russian interference—this is not about the outcome of the election; this is about the conduct and what happened throughout it. And what they did last year, in the fall, in the Presidential race, they can do against any Member here. If they don't like what you are saying, if they think you are getting too far on policy, you could find yourself the target of Russian propaganda in the hopes of undermining you, perhaps even having you eliminated from the debate because they understand our political process quite well.

The second is to do no harm. There is this notion out there—and I think on paper it sounds great, right—why don't we just partner up with the Russians to defeat ISIS and take on radicalism around the world.

The problem is this: No. 1, that is what Russia claims they are already doing. Vladimir Putin claims he is already doing that. So if he is already doing it, why would we have to partner with him? He is already doing it. Obviously, the answer is because he hasn't. This has been about propping up Assad.

Here is the other problem. When you partner up with someone, you have to take responsibility for everything they do and all the actions they undertake.

Senator COONS just outlined a moment ago, he said: Well, we talked about the bombing in Aleppo.

Think about it. If we had partnered with Russia in Syria and they were bombing Aleppo and they were hitting hospitals and they were killing civilians and they were our partners, we have to answer for that as well. We would be roped into that.

The third is to understand their strategic goal is not to defeat radical elements in the Middle East; their strategic goal is to have inordinate influence in Syria, with Iran, potentially in other countries at the expense of the United States.

We have had two Presidents—a Republican and a Democrat—previous to the current President who thought they could do such a deal with Vladimir Putin. Both of them fell on their face because they did not understand what they were dealing with. It is my sincerest hope that our current President doesn't make the same mistakes.

In addition to that, I know there are a number of legislative approaches that we have worked on together, as members of both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, and I would ask the Senator from Delaware if he could highlight some of those legislative matters that we have been talking about: resolutions, laws, and public policy that we have been advocating.

Mr. COONS. Well, briefly, if I could. Two bills that are currently gathering cosponsors—and which I hope our colleagues will review and consider joining us in cosponsoring—one is S. 341, the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017, which currently has 18 cosponsors. The other is S. 94, the Counteracting Russian Hostilities Act of 2017, that has 20 cosponsors—10 Republicans and 10 Democrats. In both cases, we are proud to have a very broad range of both Republicans and Democrats engaged in this important legislation, which ensures that Russia pays a price for breaking the rules. It starts by taking action to support the sanctions against the Russian Government for its occupation, its illegal annexation of Crimea, for its egregious human rights violations in Syria, and for meddling in the U.S. election. It prevents the lifting of sanctions on Russia until the Russian Government ceases the very activities that caused these sanctions to be put in place in the first place. It supports civil society, pro-democracy, anti-corruption activists in Russia and across Europe to show that many of us are determined, as members of the Foreign Relations Committee, as members of the Appropriations Committee, as Senators—not as partisans—that we intend to fund the tools that will enable the United States and our NATO allies to push back on Russia's aggression. Most of these tools come from the international affairs budget: State Department and foreign assistance accounts.

I want to commend you, Senator, for giving a strong and impassioned speech on the floor today about the importance of our keeping all of these tools in our toolkit so that as we confront our adversaries around the world, we have the resources and the ability to partner with and strengthen our allies as well.

We have no quarrel with the Russian people, but we are here because there is nothing Vladimir Putin's regime would love more than to see his actions divide us in this Chamber and divide us in this country from our vital allies in Europe and divide the whole North Atlantic community that for seven decades has brought peace and stability to

Europe, has brought prosperity to the United States, not as an act of charity but as an investment in the best interests of security.

We are here to say with one voice that we will stand up to Russian aggression that undermines democracy and violates human rights.

I am grateful for my colleague, for the chance to join him on the floor today, and I look forward to working together with any of our colleagues who see these issues as clearly as my friend and colleague, the Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. I thank the Senator for joining me in this endeavor here today. It is important that we speak out about this.

In a moment, the majority leader will be here with some procedural matters that will, I guess, take the Senate to a different posture.

Before that happens, I wanted to close by not just thanking him for being a part of this but by making a couple more points.

The first is, I want you to imagine for a moment, if you are sitting at the Kremlin and you are watching on satellite television the debate going on in American politics today, you are probably feeling pretty good about yourself. You have one group arguing that maybe the elections weren't legitimate because the Russians interfered. In essence, there have been news reports about a tension between the President and the Intelligence Committee. You have these reports every single day back and forth. You are looking at all this chaos, and you are saying to yourself: We did a pretty good job. If what we wanted to do was to divide the American people against each other, have them at each other's throats, arguing about things, and sowing chaos and instability into their political process, I think you look at the developments of the last 6 weeks and 6 months, and if you are in the Kremlin, you say: Well, our efforts have been pretty successful with that. I think that is the first thing we need to understand.

The second thing is, this should all be about partisanship. I am a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. It is probably known that we are undertaking an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 elections. I want everyone to know—I speak for myself and I believe almost all of my colleagues when I say, on the one hand, I am not interested in being a part of a witch hunt; on the other hand, I will not be part of a coverup. We are going to get to the truth. We want to get to the truth. We want to be able to deliver to this body and to the American people a document with truth and facts, wherever they may lead us, because this is above political party. Our system of government and this extraordinary Republic has been around for over two centuries. It is unique and it is special, and with all of its blemishes and flaws, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

I want people to think about that. The next time you wonder and say to yourself that things are so tough in America and things are going so poorly, well, with whom would you trade places? I am not saying we don't have problems, because we do, but I ask, in what country would you rather be? I promise you that you won't say China if you know anything about China. I promise you that you won't say Russia if you know anything about Russia. There is no nation on Earth we would trade places with, and there is no process of government I would trade for ours. It is not perfect.

One of the strengths of our system is our ability to stand up here in places like the Senate and discuss our differences and our problems and make continuous progress forward even if the pace is slower and more frustrating than we wish. That is what is at stake in this process and what is at stake in this debate. That is what none of us can allow to see erode because of interference by a foreign government, especially one that is a thug and war criminal in every sense of the word.

