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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

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

Loving God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

During these cold, early-darkening days, we ask Your special blessing upon those who labor in the Nation's Capitol.

Help the Members of the House and those of the Senate to act wisely and carefully in the important work they do. In the waning days of the session, may they continue to heed the voices of all their constituents, both those who voted for them and those who did not.

May all that is done within the people's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LANCE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LANCE 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

CONGRATULATING FOOTBALL STATE CHAMPIONS

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

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate three State high school football champions in New Jersey's Seventh Congressional District: Westfield High School, North Hunterdon High School, and Somerville High School.

Westfield High School finished its year with its third consecutive State championship and with its 37-consecutive-game winning streak intact. The North Hunterdon Lions won their division, and Somerville High School finished as State football champions with award-winning Coach Jeff Vanderbeek at the helm.

I congratulate the communities and families supporting our student athletes. I also congratulate all of the faculty and coaches who devote themselves to cultivating and nurturing the talent of these athletes.

Each of those public schools, in addition to athletic achievement, has also been recognized for academic achievement regularly across the Nation, highlighting that New Jersey's reputation of having among the best public schools in the Nation continues.

TAX POLICY LEAVES BEHIND NATIVE AMERICANS

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

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, as Republicans continue to rush their tax plan through both Houses of Congress, they leave behind tens of millions of Americans to give deficit-exploding tax breaks to the absolute wealthiest. They are also leaving behind some really important Americans: our Native American brothers and sisters.

For years, issues of taxation and how Federal tax policy impacts Tribal governments have been the subject of discussion, and for those years that we have talked about the need for tax reform, there have been continuous promises made to Tribal governments that we will deal with these inequities, these issues of double taxation in Tribes.

For example, a Tribal member who gets an adoption through a Tribal court doesn't qualify for an adoption tax credit. That is just one example of the many ways that Federal tax policy does not anticipate or recognize Tribal governments. But they have been left behind again.

This bill should be written in a way that actually addresses the real problems in the Tax Code. It does not.

BILL OF RIGHTS DAY

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to commemorate Bill of Rights Day. Initially, this was passed by Congress in August of 1941 as a joint resolution, signed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt on November 27, 1941, where, in his words: ''I . . . do hereby designate December 15, 1941, as Bill of Rights Day. And I call upon the officials of the government, and upon the people of the United States, to observe the day by displaying the flag of the United States on public buildings and by meeting together for such prayers and such ceremonies as may seem to them appropriate.''

The Bill of Rights was first introduced by James Madison, who later became the fourth President. Initially, 12 amendments were proposed. Two were not ratified. One did become ratified later on in compensation of Congress in 1992.

There were 14 original copies produced of the Bill of Rights at the time,

Printed on recycled paper.

one for each of the 13 States and one for the National Archives. Twelve of them survive today.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed that proclamation on December 15, 1941, he had no way of knowing what was coming. Just 9 days later, those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them. They come in time to take these rights for granted and to assume their protection is assured. We, however, have seen these privileges lost in other continents and other countries.

Indeed, prescient words for the time.

CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

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

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, in California, wildfires have become a year-round threat. Because of these fires, communities across our great State have suffered devastating loss of life and property.

Last year, in my district on the central coast of California, we had the most expensive fire in United States history, the Soberanes fire. This year, we have had some of the deadliest and costliest fires in California history in Napa and Sonoma. This week, we watch fires burn in the hills from Los Angeles and Santa Barbara to Oakland and Big Sur.

Governor Jerry Brown calls this ''the new normal.'' We should call it unacceptable, and we must do something. We must fully fund the cost of fire suppression. We must include California fire relief in this year's disaster package. We must think outside the box when it comes to fire prevention and focus our efforts to better manage our forests in the future.

TRUCKERS' ELECTRONIC TRACKING DEVICE

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

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, millions of American truck drivers helped elect President Trump last November, and I am calling on him to step in and give them a hand.

President Obama left office back in January, but a $2 billion regulation that he wrote in 2015 to require electronic tracking devices be put in every truck in America is still scheduled to go into effect this Monday. Yes, an Obama regulation that shamefully seems to remain on the books is going into effect this Monday under a Republican Congress and White House.

The Department of Transportation can give a 90-day waiver for all truckers from this mandate, giving several waivers for specific industries, including one just this week. Instead of offering fairness and relief, they are picking winners and losers.

Millions of American truckers are pleading 24/7 for relief from this mandate using the hashtag #eldorme, but it has fallen on deaf ears at the Department of Transportation.

Mr. President, you call the shots in this administration. Please issue an executive order today and instruct the Department of Transportation to give all truckers relief from this mandate for 3 months. Don't implement this colossal Obama mandate a week before Christmas.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK). Members are advised to direct their remarks to the Chair.

NEWTOWN ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, on this day in 2012, we watched together in horror as news broke of a shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Twenty innocent children and six brave educators were gunned down at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

In the 5 years since, this House has paused 40 times for moments of silence to recognize the victims of mass shootings. The names are now familiar: Emanuel AME, Pulse nightclub, Las Vegas, and Sutherland Springs.

Since Newtown, there have been more than 1,700 mass shooting events, nearly one every single day.

Across the country, there have been nearly 170,000 gun deaths—let me repeat that figure—170,000 gun deaths since Newtown.

But in those 5 years, this House has taken no significant action to improve our gun safety laws. We are not debating universal background checks or restricting assault weapons or even banning the bump stock used 2 months ago in Las Vegas, the worst mass shooting in our history.

I have met some of the parents of Newtown. We all grieve for them and their loss. But our moments of silence are not enough. The 26 who lost their lives deserve more. We must honor them with action.

I urge this House to end the obstruction and finally consider legislation that would improve safety for all of our communities.

TAX REFORM

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

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. Speaker, the House is in the midst of historic tax reform. Now that the House and Senate have almost reached agreement, I would like to take a moment to express a few ideals that I hope will be guiding principles as we complete this process.

The final tax bill should cut taxes for all Americans while also retaining important incentives making homeownership, raising a family, and obtaining higher education possible.

Additionally, the bill should continue to uphold American values by encouraging our people to be generous and charitable.

The lowering of our corporate tax rates is critical. As a former business owner, I know firsthand the difficulty of the tax burden.

Most importantly, the bill must help working American families keep more of their hard-earned money.

I am confident that Congress will deliver on its promise to simplify the Tax Code and to cut taxes for all Americans. I know that this historic legislation will spur economic growth and prosperity.

A PARTISAN TAX BILL

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

Mr. SCHRADER. Mr. Speaker, how do you make a bad, partisan tax bill better? For my Republican colleagues, apparently that means cutting tax rates for the wealthy even more than the original bill, as we have heard over the last couple days.

Where is the fairness for average, hardworking Americans?

Medical expenses are no longer deductible.

Student loans and tuition waivers are no longer deductible.

Interest is not deductible for families, but it is for business.

The mortgage interest deduction is reduced.

State and local taxes are not fully deductible.

Small businesses don't get the same tax cuts that big businesses do.

No help for capital gains.

No help for dividends, advertising, or entertaining.

Other business expense is no longer deductible.

Renewable energy tax credits go away.

Private activity bonds that help veterans and many others are also gone.

Worst of all, individual tax cuts flip back and are rescinded in a few years, while corporations go on forever.

Where is the fairness for seniors, for our youth, for our families, and for small businesses? Not in this partisan tax bill.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI'S WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM

(Mrs. HARTZLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the University of Central Missouri's women's soccer team on winning the NCAA Division II national championship. This is the Jennies first NCAA women's soccer national championship in program history.

The Jennies completed the season with a perfect record of 26 and 0, making them only the third women's Division II national champion to finish a

season with a perfect record. The team's 26 wins set a new single-season NCAA Division II women's record.

In addition to winning the national championship, the Jennies had five athletes join the Division II Conference Commissioners Association All-American teams.

The team's outstanding accomplishments mark a great milestone for the University of Central Missouri's athletics department and its head coach of 11 years, Lewis Theobald.

Please join me in congratulating the Central Missouri Jennies on this momentous achievement.

OBSERVING THE SANDY HOOK ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. MCEACHIN. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today on the anniversary of the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

On December 14, 2012, Newtown, Connecticut, lost 20 innocent children—most, 6 years old—to gun violence. We also lost six brave teachers and staff who did everything possible to protect the students in their care.

As a father, I cannot imagine anything more painful than the loss of a child. As an American, I struggle to imagine a more horrific tragedy than that which happened in Newtown.

Mr. Speaker, many of us thought this tragedy would fairly move the needle on policy. That did not happen. Just last week, the House passed major legislation loosening gun safety laws.

I want to remind my colleagues in the majority that it is not too late to act. We cannot bring back those whom we have lost, but we can and must ensure that more families do not face the pain that Newtown families faced.

I urge my colleagues in the majority to join this side of the aisle in supporting commonsense gun safety reform. Thoughts and prayers are not enough. Help us to end this scourge.

□ 0915

PRIVACY NOTIFICATION TECHNICAL CLARIFICATION ACT

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 657, I call up the bill (H.R. 2396) to amend the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act to update the exception for certain annual notices provided by financial institutions, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 657, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services, printed in the bill, is adopted, and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 2396

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act''.

SEC. 2. EXCEPTION TO ANNUAL NOTICE REQUIREMENT.

Section 503 of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (15 U.S.C. 6803) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(g) ADDITIONAL EXCEPTION TO ANNUAL NOTICE REQUIREMENT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—A financial institution that has not changed its policies and practices with regard to disclosing nonpublic personal information from the policies and practices that were disclosed in the most recent disclosure sent to consumers in accordance with this section shall not be required to provide an annual disclosure under this section if—

''(A) the financial institution makes its current policy available to consumers on its website and via mail upon written request sent to a designated address identified for the purpose of requesting the policy or upon telephone request made using a toll free consumer service telephone number; and

''(B) the financial institution conspicuously notifies consumers of the availability of the current policy, including—

''(i) with respect to consumers who are entitled to a periodic billing statement, a message on or with each periodic billing statement; and

''(ii) with respect to consumers who are not entitled to a periodic billing statement, through other reasonable means such as on its website or with other written communication, including electronic communication, sent to the consumer.

''(2) TREATMENT OF MULTIPLE POLICIES.—If a financial institution maintains more than one set of policies described under paragraph (1) that vary depending on the consumer's account status or State of residence, the financial institution may comply with the website posting requirement in paragraph (1)(A) by posting all of such policies to the public section of the financial institution's website, with instructions for choosing the applicable policy.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill, as amended, shall be debatable for 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services.

After 1 hour of debate on the bill, as amended, it shall be in order to consider the further amendment printed in House Report 115–462, if offered by the Member designated in the report, which shall be considered read, shall be separately debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, and shall not be subject to a demand for a division of the question.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act, which is an important bill cosponsored by a bipartisan group of Members of the House and a bill that was approved by the Financial Services Committee with a strong bipartisan vote of 2–1, quite literally: 40–20. Additionally, this bill builds upon an issue that has a long track record of strong bipartisan support in Congress.

I thank Congressman TROTT, a member of the Financial Services Committee, for introducing this legislation and for leading congressional efforts to modernize the privacy notification process for consumers and to provide regulatory relief for our struggling financial institutions.

There is a serious issue, Mr. Speaker, with the sheer volume, complexity, weight, load, and cost of the regulatory burden upon, particularly, our struggling community financial institutions, our community banks, and credit unions.

It is no one specific regulation, but the totality, the combination of them all, are causing us to lose a community bank or credit union a day in America. As we lose them, our constituents lose their opportunity for credit opportunities to share in their version of the American Dream. It makes it more costly, more difficult for them to finance someone to go to college, for them to perhaps buy an auto to get them to work, or perhaps capitalize their own small business. So we frequently hear from our community financial institutions.

I heard from a community banker in Nebraska, not long ago, who explained: ''I have explained about how things have changed since I started in banking 10 years ago. In efforts for our government to make things more fair or easier for consumers, it has actually become increasingly more difficult for people to obtain favorable loan terms and, not to mention, obtain loans in a timely manner.''

I heard from a banker in Alabama about real estate regulations, who said: They were intended to help customers, but it is actually hurting them. As wait times increase and banks are no longer offering certain products, not all of these people can be protected from themselves, no matter how many rules and regs the banks follow to protect them.

I heard from a community banker in Utah, who said: I have been in banking for 29 years. In that time, the regulatory burden has increased dramatically. The ability to help customers and small businesses succeed in rural America has been greatly hampered by regulation intended to protect the customer from Wall Street banks, but in the process, smaller community banks, such as mine, have been caught in the fray or broad brush of regulations.

A banker in Oklahoma said that, because of Dodd-Frank regulations: ''We no longer offer/purchase house loans.''

The list goes on and on and on.

So this is one regulation that simply says: under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, if a financial institution doesn't change their privacy notification, they don't have to send out a piece of paper annually—a piece of paper like this that 99 percent of the time customers throw away and don't read in the first place.

Don't take my word for it. Professor Adam Levitin, who is a frequent Democrat witness before the House Financial Services Committee testified before our committee: ''One thing that I think should go the way of the dodo bird are the Gramm-Leach-Bliley privacy notices. Nobody reads them.''

That is a Democrat witness, Mr. Speaker. It is not a Republican witness. It is a Democrat witness.

He goes on to say: ''There's no reason anyone should—even the large banks—should be spending money on giving these notices.''

But that is not what this bill does. It just simply says, if a financial institution does not change their privacy notification, they don't have to send out a paper notification that creates more costs, that gets passed on to the customer, and that nobody reads in the first place.

Number one, it is important regulatory relief for our financial institutions. But it is also important when we think in terms of the sheer volume of financial disclosures that our constituents receive.

This goes back to the fact, Mr. Speaker, if you disclose everything, you effectively disclose nothing because you overwhelm the customer.

So we must vigilantly ensure that our constituents are receiving effective disclosure, not just voluminous disclosure, but effective disclosure of material items written in clear, understandable, common language. Again, not voluminous disclosure of irrelevant items written in legalese and fine print. That doesn't do anybody any good, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan for his leadership. The bill that he is bringing today has earned bipartisan support because it is a simple technical correction to clarify that customers have to be physically mailed an annual privacy notice only when the privacy policies have actually changed from the previous year.

Importantly, this bill was carefully crafted to maintain and retain current privacy and opt-out policies and does not exempt any financial services provider from an initial privacy notice, nor does it allow any loopholes for an institution to avoid issuing an updated notice.

In fact, this legislation, Mr. Speaker, does not change privacy provisions at all, just how they are delivered. Let me repeat: the legislation does not change privacy provisions at all, just how they are delivered.

Again, Mr. TROTT's bill has strong bipartisan support. It provides a simple and flexible approach that modernizes privacy notification to the benefit of our customers and to the benefit of our financial institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the measure and urge every Member to vote for it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in opposition to H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act.

Contrary to the bill's title, this bill is far from a technical clarification. So I want to be very clear about what this bill would actually do.

H.R. 2396 would reduce the meaningful and clear disclosures that financial institutions must currently provide to their customers every year, even if those companies share their customers' nonpublic personal information broadly with nonaffiliated third-party companies.

Unlike other privacy bills Congress has considered, this bill comes with no guardrails whatsoever to discourage the company from broadly sharing consumer-sensitive personal information.

While the bill provides several alternative mechanisms to deliver privacy reminders, one option would result in the customer receiving no written disclosure at all.

The current annual privacy notices serve as a reminder describing a customer's right to restrict the sharing of their nonpublic, personal information to nonaffiliated third parties and information about how to exercise this right if they so choose.

This privacy right was created in the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, which was signed into law in 1999. I served on the conference committee, so I know firsthand that the initial and annual privacy notices in the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act were enacted partly in response to public concerns about the sale of personal data for marketing purposes that were highlighted in a number of legal actions brought by State attorneys general at the time.

In 1999, for example, there was a settlement between the Minnesota attorney general and U.S. Bank resolving allegations that the bank misrepresented its practice of selling highly personal and confidential information about its customers to telemarketers.

These concerns are just as relevant today. In fact, I find the timing of the consideration of this bill very troubling, as it is being brought to the floor just months after the massive Equifax data breach.

In the Equifax breach, 145.5 million Americans had their Social Security numbers, dates of birth, and other sensitive financial and personally identifiable information exposed to thieves.

Equifax is not the only major credit bureau to experience a large data breach. About 2 years ago, Experian, one of the other three major credit bureaus in this country, had a breach that exposed millions of T-Mobile customers' information.

These breaches are on top of a long list of other breaches we have seen at other companies where sensitive customer information was compromised. Consumers have called on their Representatives in Congress to enact tougher laws that would strengthen their control over their personal information, not weaken it.

Consumers are increasingly wary about the unfettered sharing of their personal information by financial firms to nonaffiliated third parties that can result in consumer profiling, fraud, aggressive target marketing, and identity theft.

Unfortunately, this bill goes in the opposite direction. Instead of working to strengthen consumers' privacy protections, H.R. 2396 would ease obligations on financial institutions to provide notices to their customers describing their privacy practices and policies, and importantly, fully explaining to these customers their right to restrict the sharing of their information to nonaffiliated third parties.

This is commonly referred to as a consumer's right to opt out of having a financial institution share their information to companies that are outside of their common corporate structure or organization. These nonaffiliated third-party companies are generally not ones that the consumers have an existing relationship with, meaning that they have not received a product or service from the company in the past.

The proponents of H.R. 2396 may say the bill has nothing to do with Equifax, or that Equifax would not be covered, if the amendment being offered later today is agreed to. But the bill would roll back privacy notice requirements for many financial institutions that engage in vehicle financing, including megabanks like Wells Fargo, even if they broadly share their customers' nonpublic, personal information with other companies.

□ 0930

Let's discuss Wells Fargo and their auto lending practices and their work with nonaffiliated third parties. Earlier this year, the Democratic staff of the Financial Services Committee produced a report on Wells Fargo's egregious misconduct, which has consulted in extensive consumer harm.

For example, Wells Fargo charged over 570,000 consumers for automobile insurance policies they did not need, which resulted in at least 20,000 customers, including Active Duty servicemembers, having their vehicles inappropriately repossessed. These auto insurance policies were provided through a nonaffiliated third-party company called National General Insurance.

The bank has also demonstrated a clear pattern of misusing millions of their customers' information to open accounts in their name without their permission.

So why should Congress consider relaxing the privacy requirements for a recidivist bank like Wells Fargo?

Let me also address arguments that suggest customers don't read these notices anyway. That is a quote that we hear oftentimes.

As I have discussed, I think consumers are paying closer attention now after the Equifax incident. Proponents say that a company posting a link on their website isn't so bad, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau allowed for it.

But the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau provided an alternative to the annual privacy notices for companies that do not share data in ways that trigger consumers' opt-out rights under the law. Over the last decade, Congress has heard repeatedly from banks and credit unions that if a company does not share personal information with an unaffiliated third party that allows consumers to opt out from having it shared, and if they do not change their privacy policies, they should be exempt from the annual notice requirements. In those instances, the customer does not have the ability to opt out of having the information shared.

After several years of research and debate, we made that targeted change in the last Congress. Since then, other companies, specifically captive auto finance companies, have made the case they should have more flexibility satisfying the annual notice requirement because they have a unique and close relationship with automobile dealers they work with that still requires them to send the annual notice.

This unaffiliated third-party relationship triggers a consumer's right under the law to opt out and not have their information shared. I offered an amendment in committee that would have granted this targeted relief, but it was rejected.

So, while I appreciate that H.R. 2396 provides flexibility to captive auto finance companies, the bill is not limited to them and goes much, much further. Mr. Speaker, over 30 consumer, community, privacy, and civil rights groups have publicly opposed this bill, including U.S. PIRG, and so do I. This is an area where more study is needed before policymakers craft sweeping changes.

The bottom line is that I believe we should not open the door too widely at this time to give this same degree of flexibility to all and every financial institution, including recidivist banks like Wells Fargo.

Furthermore, there needs to be more, not less, privacy protections and consumer control relating to personal information following the massive data breach at Equifax this year.

Mr. Speaker, for all of these reasons, I urge opposition to H.R. 2396, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds to say that I listened very carefully. It was a fascinating speech from the ranking member. Too bad it has absolutely nothing to do with the bill that is before us. Ms. WATERS was speaking of privacy policies. The bill has to do with notification.

But I do agree with the ranking member that we do need more effective disclosure. In H.R. 2396, we require financial institutions to make their current policies available on its website at all times. That actually improves disclosure. The only people who can be for the status quo are those who own paper mills so that we can waste more paper.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. TROTT), the sponsor of this legislation and an outstanding, hardworking member of the Financial Services Committee.

Mr. TROTT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), the chairman of the Financial Services Committee, for yielding me time and for bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, Mr. CLAY, for his leadership on this bill. It has been a pleasure to work across the aisle on this commonsense measure with someone for whom I have such great respect.

This bill makes a simple technical correction to Federal law. Under the legislation, financial institutions are no longer required to mail duplicative and confusing privacy notifications every year when no changes have been made to the policy. Privacy information must be made available on the company website, and financial institutions must send paper copies to consumers upon request.

Under this legislation, companies are required to provide a toll-free number so customers can request the policy at any time.

Additionally, consumers will be reminded of their right to opt out of information-sharing when they receive their bills. If you are like me, you throw away these documents. They are confusing, dense, and full of fine-print legalese. I can never tell if anything has changed, and I am a lawyer.

This legislation will ensure that consumers are alerted of changes and will no longer be inundated with junk mail.

This measure will also help companies provide better service to their customers. Some companies spend over $2 million annually on these mailings—money that could be put to better use making more car loans or perhaps even lowering the cost of their product.

During a recent hearing on this bill, a community banker told us about a similar provision that had passed for banks last year. He spoke about how positive it had been for his community and his customers. He took the money he would have spent on postage and paper and gave it back to the community in the form of more loans. This, in turn, helped people start new businesses, create more jobs, and even resulted in a few mortgages being made to purchase new homes.

I believe every Member should support getting rid of outdated, unnecessary regulations. This bill will allow those who lend money when we buy a new car to realize the same savings and efficiencies as banks. Not only will this legislation reduce unnecessary costs, it will improve transparency and accountability, and ensure individuals better understand when a company has actually changed its privacy policy.

A few minutes ago, the ranking member spoke in opposition to this bill. I am not sure what bill she read, but it was not H.R. 2396. The bill in no way puts consumers' privacy information at risk. It in no way denies consumers important privacy protections. It in no way has anything to do with Equifax. It has nothing to do with Wells Fargo. It has nothing to do with servicemembers having their cars improperly repossessed. It has nothing to do with consumer profiling. It has nothing to do with fraud. And—she didn't bring it up—it has nothing to do with the President's tax returns.

This bill should have been on the suspension calendar. There are only two groups that can oppose this bill: the United States Postal Service, because it is going to mean less business for them; and, as the chairman mentioned, paper mills.

The ranking member did, in fact, offer an amendment. The amendment was so convoluted that if I was a bank, a financial institution, or a car lender, I would prefer to do the mailings, because the amendment, at the end of the day, was really just a haven for class action lawyers to file frivolous lawsuits when someone didn't put something on their website exactly as outlined in the amendment.

This is a pro-consumer piece of legislation. I have letters from the American Financial Services Association, the National Bankers Association, the American Bankers Association, the Consumer Bankers Association, and the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers. I also have a letter signed by the Ford Motor Credit Company, General Motors Financial Company, Nissan Motor Acceptance Corporation, Toyota Financial Services, and VW Credit in support of H.R. 2396.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD these letters.

AMERICAN FINANCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, April 20, 2017.

Hon. DAVE TROTT,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REP. TROTT: The American Financial Services Association (AFSA) supports the ''Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act,'' which amends the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) to update the exception for certain annual notices provided by financial institutions.

The GLBA requires financial institutions (FIs) to issue privacy notices to consumers if the FIs share consumers' non-public personal information with affiliates or third parties.

Such disclosures are required to occur when a relationship is first established between the FI and the consumer, as well as annually in written form as long as the relationship continues, even if no changes to the disclosure policies have occurred.

Annual privacy notices without policy changes are redundant, unnecessary, and confusing. They contain several pages of small-print legalese, which have little value for consumers. In fact, they are largely discarded—unread—immediately upon receipt. However, producing and mailing these notices costs millions of dollars.

In the fall of 2014, the CFPB finalized a rule allowing FIs to post their annual privacy notices online instead of delivering them individually if they meet a series of conditions, including not sharing the consumers' nonpublic personal information with unaffiliated third parties. In December 2015, Congress went further by enacting an outright exemption from the mailing requirement for FIs that: (1) do not share non-public personal information about consumers to unaffiliated third parties, and (2) have not changed its disclosure policies and practices since the most recent disclosure was sent to consumers.

Unfortunately, certain FIs cannot take advantage of the exemption. We ask Congress to pass the Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act to level the playing field for all FIs. If a financial institution's privacy policy has not materially changed, the institution should be permitted to satisfy the intent of GLBA by delivering its privacy notice through an electronic medium, or by mail upon request.

Sincerely,

BILL HIMPLER,
Executive Vice President.

NATIONAL BANKERS ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, December 12, 2017.

Hon. WILLIAM LACY CLAY,
Washington, DC.
Hon. DAVID TROTT,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES CLAY AND TROTT: On behalf of the National Bankers Association (NBA), I write to express our member banks' support for H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Corrections Act. The NBA is the nation's leading trade organization for the country's minority and women-owned depository institutions. We write in support of H.R. 2396 because our member banks believe updating the delivery of privacy notices should be modernize and reflective of the technological choices available to institutions and customers. As you are aware, the CFPB and Congress have made changes to the privacy notification process in 2014 and 2015. These changes excluded specific financial institutions and we believe a simple method for alternative delivery for these companies is warranted.

Producing and mailing privacy notices costs millions of dollars. Eliminating the requirement would reduce the cost of delivering financial services, save paper and discontinue this annual nuisance. At the same time, it would also make the mailings more significant to the consumer because they would only come after a change in policy. The primary function of the annual notice is to remind consumers of their right to opt out of information-sharing for marketing purposes, but it is not obvious that mailing a paper disclosure is the most effective or reliable medium for accomplishing this objective.

H.R. 2396 is a sensible and balanced approach that enjoys broad bipartisan support, that we believe addresses concerns shared by our bankers regarding the need for modernization in the delivery of privacy notifications. We commend you for your leadership on this important issue, and we would urge your colleagues to support this legislation.

Respectfully,

MICHAEL A. GRANT,
President, National Bankers Association.

H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act, a bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. David Trott (MI) and Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit Subcommittee Ranking Member William Lacy Clay Jr. (MO) and the substitute language, would simplify the notice requirements for financial institutions that have not changed their privacy policies. In addition to the relief provided by the FAST Act for financial institutions that only share information within the statutory exceptions, it would create a simple disclosure mechanism using the Internet for financial institutions that have not changed their privacy practices. The ABA supports H.R. 2396.

H.R. 2706, the Financial Institution Customer Protection Act. This legislation, as introduced by House Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit Subcommittee Chairman Blaine Luetkemeyer would dictate that federal banking agencies could not request nor order a financial institution to terminate a banking relationship unless the regulator has material reason. The legislation further states that account termination requests or orders would be required to be made in writing and rely on information other than reputational risk. We thank Chairman Luetkemeyer for his attention to this issue as he well knows that banks are in the business of providing financial services for law-abiding customers, and they share a common goal with law enforcement of maintaining the integrity of the payments system. If there is reasonable concern regarding a customer, it works best when banks work together with our regulatory agencies and law enforcement. This legislation supports that concept. The ABA supports H.R. 2706.

H.R. 2954, the Home Mortgage Disclosure Adjustment Act. This legislation, as introduced by Rep. Tom Emmer (MN), would provide community banks with relief from compliance burdens that are ill-suited and unnecessary for community banks.

Specifically, the bill exempts small banks and credit unions from new reporting requirements of the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) if they are lenders that have originated 1,000 or fewer closed-end mortgages in each of the two preceding calendar years or are lenders that have originated 2,000 or fewer open-end lines of credit (such as a typical home equity loan) in each of the two preceding calendar years. Additionally, the bill repeals the HMDA amendments included in the Dodd-Frank Act and withdraws the CFPB's rule to impose the new and modified HMDA data points scheduled to take effect in January of next year.

The pending HMDA changes were imposed after the financial crisis. Although well-intentioned, the new reporting requirements were overly broad in their coverage and have the potential to add significant cost and regulatory burden, as well as privacy concerns for customers, to small institutions which have an excellent track record of fairly and honestly serving their customers' needs.

So great is the cost of compliance with these new regulations that many smaller banks may be forced to reconsider their ability to continue to make mortgage and other covered loans. H.R. 2954 provides needed relief to keep more lending options available in the markets that these banks serve. The ABA supports H.R. 2954.

H.R. 3299, THE ''PROTECTING CONSUMERS' ACCESS TO CREDIT ACT OF 2017''

The decision by the Second Circuit Court in the Madden v. Midland Funding, LLC case undermined a long-standing legal principle, the ''valid-when-made'' doctrine, which establishes that if a loan is valid when it is made with respect to its interest rate then it cannot become invalid or unenforceable when assigned to another party. CBA strongly supports H.R. 3329 that solidifies the ''valid-when-made'' doctrine, which has been a cornerstone of U.S. banking law for over 100 years and prevent uncertainty for financial institutions.

H.R. 2706, THE ''FINANCIAL INSTITUTION CUSTOMER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017''

CBA strongly supports H.R. 2706, the ''Financial Institution Customer Protection Act,'' that would require federal banking regulatory agencies to establish requirements for the termination of bank accounts and prohibit federal banking regulators from formally or informally suggesting, requesting, or ordering a depository institution to terminate a customer account except in circumstances affecting the security of our country or specific illegal activity.