So our quarrel is not with the Russian people and it is not with Russia. I have extraordinary admiration for the Russian people. I have extraordinary admiration for the sacrifices and contributions they have made throughout history to our culture and to the world. But, unfortunately, today their government is run by an individual who has no respect for his own people and no respect for the freedom and liberty of others, and it is important for our policymakers on both sides of the aisle to be clear-eyed and clear-voiced in what we do moving forward.

I thank the Senator for being with us today and allowing us to engage in this discussion. I hope we will see more of that in the weeks and months to come so we can speak clearly and firmly in one voice that on issues involving America and our sovereignty and our system of government and decisions we must make, we will speak with one voice as one Nation, as one people, as one country.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the sesquicentennial anniversary of the founding of the University of Illinois, a nationally recognized institution of higher education with a long record of innovation and discovery and the home of the Fighting Illini.

In 1867, 150 years ago, my home State of Illinois established the University of Illinois with the purpose of fostering access to higher education for the working people. It would become one of 37 public, land-grant institutions established as a result of the Morrill Land-Grant Colleges Act signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln.

Over the past 150 years, the University of Illinois and those associated with it have been responsible for pushing the boundaries of human knowledge, scientific discovery, social justice, and equality.

In 1941, David Blackwell, the son of a railroad worker from southern Illinois, received his Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Illinois. In 1965, Dr. Blackwell became the first African American elected to the National Academy of Sciences, whose members advise the President and Congress on matters related to science and technology. Dr. Blackwell is regarded as the most famous African-American mathematician in history.

In 1948, the University of Illinois became, and remains to this day, the most accessible campus in the world for individuals with disabilities. Timothy Nugent founded the first comprehensive program of higher education for individuals with disabilities at the University and helped create a campus that allowed individuals with disabilities to move about freely and independently. While the availability of buses with wheelchair lifts, accessible street curbs, and comprehensive collegiate programs for those with disabilities all have become the national standard, they started at the University of Illinois.

The University of Illinois has long been a leader in groundbreaking research and innovation in science. In the early 1970s, Paul Lauterbur discovered magnetic resonance imaging—better known by its initials: MRI. For his pioneering work, he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2003.

Today the university is one of the premier public research universities in the world. It ranks in the top 50 universities in America for research and development dollars spent in science and engineering. It is also home to one of the world's most powerful supercomputers, known as Blue Waters. Blue Waters is the fastest supercomputer located on a college campus in the world.

What began 150 years ago as a small building on the Illinois prairie between

the Illinois Central train station in Champaign and the courthouse in Urbana is today a 785-acre campus with a reputation admired around the world. It is home to more than 44,000 students from all 50 States and more than 100 different countries each year. The University of Illinois has enhanced the lives of over 450,000 living alumni and produced 23 Nobel Laureates and 22 Pulitzer Prize winners in the process. In addition, the university has grown to include campuses in Chicago and Springfield and regional campuses in Rockford, Peoria, and the Quad Cities.

It is with great pride that I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the sesquicentennial anniversary of the founding of the University of Illinois. I offer my best wishes and congratulations to President Timothy Killeen and all the University faculty, staff, students, and alumni on this important milestone.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the Committee on the Judiciary has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 115th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of 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:

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY—115TH CONGRESS

I. MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. Meetings of the Committee may be called by the Chairman as he may deem necessary on three days' notice of the date, time, place and subject matter of the meeting, or in the alternative with the consent of the Ranking Minority Member, or pursuant to the provision of the Standing Rules of the Senate, as amended.

2. Unless a different date and time are set by the Chairman pursuant to (1) of this section, Committee meetings shall be held beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Thursdays the Senate is in session, which shall be the regular meeting day for the transaction of business.

3. At the request of any member, or by action of the Chairman, a bill, matter, or nomination on the agenda of the Committee may be held over until the next meeting of the Committee or for one week, whichever occurs later.

II. HEARINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Committee shall provide a public announcement of the date, time, place and subject matter of any hearing to be conducted by the Committee or any Subcommittee at least seven calendar days prior to the commencement of that hearing, unless the Chairman with the consent of the Ranking Minority Member determines that good cause exists to begin such hearing at an earlier date. Witnesses shall provide a written statement of their testimony and curriculum vitae to the Committee at least 24 hours preceding the hearings in as many copies as the Chairman of the Committee or Subcommittee prescribes.

2. In the event 14 calendar days' notice of a hearing has been made, witnesses appearing before the Committee, including any witness representing a Government agency, must file with the Committee at least 48 hours preceding appearance written statements of their testimony and curriculum vitae in as many copies as the Chairman of the Committee or Subcommittee prescribes.

3. In the event a witness fails timely to file the written statement in accordance with this rule, the Chairman may permit the witness to testify, or deny the witness the privilege of testifying before the Committee, or permit the witness to testify in response to questions from Senators without the benefit of giving an opening statement.

III. QUORUMS

1. Seven Members of the Committee, actually present, shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of discussing business. Nine Members of the Committee, including at least two Members of the minority, shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of transacting business. No bill, matter, or nomination shall be ordered reported from the Committee, however, unless a majority of the Committee is actually present at the time such action is taken and a majority of those present support the action taken.

2. For the purpose of taking down sworn testimony, a quorum of the Committee and each Subcommittee thereof, now or hereafter appointed, shall consist of one Senator.

IV. BRINGING A MATTER TO A VOTE

The Chairman shall entertain a non-debatable motion to bring a matter before the Committee to a vote. If there is objection to bring the matter to a vote without further debate, a roll call vote of the Committee shall be taken, and debate shall be terminated if the motion to bring the matter to a vote without further debate passes with eleven votes in the affirmative, one of which must be cast by the minority.

V. AMENDMENTS

1. Provided at least seven calendar days' notice of the agenda is given, and the text of the proposed bill or resolution has been made available at least seven calendar days in advance, it shall not be in order for the Committee to consider any amendment in the first degree proposed to any measure under consideration by the Committee unless such amendment has been delivered to the office of the Committee and circulated via e-mail to each of the offices by at least 5:00 p.m. the day prior to the scheduled start of the meeting.