H.R. 2396, THE ''PRIVACY NOTIFICATION TECHNICAL CLARIFICATION ACT''

CBA supports H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Correction Act, to reduce unnecessary paperwork by streamlining the reporting of bank privacy policies. Specifically, H.R. 2396 would relieve a bank of its annual privacy policy notice requirement if it has not changed its policies and practices, makes its current policy publically available, notifies customers of the availability of the notice on periodic billing statements or electronically, and posts all notices if it maintains more than one policy.

CONCLUSION

CBA stands ready to work with Congress to ensure a sound regulatory framework for financial institutions and promote competition in the financial marketplace. On behalf of the members of CBA, we appreciate the opportunity to submit this letter in support of a number of legislative proposals that would ease regulatory burdens and provide greater access to capital for consumers.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MINORITY AUTOMOBILE DEALERS,
Largo, MD, December 12, 2017.

Hon. DAVID TROTT,
Washington, DC.
Hon. WILLIAM LACY CLAY,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES TROTT AND CLAY: On behalf of the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers (NAMAD), I write to express our members support for H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Corrections Act. NAMAD is the nation's leading trade organization for the country's ethnic minority dealers. Our primary objective is to pursue the meaningful presence and participation of minority businesses and diverse employees across all aspects of the automotive economic sector, including:

Increasing the number of minority-owned dealerships in communities across America.

Advocating workplace and supplier diversity in the automotive manufacturing environment.

Supporting minority engagement in the automotive retail sales and service sectors.

We write in support of H.R. 2396 because it is a sensible and balanced approach that enjoys broad bipartisan support, which we believe addresses concerns related to modernizing the delivery of privacy notifications shared by the indirect auto financing companies that work with our dealers as well as

those dealers that also provide in-house financing of their own directly to consumers.

As you all know, the CFPB and Congress have made changes to the privacy notification process in 2014 and 2015. These changes excluded specific financial institutions and we believe a simple method for alternative delivery for these companies is warranted. Eliminating this requirement would reduce the cost of delivering financial services, save paper, and discontinue this annual nuisance. At the same time, it would also make the mailings more significant to the consumer because they would only come after a change in policy. The primary function of the annual notice is to remind consumers of their right to opt out of information-sharing for marketing purposes, but it is not obvious that mailing a paper disclosure is the most effective or reliable medium for accomplishing this objective.

NAMAD appreciates the commonsense solution proposed in H.R. 2396 as our members believe the delivery of privacy notices should be modernized and reflective of the current suite of technological choices available to institutions and customers. We commend you for your leadership on this important issue, and we would urge your colleagues to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

DAMON LESTER,
President.

DECEMBER 13, 2017.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS: The undersigned vehicle financial institutions (FIs), consisting of captive finance companies directly affiliated with a manufacturer and who engage in dealer facilitated financing or indirect auto financing, are pleased to express our support for H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act. We thank Representatives David Trott (R–MI) and William Lacy Clay, Jr. (D–MO) for introducing commonsense legislation to amend the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) by updating the exception for certain annual notices provided by vehicle FIs to allow for an electronic delivery mechanism. We urge Members of Congress to support this important bipartisan legislation.

The GLBA requires FIs to issue privacy notices to consumers if the FIs share consumers' non-public personal information with affiliates or unaffiliated third parties. These disclosures are required to be sent annually by mail, even if no changes to the policy have occurred. Unfortunately, annual privacy notices without policy changes are redundant, unnecessary, and confusing to our consumers. They contain several pages of small-print legalese, which have little value for consumers. In fact, they are largely discarded—unread—immediately upon receipt. However, producing and mailing these notices is financially costly and time consuming.

For background, in December 2015, Congress provided for an outright exemption from the mailing requirement for FIs that: (1) do not share non-public personal information about consumers to unaffiliated third parties, and (2) have not changed disclosure policies and practices since the most recent disclosure was sent to consumers. Unfortunately, vehicle FIs remain unable to even utilize an electronic delivery mechanism for these notices.

We ask members of the House of Representatives to pass H.R. 2396 to help level the playing field. Specifically, if a vehicle FI's privacy policy has not materially changed, the company should be permitted to satisfy the intent of GLBA by delivering its privacy notice through an electronic medium, or by mail upon request. The legislation also includes a requirement that a website address or toll-free number would be included in regular communications to consumers, such as monthly statements, as well as a description of where to locate procedures for the consumer to opt-out at any time. This would ensure that our consumers have ready access to privacy policies 365 days a year, including a paper notice if they choose to receive it.

We respectfully request your support in favor of H.R. 2396. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

FORD MOTOR CREDIT COMPANY.
GENERAL MOTORS FINANCIAL COMPANY, INC.
NISSAN MOTOR ACCEPTANCE CORPORATION.
TOYOTA FINANCIAL SERVICE.
VW CREDIT, INC.

Mr. TROTT. Mr. Speaker, it will lower the costs for these companies, which will help consumers obtain more loans. This is a bipartisan, commonsense piece of legislation with true community benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support H.R. 2396.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ), a senior member of the Financial Services Committee and the ranking member of the Small Business Committee.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to thank Ranking Member WATERS for her extraordinary leadership on these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2396, the Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act.

This bill claims to amend the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act to exempt vehicle finance companies from providing customers with annual privacy statements if the company hasn't released recently changed its policies and practices and the company makes its policy available online.

But this bill goes far beyond providing a small exemption and tailored flexibility to captives and vehicle finance companies, as the proponents of this bill will have you believe, and something I am really ready to support. This bill will exempt all financial institutions from providing customers with annual privacy notices.

As currently drafted, under the bill, financial institutions such as payday lenders, check cash servicers, and large institutions like Wells Fargo are exempted from providing annual privacy notices and are unconstrained on who they can share their customers' personal information with. This goes far beyond the original intent of the bill.

As we have seen in the growing number of data breaches at companies like Equifax, the protection of consumers' personal information is something Congress must consider carefully.

While I continue to think that it makes sense for captive auto finance companies to have some degree of flexibility, to the extent they only share customers' personal information with the dealership, this legislation is far too broad.

Mr. Speaker, to that end, I ask my colleagues to oppose this measure.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. LUETKEMEYER), the chairman of the Financial Services Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit.

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his diligent work on this issue. I also thank Chairman HENSARLING from Texas for all of the leadership that he has given us throughout the year on this particular issue as well.

Several years ago, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) and I introduced bipartisan legislation to require depository institutions to provide privacy information to their customers only if they had changed any policy or practice related to that customer's privacy. That bill was ultimately signed into law by President Obama. It has eliminated millions of confusing and often-ignored mailings that cost millions of dollars to produce each year.

While our legislation provided relief to banks and credit unions, it did not extend relief to other financial companies regulated under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act; namely, captive finance companies that operate in a manner largely similar to depository institutions.

The safeguards featured in the bill from the 114th Congress and codified into law are included in Mr. TROTT's bill. This relief will not be granted to a financial company that has changed its policies or practices with regard to disclosure of nonpublic personal information; only if it kept it the same.

There is also a requirement that the privacy notice must be made available to consumers in a variety of ways. Consumers will continue to have access to privacy notices through online resources and billing statements.

Requirements for financial institutions to release annual privacy notices to customers, even when no changes have been made, are both redundant and a waste of resources. With the passage of this bill, information included in these mailings would likely be more significant to the consumer because they would only come after a change in privacy policy.

Mr. Speaker, this is about accountability for the institution to their customer for holding that information. It is about access for the customer to their own information, with regards to privacy of it. A good example, as pointed out by the ranking member, was Equifax. But let's stop and talk about Equifax for a second.

□ 0945

What happened? They had, I believe, the largest breach in history, 150 million people.

Mr. Speaker, there is probably you and I and everybody in this room and probably the 12 people watching right

now who are affected by this, but I guarantee you that you and I and all in this room and the 12 people watching, nobody kept their privacy notices that were sent out last year, did we? They are all in file 13 somewhere, long forgotten, and all of the information in those privacy notices is forgotten about and not even probably read to begin with.

So it is important. The gentleman's bill here has in here that the privacy notice can be accessed online. And in the Equifax breach, anybody who was concerned could then go online and check for the privacy policies of Equifax and see what the policies were and whether they were adhered to by the company itself in notifying them, in taking care of their concerns, in reimbursing them. Whatever was in the notice was in that online notice as well. So it provided that access, which the consumer is not going to have in a piece of paper. That is probably going to get in file 13.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when I was home last weekend, I got one of those things. You know what, I looked at it, opened the envelope, and said: ''I don't want to read this.'' I threw it away. This is nonsense. This is a waste of time and resources.

And, in this situation with the Equifax breach, I think this bill points out the great things that can happen if you enact this legislation from the standpoint of allowing consumers to have access, 24/7, to the notifications and the privacy policies.

Mr. Speaker, I want to again thank the gentleman from Michigan for picking up the mantle on this issue, and I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2396. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for bringing the bill before us today.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I have heard, more than once, Members speaking for consumers, saying: These privacy notices are not that important. Nobody reads them. They throw them in the wastebasket.

Well, I don't know how Members would know that, and I don't think that we should be satisfied that consumers are being represented that way with indications that they don't really care about these notices and the opportunity to opt out so that their information won't be shared.

But let me tell you what consumers are saying to us. I have, here, letters that have been sent by consumer organizations that really do care about what is happening with this bill today, and I would like to share that information with you.

Let me just tell you who these consumer organizations are and whom they represent:

There is Americans for Financial Reform. Americans for Financial Reform is a nonpartisan and nonprofit coalition of more than 200 civil rights, consumer, labor, business, investor, faith-based, civic, and community groups formed in the wake of the 2008 crisis, working to lay the foundation for a strong, stable, and ethical financial system, one that serves the economy and the Nation as a whole.

Then there is Allied Progress. Allied Progress is a consumer watchdog organization that uses hard-hitting research to stand up to Wall Street and powerful special interests and hold their allies in Congress and the White House accountable.

Then there is Center for Digital Democracy. The Center for Digital Democracy is recognized as one of the leading consumer protection and privacy organizations in the United States; and since its founding in 2001 and, prior to that, through its predecessor organization, the Center for Media Education, CDD has been at the forefront of research, public education, and advocacy, protecting consumers in the digital age.

Then there is Consumer Action. Through multilingual financial education materials, community outreach, and issue-focused advocacy, Consumer Action empowers underrepresented consumers, nationwide, to assert their rights in the marketplace and to financially prosper.

There is the Consumer Federation of America. The Consumer Federation of America is an association of nonprofit consumer organizations that was established way back in 1968 to advance consumer interests through research, advocacy, and education. Today, nearly 300 of these groups participate in the federation and govern it through their representatives on the organization's board of directors. CFA is a research, advocacy, education, and service organization.

Then there is Consumer Watchdog. Consumer Watchdog is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing an effective voice for taxpayers and consumers in an era when special interests dominate public discourse, government, and politics, and they describe themselves as deploying an in-house team of public interest lawyers, policy experts, strategists, and grassroots activists to expose, confront, and change corporate and political injustice in every way, every day, saving Americans billions of dollars and improving countless lives. For decades, Consumer Watchdog has been the Nation's most aggressive consumer advocate, taking on politicians of both parties and the special interests that fund them.

Then there is the National Association of Consumer Advocates. The National Association of Consumer Advocates is a nonprofit association of more than 1,500 attorneys and consumer advocates committed to representing consumers' interests. Our members, they say, are private and public sector attorneys, legal services attorneys, law professors, and law students whose primary focus is the protection and representation of consumers. They have represented hundreds of thousands of consumers victimized by fraudulent, abusive, and predatory business practices.

As a national organization fully committed to promoting justice for consumers, NACA's members and their clients are actively engaged in promoting a fair and open marketplace that forcefully protects the rights of consumers, particularly those of modest means. NACA also has a charitable and educational fund incorporated under 501(c)(3).

There is another very prominent consumer organization, the National Consumer Law Center, working on behalf of low-income clients. Since 1969, the nonprofit National Consumer Law Center has used its expertise in consumer law and energy policy to work for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people, including older adults in the United States. This organization's expertise includes policy analysis and advocacy, consumer law and energy publications, litigation, expert witness services, and training and advice for advocates.

This organization works with nonprofit and legal services organizations, private attorneys, policymakers, and Federal and State government and courts across the Nation to stop exploitative practices, help financially stressed families build and retain wealth, and advance economic fairness.

Then there is Privacy Times. Privacy Times is the leading subscription-only newsletter covering privacy and freedom of information law and policy. It is read largely by attorneys and professionals who must stay abreast of the legislation, litigation, and executive branch activities, as well as consumer news, technology trends, and business developments. Since 1981, Privacy Times has provided its readers with accurate reporting, objective analysis, and thoughtful insight into the events that shape the ongoing debate over privacy and freedom of information.

Then there is the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse. Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, a nonprofit consumer education and advocacy organization located in San Diego, California, their mission is to engage, educate, and empower consumers to protect their privacy. They engage in outreach, provide educational materials and services to individuals nationwide, and have an active media presence. The PRC uses the information we learn directly, they say, from consumers to form the basis of their advocacy work.

Then there is Public Citizen. Public Citizen has a team of researchers. They uncover the facts. Their staff brings their findings to the public through the media as well as one-on-one interactions. Their advocates bring the voice of the public to the halls of power on behalf of consumers.

Then there is Public Knowledge. Public Knowledge promotes freedom of expression and open internet and access to affordable communication tools and

creative works. They work to shape policy on behalf of the public interest.

Then there is Reinvestment Partners. Reinvestment Partners' mission is to advocate for economic justice and opportunity. They do this by providing direct services to people, revitalizing places, and advocating for just policies. Founded as a project of Legal Services in 1986 as the Community Reinvestment Association of North Carolina, the agency has worked to ensure fair lending to underserved communities in order to build and protect wealth. In 2012, they changed their name to recognize the expanded diversity of their programs and their local and State and national outreach.

And then there is U.S. PIRG. U.S. PIRG is an advocate for the public interest, working to win concrete results on real problems that affect millions of lives and standing up for the public against powerful interests when they push the other way. They say: ''The problems we face don't care if you are liberal or conservative, if you live in a red or blue State. They affect each and every one of us.'' That is why, for decades, they have taken a nonpartisan, facts-driven, results-oriented approach to their work.

Mr. Speaker, I do not like hearing that our consumers don't care, that they don't need a yearly notification about their privacy rights, that they simply throw this information that describes their rights into the wastebasket; and I am so pleased that, over the years and through the history of this Nation when too many consumers have been ignored, taken advantage of, didn't know what their rights were, all of these organizations that I have taken time to share with you today work on behalf of consumers. They work not only in organizing and educating, but they send this information to their Members of Congress. All of these organizations have sent in this information not only about their backgrounds, but about this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute to say I hope that schoolchildren from around the Nation have been listening to this debate because they would be educated on the House version of the filibuster.

I thought that the ranking member was going to break out the Washington, D.C., phone book and begin to read from it. It was a fascinating discussion of a litany of Washington-based special interest groups. I know they appreciated the shout-out; I know it will help them in their fundraising efforts; but it has absolutely nothing—nothing—to do with the bill that we are debating, nothing to do with the bill that we are debating.

□ 1000

So the ranking member said how important it is that consumers receive an annual—an annual—notice of the privacy policies of financial institutions. Well, under this bill, H.R. 2396, they don't get it annually, they get it monthly. They get it weekly. They get it daily. They get it hourly.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HENSARLING. I yield myself an additional 1 minute.

In fact, under H.R. 2396, the privacy notification must be continuous. It has to be put on the website. This helps the consumer. The consumer has access 24/7 to the privacy notification under the gentleman from Michigan's bill, as opposed to the status quo being defended by my friends on the other side of the aisle, who say, once a year—once a year—you ought to get a piece of paper that is probably going to end up in the round file anyway.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this debate has nothing to do with the privacy policies of financial institutions. It has everything to do with the notification of such policies. What we provide for is the continuous notification; and should that policy change, then, and only then, does that necessitate the killing of trees.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LOUDERMILK), an outstanding member of the Financial Services Committee.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding time so that I can speak, and not just in support of this legislation, but in strong support of the legislation by my colleague and friend from Michigan (Mr. TROTT).

In the short time I have been in Congress, Mr. Speaker, one thing I have come to realize, there are some people in this Chamber who never met a regulation that they didn't like. Regardless of how effective or ineffective or misguided that regulation is, or how outdated the regulation is, they always just want to hold on to a piece of government regulation.

I, too, appreciate the ranking member for going through the litany of mission statements of special interest groups here in Washington, D.C. But this is precisely what the American people are tired of. They are tired of the Washington, D.C., swamp. They are tired of the special interests, and they want legislation that affects them personally. This piece of legislation will affect millions of Americans directly.

Now, I am not just speaking today from prepared remarks, which I have, but I am speaking from someone with experience in this area. I spent 30 years, Mr. Speaker, in the IT services business. Ten of those years I spent protecting some of our Nation's secrets, through military intelligence, and then working in the defense industry. Twenty of those years I had my own business, and we were responsible for protecting the sensitive information of businesses and their customers. So I am well versed in the idea of protection, and, as a constitutional conservative, I am very sensitive to privacy protection.

This piece of legislation is commonsense legislation. It is exactly what the American people want us to pass, and I can give you some great examples of why, because one of the aspects of security, especially data security, is being continually aware of the threat.

Now, what happens—and I remember when this happened. I was still in my IT business when the original legislation was passed; and all of a sudden, I am receiving a privacy notice of what my rights are, and, unlike most Americans, I sat down and actually read all of it.

Now, where the confusion came in is when, a year later, I receive another one, and then I receive another one, and I am literally comparing the two to see what has changed, and I find out that nothing has changed.

So what was the reaction after that? Every time I get a notice in a big envelope, instead of just a bank statement, I would just take it and throw it in the trash, not knowing if something has actually changed, which would be important.

Now, Mr. LUETKEMEYER, another colleague of mine on the Financial Services Committee, passed a bill 2 years ago to provide correction to that problem. All Mr. TROTT's bill is doing now is expanding that to other industries.

This is a consumer protection bill because now, if someone in those industries, if there is a change, they receive a notice, they know that there has been a change.

But, as the chairman has pointed out time and time again, this is actually going to give more immediate access to know what the privacy policy is of financial institutions, to identify if there have been any changes because they can go online to see it. I mean, you can get that instantaneous with these devices that almost everyone carries. It is time to bring us up into the current century and the technology that we have.

So I commend my colleague on actually bringing commonsense legislation, the type of legislation that Americans want, that consumers want. They want to know what their rights are, but they don't want to be inundated with useless information continually, over and over again, because then they would actually not be aware of what their rights are and what has changed.

Now, this is especially beneficial to Georgia because Georgia has become an auto manufacturing hub. And as we continue to grow this economy, and more people—I believe in the next few days, when we pass this tax bill, you are going to see a rise in people buying automobiles. Why? Because they are going to have more money in their back pocket. They are going to spend more money, and they are going to be taking out more loans.

So we need to make sure that they know immediately what their privacy rights are, and this bill will make it to where those will be available online.

This simply makes—it right-sizes government by making government smarter, more effective, and, actually, that the regulation is tailored toward the consumer, not toward the special interest groups and the trial lawyers in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this legislation. I urge my colleagues to join me in a favorable vote for this.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Again, it is interesting how my colleagues on the opposite side of the aisle describe their consumers. These are people, they say, who don't want to be inundated with useless information. They are saying that the privacy information is of no use.

It is interesting that Mr. LOUDERMILK said he read his privacy notice, unlike most other Americans who don't read their privacy notice. I think that is very interesting to describe himself as someone who read his privacy notice, but able to speak for all other Americans who don't read their privacy notice.

What is very interesting also about his comments is he refers to the consumer groups as special interests, while he is representing the banks and the financial institutions, the real special interests.

Why is it Representatives who come to this Congress to represent people who vote for them somehow see their responsibility to protect the real special interests, such as the financial institutions who have lobbyists running up and down these Halls every day, who make contributions to Members of Congress, rather than the consumers who are represented by the kinds of groups that I have taken time to describe here this morning, because these individuals and the average citizen do not have paid lobbyists from financial institutions and banks representing them here.

So it is also interesting that Mr. LOUDERMILK talked about how many of these consumers are going to be buying automobiles because of the tax fraud bill that he is referring to that is being advanced by the opposite side of the aisle. The only thing that bill is going to do for consumers, which will hurt our economy, is create a $1.5 trillion debt.

Well, he said that consumers were going to be buying more cars. Yeah, the wealthy will be, the ones who are given the breaks in this tax bill. The wealthy may be buying more automobiles, but the very people who are represented by these consumers that I have shared the information on this morning, they won't be able to buy automobiles because they are going to be harmed. It is only the wealthy, only those who are making extraordinary amounts of money, and corporations, that are going to benefit from the tax bill.

I don't even know how and why he talked about it in the same breath that we are talking about our consumers being able to be respected with privacy information that they would get because we have laws that give them the right to have this information.

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

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. TROTT), the sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. TROTT. Mr. Speaker, we are having an argument here about a bill that has strong bipartisan support. When you boil it all down, the argument is pretty simple, and the question for us to consider this morning, and I would submit we have more important things to work on than that question, but that is what we are debating this morning, so let's consider it.

The question we are arguing about is: Do consumers, when they get their mail and they find an envelope filled with 30 pages of small-print legalese, boilerplate language, do they open up that envelope and pour themselves a cup of coffee and settle in—we have 9 inches of snow today back in Michigan, so they settle in next to a fire and spend the next 2 hours reading that privacy notice? That is the question.

The ranking member has been quite critical of the speeches that have been given this morning, submitting that people do read these notices, and who are we to judge whether people read these notices.

We are not making judgment, we are just submitting, on a commonsense basis, an argument that people don't read these notices; people throw these notices away. And that logic and common sense would dictate that if the privacy notice changes, and a new notice arrives, and the consumer realizes, gosh, I got a new privacy notice because the policy changed; I don't get it when the policy doesn't change; I'd better read this. If they are ever going to read it, that is the time they are going to read it.

But if the ranking member is correct in her analysis, and that millions of consumers are waiting by the mailbox each and every day so that they can study, dissect, compare, and contrast these privacy notices, then she is correct. This bill would add an extra step because, instead of going to the mailbox, they would have to click on the website or perhaps call a toll-free number and have the document mailed to them. So if that burden is more important, because people are reading these notices, then her arguments are compelling.

Now, let's examine all those groups that she spent so much time telling us about this morning, all those proconsumer watchdog groups. All those groups are interested in one thing. They are interested in making sure the laws are as complicated and convoluted as possible because all those groups, including the ranking member, believe, incorrectly, all business is bad; all banks are bad; we have to make it as convoluted and as complicated as possible so that class action lawyers can find a reason to file frivolous lawsuits to sue them, because that is what consumers need.

That is illogical because when these class action lawsuits and all these convoluted regulations get placed on the books and the banks have to hire hundreds of lawyers to deal with compliance, who do you think pays for that? The consumer pays for it.

So this bill saves a little money, saves a few trees. Maybe we will have a few more forests for our grandchildren. It is a simple bill, and I feel bad for some of the Democrats, the 20 in our committee——

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HENSARLING. I yield the gentleman from Michigan an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. TROTT. I feel bad for all those Democrats who support this bill because, apparently, they are against consumers, too. This bill has got nothing to do with any of the arguments that the ranking member has proffered this morning. I ask for strong support for H.R. 2396.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no other Members, so I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

It is very simple. The consumer groups that I took time to help people to understand who they are and what they do, representing the consumers, are the folks who are concerned about people knowing their rights. This is what they work at doing.

Those of us who align ourselves with consumer groups care about the average citizen. We care that the average citizen gets the kind of information that is going to make their lives much easier.

The people on the opposite side of the aisle represent banks and financial institutions. We are not opposed to business, and we work with businesses in various ways.

□ 1015

We are opposed to rip-offs. We are opposed to fraud. We are opposed to denying consumers the opportunity to know their rights.

But those Members of Congress who come here and basically mimic and mock the consumers by talking about those consumers who wait by their mailboxes for privacy information certainly are not representing the citizens of their district.

I can tell you this: When you take a look at who the real special interests are, who is representing the interests of the special interests, who in this House stands up for banks, financial institutions, and Wall Street and hedge funds, you look at the opposite side of the aisle, time and time again, and you will find them putting all of their time and their effort into representing those special interests.

For those of us who stand on the side of the average citizen, yes, we align

ourselves with consumer groups. No, we don't dismiss them as unnecessary people just messing around in the business of big business.

These are the representatives, again, of people who don't have fancy lobbyists walking these Halls and following the Members of Congress, getting into their area and influencing them.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today with our consumers. I applaud all of our consumer groups and I stand on the side of our consumers being able to know their rights and all of the work that went into providing this opportunity in law. I stand with them and I resist any effort by the opposite side of the aisle to deny the right of our citizens to be notified about their rights and their ability to opt out if they do not want their information shared with these unaffiliated groups.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud. I know that we are doing what our citizens want us to do, why they sent us to this Congress.

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

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has 3½ minutes remaining.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, there have been several surreal moments on the House floor this week, and today certainly is one more of them.

The debate today is not between regulation and deregulation, but in many respects, the debate is between smart regulation and dumb regulation. What we have today is a dumb regulation that forces a number of financial institutions annually to send out a paper notification even if they don't change their privacy policy; cut down trees, engage an expense—by the way, an expense that, my guess is, doesn't come out of executive bonuses, but probably comes out of the credit availability and the credit cost to the customer. It gets passed on to the consumer.

What we are also having a debate about—and I would encourage all my friends on the other side of the aisle, if in doubt, read the bill.

In this particular case, guess what, Mr. Speaker. It is a 2-page bill. It really doesn't take that long to read. If you read it, what you will find out is that this is a bill that is pro-consumer because we go from a notification that happens once a year to a continuous notification. We improve the consumer notification by ensuring that it is consistently on the website of the financial institution.

What we hear from the ranking member is: No. I want to stay in the 20th century. Gramm-Leach-Bliley is a law from the 20th century.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are in the 21st century. Why don't we ensure that the privacy notification for the consumer is actually on the website?

This is what is truly pro-consumer, not forcing people to go and subsidize the paper mills and the U.S. Postal Service by sending out a notification on paper that doesn't change anything and merely confuses consumers. If you are really pro-consumer, then try to respect their markets and try not to pass additional cost on to them.

Again, regardless of what you have heard from the other side of the aisle, this is everything to do with how we notify people of privacy policies, not the underlying privacy policy itself. It is 21st century. It is not 20th century. It is pro-consumer, regardless of all the special interests and Washington, D.C.-based lobbyists that the ranking member has cited.

The gentleman from Michigan brings us pro-consumer legislation, the Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act. I am kind of embarrassed that we are having to spend this much time debating something that should have been on our expedited suspension calendar. It is almost like there is just simply a knee-jerk reaction anytime we attempt to modify any government regulation.

This is pro-consumer. Frankly, it is pro-environment. Every Member of the House should embrace H.R. 2396. I am sorry we have had to take up so much time for it, but there are thousands and thousands of regulations that hurt our financial institutions, that hurt our consumers. We are trying to get rid of every dumb one, one at a time.

Again, this should be passing unanimously. I don't understand it, but I am glad the American people could see this debate for what it is.

Mr. Speaker, again, let's be pro-consumer, let's be pro-community financial institution, let's be pro-environment, and let's enact H.R. 2396.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate on the bill has expired.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. CLAY

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 3, line 11, strike ''financial institution'' and insert ''vehicle financial company''.

Page 3, line 18, strike ''financial institution'' and insert ''vehicle financial company''.

Page 3, line 24, strike ''and''.

Page 4, line 1, strike ''financial institution'' and insert ''vehicle financial company''.

Page 4, line 6, strike ''or with'' and insert ''the front page of''.

Page 4, beginning on line 10, strike ''on its'' and insert ''through a link on the landing page of the company's''.

Page 4, line 13, strike the period and insert ''; and''.

Page 4, after line 13, insert the following:

''(C) the vehicle financial company—

''(i) provides consumers with the ability to opt out, subject to any exemption or exception provided under subsection (b)(2) or (e) of section 502 or under regulations prescribed under section 504(b), of having the consumer's nonpublic personal information disclosed to a nonaffiliated third party; and

''(ii) includes a description about where to locate the procedures for a consumer to select such opt out in each periodic billing statement sent to the consumer.''.

Page 4, line 15, strike ''financial institution'' and insert ''vehicle financial company''.

Page 4, line 18, strike ''financial institution'' and insert ''vehicle financial company''.

Page 4, line 21, strike ''financial institution'' and insert ''vehicle financial company''.

Add at the end the following:

''(3) VEHICLE FINANCIAL COMPANY DEFINED.—For purposes of this subsection, the term 'vehicle financial company' means—

''(A) a financial institution that—

''(i) is regularly engaged in the business of extending credit for the purchase of vehicles;

''(ii) is affiliated with a vehicle manufacturer; and

''(iii) only shares nonpublic personal information of consumers with nonaffiliated third parties that are vehicle dealers; or

''(B) a financial institution that—

''(i) regularly engages in the business of extending credit for the purchase or lease of vehicles from vehicle dealers; or

''(ii) purchases vehicle installment sales contracts or leases from vehicle dealers.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 657, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, the amendment offered makes important changes to our bill, H.R. 2396, which is a straightforward, commonsense measure that seeks to streamline the privacy information consumers get from financial institutions and makes the information available much more frequently via electronic delivery.

We have been working on what I consider to be a simple but necessary fix to a 20-year-old law throughout this year, and I believe the amendment we have presented for your consideration will undoubtedly benefit consumers. We have worked with our colleagues on the Financial Services Committee to modify and strengthen the underlying bill, and I appreciate everyone's efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the committee's ranking member, Ms. WATERS, for her and her staff's efforts to improve our bill. I consider this amendment to be an effort to improve the underlying legislation. While Ms. WATERS still has some outstanding concerns, I do appreciate her working with us.