2. It shall be in order, without prior notice, for a Member to offer a motion to strike a single section of any bill, resolution, or amendment under consideration.

3. The time limit imposed on the filing of amendments shall apply to no more than three bills identified by the Chairman and included on the Committee's legislative agenda.

4. This section of the rule may be waived by agreement of the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member.

VI. PROXY VOTING

When a recorded vote is taken in the Committee on any bill, resolution, amendment, or any other question, a quorum being present, Members who are unable to attend the meeting may submit votes by proxy, in writing or by telephone, or through personal instructions. A proxy must be specific with respect to the matters it addresses.

VII. SUBCOMMITTEES

1. Any Member of the Committee may sit with any Subcommittee during its hearings or any 1) other meeting, but shall not have the authority to vote on any matter before

the Subcommittee unless a Member of such Subcommittee.

2. Subcommittees shall be considered de novo whenever there is a change in the Subcommittee chairmanship and seniority on the particular Subcommittee shall not necessarily apply.

3. Except for matters retained at the full Committee, matters shall be referred to the appropriate Subcommittee or Subcommittees by the Chairman, except as agreed by a majority vote of the Committee or by the agreement of the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member.

4. Provided all members of the Subcommittee consent, a bill or other matter may be polled out of the Subcommittee. In order to be polled out of a Subcommittee, a majority of the members of the Subcommittee who vote must vote in favor of reporting the bill or matter to the Committee.

VIII. ATTENDANCE RULES

1. Official attendance at all Committee business meetings of the Committee shall be kept by the Committee Clerk. Official attendance at all Subcommittee business meetings shall be kept by the Subcommittee Clerk.

2. Official attendance at all hearings shall be kept, provided that Senators are notified by the Committee Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, in the case of Committee hearings, and by the Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, in the case of Subcommittee Hearings, 48 hours in advance of the hearing that attendance will be taken; otherwise, no attendance will be taken. Attendance at all hearings is encouraged.

IX. SUBPOENAS

The Chairman of the Committee, with the agreement of the Ranking Member or by a vote of the Committee, may subpoena the attendance of a witness at a Committee or Subcommittee hearing or Committee deposition, or the production of memoranda, documents, records, or any other materials. Any such subpoena shall be issued upon the signature of the Chairman or any other Member of the Committee designated by the Chairman.

X. DEPOSITIONS

1. Any subpoena issued for a deposition that is to be conducted by staff shall be accompanied by a notice of deposition identifying the Majority staff officers designated by the Chairman and the Minority staff officers designated by the Ranking Member to take the deposition, and the Majority and Minority shall be afforded the opportunity to participate on equal terms.

2. Unless waived by agreement of the Chair and Ranking Member, any deposition shall have at least one Member present for the duration of the deposition. All Members shall be notified of the date, time, and location of any deposition.

3. Any Member of the Committee may attend and participate in the taking of any deposition.

4. A witness at a deposition shall be examined upon oath administered by an individual authorized by law to administer oaths, or administered by any Member of the Committee if one is present.

5. Unless otherwise specified, the deposition shall be in private.

BUDGET SCOREKEEPING REPORT

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I wish to submit to the Senate the budget scorekeeping report for March 2017. The report compares current-law levels of spending and revenues with the

amounts the Senate agreed to in the budget resolution for fiscal year 2017, S. Con. Res. 3. This information is necessary for the Senate Budget Committee to determine whether budget points of order lie against pending legislation. It has been prepared by the Republican staff of the Senate Budget Committee and the Congressional Budget Office, CBO, pursuant to section 308(b) of the Congressional Budget Act, CBA.

My last filing, which was based on enforceable levels relative to the fiscal year 2016 budget resolution, S. Con. Res. 11, and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, P.L. 114-74, can be found in the RECORD for November 16, 2016. The information contained in this report for fiscal year 2017 is current through February 27, 2017.

Tables 1-3 of this report are prepared by my staff on the Budget Committee.

Table 1 gives the amount by which each Senate authorizing committee exceeds or is below its allocation for budget authority and outlays under the most recently adopted budget resolution. This information is used for enforcing committee allocations pursuant to section 302 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, CBA. All committees are in compliance with their allocations assumed in the budget resolution and match the levels that I included in the allocation enforcement filing of January 17, 2017.

Table 2 gives the amount by which the Senate Committee on Appropriations exceeds or is below the statutory spending limits for fiscal year 2017. This information is used to determine points of order related to the spending caps found in sections 312 and 314 of the CBA. As the Federal Government is currently operating under the terms of the latest continuing resolution and temporary funding is not included in enforcement totals, this scorecard shows \$543.5 billion in security and \$415.2 billion in nonsecurity budget authority remain available for full-year appropriations.

Table 3 tracks compliance with the fiscal year 2017 limit for overall changes in mandatory programs, CHIMPS, in appropriations bills, established in the fiscal year 2016 budget resolution. The limit for this fiscal year is \$19.1 billion. To date, there are no recorded CHIMP entries on this scorecard. Division A of the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017, P.L. 114-254, included a qualifying CHIMP, \$170 million, but the Appropriations Committee included a provision to prevent its budgetary effects from being entered onto the scorecard. This exclusion was the first of its kind since the creation of the new rule in 2015. This information is used for determining points of order under section 3103 of that resolution.

In addition to the tables provided by Budget Committee Republican staff, I am submitting tables from CBO, which I will use for enforcement of budget totals agreed to by the Congress.

CBO provided a spending and revenue report for fiscal year 2017. This information is used to enforce aggregate spending levels in budget resolutions under section 311 of the CBA.

For fiscal year 2017, CBO annualizes the temporary effects of the latest continuing resolution that provides funding through April 28, 2017. For the enforcement of budgetary aggregates, the Budget Committee excludes this temporary funding. As such, the committee views current-law levels as being \$953 billion and \$583.2 billion below budget resolution levels for budget authority and outlays, respectively. Revenues are consistent with the levels assumed in the budget resolution. Finally, Social Security outlays and revenues are at the levels assumed in S. Con. Res. 3.