The amendment clarifies the process by which consumers can opt out of having their information shared with unaffiliated third parties. It limits the application of the alternative delivery mechanism to vehicle financial companies—that is simply what the amendment does—rather than all financial institutions, as defined under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act and other technical and conforming changes.

Mr. Speaker, we believe these changes make our bill stronger and we urge the adoption of the amendment.

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

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I claim time in opposition to the amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Mr. CLAY's effort to make the bill better. He is absolutely correct, we have been attempting to work together to see if there was a way that we could deal with the issue at hand and absolutely ensure that our consumers not only have a right to information that explains to them what their rights are and how they can opt out when their information is being sold, really, to unaffiliated organizations.

Mr. Speaker, just in case people are not following exactly what we are talking about when we talk about opt-out rights, let me draw your attention to the fact that you oftentimes are receiving loads of mail in your mailbox, everything from somebody who is selling pet food to clothing, to services, to all kinds of products, and you don't know why they are sending you all this junk. Well, they are sending you this junk because somebody sold your information to all of these organizations because you didn't know that you had not opted out. You maybe didn't know what your rights are. But citizens have a right to have that information, and they have a right to be respected and not thought to be simply throwing it into the wastebasket.

It doesn't matter whether it is for all businesses in the United States or just for automobile dealers. It is about every citizen having the right to have their privacy protected and not having people sell their information to unaffiliated organizations that will cause them to be pressured or solicited over and over again and their mailboxes filled with information because their privacy information has been sold to one of those unaffiliated organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I think that Mr. CLAY is attempting to streamline the bill. I appreciate the efforts that he has put into attempting to do this, but this does not correct the problem. This undermines the efforts of all of these consumer groups that worked for years to get these notices sent to our consumers.

Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that we have tried and we have worked and we have listened to each other, I would ask for a ''no'' vote on the amendment.

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

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, just in closing, let me offer some clarification.

In the fall of 2014, the CFPB finalized a rule allowing financial institutions to post their annual privacy notices online instead of delivering them individually if they met a series of conditions, including not sharing the customer's nonpublic information with unaffiliated third parties.

In December of 2015, Congress went further by enacting an outright exemption from the mailing requirement for financial institutions that, one, do not share nonpublic personal information about a consumer with unaffiliated third parties; and, two, have not changed its disclosure policy and practices since the most recent disclosure was sent to consumers.

□ 1030

Institutions that provide financing for vehicle purchases or leases do not meet the criteria set forth by Congress and are, therefore, required to continue issuing paper privacy notices to consumers.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment helps to improve this bill. It modernizes this requirement. I just urge the body to adopt the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended, and on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY).

The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY).

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

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

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentlewoman opposed to the bill?

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Ms. Maxine Waters of California moves to recommit the bill H.R. 2396 to the Committee on Financial Services with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

In subsection (g)(3) of the matter proposed to be inserted by section 2 of the bill, insert after subparagraph (B) the following flush-left text: ''For purposes of this subsection, the term 'vehicle financial company' does not include a financial institution that is engaging or has engaged in a pattern or practice of unsafe or unsound banking practices and other violations related to consumer harm.''.

Add at the end the following:

''(4) ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section:

''(A) FEDERAL CONSUMER FINANCIAL LAW.—The term 'Federal consumer financial law' has the meaning given that term under section 1002 of the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 (12 U.S.C. 5481).

''(B) PATTERN OR PRACTICE OF UNSAFE OR UNSOUND BANKING PRACTICES AND OTHER VIOLATIONS RELATED TO CONSUMER HARM.—The term 'pattern or practice of unsafe or unsound banking practices and other violations related to consumer harm' means engaging in all of the following activities, to the extent each activity was discovered or occurred at least once in the 10 years preceding the date of the enactment of this Act:

''(i) Having unsafe or unsound practices in the institution's risk management and oversight of the institution's sales practices, as evidenced by—

''(I) an institution lacking an enterprise-wide sales practices oversight program that enables the institution to adequately monitor sales practices to prevent and detect unsafe or unsound sales practices and mitigate risks that may result from such unsafe and unsound sales practices; and

''(II) an institution lacking a comprehensive customer complaint monitoring process that—

''(aa) enables the institution to assess customer complaint activity across the institution;

''(bb) adequately monitors, manages, and reports on customer complaints; and

''(cc) analyzes and understands the potential risks posed by the institution's sales practices.

''(ii) Engaging in unsafe and unsound sales practices, as evidenced by the institution—

''(I) opening more than one million unauthorized deposit, credit card, or other accounts;

''(II) performing unauthorized transfers of customer funds; and

''(III) performing unauthorized credit inquiries for purposes of the conduct described in subclause (I) or (II).

''(iii) Lacking adequate oversight of third-party vendors for purposes of risk-mitigation, to prevent abusive and deceptive practices in the vendor's provision of consumer products or services.

''(iv) Having deficient policies and procedures for sharing customers' personal identifiable information with third-party vendors for litigation purposes that led to inadvertent disclosure of such information to unintended parties.

''(v) Violating Federal consumer financial laws with respect to mortgage loans, including charges of hidden fees and unauthorized or improper disclosures tied to home mortgage loan modifications.

''(vi) Engaging in unsafe or unsound banking practices related to residential mortgage loan servicing and foreclosure processing.

''(vii) Violating the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.''.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes in support of her motion.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, this is the final amendment to the bill, which will not kill the bill or send it back to committee. If adopted, the bill will immediately proceed to final passage, as amended.

My motion would prevent institutions that have engaged in a pattern or practice of unsafe or unsound banking practices and other violations related to consumer harm from being able to evade important consumer protections.

When companies repeatedly exhibit indifference to consumer protection and demonstrate that they are incapable of complying or are unwilling to comply with U.S. laws and regulations, they should not be allowed to benefit from those bad actions.

As I have already mentioned, under this bill, as amended, companies like Wells Fargo would be free to share or sell customer information with any company, with minimal reminders to their customers.

We all know that Wells Fargo has engaged in illegal student loan servicing practices, inappropriate checking accounts, overdraft fees, unlawful mortgage lending practices, overcharging veterans for refinanced loans, enrolled customers in life insurance policies without their consent, delayed mortgage closing dates until after the expiration of the borrower's interest rate lock to levy additional fees, and charged over 570,000 customers with auto insurance policies they did not need, which resulted in at least 20,000 customers, including Active-Duty servicemembers, having their vehicles inappropriately repossessed.

Companies like Wells Fargo are why I introduced H.R. 3937, the Megabank Accountability and Consequences Act, to make sure that lenders that have engaged in abusive practices face real consequences for their wrongdoing. It is time we truly hold companies that demonstrate a pattern of harming consumers accountable. These institutions must no longer be allowed to abuse hardworking Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of my motion, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, again, I would encourage the ranking member and all Members on the other side of the aisle to read the underlying bill. It is 2 pages long. It has now been amended by perhaps a 1-page amendment. This has nothing to do with Wells Fargo. It has nothing to do with Equifax. It is limited to the annual paper notification from auto finance companies, pure and simple.

Again, for those who listened to the earlier debate, the question is whether or not these auto finance companies are going to be forced to spend money that comes out of their customers' pockets to send out a paper notification of privacy policies even when the policy doesn't change, or whether or not we should modernize into the 21st century and ensure that there is continuous notification on a website and that a paper notification only goes out upon a change, an actual change.

What the ranking member is doing with the motion to recommit is once again empowering the unconstitutional and unaccountable CFPB to engage in even more activities that harm consumers. It ought to be rejected, and we ought to ensure that we adopt H.R. 2396 and simplify and modernize one regulation that is harming consumers and harming financial institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge rejection of the motion to recommit, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 and clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to recommit will be followed by 5-minute votes on:

Passage of H.R. 2396, if ordered;

The motion to recommit on H.R. 4324; and

Passage of H.R. 4324, if ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 185, nays 235, not voting 11, as follows:

[Roll No. 681]

YEAS—185

Adams
Aguilar
Barragán
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Beyer
Bishop (GA)
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Boyle, Brendan F.
Brady (PA)
Brown (MD)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capuano
Carbajal
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Cooper
Correa
Costa
Courtney
Crist
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
DeSaulnier
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle, Michael F.
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Espaillat
Esty (CT)
Evans
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Gomez
Gonzalez (TX)
Gottheimer
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutiérrez
Hanabusa
Hastings
Heck
Higgins (NY)
Himes
Hoyer
Huffman
Jackson Lee
Jayapal
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Khanna
Kihuen
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Krishnamoorthi
Kuster (NH)
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lawrence
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lieu, Ted
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham, M.
Luján, Ben Ray
Lynch
Maloney, Carolyn B.
Maloney, Sean
Matsui
McCollum
McEachin
McGovern
McNerney
Meeks
Meng
Moulton
Murphy (FL)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Nolan
Norcross
O'Halleran
O'Rourke
Pallone
Panetta
Pascrell
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters
Pingree
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Raskin
Rice (NY)
Richmond
Rosen
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Soto
Speier
Suozzi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Tsongas
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Wasserman Schultz
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NAYS—235

Abraham
Aderholt
Allen
Amash
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barr
Barton
Bergman
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Bost
Brady (TX)
Brat
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Buchanan
Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Byrne
Calvert
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Chabot
Cheney
Clay
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Cook
Costello (PA)
Cramer
Crawford
Culberson
Curbelo (FL)
Curtis
Davidson
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Donovan
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Dunn
Emmer
Estes (KS)
Farenthold
Faso
Ferguson
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foxx
Frelinghuysen
Gaetz
Gallagher
Garrett
Gianforte
Gibbs
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Griffith
Grothman
Guthrie
Handel
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins (LA)
Hill
Holding
Hollingsworth
Hudson
Huizenga
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd
Issa
Jenkins (KS)
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger
Kustoff (TN)
Labrador
LaHood
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Latta
Lewis (MN)
LoBiondo
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
MacArthur
Marino
Marshall
Massie
Mast
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Mullin
Newhouse
Noem
Norman
Nunes
Olson
Palazzo
Palmer
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Peterson
Pittenger
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Posey
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (SC)
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney, Francis
Rooney, Thomas J.
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Royce (CA)
Russell
Rutherford
Sanford
Scalise
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smucker
Stefanik
Stewart
Stivers
Taylor
Tenney
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Trott
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westerman
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Zeldin

NOT VOTING—11

Barletta
Blumenauer
Bridenstine
Katko
Kennedy
Knight
Marchant
Moore
Pocan
Visclosky
Walz

□ 1101

Messrs. FITZPATRICK, BACON, MARSHALL, GROTHMAN, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, and Mr. YOHO changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Messrs. CARSON of Indiana, GRIJALVA, DOGGETT, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Messrs. GUTIÉRREZ, and CLEAVER changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 275, nays 146, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 682]

YEAS—275

Abraham
Aderholt
Allen
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barr
Barragán
Barton
Beatty
Bera
Bergman
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Bost
Brady (TX)
Brat
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Carbajal
Carson (IN)
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Cartwright
Chabot
Cheney
Clay
Cleaver
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Cook
Cooper
Correa
Costa
Costello (PA)
Cramer
Crawford
Cuellar
Culberson
Curbelo (FL)
Curtis
Davidson
Davis, Rodney
Delaney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Donovan
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Dunn
Emmer
Estes (KS)
Farenthold
Faso
Ferguson
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foxx
Frelinghuysen
Gaetz
Gallagher
Garrett
Gianforte
Gibbs
Gohmert
Gomez
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Griffith
Grothman
Guthrie
Hanabusa
Handel
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins (LA)
Hill
Holding
Hollingsworth
Hudson
Huizenga
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd
Issa
Jenkins (KS)
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Keating
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
Kildee
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger
Knight
Krishnamoorthi
Kustoff (TN)
Labrador
LaHood
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Latta
Lawrence
Lewis (MN)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
MacArthur
Maloney, Sean
Marino
Marshall
Massie
Mast
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Meeks
Messer
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Mullin
Murphy (FL)
Newhouse
Noem
Norman
Nunes
O'Rourke
Olson
Palazzo
Palmer
Paulsen
Pearce
Perlmutter
Perry
Peterson
Pittenger
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Posey
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (SC)
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney, Francis
Rooney, Thomas J.
Ros-Lehtinen
Rosen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Royce (CA)
Ruiz
Russell
Rutherford
Sanford
Scalise
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smucker
Stefanik
Stewart
Stivers
Suozzi
Taylor
Tenney
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Torres
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Veasey
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westerman
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Zeldin

NAYS—146

Adams
Aguilar
Amash
Bass
Beyer
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Boyle, Brendan F.
Brady (PA)
Brown (MD)
Capuano
Cárdenas
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Courtney
Crist
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
DeSaulnier
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle, Michael F.
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Espaillat
Esty (CT)
Evans
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Gonzalez (TX)
Gottheimer
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutiérrez
Hastings
Heck
Higgins (NY)
Himes
Hoyer
Huffman
Jackson Lee
Jayapal
Jeffries
Jones
Kaptur
Kelly (IL)
Khanna
Kihuen
Kilmer
Kuster (NH)
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lieu, Ted
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham, M.
Luján, Ben Ray
Lynch
Maloney, Carolyn B.
Matsui
McCollum
McEachin
McGovern
McNerney
Meng
Moore
Moulton
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Nolan
Norcross
O'Halleran
Pallone
Panetta
Pascrell
Payne
Pelosi
Peters
Pingree
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Raskin
Rice (NY)
Richmond
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Soto
Speier
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Vargas
Vela
Velázquez
Wasserman Schultz
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—10

Barletta
Blumenauer
Bridenstine
Katko
Kennedy
Marchant
Pocan
Trott
Visclosky
Walz

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

□ 1109

Mses. MOORE and WASSERMAN SCHULTZ changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Messrs. DELANEY and KEATING changed their vote from ''nay'' to yea.''

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

STRENGTHENING OVERSIGHT OF IRAN'S ACCESS TO FINANCE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to recommit on the bill (H.R. 4324) to require the Secretary of the Treasury to make certifications with respect to United States and foreign financial institutions' aircraft-related transactions involving Iran, and for other purposes, offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. SWALWELL), on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk will redesignate the motion.

The Clerk redesignated the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 188, nays 233, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 683]

YEAS—188

Adams
Aguilar
Barragán
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Beyer
Bishop (GA)
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Boyle, Brendan F.
Brady (PA)
Brown (MD)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capuano
Carbajal
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Cooper
Correa
Costa
Courtney
Crist
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
DeSaulnier
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle, Michael F.
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Espaillat
Esty (CT)
Evans
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Gomez
Gonzalez (TX)
Gottheimer
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutiérrez
Hanabusa
Hastings
Heck
Higgins (NY)
Himes
Hoyer
Huffman
Jackson Lee
Jayapal
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Khanna
Kihuen
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Krishnamoorthi
Kuster (NH)
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lawrence
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lieu, Ted
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham, M.
Luján, Ben Ray
Lynch
Maloney, Carolyn B.
Maloney, Sean
Matsui
McCollum
McEachin
McGovern
McNerney
Meeks
Meng
Moore
Moulton
Murphy (FL)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Nolan
Norcross
O'Halleran
O'Rourke
Pallone
Panetta
Pascrell
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters
Peterson
Pingree
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Raskin
Rice (NY)
Richmond
Rosen
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Soto
Speier
Suozzi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Titus
Tonko

Torres
Tsongas
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Wasserman Schultz
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NAYS—233

Abraham
Aderholt
Allen
Amash
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barr
Barton
Bergman
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Bost
Brady (TX)
Brat
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Buchanan
Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Byrne
Calvert
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Chabot
Cheney
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Cook
Costello (PA)
Cramer
Crawford
Culberson
Curbelo (FL)
Curtis
Davidson
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Donovan
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Dunn
Emmer
Estes (KS)
Farenthold
Faso
Ferguson
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foxx
Frelinghuysen
Gaetz
Gallagher
Garrett
Gianforte
Gibbs
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Griffith
Grothman
Guthrie
Handel
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins (LA)
Hill
Holding
Hollingsworth
Hudson
Huizenga
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd
Issa
Jenkins (KS)
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger
Knight
Kustoff (TN)
Labrador
LaHood
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Latta
Lewis (MN)
LoBiondo
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
MacArthur
Marino
Marshall
Massie
Mast
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Mullin
Newhouse
Noem
Norman
Nunes
Olson
Palazzo
Palmer
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Pittenger
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Posey
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (SC)
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney, Francis
Rooney, Thomas J.
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Royce (CA)
Russell
Rutherford
Sanford
Scalise
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smucker
Stefanik
Stewart
Stivers
Taylor
Tenney
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Trott
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westerman
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Zeldin

NOT VOTING—10

Barletta
Blumenauer
Bridenstine
Katko
Kennedy
Marchant
Pocan
Visclosky
Walz
Wittman

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

□ 1115

Messrs. GAETZ, JORDAN, and GROTHMAN changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 252, nays 167, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 684]

YEAS—252

Abraham
Aderholt
Allen
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barr
Barton
Bergman
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Bost
Boyle, Brendan F.
Brady (TX)
Brat
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Buchanan
Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Byrne
Calvert
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Chabot
Cheney
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Cook
Costello (PA)
Cramer
Crawford
Cuellar
Culberson
Curbelo (FL)
Curtis
Davidson
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Donovan
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Dunn
Emmer
Estes (KS)
Farenthold
Faso
Ferguson
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Frelinghuysen
Gaetz
Gallagher
Garrett
Gianforte
Gibbs
Gohmert
Gonzalez (TX)
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gottheimer
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Green, Gene
Griffith
Grothman
Guthrie
Handel
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins (LA)
Hill
Holding
Hollingsworth
Hudson
Huizenga
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd
Issa
Jenkins (KS)
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger
Knight
Kustoff (TN)
Labrador
LaHood
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Latta
Lewis (MN)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
MacArthur
Maloney, Sean
Marino
Marshall
Mast
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Messer
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Mullin
Murphy (FL)
Newhouse
Noem
Norcross
Norman
Nunes
O'Halleran
Olson
Palazzo
Palmer
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Peterson
Pittenger
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Posey
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (SC)
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney, Francis
Rooney, Thomas J.
Ros-Lehtinen
Rosen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Royce (CA)
Russell
Rutherford
Sanford
Scalise
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Smith (MO)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smucker
Soto
Stefanik
Stewart
Stivers
Suozzi
Taylor
Tenney
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Trott
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Vargas
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Wasserman Schultz
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westerman
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Zeldin

NAYS—167

Adams
Aguilar
Amash
Barragán
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Beyer
Bishop (GA)
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Brown (MD)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capuano
Carbajal
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Cooper
Correa
Costa
Courtney
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
DeSaulnier
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle, Michael F.
Duncan (TN)
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Espaillat
Esty (CT)
Evans
Foster
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Gomez
Green, Al
Grijalva
Gutiérrez
Hanabusa
Hastings
Heck
Higgins (NY)
Himes
Hoyer
Huffman
Jackson Lee
Jayapal
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Khanna
Kihuen
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Krishnamoorthi
Kuster (NH)
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lawrence
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lieu, Ted
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham, M.
Luján, Ben Ray
Lynch
Maloney, Carolyn B.
Massie
Matsui
McCollum
McEachin
McGovern
McNerney
Meeks
Moulton
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Nolan
O'Rourke
Pallone
Panetta
Pascrell
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters
Pingree
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Raskin
Rice (NY)
Richmond
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Tsongas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—12

Barletta
Blumenauer
Bridenstine
Crist
Katko
Kennedy
Marchant
Moore
Pocan
Smith (NE)
Visclosky
Walz

□ 1126

Mr. FASO changed his vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I was absent today for family reasons. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall No. 681,

"yea" on rollcall No. 682, "nay" on rollcall No. 683, and "yea" on rollcall No. 684.

PERMISSION FOR MEMBER TO BE CONSIDERED AS FIRST SPONSOR OF H.R. 3771

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I may hereafter be considered as the first sponsor of H.R. 3771, a bill originally introduced by Representative Conyers of Michigan, for the purposes of adding cosponsors and requesting reprintings pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII.

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

There was no objection.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO MAKE CORRECTIONS IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 4324, STRENGTHENING OVERSIGHT OF IRAN'S ACCESS TO FINANCE ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that in the engrossment of H.R. 4324, the Clerk be directed to insert the word ''and'' after the semicolon in section 3(b)(1) of the bill.

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

There was no objection.

CORRECTION TO ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 2396, PRIVACY NOTIFICATION TECHNICAL CLARIFICATION ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that in the engrossment of H.R. 2396, the Clerk be directed to make the correction I have placed at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the correction.

The Clerk read as follows:

In amendment number 1, the instruction relating to page 4, line 21 is modified to read as follows:

Page 4, line 21, strike ''financial institution's'' and insert ''vehicle financial company's''.

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

There was no objection.

BORINQUENEERS POST OFFICE BUILDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and passing the bill (H.R. 4042) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1415 West Oak Street, in Kissimmee, Florida, as the ''Borinqueneers Post Office Building''.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1130

SERGEANT JOHN BASILONE POST OFFICE

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill (H.R. 2815) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 30 East Somerset Street in Raritan, New Jersey, as the ''Sergeant John Basilone Post Office'', as proposed to be passed under suspension of the rules, be modified by the amendment I have placed at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment by Mr. GIANFORTE

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN BASILONE POST OFFICE.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 30 East Somerset Street in Raritan, New Jersey, shall be known and designated as the ''Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Post Office''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the ''Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Post Office''.

Mr. GIANFORTE (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

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

There was no objection.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and passing the bill, as amended.

The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Montana (Mr. GIANFORTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: ''A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 30 East Somerset Street in Raritan, New Jersey, as the 'Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Post Office'.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purpose of inquiring of the majority leader of the schedule for the week to come.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY).

(Mr. MCCARTHY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the House will meet at noon for morning hour and 2 p.m. for legislative business. Votes will be postponed until 6:30 p.m.

On Tuesday and the balance of the week, the House will meet as early as 10 a.m. for legislative business.

Mr. Speaker, the House will consider a number of suspensions next week, a complete list of which will be announced by close of business tomorrow.

This list will include several bills from the Science Committee that are part of the House Innovation Initiative. These bills support Americans pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and math, with a focus on veterans and individuals historically underrepresented in those fields.

Mr. Speaker, my friend and I recently cohosted the third Congressional Hackathon, and I think he and I would agree that STEM education is an issue of national competitiveness, and I look forward to the House passing these bills next week.

In addition, the House will consider two measures from the Financial Services Committee. First, H.R. 4015, the Corporate Governance Reform and Transparency Act sponsored by Representative SEAN DUFFY. This bill will improve the quality of the proxy research while increasing transparency for public companies and their investors.

Second, H.R. 3312, the Systemic Risk Designation Improvement Act sponsored by Representative BLAINE LUETKEMEYER. This bill replaces Dodd-Frank's arbitrary thresholds with a process that analyzes each institution of its individual risk factors.

Mr. Speaker, the House will also consider the conference report to accompany H.R. 1, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act sponsored by Representative KEVIN BRADY. This historic legislation will cap off a 31-year journey to reform America's broken Tax Code. We will double the standard deduction, making the first $12,000 of income for an individual and $24,000 for a family tax free.

We will increase the child tax credit because investing in families is among the most important investments we make. We will reduce the tax rate on small businesses to the lowest rates that have been seen in 40 years. And we do all this while simplifying the Tax Code so Americans can file in minutes on a form the size of a postcard.

Republicans have championed cutting taxes and growing our economy for years, and I am excited to deliver this important promise.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, additional legislative items are expected, including legislation related to government funding and a number of other end-of-the-year priorities. I will be sure to inform all Members if additional items are added to our schedule.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for that information.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the majority leader and I, as well as his predecessor, Mr. Cantor, have worked together on what we call a Hackathon, which is a meeting annually of individuals involved in the high-tech community in how better to communicate, how better to process information, how better to make transparent the work of this body and make the actions of this body accessible to the general public as they happen.

I want to thank the majority leader for continuing to cosponsor this effort with me and to be a leader on this effort. We just had the President sign—I think yesterday, maybe the day before—a piece of legislation, which will try to make the government more facile in bringing its technology up to date so that it can operate more efficiently and more effectively.

So I thank the majority leader for working together in a positive way to make this institution work better and to make it more accessible and better known to the American people. I thank him also for the schedule that he has put forward.

Mr. Speaker, the majority leader mentioned a number of things that the tax bill that is going to be coming before us will do. I don't believe that the conference report is available for review at this point in time.

Can the majority leader perhaps enlighten me as to whether or not the conference report is available now to be reviewed? Or, if not, when it will be available?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

I expect the report to be filed online tomorrow. As you know, you have got to go through and make sure, from joint tax, filling in the dollar figures, and all anticipation is it will be online tomorrow for all of America to read.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. It is my understanding that that will be on the floor as early as Tuesday of next week. Is that accurate?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Yes, that is accurate.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I would simply observe that what the majority leader did not mention—again, I have not seen the conference report, so this is not based upon a review of the conference report, but this is based upon the Senate bill and the House bills that were passed by both bodies—was that it will increase the debt of our country by some $1.5 trillion and a minimum of $1 trillion. It will raise taxes on some 78 million Americans between $50,000 of income and $150,000 of income.

I am assuming that the elimination of the mandate is still in the conference report. I am not sure, but the information I have is that it is still in the report. Mr. Speaker, that will cost 13 million people to be uninsured as a result.

I have information, Mr. Speaker, that what the conference report does is reduce taxes on some of the wealthiest people in America. I am not sure how they offset that—maybe with a mandate, maybe with something else—but 62 percent of the bill's resources go to the top 1 percent in America.

Mr. Speaker, Speaker RYAN spoke on this floor about the average family making $59,000 a year. He mentioned that that family will get, under the House bill—again, I haven't seen the conference report—$1,182 per year in a tax cut.

What the Speaker did not mention is that the family in the top 1 percent will get a tax cut of $1,198 per week. Per week, Mr. Speaker. In other words, 52 times what the struggling American will get, what the American who Speaker RYAN said may not be able to come up with $500 if they have a crisis with a refrigerator or their heating unit, something of that nature, or their car breaks down will get.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the aisle do not believe that this bill addresses relief for the struggling working men and women of this country.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear, in all of the polling, that the average working American shares that view. They believe correctly that this is a tax cut for the rich and a few sprinkles to the middle class. I am sure the leader will have something to say on that.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that what will happen in this tax bill is we will phase out. We will—again, I have not seen the conference report, so I don't know exactly whether that is true or not, but in both the House and Senate bills, we phased out—we didn't phase out, we proposed to be phased out. The benefits to those middle-income, hardworking Americans will see their benefits phased out. That will not be true of corporations. It will not be true of the wealthiest in our country.

So it is troubling, Mr. Speaker, that a bill of this magnitude is being rushed to judgment. In 1986, the gentleman, in making his announcement, said we have been working on this for 31 years. Now, I presume he was talking about from 1986 to 2017.

What he did not say, Mr. Speaker, is, in 1986, we had 30 days of public hearings on a bill. Thirty days of public hearings. What he did not say is that we had 450 witnesses during those public hearings testifying about the taxes. What he did not say is that there were nearly 4 months of hearings on the 1986 reform bill. And what he did not say is that the Ways and Means Committee conducted 26 days of markup.

This bill has received less than 7 days of markup in both bodies and in the conference. This is being rushed to judgment. The American people, by substantial numbers, believe this bill is not good for them.

Now, Mr. COLLINS said that he talked to a donor and the donor said: Don't call me again if you don't pass this tax bill.

I get that. I don't know who the donor was and I don't know how rich the donor was, but obviously the donor thought that he had a real stake or she had a real stake in this tax bill.

We regret that we are not doing as we did in 1986, because what the majority leader did not mention either was that the 1986 bill was a bipartisan bill with President Reagan and Speaker O'Neill supporting it, and with Chairman Rostenkowski, a Democratic chair of the House Ways and Means Committee; and a Republican chair of the Senate Finance Committee, Bob Packwood from Oregon, supporting the bill. It was a bipartisan bill. And what the majority leader did not mention is the 1986 bill did not add a single cent to the deficit. It was paid for.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a much lesser product than it could have been. We on this side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, think we need tax reform. We are prepared to support tax reform. We believe we need to bring down the corporate rate. We believe we need to make sure that small businesses can prosper and grow into large businesses.

What we don't believe in, Mr. Speaker, is simply having a bill that advantages the best-off in our country and says that the advantages we give to the middle class will be phased out in a little bit, about 5 years.

□ 1145

So, Mr. Speaker, we will, according to the majority leader, consider this bill next week. It will not be bipartisan, and that is a shame. It will not be positive for the country because it will put us even more deeply into debt, and the people who pay that bill, ultimately, will be our children.

And on both sides of the aisle—we don't have a lot of Members on the floor, but I say to every Member on the floor, every Member on this floor, I am sure, at some point in time you have given a speech somewhere that said: ''We care about the debt. We are going to bring down the debt.'' This bill does not do it. This bill exacerbates the debt.

Anybody who believes that this bill is going to pay for itself through dynamic scoring and economic growth is kidding themselves. It is a rationalization to vote for a bill for which the main imperative is political, not policy, because my Republican colleagues, Mr. Speaker, believe that, if they don't pass this bill, they will lose the next election.

I have heard that argument over and over and over again. That is not a reason to vote for this bill. It is a reason

to say: Let's go back to the table. Let's include Mr. NEAL in the consideration, the ranking member. Let's include Mr. WYDEN, the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee. Let's include Mr. MCCARTHY and me to try to see if we can reach a bipartisan, positive, constructive piece of legislation which will, like the 1986 legislation, enjoy the support of a wide range of the American people and their Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, we had an election yesterday in Alabama. Mr. Jones won that election. Mr. STRANGE, the incumbent Republican representing Alabama right now, lost the primary. He has no mandate.