CBO's report also provides information needed to enforce the Senate pay-as-you-go, PAYGO, rule. Following passage of the budget resolution in January, I reset the Senate's PAYGO scorecard to zero. Since passage of the resolution, there have been no laws enacted that have a significant effect on the Federal Government's budget deficit over either the 6- or 11-year periods. The Senate's PAYGO rule is enforced by section 201 of S. Con. Res. 21, the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution.

Finally, included in this submission is a table tracking the Senate's budget enforcement activity on the floor. No budget points of order have been raised since the passage of the budget resolution.

All years in the accompanying tables are fiscal years.

I ask unanimous consent that the accompanying tables be printed in the RECORD.

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

TABLE 1.—SENATE AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES—ENACTED DIRECT SPENDING ABOVE (+) OR BELOW (–) BUDGET RESOLUTIONS

	(In millions of dollars)		
	2017	2017–2021	2017–2026
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Armed Services			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Commerce, Science, and Transportation			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Energy and Natural Resources			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Environment and Public Works			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Finance			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Foreign Relations			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Judiciary			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions			
Budget Authority	0	0	0

TABLE 1.—SENATE AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES—ENACTED DIRECT SPENDING ABOVE (+) OR BELOW (–) BUDGET RESOLUTIONS—Continued

	(In millions of dollars)		
	2017	2017–2021	2017–2026
Outlays	0	0	0
Rules and Administration			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Intelligence			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Veterans' Affairs			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Indian Affairs			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Small Business			
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0
Budget Authority	0	0	0
Outlays	0	0	0

TABLE 2.—SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE—ENACTED REGULAR DISCRETIONARY APPROPRIATIONS¹

	(Budget authority, in millions of dollars)	
	2017	
	Security ²	Nonsecurity ²
Statutory Discretionary Limits	551,068	518,531
Amount Provided by Senate Appropriations Subcommittee		
Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies	0	9
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies	0	7
Defense	45	0
Energy and Water Development	–340	–340
Financial Services and General Government	0	0
Homeland Security	0	9
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies	0	120
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies	0	24,570
Legislative Branch	0	–1
Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies	7,898	74,600
State Foreign Operations, and Related Programs	0	0
Transportation and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies	0	4,400
Current Level Total	7,603	103,374
Total Enacted Above (+) or Below (–) Statutory Limits	–543,465	–415,157

¹ This table excludes spending pursuant to adjustments to the discretionary spending limits. These adjustments are allowed for certain purposes in section 251(b)(2) of BBEDCA.

² Security spending is defined as spending in the National Defense budget function (050) and nonsecurity spending is defined as all other spending.

TABLE 3.—SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE—ENACTED CHANGES IN MANDATORY SPENDING PROGRAMS (CHIMPS)

	(Budget authority, millions of dollars)
	2017
CHIMPS Limit for Fiscal Year 2017	19,100
Senate Appropriations Subcommittees	
Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies	0
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies	0
Defense	0
Energy and Water Development	0
Financial Services and General Government	0
Homeland Security	0
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies	0
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies	0
Legislative Branch	0
Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies	0
State Foreign Operations, and Related Programs	0
Transportation and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies	0
Current Level Total	0
Total CHIMPS Above (+) or Below (–) Budget Resolution	–19,100

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, March 1, 2017.

Hon. MIKE ENZI,
Chairman, Committee on the Budget,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The enclosed report shows the effects of Congressional action on the fiscal year 2017 budget and is current through February 27, 2017. This report is submitted under section 308(b) and in aid of section 311 of the Congressional Budget Act, as amended.

The estimates of budget authority, outlays, and revenues are consistent with the technical and economic assumptions of S. Con. Res. 3, the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2017.

Since our last letter dated November 16, 2016, the Congress has cleared and the President has signed the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017

(Public Law 114-254). That act has significant effects on budget authority and outlays in fiscal year 2017.

Sincerely,

KEITH HALL.

Enclosure.

TABLE 1.—SENATE CURRENT LEVEL REPORT FOR SPENDING AND REVENUES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017, AS OF FEBRUARY 27, 2017

	[In billions of dollars]		
	Budget Resolution ^a	Current Level ^b	Current Level Over/Under (-) Resolution
ON-BUDGET			
Budget Authority	3,226.1	3,308.0	81.9
Outlays	3,224.6	3,254.7	30.1
Revenues	2,682.1	2,682.1	0.0
OFF-BUDGET			
Social Security Outlays ^c	805.4	805.4	0.0

TABLE 1.—SENATE CURRENT LEVEL REPORT FOR SPENDING AND REVENUES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017, AS OF FEBRUARY 27, 2017—Continued

	[In billions of dollars]		
	Budget Resolution ^a	Current Level ^b	Current Level Over/Under (-) Resolution
Social Security Revenues	826.0	826.0	0.0

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office.
^aExcludes \$81,872 million in budget authority and \$40,032 million in outlays assumed in S. Con. Res. 3 for non regular discretionary spending, including spending that qualifies for adjustments to discretionary spending limits pursuant to section 251(b) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, that is not yet allocated to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.
^bExcludes emergency funding that was not designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.
^cExcludes administrative expenses paid from the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund of the Social Security Administration, which are off-budget, but are appropriated annually.