Why rush this bill through? This bill, if it were passed on December 31 of next year, would affect the 2018 taxes that would be filed in April of 2019. The need to rush this bill, Mr. Speaker, seems to be that, and the reason for having no hearings, the reason for having no witnesses, is because this bill, on its merit, cannot sustain itself.

Now, let me read you a quote, Mr. Speaker: ''I think the message of the moment is that the American people, all across the country, are asking us, even in the most liberal State, Massachusetts, to stop this healthcare bill. I think that means there will be no more healthcare votes in the Senate prior to the swearing in of Scott Brown, whenever that may be.''

That statement was made on January 20, 2010, by the present majority leader who was then, of course, the minority leader. And his proposition was: You ought to wait until Scott Brown is here so that Massachusetts can have its vote counted. But hypocritically, he has changed his tune today when Alabama, a very conservative State, the opposite of Massachusetts, has voted to elect Doug Jones to the Senate.

I don't hear Mr. MCCONNELL or anybody else saying: Let's wait for the duly elected Member of the United States Senate from Alabama to be seated so that he will have an opportunity to vote on this extraordinarily consequential vote and, in my opinion, negative consequences to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the majority leader might have some comments he wants to make in response, and, therefore, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY).

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

There were a lot of questions about the schedule. I took notes because there were a lot of things said, but let me first make sure I can try to get through all of them.

You first mentioned many times, what I did not mention. Now, I was asked a question, when would we vote on the tax bill, so I want to be very clear. I answered the question. I said, yes, we will vote on it Tuesday. You said you have heard that it could be Tuesday, so I just said yes, and I didn't mention others because I wasn't asked other questions. But now that you have, let's walk through this.

One of your first arguments was debt. Do you realize, in this progrowth, tax-cutting, job creation bill, if it just grows four-tenths of 1 percent, it pays for all of it?

But what is interesting here is—don't take my word for it—what happens every day to the market when they realize Congress and the Senate is 1 day closer to passing the tax bill? Everybody with a 401(k) gets a pay raise.

The market has set more than 59 records since the election and our movement to passing a tax bill, and that is for all Americans who invested. Everybody's retirement is getting a little better because of it.

Now, what about on the jobs perspective? Well, Broadcom, which was created in America but left America based upon the current Tax Code, on the day of the announcement of our tax bill, said: We are coming back. It is not just that we are bringing so many jobs back. We are going to spend $3 billion a year in R&D. We are going to spend $6 billion in manufacturing.

And that is $20 billion a year in revenue for that company that is going to pay taxes now in America.

But I wonder, that is a big company. Do you know what I just read the other day? A company announcing they are going to Syracuse, New York, based upon our tax bill.

Yes, things are changing in America. People are excited about it.

But it is not just those that are going to hire these thousands of Americans to work. I want to make sure it happens in Maryland as well, so I wanted to look at your district, so here we go. My good friend represents Maryland's Fifth. He has done it for quite some time. Here are a few facts.

Currently, you have 47 percent of filers in Maryland Five that take the standard deduction, so they will be better off because they will get a doubling the day the President signs it.

Another 11 percent have itemized deductions that are less than our new higher standard deduction, so they, too, will save. Not only are they going to save money, they are going to save time. Instead of spending weeks trying to fill out a tax form, it is going to be done in minutes. And you know when they fill out their tax form, they are going to get money.

But they don't have to wait until April 15. Not only in your district, but across this country, check your check come February, because you know what is going to be in that check? More money because the standard deduction goes up.

So that is 58 percent of my friend's district is better off on day one. But from what you tell me, you don't think that is good enough to vote for. A majority of your district is better off on day one. That is not even talking about the small businesses.

Do you know, the small businesses in your district, those that are earning $400,000, they are going to save $19,000. I know we are dear friends, but I am not sure if I have ever known that you have owned a business.

You know my background. When I was 20, I started my first business. There were three lessons I learned that have never left me: I was the first one to work; I was the last one to leave; and I was the last one to be paid.

This is going to create more entrepreneurship, more opportunity, and more people are going to be hired.

Now, I know you are worried about the debt, but it just strikes me, this year, you voted for a budget just a couple of months ago—I am not going to go back to another Congress—that increased the deficit by $6.8 trillion. So we are only worried about the debt at certain times?

Well, this bill is actually going to grow the economy, as we have watched quarter after quarter after quarter of the administration.

Now, I have got to make sure I got all of it.

You talked about hearings. We have had 59 public hearings. We printed out, before we even ran to continue the majority, about what we would do on tax.

But let's get to the core. That was your district. Let's say to all Americans, it doesn't matter where you live. So anybody, it doesn't matter if you sit on that side of the aisle, on this side of the aisle. It doesn't matter if you are Democrat, Republican, or you are a Socialist. It doesn't matter what you are. You are an American first.

And you know what your constituents are going to see? Let's take the average family, the average family of four, making $55,000. You can write this down. You know how much tax they are going to pay? Zero. Zero. But that still is not good enough for you.

It is very interesting, in my social science studies, what the party on the other side of the aisle used to say they were for. I believe, back in the day, if you would have stood up here and said, ''I have got a tax bill that is going to make sure the average family of four, on the first $55,000, is going to pay zero,'' they not only would be excited, they would vote for it.

And you talk to me about bipartisanship. I really think that is a question for you, bipartisanship.

Is it bipartisanship when we reach out to you about CHIP, about healthcare for children, a place not to play politics?

We even stopped a hearing and a markup that we had scheduled well in the future because you came to us, your side of the aisle, and asked us to because you thought you could come to an agreement. Then we were told by your leadership, no, nobody could vote for it. We put things in the bill that we thought you would even want, but, no, you still voted ''no.''

And how many times have you told me on this floor, I think it was just a few months ago—and I will quote you, if I may—about government funding, because I was concerned because I had read some articles in The New York

Times that suggested, ''as a minority party struggling to show resistance in an era of President Trump, the Democrats are now ready to let the lights of government go dark.'' I read that to you because I wanted to know was that true or was that false.

Well, you said to me, when I asked my friend whether that rumor was true, he replied: ''. . . nobody on my side is talking about wanting to shut down the government. We don't want to shut down the government'' was your quote.

You continued to say: ''I would assure my friend that it is neither our intent nor our desire. As a matter of fact, we want to work quickly to avoid that happening. That is not good for, obviously, the American people; it is not good for managers trying to plan on how to deliver services; and it is certainly not good for our Federal employees. So I would want to work with you to make sure that doesn't happen.''

Mr. Speaker, that was in March, just 9 months ago. I wonder what changed in those 9 months because just last week—and I tell my friend, there was no partisanship in putting a continuing resolution on the floor for 2 weeks. There was no poison pill on this side of the aisle. It was a clean one. And I watched, sitting at this desk, how the vote was going, and I watched the other side, Mr. Speaker. I watched people, not that they just voted ''no.'' They were whipped into the position to vote ''no.'' I watched the tally. And once that tally got past the magic number of 218, I watched my good friend put his thumb up, because he gave the okay to those 14 Democrats in his conference that were sitting there, that were told not to vote until it passed. I just wonder what happened to bipartisanship on something that is so bipartisan.

I know the thousands of Federal employees you have in your district, but that is just—I listened, Mr. Speaker, to the leader of the Democratic Party on the other side who said, just 2 days prior, the only person talking about the shutdown is President Trump. Well, the only person taking action and whipping to get to a shutdown was on this floor.

We have had open hearings, Republican and Democrats. We have had an open, bipartisan, bicameral conference. They have walked through an entire bill. We have made sure Americans are going to get a tax cut and jobs are going to be created. It is already happening before the bill is even signed.

I am not sure if I didn't mention something else, because you try to correct if something was not mentioned. But I want to make sure I answered all those questions for you because I know, not just in your district, that every family of four making $55,000 will pay nothing, that all the small businesses that are going to hire new people—and I differ from you.

Maybe you will whip strongly against it like you whipped strongly against the CR and keeping government open, But I still think, when I look upon that tally on the tax bill, I think there will be some on your side. And why do I think that? Because they told me so.

□ 1200

But I still think, when I look upon that tally on the tax bill, I think there will be some on your side. And why do I think that? Because they told me so.

The only difference will be, at the end of the day, if they don't, if you keep the strong arm, and instead of releasing the thumb up once it passes and put it down, that is the only reason we won't have bipartisanship on the floor that day.

But I believe in America. I believe in this floor, and I believe in the individuals who fight so strongly to get here to represent their constituents; that they know the new jobs in their district, they know how much those families will save, and they will not let politics get the best of them. They will go against the tide to stop it. They believe that it will even be better. I look forward to that day.

I also look forward to my friend coming back to the quote he told me 9 months ago, because you know what? It is close to Christmas. We have military men and women defending us. The gentleman talked about that bill the President recently signed that, yes, he worked to strong-arm with me, that is going to make government more effective, efficient, and accountable. It also had a pay raise for our men and women. And when he voted ''no,'' he told them they weren't getting their raise. But worse, he went even further.

The gentleman questioned whether they could actually have the funds to continue the battle where they needed to be. We have been through shutdowns. We know nobody wins. I believe what he told me 9 months ago. I just want him to come back.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. He made a number of points.

First, generally, I have been here long enough to have heard the debate for the 1981 bill, the so-called supply side, Jack Kemp. Vice President Bush referred to it as ''voodoo economics.'' And point of fact, as the gentleman knows, because I am sure he knows the record, we increased the debt under Ronald Reagan 189 percent. Larger than any other President with whom I have served over the last 37 years; 189 percent. Stockman said: We knew it wasn't going to balance the budget. We just said that for political purposes. Stockman said that. He was Director of the OMB under Ronald Reagan.

Then in 2001 and 2003, we had tax cuts. We heard the same arguments, how it was going to grow robustly the economy. It brought in the deepest recession anybody in this Chamber, other than perhaps SAM JOHNSON, who I think is probably our oldest Member, because the rest of us didn't experience the depression, it ushered in not the biggest growth rate in America, but the least job-producing 8 years of any American President whom I have served with, and the deepest recession that anybody in this body has experienced, and a hemorrhaging of jobs.

In fact, the stock market, which the gentleman refers to, had a 25 percent decline in value over the 8 years of the Bush administration, with two tax cuts where exactly the same argument for growth was made, and it didn't happen.

On the other hand, I was here in 1993, when we raised taxes, not much, but a little bit, particularly for infrastructure, and the prediction, Mr. Leader, on your side of the aisle: we would tank as an economy; we would have a terrible recession.

Exactly the opposite happened. You were dead, not you personally, but those who made that representation were 180 degrees wrong.

First of all, we balanced the budget 4 years in a row. Nobody has done that other than President Clinton. Now, you can say you were in charge of the Congress, you were, and I would respond to you: Why couldn't you do it under George Bush when you had everything? There is no answer to that.

In terms of the experience that we have had when we had tax cuts, the debt did, in fact, explode; 189 percent increase in the national debt. That was approximately 2½ times the increase under Obama and the increase under George Bush. But we continue to argue there is going to be great growth. No reputable economist agrees with that proposition. Well, you read them out to me. I will be glad to hear them.

The stock market increase under this President has gone up. It went up 300 percent under Barack Obama. Three hundred percent. Three hundred percent, from 6,500 to over 18,000.

He had the largest job production, and I told my friend, in 2016, as opposed to 2017, hear, my friends, there were 279,000 more jobs created in 2016, under Barack Obama, than have been created under this President. Mr. Speaker, 279,000 more. Now, that is not a great deal, but in terms of growth, there was more growth of jobs in 2016, when Obama was President of the United States, than has occurred under Donald Trump. Check the records. I am sure you will review and say: Let's see if HOYER is just giving us some malarkey.

The gentleman talks about this great tax benefit. What he didn't mention, and what I was referring to, by the way, was when you were giving the schedule, not in response to the question, but that aside, doesn't mention the State and local taxes.

Now, I am not exactly sure what has happened to State and local taxes, but in my State, it will have a very substantial negative effect. Why? Because we have a significant income tax. Why? Because it is a progressive tax, and it puts the burden on those who have more.

Now, you may disagree with that. Just have a flat tax no matter what

you have, and you pay the same thing. I am not sure exactly what you have done.

The shutdown you talk about. You had 90 people vote against a CR that you recommended they vote for in September, which was a clean CR. You would not have passed that CR. You would have shut down government. You are responsible for keeping government open, ''you'' being your party. You are in the majority. The only reason that CR passed was because we voted for it. You had 90 of your people vote against it; 90, who apparently didn't want to pay the military, apparently didn't want to protect them overseas. That proposition, like they say, won't hunt, because the chairman of the Armed Services Committee voted against that CR. Why? Because he thought it was harmful to the national security of our country. Secretary Mattis believes the CR is damaging.

It is inappropriate, in my view, when we do something and say: We don't like this bill, and the only party with whom I have served who would consciously, purposely shut down the government, I tell my friend, Mr. Speaker, is the Republican Party. They did it in 1995, under Newt Gingrich, and they did it last year with Mr. CRUZ coming over here and saying: Shut down the government unless they repeal the ACA. Shut it down, consciously.

We have never done that. Have we had to shut down because we couldn't get agreement? We have done that for a few days. But for 16 days you shut it down consciously. And guess what? When you voted to open up the government, guess who voted against it? Mr. Mulvaney, the Director of the OMB. He voted against opening up the government. I guess he was against the Armed Forces. I guess he was against defending our country, if that's your proposition.

CHIP. You are right. You waited. We didn't get an agreement. But we waited long after September 30, when the gentleman says he is very concerned about funding it. The authorization expired. Now, you passed, ultimately, a bill that we didn't vote for. You passed it on your own. If you really were that concerned, you would have passed it before the authorization expired on September 30. We passed it some weeks later, and we passed it with a piece of funding in there that is going to undermine, for instance, just as one example, vaccinations for children, because you funded it, in part, by reducing substantially the Prevention Fund, which seeks to prevent illness.

On bipartisanship, very frankly, we had a 2-week CR, you are right, a 2-week CR. You got a 2-week CR. The only thing you have worked on, from our perspective, is the tax bill, and you did not include us in those discussions. You had closed hearings.

We had a conference hearing yesterday. Mr. NEAL tried to move an amendment out of order. It wasn't accepted. It was a done deal. Done deal in secret.

I tell my friend, I reread a little bit of ''Young Guns'' last night. It talked about transparency. It talked about openness. It talked about doing things one at a time, not packaging a lot of bills.

The reason we all hate CRs is because nobody knows what is in a CR. We lard it down, and this CR is larded down with numerous bills. We are talking about the tax bill, but the CR that the gentleman talked about is five or six major pieces of legislation put in one package. Take it or leave it.

That is not the way to run this organization, and that is what you guys said in ''Young Guns.'' And I agree with you, but it is not what you have done. It is what you said, but it is not what you have done.

Let me just close on this. Frankly, I was going to talk about the CR, but I am talking about it now.

We don't have a budget caps deal. Today is the 14th; so we are essentially 17 days from the end of the year. We don't have a caps deal. We don't have a disaster supplemental for Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands that is proposed to be in this CR, as I understand it, and the fires in California. The gentleman is absolutely correct, and we are going to support helping the folks of California who have been devastated by these fires. The gentleman is absolutely correct.

We don't have anything on DREAMers. We think that is critically important. I said to the majority leader 4 months ago that we felt this was critically important and we needed to get this done. I think, as I have said to the gentleman, we have over 300 votes on this floor for a bill to get this done.

Alexander-Murray. I don't think, I don't know, I haven't seen the conference report, but Alexander-Murray, which tries to stabilize the availability of healthcare at a reasonable price to the American people, I don't think that is in the tax bill, as I understand it.

VA Choice funding, I think, is in the CR. I haven't seen exactly what it says.

Opioids funding. I have a crisis in my district. In every district in America, opioids is a critical issue. There is no funding in the CR, as I understand it, for that.

The fire grants program for our emergency responders, no money for that.

Perkins loans, nothing for that. The debt limit is going to come later.

National Flood Insurance Program, nothing for that, as I understand it.

Medicare and other health extenders, 702 of FISA to keep America secure and strong and safe. As I understand it, none of that is being dealt with.

The reason we voted against the last CR is because we are tired of kicking things down the road. We are tired of kicking the can down the road. We want to get to an agreement on a bipartisan basis to pass legislation that is positive for our country, and that is why we may vote against this next CR, because we ought to stop just kicking the can down the road. And we are going to kick the can, as I understand it, down the road to some point in time to January 19, is the discussion.

Mr. Leader, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to sit down to try to reach agreement on these issues that have got to be reached. If we don't reach them, America will be less safe, less secure, less healthy as an economy and less healthy, literally, in terms of making sure that the healthcare available to America is on a stable path.

Mr. Speaker, I will yield to the majority leader and then make a few comments, and then we will close. I yield to my friend.

□ 1215

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I do look forward to these colloquies, and I first want to make sure history has it right. 137 economists sent a letter to Congress supporting our tax reform effort and saying it will accelerate growth. I don't know if the gentleman dislikes these 137, but these are economists. I don't judge the difference.

History says President Obama added more than $8 trillion to the national debt.

Now, how does that measure against all of the others?

Well, that is more than 43 prior Presidents combined. That is what history shows.

My friend is correct. He has been here much longer than I have. He actually had the majority for 40 years. He didn't balance the budget during that time. There was a common denominator that got the budget balanced in those 4 years, and that was the Republican majority who had to fight for it to get there.

The gentleman raised some other issues. He brought an issue up with a number of days. I don't think we should waste any time. He brought an issue up of we don't have a cap agreement to be able to work forward. It wasn't the gentleman, but it was his leader on the other side who decided not to go to the meeting at the White House.

The gentleman says that we should not waste our time on the floor. It wasn't this side, but we did have to take time up on this floor to make a motion to impeach the President. We took that time up on the floor. We didn't take the time up for CHIP and for the others.

I do remember the quote from my friend. We differ, sometimes philosophically, but we are friends and we are friends because I admire him. I admire principles. There are times when I have watched the gentleman stand for what he has said for years, and maybe his party has a different position. He doesn't hide from it. It is what he told the American public he would do, and he voted that way. And he will stand and oppose me because it is what he said in the past and what he said he would do.

But this is not something new. He has always said: ''Funding our government is not a game. When one side wins and the other side loses, a shutdown is not a political football to be tossed around so casually.'' I was personally shocked last week.

I wondered what would have happened as I watched your operation whip people to a ''no;'' as we watched the time click; as you watched, you held those who stood by the voting booth who wanted to vote ''yes'' but could not.

Had we not gotten enough votes to keep government open, would your side of the aisle have applauded? Would your side of the aisle thought they won victory?

And you do go back and it is correct, there were 90 Members on this side of the aisle who didn't vote for a CR, but you, like myself, understand a CR is usually a responsibility of both because it is bipartisan. No one is getting anything, and no one wants to end in that position.

We don't want to be in a CR and we don't want to vote for a CR. That is why we came to you so many times in the past when it came to CHIP. But, yes, I understand sometimes people can use it for politics. Let's push it all to the end so maybe we get an advantage with something else.

We wanted an agreement. That is why staff of those four leaders have been meeting, and actually came to a pretty close agreement.

So what do they do next?

Take it to the next level. Let's go to the White House because the White House has been in those meetings at the same time because the President has to sign the bill, the Senate, the House, and leaders on both sides. But when that meeting came just a few short weeks ago, your leaders wouldn't show up. And I take you at your word that you are willing to sit down. The rest of your leadership has to be willing to sit down, too.

But this idea that we want to hold government hostage, so many times I have heard the gentleman in the past say that was wrong. He asked about the things that haven't been done.

The thing I love the most—I believe in metrics. They have to be honest metrics. I will share them with you because I share them with our side of the aisle because I want us to be judged. I want us to know exactly where we are. And if we are not where we said we are going to be, we should actually work harder.

So I took the first Congress of every new President since George H.W. Bush. I wanted to see how many bills came through committee. Because the gentleman is right. When he read the ''Young Guns'' book—and I am not saying to buy it in any shape or form because I don't want to cause any ethics issues, but I don't get any money from it anyway. I give it to the veterans.

Mr. HOYER. Well, I keep pushing it for you.

Mr. MCCARTHY. I don't even know if it is in print. I want the bills to come through committee because that is where the expertise is; that is where the open public process is; that is where amendments get to be offered, won or lost. More bills in a first Congress since George H.W. Bush have gone through committee.

Now, let's measure how many bills have gotten off this floor.

Does the gentleman realize that more bills have been passed out of this Congress than any Congress in the first term of a President in modern history back to George H.W. Bush?

And we did it by going through a transparent, open process; exactly what we pledged we would do in that book. So, yes, I am glad you read it and I am glad you took the words, and I would love to show you the graphs.

But let's walk back to this: government funding is important. Let's talk about it. Here are the facts: By mid-July, all 12 appropriations bills passed both subcommittee and full committee. That was July. On July 27, we passed the four appropriations bills off the House floor, which provided for critical national security. Now, my friend and nearly all of the Democrats voted ''no.''

On September 14, we passed the remaining eight appropriations bills off this floor. Now, my friend and nearly all of the Democrats voted ''no.''

But the most disappointing vote, as I mentioned, was last week on December 7 to fund the government. My friend and the Democrats all voted ''no.''

When I was young and I didn't always get my way, I would go to my parents and I would complain. But it is really odd that we got to this floor in a different nature, that someone would complain about something not getting done and never vote for anything.

Mr. Speaker, I like my friend. I want my friend, who, for decades, has talked about not playing games with the funding of government. I don't know where you have gone, but I want you to come back. I think America needs you back. I think that leadership will be important for both sides. And I will tell you, I would have been disappointed in you if I watched you applaud if you were successful in shutting down the government. Because I know that is not the man you are. I know that is not the person and the principles of what you stand for.

All of those votes that you said this side of the aisle didn't vote for, I stood and voted for those because leadership is different. We do take votes that are tougher than others. We do have to put politics aside, and we do have to look out for the best of this country. It may not be the mood of the politics on TV that maybe wants to fight more, or throw another motion on the floor to impeach, but there is a time that we should rise above.

I think going into the end of this year, we should think anew and act anew. I think America should not see a bad Christmas because one side of the aisle wanted to shut it down, and not for any other reason than they voted ''no'' on all of the bills that would have kept it open. If you had a cause, if you had a desire, and if you had a big desire, you would have shown up to the meeting to actually get the answer.

We could have a cap agreement. We could be done with it. We could make sure our men and women get the raises they deserve. We could make sure that those in battle theater have every opportunity so they are able to carry out their mission that we asked them to do in the safest manner possible. That is what I want to see.

Mr. HOYER. ''Come back, Shane.'' Maybe many of you are not old enough to remember that wonderful movie. Shane rode off and the little boy intoned, ''Come back, Shane.''

I haven't gone anywhere. Democrats have no ability to shut down the government on the floor of this House. Hear me: We don't have the votes to shut down government and we don't want to shut down government.

Maybe the leader also wants those 90 of his—he is not our leader. He is the leader of the majority party, and 90 of his people did not follow him. I presume he must be much more concerned about that.

With all due respect, he is my friend, but not my leader. We voted to give 90 days and nothing was accomplished in that 90 days other than working on a tax bill that we think is a disaster for this country. Nothing.

The gentleman talks about passing these appropriations bills. We knew they wouldn't pass the Senate and we told him so. We said: Let's do it on a bipartisan basis.

But, no. By the way, Mr. Speaker, it was the least regular order prior to an omnibus at the end of a year in dealing with appropriations bills that I have ever seen. They packaged, I think it was four or five the first time—four, I think, and then the balance of eight.

We didn't consider them individually. We didn't have an opportunity to consider them thoughtfully, no. It was one big package, for or against. I said I read that book. It was anything but regular order.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, the majority party that passed them is the majority in the United States Senate; and not a single one of those bills, not a single one, has passed out of the Senate. Not a single one has gone to the President of the United States. Not one. The Republicans are in charge of the House and the Senate. Not a single bill has gone to the President of the United States.

Harry Reid is no longer there just to beat on: Oh, it is Harry Reid.

Now, what it would have taken to pass some of those appropriations bills in the Senate is some compromise, but that didn't happen. So don't wring your hands about how bad it is that we haven't had bipartisanship on the appropriations bills—we haven't—or bipartisanship on the CR when you lose

90 of your people. Ninety Republicans voted against a simple CR. You say simple CR, nothing to be partisan about, et cetera. Ninety of your people voted ''no.''

Mr. MCCARTHY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOYER. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Let's make sure we are comparing apples to apples. That had a debt ceiling in it.

Mr. HOYER. Let me reclaim my time just so the gentleman can further explain.

Does that mean 90 of your people did not want to pay the bills of the United States and default on our debt?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

But if you are going to compare a CR that you said was simple, it is not simple. We all know that. If you are going to compare it to the CR that you voted against last week, that had no debt ceiling on it. You explained to me numerous times of how many CRs you voted for in the past in this body and how Democrats came over with Republicans. Because, you know what, you and I both know that is normally how it works.

A CR is not an advantage for one or the other. And this is what I am most upset with. Our Founding Fathers created a body that could have compromise. But for some reason, in today's society, it is not just that you want one side to win. You want to try to crush the other side. That is not crushing one side or the other. That is actually hurting the American public.

So in a situation where we know that a continuing resolution is going to be short term, in 2 weeks, yes, I would expect half of the votes to come from your side and half of the votes to come from ours. That is what has happened in the past. I am just wondering where that went.

Mr. HOYER. Reclaiming my time, let me say to the gentleman very respectfully: Do not expect cooperation from our side if we don't get cooperation from your side, if we don't get some inclusion in making decisions.

□ 1230

We are, after all, 194 Members of this body. From time to time, you and I do work together. When we work together, we get majorities and we pass pieces of legislation.

You have not passed a single controversial fiscal bill on this floor without our substantial help until last week. You got about 230 on that last bill. But let me tell you, the reason we voted against it is because we knew exactly what was going to happen: nothing. There would be no agreement to CHIP; there is no agreement on CHIP. There would be no agreement on FISA; there has been no agreement on FISA. There would be no agreement on flood control; there has been no agreement on flood control. So we knew that we were not going to get any bipartisan buy-in, so all we were doing is delaying the inevitable.

Let me tell you, when we did defeat the homeland security bill—you remember that, I am sure; we did, and you were in the majority—you came back to the floor and said that we are going to meet tomorrow. We reached an agreement, and we passed it.

Very frankly, you have never heard us say that, as a policy, in order to get the ACA repealed or Gingrich wanted to get some fiscal thing done, that we would shut down the government. Three times you shut it down in 1995 and 1996. Three times, intentionally. That was your policy.

Yes, if you are going to take the government hostage and force us to do something that we think is inimical to the best interests of this country, yes, Mr. Leader, you will leave us with no other option: to pretend that we are keeping government moving but not getting any agreement.

I talked to you very sincerely 4 months ago about one of the things that we wanted to get done before the end of this year is getting DREAMers protected who are now vulnerable and very scared that they are going to be sent back to someplace they do not know, have not lived in, brought here as children through no fault of their own, gone to elementary school, junior high school, high school, college, served in the military, working at jobs, and vetted to make sure that they haven't done anything wrong. They are afraid of being sent back home—not back home. Excuse me. I say that. That is not their home. This is their home.

Nothing has been done on that. I know you have a task force and talked about it, but we haven't done anything. There is no reason why we can't. I think we have 300 votes on this floor to get that done.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOYER. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. MCCARTHY. The gentleman is correct. There are many times we have worked together, on sanctions, on homeland and others. We work very well together.

The gentleman knows I came to you about CHIP when the committee was directed, on your side of the aisle, not to do anything with the majority party, so I came to you because of our history.

Mr. HOYER. Reclaiming my time, I don't know who the gentleman is relying on for that information, but I will tell you I have talked to Mr. PALLONE. That is not correct.

I don't know who you think directed him not to reach an agreement, but I will tell you, after you made that assertion, I think last week or the week before, I went to Mr. PALLONE. I asked him that, and he said absolutely not.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

Mr. MCCARTHY. I came to the gentleman. I was under the impression. A Member came to me and said that. Maybe that is not true. Maybe that is not what Mr. PALLONE wants.

But I came to you and said: Let's get together and work this out. I don't want to make CHIP partisan in any shape or form. We met, and we tried to work.

You came back to me and said: You have to go alone.

I said: That is not how I want to do it.

So what we did was we took everything we heard from the hearings. In good faith, the chairman of that committee, GREG WALDEN, stopped a markup because you requested—not you, but your ranking member. They weren't prepared. They wanted more time.

So we want to do everything in our power; but, at the end of the day, you couldn't be there. Twice, your side of the aisle voted against CHIP. You can't argue against it now. You voted against it.

When you talk about appropriations, I am very proud of what we did on appropriations. We haven't been able to do that in quite some time. But there were, in those first four bills—every single one of those 12 bills went through subcommittee and full committee. There were 126 amendments on the first four and 342 on the second.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I reclaim my time for just a second, and then I will yield back to the gentleman.

Is the gentleman proud that you control the House, you control the Senate, and you haven't sent a single appropriations bill to the President? Not a single one. Not one.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

No. That is why I want you to join with me and get the Senate to move, because, as the gentleman knows, you don't control the Senate when you have 51 or 52 Members. Do you know what happens? It takes 60.

Now, I don't firmly believe in that, but that is the way they play it over in the Senate. That is why, when you don't have a cap agreement, that you need all four leaders to go to the White House. But when the two won't show up, the best thing to do is, is you don't show up, then don't complain I don't have an agreement.

The best way to complain is get all 12 bills off this floor with a simple majority. If that is good enough for America inside Congress, it should be good enough on the Senate side. But, unfortunately, that is not the case. So your side is able to hold it up, and I'm ashamed of that as well.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, what it would have meant, you would have had to compromise. That is why the Senate has that 60-vote rule. I am not crazy about it myself, but that is why they have the 60-vote rule. They think it is good because that is why they kept it. They think it is good because it requires

compromise; it requires agreement; It requires moving ahead on a piece of legislation.