TABLE 2.—SUPPORTING DETAIL FOR THE SENATE CURRENT LEVEL REPORT FOR ON-BUDGET SPENDING AND REVENUES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017, AS OF FEBRUARY 27, 2017

	[In millions of dollars]		
	Budget Authority	Outlays	Revenues
Previously Enacted ^a			
Revenues	n.a.	n.a.	2,682,088
Permanents and other spending legislation	2,054,297	1,960,884	n.a.
Appropriation legislation	138,258	619,553	n.a.
Offsetting receipts	-834,250	-834,301	n.a.
Total, Previously Enacted	1,358,305	1,746,136	2,682,088
Continuing Resolution:			
Further Continuing and Security Appropriations Act, 2017 (P.L. 114-254) ^{b,c,d}	1,034,868	613,341	0
Entitlements and Mandatories:			
Budget resolution estimates of appropriated entitlements and other mandatory programs	914,848	895,267	0
Total Current Level ^e	3,308,021	3,254,744	2,682,088
Total Senate Resolution ^f	3,226,128	3,224,630	2,682,088
Current Level Over Senate Resolution	81,893	30,114	n.a.
Current Level Under Senate Resolution	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Memorandum:			
Revenues, 2017-2026:			
Senate Current Level	n.a.	n.a.	32,351,660
Senate Resolution	n.a.	n.a.	32,351,660
Current Level Over Senate Resolution	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Current Level Under Senate Resolution	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Congressional Budget Office.
Notes: n.a. = not applicable; P.L. = Public Law.
^aIncludes the budgetary effects of enacted legislation cleared by the Congress during the 114th session, prior to the adoption of S. Con. Res. 3, the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2017.
^bEmergency funding that was not designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 shall not count for certain budgetary enforcement purposes. These amounts, which are not included in the current level totals, are as follows:

	Budget Authority	Outlays	Revenues
Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017 (P.L. 114-254)	-2	-1	0

^cDivision A of P.L. 114-254 contains the Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2017, which provides funding for those agencies within the jurisdiction of 11 of the 12 regular appropriations bills through April 28, 2017; those amounts are shown under the "Continuing Resolution" section of this table. Certain provisions in Division A provide funding until or beyond the end of fiscal year 2017; those amounts are shown in the "Previously Enacted" section of this table. In addition, Division B of P.L. 114-254 contains the Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017, which provides funding until or beyond the end of fiscal year 2017 for overseas contingency operations; those amounts are shown under the "Previously Enacted" section of this table.
^dSections 193-195 of Division A of P.L. 114-254 provided funding, available until expended, for innovation projects and state responses to opioid abuse. CBO estimates that, for fiscal year 2017: The \$20 million in discretionary budget authority provided by section 193 would result in an additional \$5 million in outlays for FDA innovation projects; The \$352 million in discretionary budget authority provided by section 194 would result in an additional \$91 million in outlays for NIH innovation projects; The \$500 million in discretionary budget authority provided by section 195 would result in an additional \$160 million in outlays for state response to opioid abuse. Consistent with sections 1001-1004 of P.L. 114-255, for the purposes of estimating the discretionary budget authority and outlays for these provisions under the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Act of 1974 and the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Act of 1985, these amounts are estimated to provide no budget authority or outlays.
^eFor purposes of enforcing section 311 of the Congressional Budget Act in the Senate, the resolution, as approved by the Senate, does not include budget authority, outlays, or revenues for off-budget amounts. As a result, current level does not include these items.
^fExcludes \$81,872 million in budget authority and \$40,032 million in outlays assumed in S. Con. Res. 3 for non regular discretionary spending, including spending that qualifies for adjustments to discretionary spending limits pursuant to section 251(b) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, that is not yet allocated to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

TABLE 3.—SUMMARY OF THE SENATE PAY-AS-YOU-GO SCORECARD FOR THE 115TH CONGRESS, AS OF FEBRUARY 27, 2017

	[In millions of dollars]	
	2016-2021	2016-2026
Beginning Balance ^a	0	0
Enacted Legislation: ^{b,c,d}		
Tested Ability to Leverage Exceptional National Talent Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-1)	*	*
Disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of the Interior known as the Stream Protection Rule. (P.L. 115-5)	*	*
Current Balance	*	*
Memorandum:		
Changes to Revenues	*	*
Changes to Outlays	*	*

Source: Congressional Budget Office.
Notes: n.e. = not able to estimate; P.L. = Public Law; FAA = Federal Aviation Administration; * = between -\$500,000 and \$500,000.

^aPursuant to the statement printed in the Congressional Record on January 17, 2017, the Senate Pay-As-You-Go Scorecard was reset to zero.
^bThe amounts shown represent the estimated effect of the public laws on the deficit.
^cExcludes off-budget amounts.
^dExcludes amounts designated as emergency requirements.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING SHERIFF RALPH OGDEN

● Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, with a heavy heart I wish to mark the passing of a pillar of the Arizona law enforcement community. When people think of the Old West, they often picture a Stetson-wearing lawman sitting astride his horse, keeping watch over his community.

For generations of residents in southwestern Arizona, that lawman was Yuma County Sheriff Ralph Ogden. With his towering frame and trademark mustache, Sheriff Ogden looked every bit the part. Despite his imposing physical presence, Sheriff Ogden was a kind, compassionate man, beloved by his deputies and celebrated by his community. After 4 years of distinguished service in the U.S. Marine Corps, Ralph Ogden began his 42-year law enforcement career as a dispatcher and jailer in Parker, AZ. A dedicated public servant, he would eventually serve as chief deputy for 12 years. Ralph would go on to be elected to five consecutive terms as sheriff, with

his 20-year tenure the longest in Yuma County history.

Sheriff Ogden always understood the importance of getting to know the community he served and encouraged his employees to get involved in charities, religious groups, and service organizations.

He valued teamwork and recognized that no one can succeed on their own.

This philosophy of always having each other's back was something he carried with him throughout his time with the sheriff's office, and it was reflected in the way he treated those around him.

Sheriff Ogden was known to write personal birthday and anniversary cards for each of his employees, just to show that he valued their service and friendship and that they were important to him.

When asked about the benefits of serving in law enforcement, Sheriff Ogden said that, when you go home tired and beat after a long day, you sleep well knowing you did some good.