I will tell you, I served on the Appropriations Committee for 23 years, and we reached agreement between Republicans and Democrats on almost every bill. And when we had the bills, they weren't partisan bills, and they got a lot of Republican votes, almost always, when we were in charge—not all the time, almost always.

If you are a party of no compromise, then you can't move things in the United States Senate. I get that. But that is the reason. That is the reason, because you couldn't reach compromise.

Very frankly, a lot of the bills have come out of the committee. Do you know why they came out of committee? Because they were bipartisan. But they haven't been brought to the floor by Mr. MCCONNELL, and they haven't been sent to the President of the United States, so somewhat crocodile tears.

Yes, you passed those 12 bills just like you can pass the CRs, on your own, without any help from us. If the government shuts down, it is because you can't get the majority of your party to pass bills.

Mr. MCCARTHY. No. No. No.

Mr. HOYER. You are in charge. There is no doubt when we were in charge and you didn't support us, we passed every piece of legislation we wanted to pass on this floor with 218 Democrats. We were united as a party. Now, we lost some, but never enough to make it so that we didn't get 218. You lost 90. You can say it was on the debt; you can say it was on national security; you can say whatever you want on it; but you brought a bill to the floor, and 90 of your people voted against it to keep government open and to keep government operating.

Very frankly, we voted with you so that we could get some work done, and we haven't gotten work done. That is what frustrates us. That is what frustrates the American people.

I will tell my friend, at the end of the day, after this Congress is gone, historians are not going to be kind, notwithstanding the fact you say you passed so many bills. You passed so many bills on a partisan basis, and you used, essentially, the 51 vote because you didn't want to compromise. We get it. You don't want to compromise. You don't want to work with us. You didn't have any hearing on this tax bill. We were not included in any phase of the marking up and fashioning of this tax bill.

Now, I am about ready to yield back the balance of my time. I am sure that everybody who wants to give a 1-minute or a Special Order is very happy to hear that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

The gentleman is correct about compromise, but there is a real big difference between compromise and obstruction, to obstruct, when you talked about the Senate. It takes 60 votes to even get on to a bill. I know as well as my friend that you can utilize the Senate and the leadership of the House to stop something if you want to.

I will tell my friend that I am disappointed. What will you say to the 62,000? What will you say to the 62,000 Federal employees who live in your district? What will you say to them about every quote you made in the past that you should not play games with funding and shutting down the government?

You may think you can make that statement here. Your leader may think that she can say that only the President was talking about a shutdown. The President never whipped one vote to shut it down. He whipped it to stay open. History won't be kind.

Yes, we will come to a conclusion next week.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, in reclaiming my time, does the gentleman remember President Trump saying that a good shutdown will be good for government? Do you remember him saying that, when you tell me about how he has been down here lobbying? He said: A ''good shutdown'' may be good for government.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I understand what his words said. I also watched his actions. I also watched what he did last week to get Members to vote to keep it open because things did change. There was not compromise even though the bill was a compromise because there was no poison pill in it.

If we are going to carry everything ourselves, maybe we should put something in it. It was a compromise, but, unfortunately, you changed on the other side. You decided now is the time to shut the government down, try to blame somebody else.

The American people will see through that, and I will guarantee you that 62,000 people who work for the Federal Government in the Maryland Fifth District will not take that as an answer.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, I would, again, reiterate: the majority party can do whatever it wants on this floor. It could have kept government open. It could have kept policies moving with its votes. Time after time after time on critical issues confronting this country, they couldn't come up with a majority.

As a matter of fact, on one occasion, Mr. MCCARTHY was the whip, Mr. Cantor was the majority leader, and Mr. Boehner was the Speaker. They offered a bill to keep government moving. They only got 84 of their colleagues, approximately one-third of their colleagues on their side of the aisle, to vote with them.

I don't want to hear about us shutting down government. We can't shut down government. They are in charge. The majority has the votes. You can do whatever you want. We get it. We may not like it any more than you liked it, but we get it.

But we voted on the hope that we would get some work done. We haven't moved anyplace except on the tax bill, which we think is bad for this country, in the last 90 days since we passed—and we passed. The CR would not have passed without us.

And, yes, we will not be held hostage. Yes, we will oppose what we think is a very, very bad tax bill and we think is an effort to avoid getting the work of this House done.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUDD). The Chair would remind Members to direct their remarks to the Chair.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 5:30 p.m. tomorrow.

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

There was no objection.

ADJOURNMENT FROM FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2017, TO MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2017

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns on Friday, December 15, 2017, it adjourn to meet on Monday, December 18, 2017, when it shall convene at noon for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

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

There was no objection.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO TIM FRABLE

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

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, America lost a hero this week, and I lost a friend.

Tim Frable trained at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana and flew missions in a P–51 over Japan during World War II. During one mission, he had to ditch into the Pacific. He and a wing mate floated for days before being rescued.

Tim was my science teacher in junior high school. He told his ocean rescue story in 5-minute installments at the end of class each day. Because of his storytelling, no one missed class.

Tim loved Montana. In 1976, he brought me and 17 other classmates from Pennsylvania to Red Lodge to

hike into the back country. We hiked to Black Canyon Lake, Grasshopper Glacier, Froze-to-Death Plateau, and onto the Absaroka Lake Plateau.

Tim had a tremendous impact on many lives in his 93 years, including my own. I will always be grateful for his service to our country and for his dedication as a teacher. I will miss my friend Tim Frable.

□ 1245

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF MAYOR ED LEE

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

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sorrow that I rise to pay tribute to a dear friend and an extraordinary leader, Mayor Ed Lee of San Francisco.

All who knew Mayor Lee understood him to be a true gentleman of great warmth, positivity, and kindness. His passing is not only a tragic official loss for our city, but an immense personal loss for all who were fortunate to call him friend.

Mayor Lee's first priority was always the people. His strong moral compass was rooted in his identity as the hardworking son of an immigrant family of modest means and was guided by his years as a community organizer and civil rights lawyer.

Ed fundamentally understood that the strength of a community is measured by its success in meeting the needs of all its people. He knew the rhythms and the workings of San Francisco at the most granular level, and dedicated decades to improving the lives of all San Franciscans.

As mayor, Ed Lee served with exceptional dignity and great effectiveness. His values-based, pragmatic leadership helped drive the city into a strong economic expansion.

His firm commitment to equality made immense progress toward securing affordable housing and a living wage for all. His unwavering belief in justice helped combat the moral crisis of homelessness in San Francisco, particularly for our veterans. His bold, hopeful vision for the future further secured San Francisco's role as a model city for the Nation.

Mayor Ed Lee's public service leaves an enduring, inspiring legacy that generations of San Franciscans will enjoy. As Ecclesiasticus says: The people will tell of His wisdom and the congregation will continue to sing His praise.

Mayor Lee never had an unkind word for anyone, and no one ever had an unkind word for him. Even though our hearts are broken, we think of the person Ed Lee was, and we smile.

Mayor Lee took deep pride in serving as the first Asian-American mayor of San Francisco. But his greatest source of joy was his beloved family. Our city owes a debt of gratitude to his wife, Anita; and his daughters, Brianna and Tania, for sharing this exceptional person with us.

My deepest love and prayers are with his family. May it bring them some measure of comfort that so many people throughout the world mourn with them and continue to be inspired by him.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we are joined by so many Members of Congress from the California delegation and from the Asian Pacific American Caucus as well.

TAX CUTS BILL

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

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I am excited.

For the first time in decades, I can dare to hope that we will not crush our children's future with debt.

As our House and Senate colleagues work hard to shape the details of a final bill, we can see the goal line:

We will lower rates across the board for hardworking taxpayers in all brackets;

We will provide relief to small businesses and farms throughout our Nation so that America can compete and win; and

We will simplify the Tax Code.

Mr. Speaker, you shouldn't need an army of lawyers and accountants to do your taxes. Americans deserve a Tax Code where everyone plays by the same rules and a code that projects a lifetime of savings.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to work together, give America the healthy economy it deserves, and support the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

REAUTHORIZE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

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

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, children's health is not a partisan issue. It is a human issue.

Nevertheless, the majority party let the Children's Health Insurance Program expire months ago. As a result, States across the country are going to be forced to terminate millions of underserved children's only lifeline to a doctor.

Rather than working with Democrats, the Republican leadership passed a bill that would extend CHIP, but strip health coverage from as many as 668,000 American children. Partisanship has poisoned this well.

Mr. Speaker, nearly 231,000 children in New Jersey rely on CHIP to get them to the doctor. Many more people in my State rely on community health centers, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act's prevention fund to stay healthy.

Congress must protect these programs. I urge my colleagues to pass a bill before the end of the year to extend the funding for these critically important healthcare programs, including CHIP and community health centers, without taking healthcare away from more than half a million Americans.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

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

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on my colleagues in Congress to quickly pass a 5-year extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program.

In Iowa, around 85,000 children rely on CHIP for their health. This is very important to so many families in our Third District. I am grateful a short-term solution was included as part of the continuing resolution passed last week; however, we must do more.

On November 3, the House passed legislation to extend funding for CHIP for 5 years, with the support of every Iowa Representative. However, since that time, we have been waiting for our colleagues in the Senate to act. They need to act now.

We must work together to fund this critical program which has bipartisan support and bicameral support. The health of our children is at stake. Children in low- and middle-income families will be those hit the hardest if we do not fully fund CHIP. With Iowa families left without coverage and access to needed medical services for their children, we must act.

I urge my colleagues in the House and Senate to include an extension of CHIP in the important bills we will be considering in the weeks ahead, because families shouldn't be worrying about losing coverage for their children.

As Congress continues to work on the many important issues facing our country, I know I, and other colleagues, will continue to support this.

HONORING THE LIFE OF TIMOTHY ''TIM'' BRADFORD

(Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, my good friend Timothy ''Tim'' Bradford passed away last week.

Tim was a commissioner of the Cook County Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, but he was much more than that. Tim grew up on the west side of the city of Chicago, moved to the south suburbs, and became known as the godfather of politics in south suburban Cook County.

He was in love with everybody he met, involved in everything that existed, and I simply express condolences to his wife and family on his passing.

MEDIA HELPED ELECT A SENATOR

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

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the liberal media helped elect a U.S. Senator from Alabama. Their alliance with the Democratic Party is now so close, we should call them mediacrats. Admittedly, the mediacrats got an assist from some Republicans, as well as the candidate himself.

The primary lesson to be learned from the election is that Republicans must confront media bias. They must constantly point it out and remind the American people of this corrosive effect on our election process. Republicans should join the President exposing fake news.

The media should trust the American people with the facts, not tell them what to think. Because the media is so biased, their credibility with the American people is at an all-time low.

For the sake of our country and for the sake of fair elections, I hope the media will return to their paramount responsibility: providing the American people with unbiased news.

MOMENT OF TRUTH

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

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, Donald Trump claims he has ''nothing to do with Russia,'' but we have seen damning revelations: secret meetings, business and financial entanglements, and elaborate attempts to conceal information.

In any other era, these would be bombshells, but our nonstop media cycle, fueled by Trump's constant infusions of drama, make it hard to connect the dots. It is not that we lack evidence of Trump-Russia ties, it is that there is so much, it makes your head spin.

So today, I am beginning a ''moment of truth'' series of speeches to point out facts that show an administration that is compromised and that not only colluded with Russia, but has obstructed justice to keep us from knowing the truth.

One of many smoking guns is from 2015, when Trump's associate, Felix Sater, was seeking financing from a Russian bank facing American sanctions to build a Trump Tower in Moscow. This email from Sater to Trump's personal attorney speaks for itself: ''I'll get Putin on this program, and we'll get Donald elected.''

There is a lot more to come.

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

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF SANDY HOOK SHOOTING

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute and commemorate the sad fifth anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, which took the lives of 20 innocent children and six brave educators.

Last night, I stood on the floor of the House and indicated how breathless I felt when the news came in: One child, 2 children, 3 children, 4 children, 5 children, 6 children, 7 children, 8 children, 9 children, 10 children, 11 children, 12 children, 13 children, 14 children, 15 children, 16 children, 17 children, 18 children, 19 children, 20 children, and the brave adults who tried to save their lives, including the mother of the perpetrator.

I rise today to join in the call for acts of kindness. Tomorrow, I will be giving out books at the Blackshear Elementary School. I will be giving out shoes in my district to the Forest Brook Middle School.

I hope that we understand what it is not about: guns don't kill; people do. Guns kill.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we have real gun safety legislation. At the same time, I hope that, as we look toward the needs of our Nation, the Children's Health Insurance Program and those who are suffering from hurricanes will be part of our kindness.

I take a moment for these children. I honor the Sandy Hook children and the brave adults who tried to save their lives. May God bless them all.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to join my colleagues in honoring and remembering all of the victims of the tragic shootings at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT five years ago.

Nearly five years after a mass shooter murdered 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook elementary school, Republican politicians are still blocking any attempt to pass tougher federal gun control laws.

The lack of congressional action has prompted outrage, despair, and a sense that the gun debate is intractable.

As the Founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus and a senior Member of the Judiciary Committee, I have listened to the tragic testimony of individuals who have survived or lost loved ones as a result of gun violence.

It is still painful for those who recall the news from Newtown, Connecticut on that day five years ago.

The story of Sandy Hook was particularly frightening for those of us who are parents or grandparents.

The community and the families directly impacted continue to reel from the inconceivable tragedy that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary on December 14, 2012.

Our hearts still ache with sadness and disbelief for the families and loved ones of the children and women who lost their lives in this senseless act of violence.

I also recognize and applaud the heroic efforts made by the teachers, administrators, and law enforcement officials who acted quickly to secure and protect the lives of the children who survived this deadly encounter.

I, along with other parents in America, know that the healing process continues for the parents, siblings, and friends of the 20 children who died on December 14, 2012.

Our prayers go to the families and colleagues of the teachers, councilor, and principle of the school who were also killed in defense of the children in their charge.

This tragedy unlike any other in recent memory touched so many hearts and minds both in the United States and around the world that this weekend is particularly poignant.

The parents and grandparents who dropped off their children and grandchildren in the early morning hours of December 14, 2012, could never have imagined that by 10 a.m. on that morning they would have to face this tragedy.

The deaths at Sandy Hook as well as those at Aurora and Columbine will be etched in our collective memories.

These are moments when lives were needlessly lost due to gun violence.

The nation united in grief one year ago, and many of us who strong support sensible gun safety laws thought the moment had finally arrived when the policy makers, parents, teachers, and law enforcement could join efforts to make our schools, parks, sidewalks, and homes safer from gun violence.

We could all agree that the tragedy should not have occurred, but we could not find the common ground that would take any meaningful step to reduce gun violence in the United States.

We must join together in recognizing that this tragedy can happen in any community and we must immediately begin to address the underlying problems that would lead a young man to take up arms against defenseless women and children.

The tragedy of Sandy Hook took us all by surprise, but there are hundreds of other tragedies around the nation that involve children falling victim to gun violence.

Annually in the United States there are over 30,000 gun related deaths.

The total number of deaths associated with 13 years of war in both Afghanistan and Iraq is 6,778 service men and women.

No other nation had the level of gun violence per-capita as the United States unless they were actively engaged in a civil war or conflict with another nation.

There are some things that cannot be rationalized by any means—one of the things that we as policy makers have to face is the threat of gun violence to our nation, communities, and families.

I read with heartache the September 28, 2013, New York Times article, ''Children and Guns: The Hidden Toll,'' published in September of this year.

Some of the stories were tragic as they are familiar to those of us who work to reduce gun violence.

Lucas Heagren, 3 years old, killed by a gun he found where his father temporarily hid it under a couch.

Days later, Cassie Culpepper, age 11, who was shot and killed by her brother who thought a gun his father gave him to scare coyotes was unloaded.

A few weeks later, Alex Whitfield, age 11 was killed by a Glock pistol found in a closet by a 15 year old.

These children are the hidden victims of a nation obsessed with guns at almost any cost.

The children of gun violence may be any child or grandchild—including your own.

They may be from any home found in any neighborhood or rural community in this nation.

The tragedies of gun deaths of children are not just what your child knows about gun safety, but more often what another child with access to a firearm does not know.

More important—is the lack of adults' knowledge regarding gun safety that can lead to preventable gun related child deaths.

Some parents are the source of their own children becoming victims of gun violence because they mistakenly attempted to clean a loaded gun or handled a loaded gun improperly.

Many of these deaths are not part of official records.

The New York Times conducted research in Georgia, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Ohio going back to 1999.

They collected data from medical examiners in Florida, Illinois and Texas.

They found over 259 accidental firearm deaths of children under the age of 15.

These numbers are about twice as many as were reported in federal statistics.

Homicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24.

Homicide is the leading cause of death for many minorities in this country.

82.8 percent of young people who are killed, are victims of a killing through a firearm.

Every 30 minutes, a child or teenager in America is injured by a gun.

Every 3 hours and 15 minutes, a child or a teenager loses their life to a firearm.

And in 2010, 82 children under 5 years of age lost their lives due to guns.

Less than 20 states have laws that hold adults criminally responsible if they act negligently in the storage of firearms that may lead to children having access to them.

National data is needed on all forms of firearm related deaths for policy makers, the public and media to fully comprehend the scope of the problem of gun violence in the United States.

The challenge to gaining access to this information is state laws that do not consider death certificate information as public information and who may not voluntarily report numbers to the Department of Justice.

At around the same time that the children in Newtown, CT faced a deranged gun man, thousands of miles away in China, another man also attacked a group of school children.

Again, a tragedy that no one in the community could have anticipated; however, because the man in China was armed only with a knife, he wounded instead of killed 20 children.

The lives of 20 children in China were spared because their attacker did not have in his possession a gun.

I believe the solution to these acts of violence can be found by taking a multifaceted approach.

There are those who will say that ''guns don't kill people, people kill people.''

The statistics for the harm that people are capable of doing with guns to themselves and others is alarming.

People are indeed killing people, with guns.

We need to reform how we view guns in this country and also how we address mental health challenges in our communities.

We must act now.

This is the right moment to demonstrate that the safety of our children is one of our most sacred priorities.

It is imperative that this Congress brings to the House for immediate consideration the following gun safety laws.

First, there must be an immediate ban on all assault weapons.

Second, we must close gun show loopholes which allow for the sale of weapons without a background check.

Third, we must reform our current mental health system to provide support for families to enable them to get immediate assistance for mental health issues.

In addition, there should be pathways for families who are facing these challenges to gain emergency access to publicly funded or private counseling services.

Fourth, we must look at the design of primary and secondary schools in which these schools may need to have reinforced bullet proof window and reinforced secure entrances.

Lastly, we must expand current state laws to hold adults accountable and responsible for the security of their weapons.

We can help to prevent tragedies like this one from happening again.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, gun violence claims the lives of over 30,000 people.

For every person who dies from a gunshot wound, two others are wounded.

Every year, approximately 100,000 Americans are victims of gun violence.

In addition to those who are killed or injured, there are countless others whose lives are forever changed by the deaths of and injuries to their loved ones.

In 2010, guns took the lives of 31,076 Americans in homicides, suicides and unintentional shootings.

This is the equivalent of more than 85 deaths each day and more than three deaths each hour.

There were 73,505 Americans treated in hospital emergency departments for non-fatal gunshot wounds in 2010.

Firearms were the third-leading cause of injury-related deaths nationwide in 2010, following poisoning and motor vehicle accidents.

Between 1955 and 1975, the Vietnam War killed over 58,000 American soldiers—less than the number of civilians killed with guns in the U.S. in an average two-year period.

In the first seven years of the U.S.-Iraq War, over 4,400 American soldiers were killed. Almost as many civilians are killed with guns here in the U.S. over the course of 7 weeks rather than 7 years.

U.S. homicide rates are 6.9 times higher than rates in 22 other populous high-income countries combined, despite similar non-lethal crime and violence rates.

The firearm homicide rate in the U.S. is 19.5 times higher. Guns were used in 11,078 homicides in the U.S. in 2010, comprising almost 35% of all gun deaths, and over 68% of all homicides.

Over a million people have been killed with guns in the United States since 1968, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated.

On average, 33 gun homicides were committed each day for the years 2005–2010.

Regions and states with higher rates of gun ownership have significantly higher rates of homicide than states with lower rates of gun ownership.

Where guns are prevalent, there are significantly more homicides, particularly gun homicides.

For years, I have introduced and reintroduced gun safety legislation and supported the efforts of my colleagues who have also worked diligently to protect the lives of our nation's children through adequate gun safety.

I reintroduced H.R. 277, the Child Gun Safety and Gun Access Prevention Act of 2011.

This legislation would prevent anyone under the age of 21 from being eligible to own a handgun and would prohibit youth from possessing semiautomatic assault weapons.

Under this legislation parents and supervising adults will be held accountable if a juvenile is able to gain possession of dangerous firearms that are located in their household.

The statistics are clear, firearms in a household must be properly and adequately stored.

A gun in the home is 22 times more likely to be used in a completed or attempted suicide (11×), criminal assault or homicide (7×), or unintentional shooting death or injury (4×) than to be used in a self-defense shooting.

Higher household gun ownership correlates with higher rates of homicides, suicides, and unintentional shootings.

Keeping a firearm in the home increases the risk of suicide by a factor of 3 to 5 and increases the risk of suicide with a firearm by a factor of 17.

Keeping a firearm in the home increases the risk of homicide by a factor of 3.

A 2009 study found that people in possession of a gun are 4.5 times more likely to be shot in an assault.

My legislation also requires a parent to accompany a minor when attending a gun show.

Our focus should also be on the owners of guns. Parents need to keep guns and ammunition out of the reach of teenagers.

Parents should be responsible for securing from their minor children access to dangerous firearms.

Further, my bill is a preventative measure, my legislation encourages school districts to prove or participate in firearm safety programs.

It also addresses the underlying concerns related to violence and suicide.

It amends the Public Health Service Act to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to support programs to promote mental health services among all children and their families and to provide early intervention services to ameliorate identified mental health problems in children and adolescents.

This is a multifaceted approach to address this multifaceted issue.

In the 113th Congress I introduced H.R. 65, the Child Gun Safety and Gun Access Prevention Act of 2013, which amends the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act by raising the age of handgun eligibility to 21 and prohibits persons under age 21 from possessing semiautomatic assault weapons or large capacity ammunition feeding devices, with some exceptions.

The bill places limitations and obligations on the transfer of firearms regarding juvenile violations of Brady Act provisions and the transfer of a handgun, ammunition, semiautomatic assault weapon, or large capacity ammunition feeding device to a person who is under age 21.

Prohibits any licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer from transferring a firearm to any person (other than a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer) unless the transferee is provided with a secure gun storage or safety device.

Authorizes the Attorney General to suspend or revoke any firearms license, or to subject the licensee to a civil penalty of up to $10,000, if the licensee has knowingly violated this prohibition.

The bill also places prohibitions on keeping a loaded firearm or an unloaded firearm and ammunition within any premises knowing or recklessly disregarding the risk that a child: is capable of gaining access to it, and may use the firearm to cause death or serious bodily injury.

Finally, the bill authorizes the Attorney General to provide grants to enable local law enforcement agencies to develop and sponsor gun safety classes for parents and children.

I also introduced H.R. 2665, a bill to ensure secure gun storage and gun safety devices.

The bill amends the federal criminal code to repeal provisions that create exceptions to the prohibition against a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer transfer of a firearm to any person other than a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer unless the person receiving the firearm is provided with a secure gun storage or safety device; and grants immunity from a qualified civil liability action to a person who has lawful possession and control of a handgun and who uses such a device.

This Congress, I introduced H.R. 4268, the Gun Safety: Not Sorry Act which imposes a seven-day waiting period on the purchase of certain weaponry including bump stocks in response to more recent mass shootings.

Recent U.S. mass shootings include:

1. Las Vegas, 2017: 50+ killed
2. Orlando, 2016: 50 killed
3. Virginia Tech, 2007: 32 killed
4. Sandy Hook, 2012: 27 killed
5. San Ysidro, 1984: 21 killed
6. San Bernardino, 2015: 14 killed
7. Edmond, 1986: 14 killed
8. Fort Hood, 2009: 13 killed
9. Columbine, 1999: 13 killed

I also join in support of the families and survivors of the Community of Newtown, Connecticut who lost loved ones to give them space so that they can heal.

Events such as the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School touch all of us as compassionate, caring people which was demonstrated through the wave of support expressed by this nation.

To keep the memory of the 20 children and six adults killed on that tragic day vibrant—a website has been created by the families—mysandyhookfamily.org.

I encourage you to visit this memorial website and learn more about Charlotte, Josephine, Daniel, Avielle, Rachel, Jessica, Victoria, Benjamin, Anne Marie, Dawn, Carline, Ana, Madeleine, Catherine, Noah, James, Mary, Emilie, Lauren, Allison, Chase, Dylan, Jesse, Olivia, Jack and Grace.

Mr. Speaker, it is our responsibility to do all that we can do to reverse this level of gun violence. We must pass commonsense gun safety.

AN AMERICAN HERO

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

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Speaker, 47 years ago, August 11, a baby boy was born to a mother and father in Detroit, Michigan, named Brian Terry.

Some 18 years after that, Brian made a commitment to serve his country by enlisting in the United States Marine Corps, where he served 3 years honorably, including a tour of duty in harm's way in Iraq.

Discharged from the Marine Corps honorably in 1994, Brian Terry followed his calling to serve by becoming a police officer. He then made another commitment not to serve just his community, but our Nation. In 2007, he joined the Customs and Border Protection.

But this wasn't good enough for what his mother characterized as a brave, strong defender of people. Brian decided to join the elite Border Tactical Team of the Border Patrol unit.

Seven years ago today, Brian was part of a four-person team tasked with pursuing and apprehending a ''rip'' crew. This rip crew has been alleged to be affiliated with the Mexican drug cartels. What they did was exploit those who took advantage of the unwillingness of those in leadership in this country to perform that basic, principled responsibility, which is to secure our borders.

□ 1300

The rip crew would rob drug mules as they carried drugs across the border, but would also routinely detain and shake down those who snuck through our porous borders. This cartel-affiliated rip crew had weapons, and they used those weapons to rob, terrorize, and exploit in the worst possible ways people who were essentially invited here by our failure to do our jobs.

Seven years ago today, Brian Terry and three of his colleagues set out not just to protect our border, but to protect innocent people, who came with their entire life savings, because we chose to leave that border porous.

Yesterday, the House Homeland Security Committee took up H.R. 4433. H.R. 4433 is entitled Securing DHS Firearms Act of 2017. We learned during testimony on this bill that in a 2-year period, just over 200 firearms were stolen from people who worked for the Department of Homeland Security, or lost. At least one person was killed by these firearms. I would concur that that is unacceptable.

I certainly support the bill, but having served in the United States Army as a leader of soldiers on deployment, all of whom were issued at least one weapon, I wonder if it literally requires an act of Congress to suggest that the DHS promulgate regulations to oversee the loss or theft of DHS supplied weapons.

Yes, over 200 weapons is horrible. Yes, one life lost is horrible. But should there be an act of Congress?

Because, as I recall, as a leader in the army while deployed overseas, we had protocol for dealing with lost weapons, with lost sensible items, and with lost COMSEC. We didn't need an act of Congress to tell us to promulgate it.

While I support this bill, it began to make me wonder and then think of a Bible verse, Matthew 7:3:

''Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?''

Certainly it is unacceptable that over 200 weapons should be lost or stolen from DHS employees in a period of 2 years. But it is, quite literally, one-tenth of the scale of the weaponry that our government intentionally put into the stream of commerce to be used by those who would visit harm not only on their neighbors and family members south of our border, but right here on our own soil.

So, weapons like this, to the quantity of over 200, were lost or stolen from members of DHS. Meanwhile, 7 years ago, weapons like this were put into the stream of commerce by our very government. Weapons like this took the lives of at least one person. Weapons like this, put into the stream of commerce by our very government, have taken, at the very least, 70 times as many lives.

Yesterday, the Committee on Homeland Security promulgated a bill—an act of Congress—to address 200-some weapons like this that have cost at least one human life. And 7 years after Brian Terry set out on patrol that fateful night in Arizona, days before he was to fly home to Michigan to see his family for Christmas, nobody is talking about the weapons like this that our government intentionally placed into the stream of commerce, where we knew, to a metaphysical certainty, they would go to those who would do harm to their neighbors and their families and Americans.

Seven years later, we have seen justice. The killers of Brian Terry have been arrested. The first man arrested for having shot Mr. Terry in the back with a military-style rifle, leaving him to bleed to death in the medical chopper that flew him out in an effort to save his life, had, I think, ironically, already been deported from this country seven times.

The night that Brian Terry set out to protect not only the borders of this Nation, but the people who seek to enter it because we will not uphold our responsibility, the man who killed him was about robbing the very people who were coming here because we allowed it by not doing our jobs, and he had already been deported seven times.

Now, we know that close to 70 people have died because we intentionally, as a nation, put into the stream of commerce military-style weapons. In fact, we have lost track of over 1,400 of the over 2,000 weapons that the Obama administration thought it would be a good idea to intentionally let go to Mexico.

The weapon pictured next to me is a Barrett M–82 .50-caliber anti-personnel and -materiel rifle. There are Members of this body who have spoken on how this weapon should be illegal because, conceivably, it can take down an airplane.

Why do I digress?

Because that weapon was recovered in the hideout known to be used by the most notorious murderer in North America in the last 100 years: El Chapo Guzman.

The United States Government watched while a weapon that some Members of this body would suggest can take down an airplane was trafficked to a man who is trafficked in death to the point where the next slide I show will blow any thinking person's mind.

Many of the 160,000, roughly, deaths of civilians in Mexico can be traced directly back to this man. And we know, because it was recovered, that at least one of the military-style weapons that he received came from us.

So, 7 years ago today, an American hero named Brian Terry, who had served as a law enforcement professional, as a marine in Iraq, and on the elite border tactical squadron, set out to protect America, but to also protect those who sought to enter it, whether legally or illegally. And, when he did so, he did so understanding fully, as those who take an oath to defend this Nation do, that some things in this world are worth standing, fighting, and dying for. And, tragically, 7 years ago tonight, Brian Terry made that sacrifice.

I had no intention of standing and speaking on this today until H.R. 4433, the Securing DHS Firearms Act of 2017, came before the Homeland Security Committee yesterday, but it struck me as ironic. Not only did I serve in uniform as a combat arms officer for nearly 6 years, but I spent just under 10 years as a prosecutor, and I have a passion for a number of things, but foremost among these is justice.

So while it gives my heart some condolence, I can't begin to imagine the feelings on the 7th anniversary of the family members of this American hero, knowing that, while the people who pulled the trigger have been convicted, the weapons that they used were provided to them by the very Nation that he died to protect.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would submit this: I have faith that in life or after life, there will always ultimately be justice.

I will tell you this: In the case of those who, with intent, put the firearms into the hands of the individuals who took the life of this American hero, I hope that justice comes in this life and not the next.

So, while we move about our business of promulgating laws to dictate to the DHS that they should have a policy to address the loss of firearms, I hope we don't take our eye off the ball of the very firearms that we intentionally trafficked, like the two that were recovered from the scene of the murder of Brian Terry, and that we will continue until we find it to seek justice for this man and act in a manner such that there are no more Brian Terry tragedies going forward.

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

ROBERT MUELLER INVESTIGATION

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

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I am here to discuss a very serious issue, which are the mounting threats and criticism of Robert Mueller's investigation into criminality taking place in the course of the Presidential election with interference by the Russians and possible collusion with various Americans working with him.

But I want to start by putting this in a general context, Mr. Speaker. Tom Paine said: ''In the monarchies, the king is law; but in the democracies, the law is king.''

We place everything on the rule of law here in the United States of America. It is how we control the people who occupy the highest offices of government and control vast amounts of resources that belong to the people of the United States.

In the monarchies and in the dictatorships, the people have no control over those who occupy government; but in the democracies, in the constitutional societies, we exercise control over the people who lead the government to make sure that they don't abuse their power for improper purposes: for private gain, for the enrichment of particular classes, or for the perpetuation of their own political power.

Now, when we took office at the beginning of this year, Mr. Speaker, we received an Intelligence Committee report, signed by 18 intelligence agencies: the FBI, the CIA, the NSA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and on and on.

They all told us the same thing, which is that Vladimir Putin had attempted to interfere and had interfered in the American election through cyber espionage and cyber sabotage in an effort to determine the outcome of our election. That took place. We knew that way back when we first took office.

Now, in the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which I serve on, and in the House Judiciary Committee, which I serve on, we were told—and we have been told for months going all the way back to the beginning of the year—that we don't need to investigate this assault on the sovereignty of the American people in our own election because there is an excellent lawyer and law enforcement official in charge of the special counsel investigation: Robert Mueller.

Indeed, Robert Mueller is a man of extraordinary and, perhaps, singular qualification. He is a decorated war hero from the Vietnam war; a U.S. attorney, who had been the U.S. attorney for both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of California; a former Director of the FBI.

And do you know what?

Robert Mueller is a registered Republican. He was named as special counsel by another registered Republican and another widely heralded and highly-qualified law enforcement official: Rod Rosenstein, who had been a career attorney in the Department of Justice, and then the U.S. attorney appointed by President Bush in the great State of Maryland, my home State; and who is presently the Deputy Attorney General of the United States, appointed by another Republican: Attorney General Sessions.

So Attorney General Sessions appointed Rod Rosenstein, who is the Deputy Attorney General, a Republican; and Rod Rosenstein appointed another Republican and a widely admired and highly-qualified law enforcement official, Robert Mueller, to take over as the special counsel.

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Now, with all these Republicans in charge of the investigation and with the Republicans here in Congress saying, ''no, we won't do any investigations of our own,'' despite past practice, we have to ask why Special Counsel Robert Mueller this week has suddenly come under withering fire by our GOP colleagues in the most ferocious organized attack on a Federal prosecution and prosecutor I have ever seen.

Well, the answer, alas, is obvious. They are attacking Special Counsel Robert Mueller and his fine team of lawyers and investigators because Mueller and his team are doing their jobs and justice is being done. There have already been two guilty pleas arising from this investigation: one from President Trump's former National Security Advisor, General Flynn, who pled guilty to lying to the FBI about Trump-Russia; and another criminal confession and guilty plea from the former foreign policy assistant, George Papadopoulos, who also took full responsibility for his criminal conduct in lying about Trump-Russia to the FBI.

And there have been sweeping criminal indictments handed down by the Mueller team, the special counsel, against Paul Manafort, Trump's former campaign manager, and his associate, Rick Gates.

Now, for all we know, this might be the end of it. The special counsel isn't talking. He is not leaking. He is doing his job. But it is also possible that the investigation is just getting started and that they are closing in on even higher targets: perhaps Jared Kushner, the all-purpose Trump aide and the

President's son-in-law, perhaps he is within the scopes of this investigation; perhaps Donald Trump, Jr.; and perhaps the President of the United States himself, Donald Trump.

And so the White House has issued its apparently desperate and cornered animal orders. The President cries chaos and let's slip the dogs of war against Special Counsel Mueller and the rule of law. This week, Trump has called the Mueller investigation—an investigation led by a Republican, who is named by a Republican, who is named by a Republican—he calls this investigation ''the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history.''

And I don't want to hear from any of my colleagues, either, GOP on the other side, Well, you can't take seriously what the President says because he is disconnecting from reality or he is paranoid or he is delusional, unless you are willing to try to activate the provisions of the 25th Amendment. We must take the President's word seriously.

And, in the meantime, of course, our friends across the aisle, Mr. Speaker, are going along with everything the President says and everything that he does, and they are enabling his attempt to defame the special counsel, Mr. Mueller, and to attack the work of the FBI.

The President calls the FBI an agency in tatters, and an onslaught has followed in the media. On FOX News, a full-scale campaign against the FBI has arisen with lots of people comparing the FBI to the KGB, which is amusing because, if that were true, they would like the FBI—because Donald Trump's best buddy in foreign relations and FOX News' beloved kleptocrat authoritarian dictator abroad is Vladimir Putin, the former chief of the KGB. But they compare our FBI, the tens of thousands of men and women who have given their lives to law enforcement in our country, they compare the FBI to the KGB under a totalitarian government.

Newt Gingrich calls Mueller corrupt, Newt Gingrich who was officially reprimanded right here, Mr. Speaker, right where we stand today, by this body. In a vote of 395–28, he was reprimanded and disciplined for violating the rules of this body, and he calls the former FBI Director, Special Counsel Mueller corrupt in an effort to undermine and discredit the special counsel investigation.

And now this propaganda campaign comes to the official channels of the House of Representatives. Yesterday, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appeared before the House Judiciary Committee for an oversight hearing, and I was appalled and I was amazed at the way our GOP colleagues attacked him with a series of completely phony, overblown, and misleading accusations.

They are in full-scale assault mode now. They are in a frenzied wild goose chase to find anything possible to discredit Special Counsel Mueller and his investigators in his team.

And guess what, they finally found their villain. This week they found their villain, and they pounced on him. It is an FBI agent named Peter Strzok, who was working on the Mueller investigation but was removed from it this summer when it was discovered that he had sent a bunch of text messages to his apparent girlfriend criticizing a number of politicians, including Donald Trump, whom he called an idiot, Mr. Speaker. I think he was watching one of the Presidential debates where he sent a text message to his girlfriend, writing: ''OMG, he is an idiot.'' That is the way I am reading the texts that were revealed to us yesterday.

Now, he was probably one of millions of people to send that exact same text across the country. It wasn't a very nice thing to say, but he said it. He also called BERNIE SANDERS, the Democratic candidate for President, the Vermont U.S. Senator, an idiot. He called Trump an idiot; he called SANDERS an idiot; and he had even more choice, unspeakable words for my friend, the former Governor of Maryland, Martin O'Malley, which I don't think I can repeat on the floor, Mr. Speaker.

All right. Mr. Strzok was speaking his mind in these private texts, but it raised the potentiality of bias in one of the agents working on the team. And so what did Mr. Mueller do when he learned of it? He fired him immediately. He got him off of the investigation, removed him from the investigation, and put him into a different part of the FBI. He removed him immediately from the investigation.

Unlike President Trump, for example, who took 18 days to fire General Flynn after learning that Flynn was a serial liar about his connections with Russia.

So it took President Trump 18 days. Mr. Mueller fired the guy immediately because people make mistakes, they do the wrong thing, and Mueller said: I don't want him on my team. He removed him, and they put him somewhere else.

Now, that should have been the end of the matter; right? It sounds like the end of the story is not a big deal. But, on the eve of our hearing yesterday, we received a dump of hundreds of these private text messages between Mr. Strzok and his friend, Ms. Page, and they make, no doubt, for titillating, fascinating, engrossing reading as these two people make their observations about the Presidential campaign. It's like ''Anna Karenina'' or ''House of Cards.'' It is fascinating. It is the kind of trivial gossip that people get into sometimes in this town.

I was amazed to learn that the Department of Justice itself—not Mueller, not his team, but the Department of Justice—the formal public affairs channel had actually orchestrated this dump of text messages that were revealed in the course of an ongoing Department of Justice investigation, inspector general investigation. They took this material from the middle of an investigation, called up a whole bunch of reporters and brought them in to show them these texts.

Why?

Well, nobody could really explain it. I asked Mr. Rosenstein yesterday, and he couldn't explain what really—he said: Well, it had been approved.

I said: ''Was there any precedent for it? Was there any precedent for the Department of Justice revealing material that turned up in the middle of an ongoing investigation to reporters?

He couldn't name any. It wasn't even in the press conference.

So that took place. That strikes me as very odd that there are people in the Department of Justice who apparently are cooperating with this effort to undermine the integrity and the strength of the special counsel investigation.

Well, the key thing to understand is that all of those text messages are totally irrelevant. The great text message love story saga, which was dumped on us, is an irrelevant distraction. Mr. Mueller got rid of Mr. Strzok, removed him from the team, end of story.

Of course, FBI agents, prosecutors are allowed to have a political party. Mueller's got one; it is Republican. Rosenstein's got one; he is a Republican. That is fine. You can be Republican. You can be Democrat. You are not allowed to have your political ideas affect your work to the point that you are biased.

So I take it Mr. Mueller figured that those text messages suggested the possibility of bias, not just against BERNIE SANDERS and Martin O'Malley, but also against Donald Trump, and they said: Okay. We will remove him from the team. He is gone.

But yesterday, that is all the Republicans wanted to talk about, this great trumped up, fake text message scandal—totally irrelevant.

The only one who, to his credit, tried to make it relevant was a Republican colleague who said this is fruit of the poisonous tree, and he repeated it numerous times. He intoned the words, ''fruit of the poisonous tree.''

Well, I am a law professor, so I know what ''fruit of the poisonous tree'' means. It is a Fourth Amendment doctrine which says that, if you have got an illegal search or seizure by the government, you cannot use evidence that is obtained by virtue of an illegal search or an illegal seizure against someone in court. If the government tries to use it, then the so-called exclusionary rule is activated, and you exclude evidence that is derived from an illegal search or seizure.

But there is no illegal search or seizure, and there is not even an allegation of an illegal search or seizure. All they have got is text messages between two lovebirds, and that is it.

I asked Mr. Rosenstein yesterday, I said: Was there an illegal search or seizure? Is there an allegation of an illegal search or seizure?

No, none at all.

So what is the relevance of all that stuff? Nothing. They found one FBI agent who is removed during the summertime for trashing a bunch of politicians on both sides of the aisle. They find that guy. They talk only about the fact that he called the President of the United States an idiot, which we must concede hardly makes him an original critic of the President. Okay. They find that one guy, and then suddenly they want to use that to claim that bias infects the whole operation, the whole investigation.

And why are they doing that? Well, look, if they just want to put up a propaganda smoke screen, that is within their First Amendment rights to do so and within their rights under the Speech or Debate Clause. The problem is that there is mounting fear and anxiety that this is trying to set the stage for President Trump to fire Robert Mueller, perhaps the most admired law enforcement official and prosecutor in the country, that they are setting the stage to fire him with all this trumped-up stuff about a bunch of texts between some lovebirds. That is it. That is all they have got.

After all this time, that is what they are using to try to discredit Robert Mueller and his team, who, at the time of his appointment, they described as unimpeachable, beyond reproach, and so on. But now that he is doing his job and it looks like the momentum of the investigation is leading to the very top of the U.S. Government, they may be looking for a reason to fire him.

Well, this is an emergency, a constitutional emergency if this is going to happen. This is why we are blowing the whistle on it.

I am delighted to be joined by a great legislator, someone whose career is woven into the fabric of the U.S. House of Representatives. He is the minority whip of this body, and I am just delighted to yield now to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

□ 1330

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for taking this opportunity on the Special Order. I think, as an aside, I need to apologize to him for making him wait so long for this Special Order.

I also want to tell the American people, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman who has taken this Special Order is probably the constitutional expert not only in this body, but one of the constitutional experts in our country. He is a great legislator himself. Although he is new to this body, he is not new to being a legislative leader at all. He has been a legislative leader in our State for many years. He is a wonderful teacher and somebody who has great political courage and is willing to stand and say that the emperor has no clothes. He is willing to call attention to the fact that our democracy is at risk, that our due process is at risk.

He used the phrase ''trumped up.'' What an interesting phrase that is that we have used for many years. I don't know that it has had as much relevance in years past as it now may have.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, Mr. RASKIN, for leading this Special Order. Our system of government, as he has pointed out, is based on the rule of law. We are a government of laws, not of men.

What that means is that it is not personalities, not dictators, not kings that rule our land. It is the law, the law of our Constitution, the law of our legislators, and the common law that we pursue as interpreted by our court systems. Its foundation is the constitutional principle that all are equal under the law. No one is exempt.

The appointment of a special prosecutor earlier this year to look into the possibility of the administration or Trump campaign officials colluding with a foreign adversary or obstructing justice falls into a long tradition in our country of using independent counsel to investigate those in the most senior offices of our government.

Our Founding Fathers would say that is a check and balance; that is a protection against the usurpation of democracy.

The choice of former FBI Director Bob Mueller to be that independent investigator was an extraordinarily wise one; a decision greeted with support from across the political spectrum, precisely because Mr. Mueller is so widely respected for his independence and his commitment to the law above all else.

And, parenthetically, although it is not necessarily relevant, he is a Republican. He is not, however, driven by the politics of left or right or Republican or Democrat. He is a man of the law, a man who seeks the truth, a man who has dedicated his career to assuring that we remain a land of liberty under law.

We have already seen a demonstration of that commitment in the prompt firing of a subordinate investigator for an act that was not illegal, as the gentleman from Maryland, our constitutional scholar, has pointed out, but, however, threatened to impugn the objectivity of the investigation.

In other words, he removed somebody who he thought might undermine the credibility of this investigation because he is so committed to this investigation being objective and unquestionably fair. Mr. Mueller has made it abundantly clear that he will not tolerate any hint of bias in this investigation.

So far, it appears that his investigation is bearing fruit, having uncovered serious crimes and secured three indictments as well as guilty pleas from two key subjects. Guilty pleas.

This was not a question of: We had a trial and somebody convinced 12 people that he was guilty.

This was a case where the individual said: ''I am guilty. I did what was alleged. I know that it is illegal, and I should bear the consequences.''

That included, of course, the National Security Advisor—who was National Security Advisor, I think, for 25 days, or close to that number—Mr. Flynn.

As the investigation has advanced, Mr. Speaker, we have seen troubling statements from the President and his advisers seeking to sow uncertainty about the legitimacy of the special counsel's activities and undermine confidence in him.

But it is not so much the confidence in him that is critical. It is confidence in the law. It is confidence in the process. It is confidence that, in fact, we are a nation of laws, and whether we are President or peasant, we will be held accountable if, in fact, we break the laws.

What is being done to undermine this process threatens the independence of the investigation and those who are undertaking it. It is dangerous to our democracy and to our freedom.

Now, in recent days, we have heard calls by the President and his allies to launch a counterinvestigation of the special prosecutor's investigation. Those of us who know history know that that is so often the defense of those who seek authoritarian power, of those who believe they are above the law, of those who believe they can intimidate others so that they will never be held accountable for wrongdoing.

This preposterous suggestion has but one purpose: to cast a shadow of doubt over the findings of Mr. Mueller's inquiry by attempting to frame it in a partisan way.

In fact, Mr. Mueller was appointed by a Republican-appointed Deputy Attorney General. It is tactics like this one that we see so often overseas in countries ruled by dictators and those seeking to become dictators. This willful effort to erode confidence in any institution that must be seen as impartial is harmful because if nobody and nothing is impartial, if everyone and everything is tainted by politics and interest, then no one can possess the moral authority to hold accountable one who wishes to be entirely unaccountable.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the reason I think that the President has also attacked the fourth estate, the newspapers, the broadcasters, the people whose duty it is to bring facts to the people so that they, the people, can make a rational judgment in a democracy, for it is in their hands that the power ultimately resides; and if you undermine those who give them the facts, then you undermine their ability to make decisions.

This ultimately is what the special prosecutor's work is all about: accountability, ensuring that every person is held to the same high standard of behavior under the laws of our Nation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues in both parties—this is not about party. This is about country. This is about patriotism. This is about the rule of law. If we lose that respect

for law, we will lose our country. It will be a different, lesser country.

I urge my colleagues, from both parties, from every ideological corner, let us not forget the most fundamental principle that binds us together as Americans and as public servants: That all are created equal; that all of us, all Americans, are equal under the law.

That doesn't mean we are the same, but it means, in the eyes of the law, we are equal as we stand to be held accountable, or to be held innocent, or not involved, or not owing somebody else for wrongdoing. We need to uphold it by our words and by our deeds.

The special prosecutor's work must continue unimpeded, and it must continue to be respected. Yesterday, in the Judiciary Committee, that was not the case. To defend the indefensible undermines respect for law.

I want to thank my friend again, Mr. JAMIE RASKIN, from Montgomery County, Maryland, for this Special Order. As I said, he is a great constitutional scholar and teacher, a great legislator. More importantly than that, he is an individual who loves his country and, throughout his life, has fought to make the country all that the Founding Fathers meant it to be.

I thank him for coming to this floor and for his efforts to ensure that Mr. Mueller's investigation can continue to be seen as impartial and with its objective unquestioned, and that is accountability, accountability and justice, and equal justice under the law. That is our bedrock. That is our touchstone. That is our guiding star. That is what Professor RASKIN, Congressman RASKIN, Citizen RASKIN is talking about today, and we all ought to thank him for that.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) very much for his kind words and for his patriotism. I thank him for also pointing out the critical importance of civic equality to this discussion because civic equality implies that none of us is above the law.

Of the many dangerous things I have heard uttered over the last couple of weeks with respect to this investigation, perhaps none is more sinister or disturbing than the suggestion that the President cannot be guilty of obstruction of justice because the President himself oversees the whole government.

Well, at that point, we may as well hang it all up and go back to monarchy because the governing principle of our Constitution is we have no kings here. We have no kings here. So I thank Mr. HOYER for that.

James Madison wrote that the very definition of ''tyranny'' is the collapse of all powers into one. We are trying to defend the separation of powers and we are trying to defend the rule of law against all of it being drowned in a political agenda.

Mr. Speaker, I am joined now by my very distinguished colleague on the House Judiciary Committee. I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I am a little late and I don't know exactly what has been discussed. I serve on the Judiciary Committee with the gentleman, and what we have seen in the Judiciary Committee is scary.

I am honored to be a Member of the United States Congress. I am honored to be an American citizen. I see a threat to the independence of the United States Congress in upholding its oath and looking out for the best interests of its people and to our country.

I have Republican friends, as the gentleman does, on the other side of the aisle, and I know that they, in representing their constituents, are not fond of the totalitarian Russian Government and philosophy that threatens NATO countries like Lithuania, and Estonia, and Latvia, and Ukraine, and Georgia, with the power of the Russian military.

They do not like democracy. They do not like America, and they do not like what we represent. They don't like freedom of the press. They don't like freedom of religion. They don't like freedoms of elections. They don't have really free elections. They say they do, but they kill their opponents or they put them in jail on trumped-up charges, and they count the votes. There is nothing good about Russia in regards of democracy, and even within their constitution after they formed a country after the Soviet Union fell apart.

Our Republican colleagues are like sheep, following the President in attacking the FBI; in attacking the Justice Department; in attacking heroic Americans who have risked their lives in the FBI, and heroic Americans like Robert Mueller, who served in Vietnam and risked his life and was wounded there, I believe. And they threaten them and talk to them as if they are complicit with the Clinton campaign and trying to do something to harm President Trump.

Mr. Mueller is a Republican, appointed first by a Republican, Bush, and then later by a Democrat, Obama. He is as fine a human being as I have come in contact with in my 11 years in Congress, and maybe as fine a human being as I have come in contact with in my 68 years on Earth.

□ 1345

Mr. Rosenstein said glowing things about him yesterday and how heroic he is and how strong he is, how dedicated he is, how patriotic he is, and how honest he is.

For the Republicans to be trying to take this man down and to take down others who serve in the FBI, the only reason they are doing this is because they are finding information in their charge that implicates the President of the United States in activities that are questionable as far as his oath of office and border on treason. Because of that, they attack the FBI, which is the top layer or the cream of the crop of law enforcement.

And the President goes out and talks about our wonderful first responders, but the top of the line he is against because they question him.

That is when your country no longer exists, when it is all about the leader, not about institutions, and not about other individuals who are doing their jobs in a proper manner.

FBI Director Wray said nothing but good things about Robert Mueller. I think Robert Mueller's job is in jeopardy from this President, who likes to fire people, which is what he did on television, and he still thinks he is on television. It is a big performance art. It is all about performance art, and the star is Donald Trump. He acts and he is the show; and the show goes on, and there is nothing else.

To fire Mueller is part of the show, to question what he has done in arresting Manafort and Gates, guilty pleas, I think, from one of the gentlemen he arrested—was it Papadopoulos?—and then a guilty plea from Flynn. They don't plead guilty unless they are guilty.

Mueller is doing his job. He is trying to protect America. I think he is the man of the year and will be the man of the year next year. He is the one person between us and a kleptocracy and group of oligarchs, but kleptocrats who are using their positions in government to benefit themselves financially and to build up their wealth.

This tax bill we are talking about is part of the same thing. It is oligarchs. No inheritance tax, meaning they get hundreds of millions of dollars—hundreds of millions of dollars—and the President goes and says to a middle class family earning $75,000: You will have $2,000 that you can spend any way you want, or you can even save it.

$2,000 is tip change at Orange Julius to those people, the big money, hundreds of millions and hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars as the inheritance tax being repealed and the AMT being repealed and other changes.

And then they said: Oh, well, we only reduced the tax on the wealthiest from 39 percent to 37 because they weren't going to get to deduct as much of their State and local taxes, and it was going to hurt them more.

Well, there are people who aren't in the top bracket who aren't going to get to reduce their State and local taxes, and they gave them nada. They gave all of it to the wealthiest.

And that is what this is about. This is about the wealthiest people taking this country over and an oligarchy, and Trump is representative of them. It is about him. It is not about institutions. It is not about the Constitution. It is not about people. It is not about the First Amendment.

So many of the people who support him are good, hardworking, decent American people who don't want to be in bed with Russia and don't want to give up our democracy and don't want to give up our free elections to hacking and to internet social media games, and that is what we have had.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for having this Special Order.

Mr. Speaker, I have a bill I took over for Mr. CONYERS with Mr. WALTER JONES, a Republican, that says you can't fire Mr. Mueller without cause and gives a redress in court. SHEILA JACKSON LEE has another. We have to be aware and alert. And if this happens, the people have to let their Representatives know, and particularly the Republican Representatives know, that they won't stand for it and they won't have another Saturday Night Massacre, because Rosenstein said Mr. Mueller has done nothing to be fired. He probably would not fire him, which means Rosenstein will be fired, and that is the end of the rule of law, and that is what makes us different from other countries, makes us different from dictators and autocrats.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his leadership. I thank him for invoking the critical Watergate analogy, the Saturday Night Massacre with the firing of Archibald Cox and other Department of Justice officials who refused to cover up for the President's crimes and misdeeds. I thank him for his legislation that would try to empower the special counsel not to be fired without a court's say-so at least, to build another check and balance.

I thank him, also, for invoking what is also taking place in Washington right now, which is this massive assault on the American middle class through this so-called tax cut bill, this tax scam, which would actually raise taxes for tens of millions of Americans while transmitting billions of dollars up the income and wealth ladder.

Ever since we have arrived here, the whole government has felt like a money-making operation for a person, a family, a small group of billionaires in the Cabinet, a handful of people in the country like the Koch brothers and the Mercers. We cannot allow either this assault on the basic middle class economics of the country to go through or this assault on the Constitution and the rule of law, which we witnessed so vividly yesterday in the House Judiciary Committee.

I want to thank the gentleman for his service and for being one of the first to blow the whistle about what is taking place here.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President and Members of the Senate, whether originating as the Member's own words or being reiterated from another source.

LET HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA GO HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, this week, people all around the world are commemorating Human Rights Day, the annual celebration of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 13 of the declaration affirms that everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and return to his country. I have that right. As a citizen of the United States, I can leave my country whenever I choose, and I have the right to return whenever I like. For me, this right is not theoretical. I exercise it every time I travel abroad and every time I return home.

But, Mr. Speaker, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, born and educated in Tibet, has not seen his homeland since he was forced into exile in 1959.

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, describes himself as a simple Buddhist monk. He was recognized as the reincarnation of the previous Thirteenth Dalai Lama when he was only 2 years old, and he was only 6 when he began his monastic studies. But well before he finished his education, at the young age of 15, he was called upon to assume political leadership after China's invasion of Tibet in 1950.

For the next 9 years, he worked to preserve Tibet's autonomy and Tibet's culture. But after years of growing resentment against restrictions imposed by the Chinese Communists, a full-scale revolt broke out in March 1959, and the Dalai Lama was forced to flee as the uprising was crushed by Chinese troops. On March 31, 1959, he began a permanent exile in India, settling in Dharamsala in northern India.

Since then, he has not returned to Tibet, or, more accurately, he has never been permitted to return. He has spent more than 60 years in exile.

Today, the Dalai Lama is 82 years old, a man renowned all over the world for his commitment to peace. He has consistently advocated for policies of nonviolence, even in the face of extreme aggression.

In 1989, he won the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of what was then his nearly 30-year nonviolent campaign to end China's domination of his homeland.

In 2007, the Congress awarded him the Congressional Gold Medal, and at the time, then-President George W. Bush called him a man of faith and sincerity and peace.

Now, I have long believed that the Dalai Lama is part of the solution to resolving Tibetan grievances. There was a time, from 1959 until 1979, when the Tibetan goal was independence. But since the 1970s, the Dalai Lama has been looking for a way to resolve the situation of the Tibetan people through negotiations. In the late 1980s, he proposed the Middle Way Approach as a path toward Tibetan autonomy within China.

His commitment to nonviolence and his recognition as the spiritual leader of Tibetans worldwide confers on him an undeniable legitimacy that would be of great benefit were China willing to restart the dialogue that has been suspended since 2010.

But the Chinese Government has not recognized or taken advantage of this opportunity to achieve a peaceful resolution. Instead, Chinese authorities continue to view the Dalai Lama with suspicion, disparage him, and accuse him of fomenting separatism. They seem to believe that, with his inevitable death, they will be assured of consolidating their hold on Tibet.

Well, I would not be so sure. Today, all around the world, we are seeing the consequences of repression of religious and ethnic minorities. For the Chinese, there is still time to recognize that inclusion and respect for human rights of Tibetans offers the best path to security.

So today, I call on China to follow a different path. I call on the Chinese authorities to affirm the right of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama to return to his homeland, whether to visit or to stay. I call on them to welcome him home, afford him the respect he deserves as a man of peace, and sit down with him to resolve Tibetan grievances so as to prevent the deepening of tensions and eruption of conflict.

Were China to take such a step, I believe the international reaction would be very positive. I would be among the first to recognize and congratulate an important gesture.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be in the business of preventing and transforming conflicts instead of being forced to respond to their consequences after the fact.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in calling on the Chinese authorities to allow the Dalai Lama to return to his homeland. The Chinese Government should allow His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is revered all around the world, the ability to go back to his home, to go back to where he was born.

This is a time for bold action, and I urge my colleagues to speak out along with me in urging the Chinese Government to do the right thing. Now is the time to raise our voices—now, before it is too late.

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

HONORING THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN JOHN YATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the

gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LOUDERMILK) for 30 minutes.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to take 30 minutes, but the time that I do spend is very important, because I want to honor a very, very special person.

First of all, let me start off by wishing you a Merry Christmas. I say that because, as we are getting into the season, many of us are thinking about family and friends and spending Christmastime at home, which I hope to be able to do as well.

Every Christmas season my thought goes back about 73 years ago. You see, my dad was a medic in World War II, and December 16, which will be just a few days from now, will be the 73rd anniversary of one of the largest, most significant battles of World War II: the Battle of the Bulge.

My father was a medic in the Battle of the Bulge, and I still remember the stories he used to tell of the cold weather and the snow and how, when the Germans broke through the Siegfried Line, they decimated American forces—we lost thousands and thousands of troops in those few days—how the snow was just so heavy and so thick that many were trapped in their foxholes, unable to escape. Many retreated back to areas of safety and the lines behind.

But I don't want to talk about my dad here today. I want to talk about someone else, a dear friend of mine, someone I got to serve in the Georgia Legislature with. It was another young Georgian from Spalding County who was a pilot in the Army Air Corps.