Sheriff Ralph Ogden did a lot of good, and I know he is resting well.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting nominations which were referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:30 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 9355(a), 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 Board of Visitors to the United States Air Force Academy: Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Swezey, United States Air Force, Retired, Franklin, Wisconsin.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-889. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting a report on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General Robert R. Ruark, United States Marine Corps, and his advancement to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-890. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "International Affairs; Antarctic Marine Living Resources Convention Act" (RIN0648-BB86) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 23, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-891. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Implementation of Statutory Amendments Requiring the Modification of the Definition of Hard Cider" (RIN1513-AC31) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 23, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-892. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Deputy Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 28, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-893. A communication from the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department's fiscal year 2014 and fiscal year 2015 inventories of commercial and inherently governmental activities; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-894. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-655, "Elderly Tenant and Tenant with a Disability Protection Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-895. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-656, "Council Financial Disclosure Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-896. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-657, "Condominium Owner Bill of Rights and Responsibilities Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-897. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-658, "Vehicle-for-Hire Accessibility Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-898. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-659, "Downtown Business Improvement Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-899. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-664, "Specialty Drug Copayment Limitation Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-900. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-665, "Regulation of Landscape

Architecture and Professional Design Firms Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-901. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-666, "Washington Metrorail Safety Commission Establishment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-902. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-668, "Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-903. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-669, "State Board of Education Omnibus Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-904. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-670, "Nationals Park and Ballpark District Designated Entertainment Area Signage Regulations Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-905. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-671, "Rail Safety and Security Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-906. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-672, "Collaborative Reproduction Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-907. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-673, "Fair Credit in Employment Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-908. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-674, "Urban Farming and Food Security Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-909. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-676, "Death Certificate Gender Identity Recognition Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-910. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-677, "Fair Criminal Record Screening for Housing Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-911. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-678, "Omnibus Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-912. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-679, "Office of Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes Establishment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-913. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-680, "Bryant Street Tax Increment Financing Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-914. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-681, "District of Columbia State Athletics Consolidation Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-915. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-682, "Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-916. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-683, "Snow Removal Agreement Authorization Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-917. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-684, "Wage Theft Prevention Clarification and Overtime Fairness Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-918. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-685, "Land Disposition Transparency and Clarification Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-919. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-686, "First-time Homebuyer Tax Benefit Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-920. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-687, "Advisory Neighborhood Commissions Omnibus Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-921. A communication from the Deputy General Counsel, Office of General Counsel, Small Business Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Civil Monetary Penalties Inflation Adjustments" (RIN3245-AD44) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 23, 2017; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

EC-922. A communication from the Deputy General Counsel, Office of Investment and Innovation, Small Business Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Small Business Investment Companies: Passive Business Expansion and Technical Clarifications" (RIN3245-AG67) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 23, 2017; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

EC-923. A communication from the Deputy General Counsel, Office of Policy, Planning, and Liaison, Small Business Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Credit for Lower Tier Small Business Subcontracting" (RIN3245-AG71) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on

February 23, 2017; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

EC-924. A communication from the Office Program Manager, Office of Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "VA Veteran-Owned Small Business Verification Guidelines" (RIN2900-AP93) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 23, 2017; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

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. COTTON (for himself, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. DONNELLY):

S. 478. A bill to amend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to prohibit baiting exemptions on certain land; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself, Mr. WICKER, Mr. CARDIN, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 479. 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 Finance.

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

S. 480. A bill to reauthorize the Multi-national Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. BENNET:

S. 481. A bill to provide for the withdrawal and protection of certain Federal land in the State of Colorado, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. CAPITO, and Mr. DONNELLY):

S. 482. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to treat certain amounts paid for physical activity, fitness, and exercise as amounts paid for medical care; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. MURRAY:

S. 483. A bill to designate and expand wilderness areas in Olympic National Forest in the State of Washington, and to designate certain rivers in Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park as wild and scenic rivers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. HATCH):

S. 484. A bill to amend the Investment Company Act of 1940 to terminate an exemption for companies located in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and any other possession of the United States; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. HELLER, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. DAINES, Mr. TESTER, and Mr. BENNET):

S. 485. A bill to amend the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 to provide cancellation ceilings for stewardship end result contracting projects, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. COONS, Mr. GARDNER,

Mr. BROWN, Mr. ROBERTS, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. CAPITO, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mr. BLUNT):

S. 486. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the non-application of Medicare competitive acquisition rates to complex rehabilitative wheelchairs and accessories; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CRAPO (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BENNET, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. GARDNER, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. KING, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MENENDEZ, and Mr. RISCH):

S. 487. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an exclusion for assistance provided to participants in certain veterinary student loan repayment or forgiveness programs; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. TOOMEY (for himself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 488. A bill to increase the threshold for disclosures required by the Securities and Exchange Commission relating to compensatory benefit plans, 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 Mrs. FISCHER (for herself and Mr. SASSE):

S. Res. 74. A resolution congratulating the State of Nebraska on the 150th anniversary of the admission of that State into the United States; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. PORTMAN (for himself and Mr. BROWN):

S. Res. 75. A resolution recognizing the 100th anniversary of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the largest organization of food and nutrition professionals in the world; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. ISAKSON, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. COONS, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. Res. 76. A resolution expressing support for the designation of March 21, 2017, as "National Rosie the Riveter Day"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. COONS, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. BROWN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. MORAN, and Mr. THUNE):

S. Res. 77. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 59

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 59, a bill to provide that silencers be treated the same as long guns.

S. 132

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 132, a bill to amend title 54, United States Code, to provide for congressional and State approval of national monuments and restrictions on the use of national monuments.

S. 152

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 152, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, and for other purposes.

S. 203

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 203, a bill to reaffirm that the Environmental Protection Agency may not regulate vehicles used solely for competition, and for other purposes.

S. 223

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 223, a bill to provide immunity from suit for certain individuals who disclose potential examples of financial exploitation of senior citizens, and for other purposes.

S. 236

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 236, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform taxation of alcoholic beverages.

S. 254

At the request of Mr. UDALL, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 254, a bill to amend the Native American Programs Act of 1974 to provide flexibility and reauthorization to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.

S. 315

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 315, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Army to place in Arlington National Cemetery a monument honoring the helicopter pilots and crewmembers who were killed while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam era, and for other purposes.

S. 339

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 339, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan by veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 372

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from West Vir-

ginia (Mrs. CAPITO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 372, a bill to amend the Tariff Act of 1930 to ensure that merchandise arriving through the mail shall be subject to review by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and to require the provision of advance electronic information on shipments of mail to U.S. Customs and Border Protection and for other purposes.