Now, Captain John Yates was not what you may think of. Most people think of an Army Air Corps pilot flying a B–29 or a B–25 Mitchell. What John Yates flew was a small, single-engine Piper Cub aircraft. He was a liaison pilot.

Now, most people aren't familiar with what a liaison pilot is, but they played a very crucial and critical role in the victory in Europe in World War II and even in the Pacific theater.

You see, as a pilot, I have a lot of appreciation for someone who will fly a very small plane. I mean, I am a pretty tall guy. I don't fit in the cockpit of a Piper Cub very well.

□ 1400

That is why I have never actually flown one. But John Yates would climb into the cockpit of this small, single-engine aircraft—which are still in use today. Many of them are used in the bush areas of Alaska because of how lightweight they are, and small, and compact. They don't take a whole lot of runway.

But he would climb into this small, aluminum airplane and would fly just above the treetops to draw enemy fire. He actually flew a plane to be shot at. This wasn't like close air support airplanes we have today that have titanium shells that can absorb a lot of impact. No, this was just a small plane with an aluminum skin around the fuselage.

But his purpose was to fly close to the enemy to try to spot the enemy and cause the enemy to fire at him so our artillery and our other aircraft would actually know where the enemy forces were and where their heavy artillery was. That is an incredible job for someone to do, especially a young person, maybe in his twenties, as he was serving in World War II.

After 60 years from the time that he flew those Piper Cub aircraft, I had the opportunity to serve with John Yates in the Georgia Legislature. There is one thing I appreciated about John, as we find from a lot of veterans, and as a veteran myself—I know that same feeling—once you serve, you always have this desire to serve in another capacity.

In 1989, John was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives. I came several years later to serve with him. But John continued his fight for his fellow servicemen and for his country in the Georgia Legislature, as he was chairman of the House Defense and Veterans' Affairs Committee and was always on the front lines of fighting for veterans' care, to ensure that the government provided to veterans the care that they needed and the services that they deserved.

He understood the meaning of patriotism. He lived as a patriot. Everything he did portrayed the idea of patriotism. One thing I liked about John Yates is one of his favorite quotes was from Winston Churchill. That quote was: ''Never give up. Never give up. Never give up.''

That is something that we can take hold of ourselves today, especially as Americans. We have a history of never giving up, a fortitude of not just taking defeat and running away, but taking defeat and turning it into a victory.

John Yates never quit serving. All he looked for was the ability to serve in the next mission that he was called for. On December 11 of this year, John Yates went on to his next mission in Heaven.

We are going to miss John Yates. The State of Georgia is going to miss John Yates. But I stand here today, Mr. Speaker, to honor one of those true American patriots who stood in the face of battle and faced the enemy face-to-face; and when he came home, he followed that desire to continue to serve, and he served until he passed away just a few days ago.

HONORING HEROES OF CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL SHOOTING

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, I would like to just take a moment and recognize another anniversary. Six months ago today, on a baseball field just a few miles from here, I and several of our colleagues found ourselves in a combat zone of our own.

It doesn't seem like it has been 6 whole months since a crazed gunman walked onto our field and started shooting at us. But the reason I want to bring that up today is because every person on that field that day who was shot at is still in this House today and still walking around in Washington, D.C.

By the grace of God, we were protected during that time, and I just want to thank everyone for their prayers and support, and those who responded to that event and came out and saved the lives of many of us.

STEVE SCALISE, the whip whom we serve with here; Matt Mika, one of our staff members; Zack Barth, a congressional staffer; and Capitol Police Special Agent Crystal Griner all were wounded during that battle, and it really was a battle.

But I also want to highlight some of those who did not leave the field that day, who stayed and helped others; people like my good friend from Mississippi, Congressman TRENT KELLY, an Army Reservist, who, when he identified the shooter, did not panic, but he alerted others, and then eventually led many to safety behind a concrete building.

Representative MO BROOKS stayed and helped apply a tourniquet to Zack Barth who had been shot in the calf.

Representative BRAD WENSTRUP, who is also a colonel in the Army Reserves, a combat doctor, was out on the edge of the field and could have easily run away, but he stayed and was one of the first to be able to run out and give aid to STEVE SCALISE out on the field as he lay near second base.

Retired Lieutenant General Representative JACK BERGMAN was able to actually lead several of our players and staff members to safety inside of the dugout away from the gunfire.

Brian Kelly, a civilian staff member on the team, stayed with me throughout the gunfire as we tried to lend aid to Matt Mika who was lying next to the Capitol Police SUV throughout the entire incident.

Finally, my thanks go out to Special Agent David Bailey, who I personally watched on numerous occasions put his own life in danger as he would move out into the line of fire to draw fire away from myself and Brian Kelly. He saw that, whenever the shooter was not shooting at Capitol Police, they were shooting at us so he would purposely move himself in the line of fire, and again, miraculously protected us, even as one of the rounds hit his cellphone which deflected away from his body.

Lastly, I want to thank the Alexandria Police Department, who came to our aid and eventually took down the shooter.

Moments like this are surreal to me and to others, and it is important that we go back and reflect and remember these moments. Because the only way that we can correct mistakes from our past, is if we go back and we relive them and we look at what caused this.

As we stand here today, one of the things that I see that we need in America that we have lost is the idea of civility. We have heard here on the floor

today differing opinions regarding policy; ideas of what is good for this country, what is right for this country. That is part of the strength of this country. That is the freedom that we have, which is to bring different ideas.

The whole idea of this Chamber is to bring different ideas and different policy opinions to the floor and debate them, and those ideas and opinions that have the support of a majority of the Members are moved forward.

But at some point in the past, we have transitioned beyond just arguing over ideas and we bring rhetoric that is distasteful. We attack the person and their families. I just believe that we can do a whole lot better in this Nation if we, once again, find the ability to agree to disagree and respect the rights, freedom, and the liberty of the other person to have their opinion. If we can do that, then we can engage in discourse and we will lessen the amount of violence that we see that is driven by political rhetoric.

That would be the message that I would pass off to America on the anniversary of the shooting because that is the idea that people like John Yates lived their lives for and fought their battles for, was for the freedom that we have in this Nation to continue to exist.

I believe America's greatest days are ahead of us, but we have got a little work to do to actually grasp hold of it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to honor the memory of my good friend and colleague, John Yates.

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

FEDERALISM ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleagues across the aisle discussing the issue of Special Counsel Mueller. Since there are one or two possibilities about some of the things they said regarding Republicans, especially on a committee, either Mr. COHEN's memory is terrible or he is falsely, intentionally misrepresenting things.

I am not saying that is the case. I am saying it is one or the other, and I will get to that momentarily.

The hearing we had this week in the Judiciary Committee with Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein was deeply troubling to those who want the Department of Justice to be about justice; those who want to see the FBI be that great arbiter, that great entity that will ensure that justice is done. We need an entity like that.

The ATF, their reputation was sorely soiled back during the attack by the ATF on Waco at the facility where some folks had been sucked into basically a cult. It didn't have to happen. And as we found out, local law enforcement said that they knew that David Koresh went to Sam's Club right there on Belle Meade—I think they said Tuesday. And if the ATF had told us they wanted to arrest him, we could have helped them arrange to pick him up as he walked out of Sam's Club with grocery sacks in his arms. There would have been no incident. No lives would have been lost, no children burned up in a fire, no people killed. It was so unnecessary, but the ATF apparently wanted to make a point and wanted to have a big show. Actually, there were constitutional issues there.

I read in the paper that a gentleman who served with me at Fort Benning in Georgia, during my time in the Army, had advised the post commander out at Fort Bliss that he should not allow the U.S. Army tanks or equipment to be used, in violation of the posse comitatus, unless he had a direct order from the President himself.

As we found out after the fact, the President made clear that: Oh, that was Reno's deal. You have to talk to her about that.

So, clearly, he did not order the U.S. military to use equipment and allow their equipment to be used against civilian American citizens. So there were all kinds of terrible things that came out and it really made the ATF look bad.

□ 1415

I was a fan of the ATF, the Federal ATF. I knew them to have done some great things, and I had some very dear friends, and still do have some very dear and very great friends, who are in the ATF.

But the point is that such horrendous judgment in the ATF set up what they knew or should have known would probably result in losses of lives, including severe injuries to ATF themselves. I don't think they lost anybody, but they certainly were severely wounded and treated there in Waco. But that kind of outrageous judgment that puts political and news interests ahead of just doing the job and seeing justice done ends up being such a terrible blot on the reputation of any entity that it is hard to work back from that.

I still hear people who refer to that incident nearly 25 years ago, and still it is such a blot on the ATF that it is hard for people to consider the ATF without thinking how terribly, just inappropriate, the ATF acted at times and caused people to wonder: Is that the general rule, or was that an exception? People, after some other episodes, began to think it is the rule with the ATF. Some claim: Let's get rid of it.

What has gone on now and is currently going on now with the Deputy Attorney General taking all three positions that he sees no evil, he hears no evil—he doesn't know of any evil going on. He thinks everything is like the poet said: ''God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world.'' I believe the author had a little girl saying that.

But it is not right with the world. It is terribly wrong. America and the world sit in a position of Western civilization where potentially the most incredible and amazing strides in healthcare, in energy, and all kinds of areas of life on this Earth have been made better exponentially, and the United States of America is at the very heart of those great developments.

A majority in the United States throughout our history would always say: We call those blessings from God.

Now, maybe it is and maybe it isn't a majority, but we are ever getting closer to a position where this grand experiment in self-judgment is potentially on the verge of being lost. History is not being taught as zealously as it once was. Places like Hillsdale College or Liberty or Regent, there are some places where it is being taught. I had fantastic history teachers, which is what I majored in at Texas A&M because I knew I was going to do 4 years in the Army, at least, and if we were at war when my 4 years were up, I would have continued to serve.

But our students don't know history anymore. Why? Because President Carter decided that the Federal Government intervention into education, even though it is not an enumerated power under the Constitution, and it is, therefore, a power that is reserved to the States and the people and not the Federal Government, we have been acting extra-constitutionally, that means outside the Constitution, for quite some time going back to the late seventies under President Carter.

Our students have suffered as a result. They don't know history. Someone had advised me that even though history is not an important part of the federally mandated test, there are things that in different subjects are mandated by the Federal Government. Here is an element that students should know about the subject. I was advised that the one area that the federally mandated test, the only area historically that students were required to know, is that when the United States dropped two atomic bombs, one on Hiroshima and one on Nagasaki, it raised serious questions about the United States' morality, which is absolutely fictitious unless the ignorance of the authors requiring such a thing did not allow them to know the truth.

The truth is that Truman was advised that because the Emperor of Japan had ordered the Japanese people to fight for their homes to the death, then the Allied Forces would have to land in Japan. They would have had to move across the country, and it was considered a very fair and possibly quite conservative estimate that there could be 10 million people losing their lives if Allied Forces had to land and were fighting the Japanese people home to home to home.

So the morality of the issue is: Would we morally be better off in this absolute war that the Japanese started

against the United States, would we be better off losing the horrible tragedy of 300,000 or so lives, or would we be better off having 5 or so million Japanese people killed and 5 or so million Allied Forces being lost?

The morally correct decision was that a Democrat, a man who apparently really wrestled with the issue from a moral standpoint, decided to put the American bombers at risk, those flying the planes and taking the atomic bombs, and to put 200,000 or 300,000 or so people at risk in an effort to avoid losing 5 million or so Japanese and an equal number or more of the Allied Forces. I think he made the correct moral decision.

So that doesn't raise moral issues about the United States. It raises ignorance issues about the federally mandated test. We would be so much better off if we got back to allowing local school boards to decide and States to decide—as they had been for many decades—deciding what their students should learn. That was the beauty of a federalist situation where States would have so much power.

But as is often the case when the Federal Government takes over an area like education, then it gets worse. I was on the board of directors of the Texas A&M Association of Former Students, and I can recall the president advising us that the official SAT had to change the scoring system for the SAT because students across the board were doing so much worse than they did when classes around my era, in the 1970s, had done, that we had done, overall, so much better than the students who came through after the Federal Government took over education.

So I don't know if it was accurate, but I had educators back at that time say that there is a formula; so it is hard to say. But if you scored, say, 1,400 out of 1,600 on the SAT in the seventies, then under the new scoring system it would probably be scored closer to 1,600, 1,500 to 1,600, maybe a couple hundred points that they had to add to the system, because after we had a Federal Department of Education, then students started doing worse. So to keep it from looking like the Department of Education here in Washington made education as poor as it helped to do, we had to raise the SAT scores basically on an arbitrary basis.

We know that the students coming through in the eighties, nineties, and then this new millennium have the potential to do better than we ever did, but because the Federal Government got involved, I don't think it is just a great irony when the Federal Government took over education under President Carter that, wow, ironically, isn't it amazing, at the same time students were doing worse and worse. So that is what often happens when the Federal Government gets involved.

We saw that with Waco. If they had gotten the help of the local law enforcement, there would have been no loss of life, in all reality, but the ATF was going to bust in and make a big show out of it, and it cost an awful lot of lives.

You would like to think that, when the FBI comes in, you don't have to worry, they are going to do the right thing. I know so many incredible, outstanding FBI agents. But for Mr. COHEN to continue to say, even after he has been advised and reminded that I have been raising Cain about Robert Mueller for over a decade, I guess, he came in, sworn in in January of '07, as I understand it. Initially, when I questioned Robert Mueller as FBI Director when I first got to Congress, I was carrying that image of the great FBI, the image that so many of the agents still carry, thousands of them still carry, but with more and more difficulty because of the cesspools that have developed here in Washington and the way in which it has been used, as we saw with the IRS, during the Obama administration, weaponized and used as a political instrument.

Now, how do we know that? We didn't know near as much as we continue to find out, but Robert Mueller ran off thousands of years of experience, and I contend it was because he wanted nothing but yes people. He didn't want the experienced people around the country who might try to point out to the director when he made one of his many mistakes as FBI Director or chose software programs, chose law enforcement programs that created problems because they had more experience than he did, he did not really want people around the country to have more experience than he did because they might question something that he ordered inappropriately, and he just wanted people to salute him, salute the flag, figuratively speaking, and drive forward.

That means when Mueller wanted somebody to bust down the door in the middle of the night, even though there was no threat of the individual fleeing, no threat of the individual hiding evidence, it was done, as we are now seeing the Mueller special counsel group, team, SWAT unit, unofficial SWAT, of course, but we are seeing them use these types of tactics.

Now, I don't really know Paul Manafort. He doesn't seem like a fellow that I would enjoy getting along with. Nonetheless, it certainly appeared that he was very materially mistreated because Mueller wanted to make sure he got his point, and he knocked down the door, or at least went in in the middle of the night, however they got in. We have heard this before, this heavy-handed Federal Government, and there was no reason for that other than bullying, mean, Federal agents at the top wanting to bully people around.

We saw that kind of conduct with Mike Flynn as he was set up. He had been, as part of the transition team, talking to people at the FBI about different issues, and now we know Strzok was part of that, this man that absolutely loathed President-elect Trump, he loathed everything about Trump and those he was going to be bringing into office. We didn't know how badly they despised or loathed the President and Republicans supporting him until we got more information.

□ 1430

But these kind of things are things that Robert Mueller should have known. He should have known the Department of Justice's reputation and hope for being considered righteous was all riding on him and what he did. Yet he rode in with his black hat—figuratively, for those in the mainstream media who don't understand those type of references—and he began to overreach.

We heard yesterday from the guy that appointed Mueller, Rod Rosenstein, that, to have a special counsel, you have to believe that a crime was committed. So it would seem to reason that Mueller was appointed to investigate something that they had reason to believe that possibly a crime had been committed.

Yet because of whether it is incompetence or zeal in wanting Mueller to go on a witch hunt, to just keep searching until you find something, even if it is a poor guy like Scooter Libby who devoted his life to helping his country, we need somebody's scalp. It doesn't look like Donald J. Trump was colluding with the Russians, so we have got to have somebody's scalp. Let's intimidate some people. Let's bully our way into homes in the middle of the night. Let's do whatever we have got to do and maybe we will scare somebody into admitting something.

Like many are saying, Michael Flynn didn't lie. To be a lie, you have to have intent to deceive. But whether they are right or wrong about that, the word is he was bankrupted by an overzealous bully.

All my friends on the left are talking about bullying. I was small for my age. In my class, I was bullied. I had a black eye, a bloody nose. A fifth grade teacher, after a big bully took my football and I tried to get it back and ended up with a bloody nose and a black eye—our teacher loved the bully back then—pulled me in front of class while I was trying to get my nose to stop bleeding and told the class: This is what happens when little boys try to play with big boys.

I know something about being bullied and I recognize it in a government group when I see it. The Mueller team has been bullies, but that is what Mueller wanted. Why do you think he went and hired Weissmann, who destroyed thousands and thousands of employees' lives who worked for Arthur Andersen in a joust at windmills that cost these people their livelihoods, caused more pain and suffering than imaginable, for what the Supreme Court said, 9–0: You are a fool. This was not a crime. You made this up?

That is who Mueller wanted on his team. This is the same Robert Mueller, as I have been pointing out for years,

who has been grossly unfair in running off the thousands of years of experience that he did so he could have great people, wonderful people.

Not only were they new and young, but he was eliminating the older folks who had the experience that could bring them along, because Mueller wanted them created in his image and to get rid of all the wisdom of the ages that could be found throughout the FBI before he took over.

I am sure there are a bunch of people that needed to go, but you don't destroy an entire entity like the Federal Bureau of Investigation just because you want a bunch of yes men. That is what Bob Mueller did. That man shouldn't have been close to being a special counsel. He couldn't stand Trump.

As the Washingtonian magazine was glorifying James Comey—I believe it was in a 2013 issue where they said, basically, in essence, if the world were burning down, James Comey knew that the one person who would be standing with him would be Bob Mueller—Comey is the very guy who admitted leaking information out in order to try to get a special counsel appointed.

As I covered with Mr. Rosenstein yesterday, this is part of an FBI typical employment agreement. Everybody is supposed to sign this thing and swear to it: ''All information acquired by me in connection with my official duties with the FBI and all official material to which I have access remain the property of the United States of America. I will surrender upon demand by the FBI, or upon my separation from the FBI, all materials containing FBI information in my possession.''

If a man like Comey goes to a meeting in his official capacity of FBI Director with the President of the United States and he comes out of this and types up a memo, even though it appears it was a pretty less than unbiased memo trying to make President Trump look bad, so he commemorates it with a memo, that memo, as I discussed with Mr. Rosenstein yesterday, is probably government property. That is government information, government property. And the question is: Did he commit a crime when he leaked that information?

There is a decent chance it is, yes.

So where is the FBI in its investigation of James Comey's potential crime?

When you look at the record and you go back, now we know from that one incident this is the person to whom he leaked, and then that got to The New York Times. Well, here is another meeting where he was the principal character there, the most likely person to have leaked.

Well, lo and behold, his same conduit for leaking information that he has admitted to ends up being in place in this story. There may be at least six other places where he has leaked information, and some of them will be crimes, but because the special counsel was all about trying to strip the winner of a Presidential election, we are not going after Comey. We are not going after any of these other people. They are trying to find something.

As we know from the text messages of FBI Agent Strzok, they wanted an insurance policy so that, in case Trump won, they could still get rid of him. Poor Strzok believed that no one in this country should vote—not a single person, not even Donald Trump's family—should vote for him. It ought to be 100 million to zero.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is so clear, in my days of trying cases in Federal court and State court, where you are asking questions of a jury panel to see who would be fair enough to sit on a jury, we can see that these people who were working and have been—and some still are—for the FBI, for the Department of Justice, have no business getting close to this investigation unless they are a target of investigation.

Andrew Weissmann should never have been a part of the special counsel team.

Peter Strzok, this is only some of the text message he sent, but he says:

> He asked me who I'd would vote for, guessed Kasich.

It goes on:

> God Trump is a loathsome human.
> Yet he may win.
> Good for Hillary.
> It is.
> Would he be a worse President than Cruz?
> Trump? Yes, I think so.

This, of course, is an exchange between Peter Strzok, or PS, and his mistress, Lisa Page, who is also working for the FBI. These people had done irreparable damage to the FBI. But worse than that, they have made a mockery of justice in the United States.

What really gets me is I know how upset I was in the Bush administration when I saw somebody doing wrong. I didn't care if he was appointed by a Republican or a Democrat. I didn't care that President Bush had appointed a man or a woman to a position. What I cared about was them being righteous and doing the right thing.

Now, where is my Democratic friend who will stand up and say this isn't right?

We know Alan Dershowitz, a great Democrat, brilliant intellect, has done it. But where are people across the aisle who would do what I did during the Bush Presidency, pick up the phone and say: This is an outrage. What has happened under this Attorney General should never have happened. He has got to go?

Where is the Democrat who has a sense of moral outrage when the justice system is just shaken to its core by people who want to take out a President because they didn't support him, they didn't want him to be there, they didn't think any American should vote for him, and they are destroying the sense of justice and our justice system?

It is time for Americans to wake up. It is time to clean house, get rid of Mueller, and get some fair people in there to investigate.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded that remarks in debate in the House may not engage in personalities toward the President, whether originating as the Member's own words or being reiterated from another source.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 41 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, December 15, 2017, at 5:30 p.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

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

3390. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Extension of Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions (Multiple Chemicals) [EPA-HQ-OPP-2017-0563; FRL-9969-16] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

3391. A letter from the Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting the Commission's temporary final rule — Investment Company Reporting Modernization [Release Nos.: 33-10442; 34-82241; IC-32936; File No.: S7-08-15] (RIN: 3235-AL42) received December 13, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

3392. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Ziram; Pesticide Tolerances [EPA-HQ-OPP-2016-0536; FRL-9970-38] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3393. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval of California Air Plan Revisions, Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District [EPA-R09-OAR-2017-0196; FRL-9970-92-Region 9] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3394. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Boscalid; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2016-0600; FRL-9968-95] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3395. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Ethofumesate; Pesticide

Tolerances [EPA-HQ-OPP-2016-0314; FRL-9969-13] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3396. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Nitrapyrin; Pesticide Tolerances [EPA-HQ-OPP-2016-0295; FRL-9967-73] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3397. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Polyethyleneimine; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2016-0616; FRL-9970-06] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3398. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Revisions to California State Implementation Plan; Bay Area Air Quality Management District; Emission Reduction Credit Banking [EPA-R09-OAR-2017-0130; FRL-9970-68-Region 9] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3399. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval of California Air Plan Revisions, Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District [EPA-R09-OAR-2016-0740; FRL-9970-93-Region 9] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3400. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Revision of Air Quality Implementation Plans; State of New York; Regional Haze State and Federal Implementation Plans [EPA-R02-OAR-2017-0013; FRL-9971-28-Region 2] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3401. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Air Plan Approval; ID; 2012 PM2.5 Standard Infrastructure Requirements [EPA-R10-OAR-2015-0856; FRL-9971-33-Region 10] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3402. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — 1,3-dibromo-5,5-dimethylhydantoin; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2011-1033; FRL-9968-30] received November 28, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3403. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Certification Related to Condition 7(C)(i) of Senate Executive Resolution 75 (1997) Concerning Advice and Consent to the Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3404. A letter from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting 21 notifications of a federal vacancy, designation of acting officer, nomination, action on nomination, and discontinuation of service in acting role, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3405. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Labor, transmitting the Department's Office of Inspector General Semiannual Report to Congress for the period April 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, Public Law 95-452; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3406. A letter from the Vice President, Congressional and Public Affairs, Millennium Challenge Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's Agency Financial Report for FY 2017, including annual audited financial statements, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3515(a)(1); Public Law 101-576, Sec. 303(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 107-289, Sec. 2(a)); (116 Stat. 2049); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3407. A letter from the General Counsel, Executive Office for Immigration Review, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department's final rule — Procedures Further Implementing the Annual Limitation on Suspension of Deportation and Cancellation of Removal [EOIR Docket No.: 180; AG Order No.: 4034-2017] (RIN: 1125-AA25) received December 13, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

3408. A letter from the Chief, Trade and Commercial Regulations Branch, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Donations of Technology and Related Support Services To Enforce Intellectual Property Rights [USCBP-2016-0076] [CBP Dec. 17-21] (RIN: 1515-AE21) received December 12, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

3409. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Treasury, transmitting notification of the Secretary's determination that, by reason of the statutory debt limit, the Secretary will be unable to fully invest the portion of the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund (CSRDF) not immediately required to pay beneficiaries, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8348(l)(2); Public Law 89-554, Sec. 8348(l)(2) (as added by Public Law 99-509, Sec. 6002(c)); (100 Stat. 1933); jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Oversight and Government Reform.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

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

Mr. HENSARLING: Committee on Financial Services. H.R. 4292. A bill to reform the living will process under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; with an amendment (Rept. 115–465). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. TIPTON:

H.R. 4642. A bill to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to include in the Veterans Choice Program all veterans enrolled in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. DEFAZIO:

H.R. 4643. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, with respect to the duties of the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. GIANFORTE:

H.R. 4644. A bill to withdraw certain National Forest System land in the Emigrant Crevice area located in the Custer Gallatin National Forest, Park County, Montana, from the mining and mineral leasing laws of the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. GIANFORTE:

H.R. 4645. A bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain segments of East Rosebud Creek in Carbon County, Montana, as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. PALMER (for himself, Mr. BYRNE, Mrs. ROBY, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. BROOKS of Alabama, Mr. ADERHOLT, and Ms. SEWELL of Alabama):

H.R. 4646. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1900 Corporate Drive in Birmingham, Alabama, as the ''Lance Corporal Thomas E. Rivers, Jr. Post Office Building''; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. FORTENBERRY (for himself and Mrs. DINGELL):

H.R. 4647. A bill to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. EMMER (for himself and Mr. HULTGREN):

H.R. 4648. A bill to delay the effective date of certain regulations relating to home mortgage disclosures, to suspend certain data sharing requirements, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania (for himself, Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania, and Mr. TAKANO):

H.R. 4649. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax credits for energy storage technologies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. AGUILAR (for himself, Ms. TITUS, and Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN):

H.R. 4650. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to develop and make available guidance relating to domestic preparedness for and collective response to terrorism regarding active shooter and mass casualty incident response assistance, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security.

By Mr. BIGGS (for himself, Mr. POSEY, Mr. HARRIS, and Mr. SCHWEIKERT):

H.R. 4651. A bill to provide that the final rule of the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection titled ''Home Mortgage Disclosure (Regulation C)'' shall have no force or effect; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mrs. BLACKBURN (for herself, Mr. COOPER, Mr. ROE of Tennessee, Mr.

COHEN, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, Mrs. BLACK, Mr. FLEISCHMANN, and Mr. KUSTOFF of Tennessee):

H.R. 4652. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to make permanent the Tennessee disproportionate share hospital (DSH) allotment under the Medicaid program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. CARTWRIGHT:

H.R. 4653. A bill to provide for a prescription drug take-back program for members of the Armed Forces and veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Armed Services, the Judiciary, and Veterans' Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. CRAMER (for himself, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. EMMER, Mrs. NOEM, and Mr. PETERSON):

H.R. 4654. A bill to amend the Agricultural Act of 2014 to require the Secretary of Agriculture to use certain data in determining an actual or benchmark county yield, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. DONOVAN (for himself, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. MARINO, Mr. RUTHERFORD, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Ms. TENNEY, Mr. BACON, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. STEWART, Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. GOWDY, and Mr. BISHOP of Utah):

H.R. 4655. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit the importation or transportation of child sex dolls, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER (for herself and Mr. KILMER):

H.R. 4656. A bill to extend a prohibition relating to permits for discharges incidental to the normal operation of certain vessels; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. KING of New York (for himself and Mr. MEEKS):

H.R. 4657. A bill to amend title 11 of the United States Code, to allow full subrogation, including subrogation to the priority rights of the United States, of claims for the payment of customs duties; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHI (for himself and Mr. TAKANO):

H.R. 4658. A bill to provide consumer protections for students; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committees on Armed Services, and Veterans' Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. LUETKEMEYER (for himself, Mr. LUCAS, Mr. VELA, Mr. O'HALLERAN, and Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia):

H.R. 4659. A bill to require the appropriate Federal banking agencies to recognize the exposure-reducing nature of client margin for cleared derivatives; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mrs. WAGNER (for herself, Ms. FOXX, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. YOHO, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. BABIN, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. YODER, Mr. ROKITA, Mr. LUETKEMEYER, Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia, Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia, Mrs. BLACK, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. ROSKAM, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. ROTHFUS, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. GIBBS, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. BYRNE, Mr. HUIZENGA, Mr. NORMAN, Mr. MESSER, Mr. GOSAR, and Mrs. HARTZLER):

H.R. 4660. A bill to prohibit discrimination against the unborn on the basis of sex, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

MEMORIALS

Under clause 3 of rule XII, memorials were presented and referred as follows:

148. The SPEAKER presented a memorial of the Legislature of the State of Texas, relative to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 26, urging the executive branch and the Congress to work in conjunction with the State of Texas to identify federal regulations promulgated during the last eight years, especially those promulgated under the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Department of the Interior, and the United States Department of Energy, and determine whether they should be revised, delegated to state agencies, or eliminated in order to ease the overly burdensome regulatory patchwork on the oil and gas industry in Texas; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

149. Also, a memorial of the Legislature of the State of Texas, relative to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 37, urging the Congress to increase appropriations from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to ensure that the nation's ship channels are appropriately maintained and safe; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

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

By Mr. TIPTON:

H.R. 4642.

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

section 8 of article I of the Constitution

By Mr. DEFAZIO:

H.R. 4643.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1, Clause 3, and Clause 18 of the Constitution.

By Mr. GIANFORTE:

H.R. 4644.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. GIANFORTE:

H.R. 4645.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. PALMER:

H.R. 4646.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 7

The Congress shall have Power To . . . establish Post Offices and post Roads . . .

By Mr. FORTENBERRY:

H.R. 4647.

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

The constitutional authority for this bill is pursuant to Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. EMMER:

H.R. 4648.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania:

H.R. 4649.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1—The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.