S. 389

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 389, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that kombucha is exempt from any excise taxes and regulations imposed on alcoholic beverages.

S. 407

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 407, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend the railroad track maintenance credit.

S. 415

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) were added as cosponsors of S. 415, a bill to nullify the effect of the recent Executive order that makes the vast majority of unauthorized individuals priorities for removal and aims to withhold critical Federal funding to sanctuary cities.

S. 420

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 420, a bill to require the President to report on the use by the Government of Iran of commercial aircraft and related services for illicit military or other activities, and for other purposes.

S. 422

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the names of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) were added as cosponsors of S. 422, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes.

S. 431

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 431, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand the use of telehealth for individuals with stroke.

S. 445

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 445, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure

more timely access to home health services for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program.

S. 473

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 473, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make qualification requirements for entitlement to Post-9/11 Education Assistance more equitable, to improve support of veterans receiving such educational assistance, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 11

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 11, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Bureau of Land Management relating to "Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation".

S. RES. 54

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) and the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 54, a resolution expressing the unwavering commitment of the United States to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

S. RES. 70

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 70, a resolution recognizing the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 and expressing the sense of the Senate that policies that discriminate against any individual based on the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion of that individual would be a repetition of the mistakes of Executive Order 9066 and contrary to the values of the United States.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 74—CONGRATULATING THE STATE OF NEBRASKA ON THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADMISSION OF THAT STATE INTO THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. FISCHER (for herself and Mr. SASSE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 74

Whereas the name "Nebraska" is derived from a Native American Siouan word that means "flat water" and is inspired by the Platte River;

Whereas early explorers of the Great Plains called the Nebraska region the "Great American Desert", mistakenly believing that its vast prairies were incapable of supporting agriculture;

Whereas the Platte River Valley provided an ideal corridor for settlers traveling westward along the Oregon, Mormon, and California Trails;

Whereas the Act entitled "An Act to secure Homesteads to actual Settlers on the Public Domain", approved May 20, 1862, encouraged enterprising individuals to consider settling in the Nebraska Territory;

Whereas Nebraska was—

(1) the first State admitted to the United States after the conclusion of the Civil War; and

(2) the only State the admittance of which the President vetoed because of disagreement with the "fundamental condition" imposed by Congress with respect to giving black men the right to vote;

Whereas, by means of the Act entitled "An Act for the Admission of the State of Nebraska into the Union", approved February 9, 1867, Congress overrode the veto of President Andrew Johnson, opening the way for the admission of Nebraska into the United States on March 1, 1867;

Whereas the admission of Nebraska into the United States led to the further settlement of Nebraska and the construction of the transcontinental railroad westward from the Omaha terminus;

Whereas, in 1879, a Federal district court in Nebraska was the site where American Indians were first recognized as persons under the laws of the United States after Standing Bear pleaded, "I am a man";

Whereas Nebraska is leading the way for a new innovation frontier where entrepreneurs are engaged in building the economy of the future by establishing and growing great businesses;

Whereas Nebraska is the only State whose residents, desiring greater government accountability, voted to transition the State legislature from a bicameral system to a unicameral system, thereby reducing the size of the legislature by nearly 70 percent;

Whereas Nebraska is the home of such national food sensations as the reuben and runzas;

Whereas Nebraska leads the United States in—

- (1) beef and veal exports;
- (2) commercial red meat production;
- (3) commercial cattle slaughter;
- (4) Great Northern bean production;
- (5) popcorn production; and
- (6) the number of irrigated acres of cropland;

Whereas Nebraska continues to lead the United States in center-pivot irrigation technology, as Nebraska is home to the 4 largest irrigation companies in the United States;

Whereas, in 1986, Nebraska was the first State in which women were the 2 major party candidates for governor;

Whereas Nebraska has played and continues to play a significant and remarkable role in the civic, economic, educational, and cultural life of the United States;

Whereas, on March 1, 2017, Nebraska marks the 150th anniversary of the admission of that State into the United States; and

Whereas the sesquicentennial celebration of statehood offers a special opportunity for the people of Nebraska to reflect, remember, celebrate, and plan for an even brighter future that embodies the State motto of Nebraska, "Equality Before the Law": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate congratulates the State of Nebraska on the 150th anniversary of the admission of that State into the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 75—RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS, THE LARGEST ORGANIZATION OF FOOD AND NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS IN THE WORLD

Mr. PORTMAN (for himself and Mr. BROWN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry:

S. RES. 75

Whereas, on October 20, 1917, dietitians met in Cleveland, Ohio, to identify ways in which food and nutrition professionals could help the United States Government conserve food and improve public health and nutrition during World War I;

Whereas the foundational meeting on October 20, 1917, led to the creation of the American Dietetics Association, now known as the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (referred to in this preamble as the "Academy");

Whereas, since the inception of the Academy, the Academy has grown from a charter membership of 58 individuals to the largest organization of food and nutrition professionals in the world, with a membership as of January 2017 of more than 75,000 individuals;

Whereas the Academy is comprised of a diverse group of registered dietitian nutritionists and technicians, scientists, clinicians, educators, students, and other food and nutrition practitioners; and

Whereas, through evidence-based research and education, members of the Academy play an important role in shaping the food choices and nutrition of the people of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) commemorates October 20, 2017, as the 100th anniversary of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; and

(2) applauds the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics for its past, present, and future efforts to champion the principles established by its dietitian predecessors more than 100 years ago—

(A) to promote food and nutrition professionals; and

(B) to improve the health and wellness of all people of the United States through research, education, and advocacy.

SENATE RESOLUTION 76—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF MARCH 21, 2017, AS "NATIONAL ROSIE THE RIVETER DAY"

Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. ISAKSON, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. COONS, and Mrs. SHAHEEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 76

Whereas National Rosie the Riveter Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the 16,000,000 women who worked during World War II;

Whereas the people of the United States have chosen to honor women workers who contributed from the home front during World War II;

Whereas those women left their homes to work or volunteer full-time in factories, farms, shipyards, airplane factories, banks, and other institutions in support of the Armed Forces overseas;

Whereas those women worked with the United Service Organizations and the Amer-

ican Red Cross, drove trucks, riveted airplane parts, collected critical materials, rolled bandages, and served on rationing boards;

Whereas it is fitting and proper to recognize and preserve the history and legacy of working women, including volunteer women, during World War II to promote cooperation and fellowship among those women and their descendants;

Whereas those women and their descendants wish to further the advancement of patriotic ideas, excellence in the workplace, and loyalty to the United States; and

Whereas March 21, 2017, during Women's History Month, is an appropriate day to designate as "National Rosie the Riveter Day": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the designation of March 21, 2017, as "National Rosie the Riveter Day"; and

(2) acknowledges the important role played by women during World War II.

SENATE RESOLUTION 77—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. CASEY (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. COONS, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. BROWN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. MORAN, and Mr. THUNE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 77

Whereas multiple sclerosis (referred to in this preamble as "MS") can impact individuals of all ages, races, and ethnicities, but MS is at least 2 to 3 times more common in women than in men;

Whereas there are approximately 2,300,000 individuals worldwide who have been diagnosed with MS;

Whereas MS is typically diagnosed in individuals between the ages of 20 and 50, but it is estimated that between 8,000 and 10,000 children and adolescents are living with MS in the United States;

Whereas MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain and between the brain and the body;

Whereas symptoms of MS range from numbness and tingling to vision problems and paralysis, and the progress, severity, and specific symptoms of MS in any 1 person cannot yet be predicted;

Whereas, while there is no evidence that MS is directly inherited, studies show that there are genetic and environmental factors that give certain individuals a higher risk of developing MS;

Whereas the exact cause of MS is unknown, and there is no cure for MS;

Whereas the Multiple Sclerosis Coalition, a national network of independent MS organizations dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life of individuals affected by MS, recognizes and supports Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week;

Whereas the mission of the Multiple Sclerosis Coalition is to increase opportunities for cooperation and to provide greater opportunity to leverage the effective use of resources for the benefit of the MS community;

Whereas the United States plays a critical role in coordinating MS research globally and amplifies the impact of research in the United States through which results are delivered to MS patients;

Whereas, in 2012, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society was a founding member of the International Progressive MS Alliance, which coordinates research to accelerate the development of treatments for progressive MS by removing international scientific and technological barriers and, as of 2017, includes 16 MS organizations from 15 countries, 8 foundation and trust members, and 5 pharmaceutical partners;

Whereas the Multiple Sclerosis Coalition recognizes and supports Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week during March each year;

Whereas the goals of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week are—

(1) to invite people to join the movement to end MS;

(2) to encourage everyone to do something to demonstrate a commitment to moving toward a world free of MS; and

(3) to acknowledge those who have dedicated time and talent to help promote MS research and programs; and

Whereas, in 2017, Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week is recognized during the week of March 5 through March 11: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week;

(2) encourages States, localities, and the territories and possessions of the United States to support the goals and ideals of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week by issuing proclamations designating Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week;

(3) encourages media organizations—

(A) to participate in Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week; and

(B) to help provide education to the public about multiple sclerosis;

(4) commends the efforts of States, localities, and the territories and possessions of the United States to support the goals and ideals of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week;

(5) recognizes and reaffirms the commitment of the United States to ending multiple sclerosis by—

(A) promoting awareness about individuals that are affected by multiple sclerosis; and

(B) supporting multiple sclerosis research and education programs;

(6) recognizes all individuals in the United States living with multiple sclerosis;

(7) expresses gratitude to the family members and friends of individuals living with multiple sclerosis, who are a source of love and encouragement for those individuals; and

(8) salutes the health care professionals and medical researchers who—

(A) provide assistance to individuals affected by multiple sclerosis; and

(B) continue to work to find ways—

(i) to stop multiple sclerosis;

(ii) to restore what has been lost due to multiple sclerosis; and

(iii) to end multiple sclerosis forever.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have eight requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to Rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be author-

ized to hold a meeting during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at 10 a.m. in room 106 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, entitled "Connecting America: Improving Access to Infrastructure for Communities Across the Country."

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at 10:30 a.m., in room 406 of the Dirksen Senate office building, to conduct a hearing entitled, "Flood Control Infrastructure: Safety Questions Raised by Current Events."

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at 10:30 a.m., in 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building, to consider nomination.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on March 1, 2017, following the first vote on the Senate Floor, in the Capitol, to conduct an executive business meeting.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled "The Effects of Border Insecurity and Lax Immigration Enforcement on American Communities."

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at 10 a.m., in room SD-G50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a legislative presentation of The American Legion.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at 2 p.m., in room SD-G50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a legislative presentation of Veterans of Foreign Wars.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

The Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at 10:15 a.m., in closed session, to receive testimony on Global Counterterrorism.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 77, submitted earlier today.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 77) supporting the goals and ideals of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 77) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and upon the recommendation of the Democratic leader, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, appoints the following Senator as Vice Chairman of the Senate Delegation to the British-American Interparliamentary Group Conference during the 115th Congress: the Honorable Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks on Thursday, March 2, there be 20 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to the confirmation vote on Executive Calendar No. 5, the nomination of Ben Carson to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, followed by up to 10 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to the cloture vote on Executive Calendar No. 9, the nomination of Rick Perry to be Secretary of Energy, and if cloture is invoked, time be counted as if invoked at 7 a.m. that day.

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

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, March 2; 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, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Carson nomination as under the previous order.

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

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:34 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 2, 2017, at 9:30 a.m.

CHARLES R. BREYER, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES SENTENCING COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 31, 2021. (REAPPOINTMENT)

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

Mr. McCONNELL. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

UNITED STATES SENTENCING COMMISSION
DANNY C. REEVES, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES SENTENCING COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 31, 2019, VICE RICARDO H. HINOJOSA, TERM EXPIRED.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate March 1, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
RYAN ZINKE, OF MONTANA, TO BE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.