By Mr. AGUILAR:

H.R. 4650.

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

Article 1, section 8, clause 18 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. BIGGS:

H.R. 4651.

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

Article I of the U.S. Constitution

By Mrs. BLACKBURN:

H.R. 4652.

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

The authority to enact this bill is derived from, but may not be limited to, Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. CARTWRIGHT:

H.R. 4653.

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

Article I; Section 8; Clause 1 of the Constitution states The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States . . .

By Mr. CRAMER:

H.R. 4654.

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

The constitutional authority on which this bill rests is in clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution. Also, clause 3 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution.

By Mr. DONOVAN:

H.R. 4655.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 and/or Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.

By Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER:

H.R. 4656.

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

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution.

By Mr. KING of New York:

H.R. 4657.

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

Article I, Section 8

By Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHI:

H.R. 4658.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Subsection 18: 18: To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

By Mr. LUETKEMEYER:

H.R. 4659.

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

The constitutional authority on which this bill rests lies in Article 1, Section 7, Clause 2 of the Constitution, which allows for every

bill passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate and signed by the President to be codified into law; and therefore implicitly allows Congress to repeal any bill that has been passed by both chambers and signed into law by the President.

Additionally, the Constitution grants to Congress the explicit power to regulate commerce in and among the states, as enumerate in Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3, the Commerce Clause.

By Mrs. WAGNER:

H.R. 4660.

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

Commerce Clause

Section 8 of Article I to make all laws necessary and proper for the carrying into execution of powers vested by the Constitution in the Government of the United States

Section 5 of the 14th Amendment

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

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

H.R. 113: Mr. YOUNG of Iowa.

H.R. 519: Mr. CURTIS.

H.R. 632: Mr. RUIZ, Mr. SCHIFF, and Mr. GOTTHEIMER.

H.R. 866: Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York.

H.R. 1192: Mr. GIBBS, Mr. PEARCE, and Mr. GRAVES of Georgia.

H.R. 1205: Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. DENHAM, and Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana.

H.R. 1243: Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico and Mr. COLLINS of New York.

H.R. 1318: Mr. FITZPATRICK and Mr. POLIQUIN.

H.R. 1456: Mr. FLEISCHMANN, Mr. MITCHELL, and Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee.

H.R. 1457: Mr. GOTTHEIMER and Ms. VELÁZQUEZ.

H.R. 1487: Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 1528: Mr. SABLAN.

H.R. 1664: Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York and Mr. ESPAILLAT.

H.R. 1825: Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana, Mr. BERA and Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 1836: Mr. MEEKS.

H.R. 1861: Mr. AL GREEN of Texas.

H.R. 1889: Mrs. MURPHY of Florida.

H.R. 1896: Mr. PETERS.

H.R. 2215: Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York.

H.R. 2219: Mr. SIRES, Mr. HULTGREN, and Mr. POE of Texas.

H.R. 2267: Mr. GUTIÉRREZ.

H.R. 2295: Mr. KILDEE.

H.R. 2340: Mr. FITZPATRICK.

H.R. 2366: Mr. MCGOVERN.

H.R. 2401: Mr. FITZPATRICK.

H.R. 2569: Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHI.

H.R. 2584: Ms. GRANGER and Mr. KIND.

H.R. 2640: Mr. SWALWELL of California and Mr. DESAULNIER.

H.R. 2646: Mr. POE of Texas.

H.R. 2651: Mr. ROUZER.

H.R. 2719: Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, and Mr. BLUMENAUER.

H.R. 2740: Mr. WITTMAN and Mr. COURTNEY.

H.R. 2813: Mr. POCAN.

H.R. 2826: Mr. CARTER of Georgia.

H.R. 2851: Mr. MITCHELL.

H.R. 2899: Mr. GOMEZ.

H.R. 2902: Ms. CLARKE of New York.

H.R. 2996: Mr. BUCK.

H.R. 3032: Mr. RUIZ and Mr. KENNEDY.

H.R. 3079: Mrs. LOVE.

H.R. 3255: Ms. PINGREE.

H.R. 3282: Mr. BERGMAN.

H.R. 3320: Mr. YODER.

H.R. 3444: Mr. LOWENTHAL.

H.R. 3495: Mr. LOEBSACK, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. DESAULNIER, and Mr. BLUMENAUER.

H.R. 3545: Mr. HOLDING.

H.R. 3576: Mr. MITCHELL and Mr. SMITH of Missouri.

H.R. 3596: Mr. BROWN of Maryland.

H.R. 3600: Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

H.R. 3666: Mr. DEFAZIO.

H.R. 3776: Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida.

H.R. 3798: Mr. YOUNG of Iowa and Mr. NEWHOUSE.

H.R. 3806: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 3851: Mr. WILSON of South Carolina.

H.R. 3881: Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 3913: Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico, and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY.

H.R. 3931: Mr. KENNEDY.

H.R. 4072: Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 4143: Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.

H.R. 4202: Mr. GOMEZ, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

H.R. 4207: Mr. POLIS and Mr. GIBBS.

H.R. 4221: Mrs. COMSTOCK.

H.R. 4222: Ms. SLAUGHTER.

H.R. 4229: Mr. ROKITA, Mr. PITTENGER, Mr. COMER, and Mr. HIGGINS of New York.

H.R. 4265: Mr. GRAVES of Georgia.

H.R. 4306: Ms. BONAMICI.

H.R. 4328: Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York.

H.R. 4360: Mr. DELANEY.

H.R. 4392: Mr. MARINO, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. FASO, Mr. WITTMAN, and Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee.

H.R. 4396: Mr. GALLEGO.

H.R. 4437: Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida.

H.R. 4444: Mr. CLAY and Mr. SIRES.

H.R. 4459: Mr. GARAMENDI.

H.R. 4473: Mrs. RADEWAGEN.

H.R. 4474: Mr. LAWSON of Florida and Mr. ESPAILLAT.

H.R. 4485: Mr. PALLONE and Mrs. DEMINGS.

H.R. 4505: Ms. SPEIER.

H.R. 4506: Mr. KHANNA.

H.R. 4518: Mrs. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Ms. MENG, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. WELCH, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. BASS, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. FOSTER, Mr. NORCROSS, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. ESTY of Connecticut, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. SIRES, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. KIHUEN, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. SCHNEIDER, Mr. YARMUTH, and Mr. MCNERNEY.

H.R. 4526: Mr. DESJARLAIS.

H.R. 4527: Mr. MCGOVERN.

H.R. 4541: Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, Mr. WELCH, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. BLUMENAUER, and Mr. CICILLINE.

H.R. 4545: Mr. GOTTHEIMER.

H.R. 4547: Ms. JENKINS of Kansas.

H.R. 4573: Ms. ROSEN, Mr. BEYER, and Mr. BLUMENAUER.

H.R. 4616: Mr. MESSER.

H.R. 4633: Mrs. HARTZLER.

H.J. Res. 33: Mr. KIHUEN, Ms. ESTY of Connecticut, Mr. GOMEZ, Mr. QUIGLEY, and Mr. LANGEVIN.

H.J. Res. 121: Mr. ALLEN.

H.Con. Res. 63: Mrs. DINGELL.

H. Res. 274: Mr. BILIRAKIS.

H. Res. 495: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.

H. Res. 528: Mr. PETERS and Mrs. LAWRENCE.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163 WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2017 No. 204

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.

O Lord our God, we are grateful for Your marvelous works and power. Keep us from becoming weary in doing what is right, as You remind us that a harvest of blessings is certain. Give strength to our lawmakers and bless them with Your peace. We praise You that You are the strength of our lives and we need not fear for the future. As You guide our Senators with Your wisdom, create in them a hunger and thirst for righteousness, preparing them to be filled with Your Divine nourishment. Lord, thank You for not withholding blessings from those who walk upright.

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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of James C. Ho, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will continue another historic week confirming more of President Trump's impressive judicial nominees to the Federal bench—Steven Grasz, confirmed; Don Willett, confirmed. And soon we will add James Ho to the list by confirming him to serve on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

He is an exceptionally well-qualified nominee whose career in both public service and the private sector has garnered respect from both sides of the aisle. The former Democratic mayor of Dallas supported his nomination, calling him ''among the most brilliant appellate lawyers in the United States.''

When we vote to confirm Mr. Ho, we will be adding another fair and impartial judge to the Federal bench, and by doing so, the Senate will take another important step to ensure that the Federal judiciary fulfills its proper role in our constitutional system. Each of them will be an asset to our Nation's courts.

Under Chairman GRASSLEY's leadership, the Senate Judiciary Committee has done outstanding work to move these judicial nominees to the floor. I am grateful for his efforts, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm Mr. Ho soon.

FUNDING OUR MILITARY

Mr. President, on another matter, our Nation faces a myriad of threats from around the globe, and it is the Senate's responsibility to provide the service chiefs with the resources to train and equip our warfighters and to provide them with the resources they need to keep us safe.

The diverse challenges posed by Iran, China, Russia, North Korea, ISIL, al-Qaida, and its affiliates span the spectrum of warfighting, and our force must be trained and prepared to operate on sea, air, land, and in cyber space. These challenges were only compounded by the Obama administration's focus on reducing the size of our conventional force, withdrawing our forward presence, and placing an unrealistic reliance upon allies and Special Operations forces.

In stark contrast to the previous administration, this Republican-led Congress and the Trump administration have taken the initial steps to rebuild our military. We are working to ensure that the needs of the force are met and our servicemembers have the tools and training necessary to fulfill their missions.

In our ongoing discussions surrounding government funding, we must continue to prioritize our Nation's men and women in uniform. It is illogical for this Senate to repeatedly vote to pass National Defense Authorization Acts at one level of authority and not meet that commitment with the necessary appropriations act; and this funding cannot be held hostage to the Obama-era demand that increases in defense funding be matched by equal increases in nondefense spending. Congress ignored that demand earlier this year, and we must do it again now.

The reason is simple: Under the Budget Control Act, the Department of Defense has received a disproportionate funding cut—and will again if Congress fails to come to an agreement. That type of blow would unacceptably diminish our military's readiness and damage our national security.

I hope that Members can work together to provide the necessary funds

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

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to our military—and to all parts of our government—so that the men and women of our all-volunteer force can continue to keep our country safe.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS BILL

Now, on a final matter, Mr. President, yesterday, Congress moved closer to delivering much-needed tax relief to American families and small businesses as Members of the House and the Senate held a public meeting of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act conference committee. The conferees discussed the best way to provide tax reform to families and small businesses across our country. Throughout this process, we have focused on the middle class and on those left behind by the Obama economy—like many of the families in Kentucky who I represent.

By overhauling our broken and outdated Tax Code, we are working to seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to grow paychecks, create more jobs, and help our economy reach its full potential. The plan before the conference committee will also end many of the perverse incentives for corporations to ship American jobs overseas. We want to bring those jobs and investments home and keep them here.

Once the committee completes its work to reconcile the differences between each Chamber's bill, every Member of Congress will have the opportunity to cast a vote to provide meaningful tax relief to middle-class Americans. That should be something we all can support. And when Congress does, this bill will go to the President's desk to become law.

I would like to thank every Member who has contributed to making tax reform a reality, following years of hearings and proposals and a multitude of amendments as this legislation proceeded through regular order.

This is a chance to work together to get the economy going again and lift up the families that the Obama Administration's policies left behind. I hope that we can take this opportunity to move beyond partisanship to deliver real tax reform for the middle class. Many of the provisions of this bill are based on ideas that our friends across the aisle used to say they supported. I hope our friends will support them again.

I would like to once again commend the conferees for their work, and I look forward to voting on the committee report soon.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak about business that is important to Kansas and important to the country but especially important to the providers of healthcare for children, the children, and their families who receive that coverage and care; that is, the Medicaid CHIP program. It was established in 1997.

I call to the attention of my colleagues the importance of us acting in the next several days in regard to the reauthorization extension of the CHIP program. It has helped provide coverage to children of low-income families in my State and those individuals who would otherwise be left without any insurance and most likely, in every case, the funds necessary to cover healthcare costs for the well-being of those young men and women.

This program is funded through a multiyear authorization that requires Congress to take action each time the program reaches the end of that authorization. The end of that authorization occurred on September 30, now several months ago. While I have been assured in my State that there are sufficient funds to get us through the end of the year, I am concerned. In fact, the belief is, we may have enough funds to pay for our insurance program through March. That certainly is probably not the case across the United States, and we need to act within a few short days. I hope this is an issue that is addressed, as the continuing resolution that funds the Federal Government expires on December 22. As we respond to that circumstance, we ought to respond to the expiration of the CHIP program that occurred on September 30.

Waiting to reauthorize that program has already created an unnecessary burden, but if we waited any longer, it would create even more unnecessary burdens for families of more than 9 million children who are currently receiving healthcare through that program.

Temporary funding measures have kept the program solvent since the program expired, but now is the time to act, to provide some certainty and make sure the funds continue to be available. In Kansas, it would leave about 79,000 children without coverage or other good options.

Many of our Nation's best children's hospitals serve a great deal of patients through that CHIP program. We are fortunate in our area to have Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, and those hospitals and other providers rely upon the CHIP program to pay their bills as well. With all the costs associated with healthcare and with the inability of people to pay, the burden then falls upon hospitals and others to figure out how they survive. In Kansas, almost every hospital—127 of them in our State—continues to hang on by a thread, and some may not survive. This is another opportunity for us to strengthen and provide certainty that a mechanism will be in place so that when they provide care to children of Medicaid families, they will be reimbursed. That benefits all of us in our healthcare delivery system and provides more stability and more certainty in these challenging times for healthcare providers across Kansas.

I am happy the House of Representatives has passed reauthorization. They did their bill. It is now time for the Senate to act. The Finance Committee has taken its action, but this bill is still pending on the floor of the U.S. Senate. During this Christmas season, this holiday time, parents should not have to wonder what they will do in the absence of this insurance program that allows their children to receive routine care and, in many instances, lifesaving care.

Continuing to delay action on this bill is not in the best interest of the American people. It would be nice, it would be appreciated by Americans to see the U.S. Senate work on a program that has broad bipartisan support but still, for some reason, can't get it across the finish line. That finish line, I suppose, was September 30, but I would say that finish line is now the end of the year, and specifically December 22, with the CR expiring at that point in time. It is time for Congress to take action in that regard.

My plea on the Senate floor this morning is for the U.S. Senate to take legislative action and reauthorize this program, provide certainty, and care for our country's children who are, without this program, in significant jeopardy of having an absence of healthcare.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the U.S. Senate.

I yield back.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the year-end negotiations, they are making headway—that is good—but many issues still remain to be resolved.

We need to provide funding for community health centers, CHIP, and areas that have been hit by disasters. We need to pass a bipartisan deal to pair the Dream Act with border security and pass a budget deal that fully funds both our national security and our economic security, in the common parlance known as ''parity.''

If we don't lift the spending caps for defense and also urgent domestic priorities—jobs, the economy—both will come under the specter of sequestration. Lifting those spending caps in equal measure has been the basis of successful budget agreements going back several years.

There has been parity between defense and nondefense for the last three

budget negotiations. That is how it ought to stay. That is what brought us to good agreements. That is what averted shutdowns. Unfortunately, it appears that the Freedom Caucus in the House, which doesn't represent the mainstream of America or even the mainstream of Republicans, is trying to derail another successful parity agreement. Unfortunately, Speaker RYAN, as he is doing far too often, to the detriment of the country and his party, is just following its lead.

Last night, the House posted what is called a CRomnibus—a very short-term extension of funding for jobs and economic development that will lead to cuts in those areas but a long-term extension and a large increase of funding for defense. This is merely a ruse that is designed to slash funding for education, healthcare, infrastructure, and scientific research—all things the Freedom Caucus doesn't want the government to fund—against the will of the overwhelming majority of Americans.

At this late hour, it is also an unfortunate waste of precious time. Earlier this week, 44 Senate Democrats sent a letter to our Republican colleagues that explicitly warned them that Democrats could not support such an approach. Because 60 votes are needed to advance a spending bill here in the Senate, House Republicans should have known not to waste everyone's time with a partisan spending bill that could never pass in the Senate.

The CRomnibus is nothing but a spectacle—a charade, a sop—to some militant, hard-right people who don't want the government to spend money on almost anything. It is a perilous waste of time as the clock ticks closer and closer to the end of the year.

It is time for our Republican colleagues—especially in the House, where the Freedom Caucus is like the tail wagging the dog—to get serious about working with Democrats toward a real parity agreement. Every hour that the House spends on the CRomnibus is an hour that could be spent on our working on a deal to avert a shutdown and solve the many pressing issues that Congress must grapple with before the end of the year.

If Speaker RYAN decides to press forward with a CRomnibus, it will quickly fail in the Senate, and we can get back to negotiating a real bipartisan agreement that will provide certainty and full funding to both our national defense and the middle class. Speaker RYAN has gone along with this approach three times in a row—or the House Republicans have. I think RYAN was the Speaker for two of those three and was the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee for the third. Right now, Speaker RYAN is pursuing a dead-end strategy. Instead, we urge him to continue working with Democrats on a bipartisan, long-term agreement that will keep the government open and fund our major priorities—defense, with jobs and the economy on the other side.

By the way, even on the other side of the ledger, the things that affect our security, like the border and the FBI, are funded on the nondefense side, and you have to have security in every way in this terrorism-ridden world in which we live.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. President, a word on the Republican tax bill. On both process and substance, it appears that the Republicans' conference committee is making all the mistakes that the Republicans made when they passed their bill in the first place. Even though there is still not a final agreement on the text of the tax bill, Republican leaders promise a vote on the committee report as early as Monday of next week. I am not sure that my colleagues will have had enough time to have read and digested the bill that passed this Chamber a few weeks ago, let alone an entirely new conference report that will include many changes. It is the same rushed, awful process as before, and it can only result in mistakes and unintended consequences that could wreak havoc on the economy. Why are our Republican colleagues rushing this bill through? I think that they are ashamed of it.

Every day, the more people know about the bill, the more they don't like it. Just in the polling data today, it shows that the popularity of the bill continues to plummet, and a poll out today said it is not just that the people do not like the bill but that those who vote for it will be affected at election time. The poll today asked people if they were more or less likely to vote for a Congressman who would vote for this bill or to vote for a Senator who would vote for this bill. Many in the public said that they were less likely to vote for a Congressman who would vote for this awful bill. The public knows that it is awful. Why? They know that Republicans are doubling down in this new proposal on the core mistake of their bill by tilting it even further in favor of the wealthy.

I saw on TV this morning a guy from the Club for Growth and a guy from—I forgot the name—another group. These are narrow, narrow groups that have very little support and that are funded by the hard-right group of billionaires who want to see their taxes cut. They don't even talk about what is in the bill. They try to talk about its being a job creator, but they dare don't say, like so many of my Republican colleagues, how disproportionately it goes to those in the upper incomes and not to the middle class.

Amazingly enough, behind closed doors, they have made a bad bill even worse. One of the most significant changes that have been made by the conference committee will be to lower the top tax rate 2 percentage points more than in the original bill. Let's help those millionaires get an even lower tax rate than they have now, for they are doing so poorly. This is crazy. There are a lot of wealthy people in America. God bless them. I don't resent their wealth, but they don't need a tax break. On the other hand, there are hundreds of millions of struggling middle-class people, and they could use that kind of money. Yet millions of people in this bill who are middle class, upper middle class, and who are struggling to be middle class get a tax increase. Instead of lowering the rate on the highest income people, why not use the money to help those in the middle?

Despite all of the concerns about raising middle-class taxes, which makes the bill as unpopular as I just mentioned, the one big thing that Republicans go back and change is the rate paid by the wealthiest of Americans. They lower it. When it comes down to a choice between the middle class and the wealthy and the middle class and big corporations, the Republicans just instinctively, atavistically—in a knee-jerk way—choose the wealthy and the powerful over the middle class. That is why they are struggling.

I believe that is why President Trump's numbers are as low as they have ever been. People are getting a feel—a smell—in that President Trump talks about the middle class, but when he acts, like in this tax bill, it is to help the wealthiest and the most powerful. That happens with issue after issue.

I see that my colleague DICK BLUMENTHAL, the Senator from Connecticut, has come to the floor. He is going to talk about net neutrality, I believe. Again, help the big cable companies and the corporations, and make it harder for the middle class when it comes to cable service and the cost of cable.

Republicans claim that lowering the top rate is an attempt to address tax hikes that would result from their plan to gut the State and local deduction, but reducing the top rate only helps the very wealthy—couples who make over $1 million in the last draft that we heard about—but they are already the prime beneficiaries of this tax plan.

I have a feeling that President Trump was hearing from his handful of wealthy friends who pay a lot in State and local taxes, many from my home State of New York. He decided, well, I will lower their taxes even more. But 99 percent of State and local deductions are taken by Americans with incomes under $1 million. More than half of the taxpayers who take the SALT deduction make less than $100,000. Reducing the top rate does nothing to help the 99 percent of taxpayers who take SALT. It only helps the top 1 percent, who make over $1 million. But this is what, it seems, the President and our Republican colleagues in the House and the Senate keep doing.

As I have said from the start, eliminating or cutting the State and local deduction would hurt the middle class across the country. It would raise taxes on millions, lower home values for millions more, and gut our State and local

programs—education, law enforcement, infrastructure. None of those programs were addressed in the conference. Instead, the richest Americans will likely get an even bigger tax break.

There is no reason to rush the bill through the Senate.

Tuesday night, as our Presiding Officer knows, we had an election in Alabama. This Chamber is waiting for the seating of a new Senator. Shouldn't the people of Alabama have their voices in the Senate present for a vote on the tax bill?

Again I would say to my friend the majority leader, slow down and wait for Senator-Elect Jones to arrive before taking any more votes on the tax bill. Democrats waited for Republican Senator Scott Brown in 2010, but now that the shoe is on the other foot, Republicans don't seem to want to do the same. It is the right thing to do, and it will give every Senator and the American people more time to consider the legislation.

NET NEUTRALITY

Finally, Mr. President, a word on the FCC's vote today on net neutrality. We depend on a free and open internet to spur innovation and job creation. Our economy works best when innovators and entrepreneurs and businesses of all sizes compete on a level playing field. Net neutrality, very simply, says that everyone deserves the same, fair access to the internet. Consumers, small businesses, students, everyone from the elderly couple using Skype to talk to their grandchildren who are half a country away, to the startup company operating out of its founder's basement—everyone deserves the same access to and quality of internet as the big corporations.

When I was growing up in Brooklyn, my father owned a small exterminating business. If his competitor down the street had received a preferred electricity rate, he would have rightly been outraged, and the law would have protected him from unfair treatment. We don't reserve certain highways for a single trucking company, and we don't limit phone service to handpicked stores. We shouldn't reserve high-speed internet for a favored few corporations either. Yet now President Trump's appointed Chairman of the FCC, Ajit Pai, is on the verge of eliminating net neutrality, which will bring to an end the free and open internet that has enabled so many successful companies and has created so many jobs.

Our internet is the envy of the world. Why are we changing it in a way that could harm it? If net neutrality is eliminated, the internet may resemble a toll road, with the highest bidders cruising along private fast lanes while the rest of us inch along on a single, traffic-choked public lane. We could be forced to purchase internet packages, much like cable packages, and pay for more popular sites. It is hard to imagine an entrepreneur building the world's next revolutionary, billion-dollar company while she sits in bumper-to-bumper traffic online. It is hard to imagine that average consumers are going to get a good deal if internet service providers are unshackled and offer premium service to premium customers.

Again, President Trump talks one way and acts another. He talks like he is helping the middle class. He is fully supportive of the FCC and his handpicked Chairman while he hurts the middle class and helps the big interests when it comes to the internet.

By ending net neutrality, Chairman Pai and the Trump administration are once again siding with corporate interests against consumers and small business. Once again, the Trump administration is picking CEOs over citizens—just as in the tax bill and now on net neutrality—and thwarting the comments of millions of Americans who have sent comments to the FCC asking them to save net neutrality and to keep the internet free and open to everyone.

The American people have spoken. I hope Chairman Pai and President Trump are listening.

Before I yield the floor, I want to thank my friend, the senior Senator from Connecticut, for his valiant and strong struggle to keep the internet free, open, and available to the little guy and gal equally as it is to the big shots.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I wish to thank the senior Senator from New York, our minority leader, for his very powerful and eloquent remarks on net neutrality. He has been a leader in protecting consumers in so many areas, and this one is preeminently important.

We are here on a day when the FCC may well repeal the net neutrality order. I spoke at length about it yesterday, and I am struck by the mockery that the FCC will make of consumer protection if it proceeds with this very misguided and mistaken course. It is a course that will be reversed, I believe, in the courts if it is followed, and it should be reversed in this body as well. It is profoundly important to the future of the internet to have access and affordability to innovation, to our economy, and to job creation. The open and accessible internet is part of our lifeblood economically and culturally in this country. Part of what makes America great is the freedom of access and innovation.

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SANDY HOOK MASS SHOOTING

Mr. President, I want to talk today on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Sandy Hook massacre in my State of Connecticut. It was one of the saddest days of my life and one of the worst days of my public career when I went to the elementary school in Newtown, CT, along with a number of my colleagues who will be speaking today as well, Congresswoman ESTY and Senator MURPHY.

In the Judiciary Committee, just moments ago, Senator FEINSTEIN circulated a framed copy of the front page of the Daily News of Wednesday, December 15, 2012—5 years ago, almost to the day. That front page has photographs of the 20 beautiful children who were lost in that unspeakable act of terror and horror. They are 20 wonderful human beings who would be 11 years old today. Their great teachers were killed as well.

Having valued and known their parents as friends and fellow advocates in the effort to achieve commonsense legislation against gun violence, I know how deeply that pain is still felt. The healing is far from over. The grief never ends. The prayers and thoughts of mine go every day to the loved ones who lost those children and educators.

Prayers and thoughts are not enough. It never has been after any of these massacres, and it never will be after the mass killings or for the one-by-one deaths in our communities—90 every day in this great country. Gun violence kills 90 people every day, and 150,000 have perished since Sandy Hook.

So as we commemorate this awful day, 5 years ago, let us rededicate ourselves to act to honor those victims with action, to honor all those with action. It is never too soon to honor the victims with action.

On that front page of the Daily News, there is a line that says ''New York's Hometown Newspaper.'' New York wasn't the hometown to those Sandy Hook victims, but America felt that Sandy Hook was every town in America, and it is indeed quintessentially an American town, filled with wonderful people who hugged and grieved together that day.

That night, in the St. Rose of Lima Church, and in the days following, when there were calling hours and funerals, one after the other, it seemed like they would never end. In some ways they have never ended, because those families' losses are still real and urgent. For us the task of honoring those 20 beautiful children and the 6 educators ought to be real and urgent, even more so today than it was then.

That day we prayed in the St. Rose of Lima Church. I said to the congregation that the whole world is watching. The whole world was watching. The world is watching America to see whether we will act.

We are not the only country with mental health problems. Our rate of mental illness is no greater than any other developed industrial country, but our rate of gun violence is off the charts compared to other countries. There is no excuse for it. There is no rational explanation for it.

As we prayed and grieved then, in the wake of that senseless, horrific tragedy, Congress turned its back. It turned its back on those courageous and strong families who came here in

the weeks following, talking to our colleagues, across the aisle and on this side, asking for commonsense measures, background checks. There was a bipartisan measure then to extend background checks and achieve other gun violence prevention measures, which unfortunately failed on this floor to gain enough votes. We had 55, but we needed 60. From the Gallery on that day, someone shouted: ''Shame.''

December 14, 2012, will be forever a stain on our Nation's history. That day will forever be a black mark on the United States of America, but so will the day that those commonsense measures were rejected in this Chamber. That shame was richly deserved on that day.

Congress saw the photos of those innocent babies, those wonderful children. It saw their grieving parents. It saw the lines of terrified and traumatized children that day being led to safety out of their elementary school. It saw the war zone that the school became when that mass killing turned it into something that no teacher, no educator ever could have foreseen. Those educators helped save lives.

Congress saw and heard the stories of how brave educators sought to shield their children from the bullets coming from that assault weapon on that day. Unfortunately, the vice-like grip of the gun lobby and, principally, the NRA—let's be blunt about who is leading that lobby—prevailed. In the 1,825 days since the Sandy Hook tragedy, despite the 150,000 people who have perished from gun violence since then, Congress has chosen inaction. It has disregarded public safety and the clear will of the American people. It has heeded instead the campaign contributions of the gun lobby, and it has failed to act. It has been complicit in the continuing scourge of gun violence by its inaction. It has been complicit in those deaths. It has been an aider and abettor, in fact, to the 90 killings each day as a result of gun violence. Shame on Congress if it fails to act now.

Today I am not just heartbroken; I am furious. I am angry beyond words about Congress's complicity, about the inaction we have seen, about Congress's abject failure to take commonsense steps that will protect the American people, about its failure to meet this public health crisis with the kind of action that the American people deserve and need. If 90 people every day were perishing from Ebola or some contagious disease—even the flu—there would be an outcry, an outrage, and we would be clamoring to do something.

Here, the solutions are self-evident. None of them is a panacea. None is a single, magic solution to this problem. The trap raised by the gun lobby that none will necessarily deal with the mass killing that just happened is, indeed, a trap we should reject.

The ban on bump stocks might have prevented Las Vegas but not Charleston. The closing of the 72-hour loophole that permits purchasers to buy a gun if the background check has not been completed in 72 hours might not have prevented Las Vegas, but it would have prevented Charleston. Dylann Roof purchased the gun only because he was able to circumvent the background check as a result of that 72-hour loophole.

The ban on certain kinds of high capacity magazines might not have prevented San Bernardino or Orlando, but it would have helped to prevent Sandy Hook.

We will never know whether any of these measures would prevent every one of the killings that we cite, but each of them can save lives, and if we save one life, we will have saved the world.

Shame on Congress for allowing this tragic anniversary to be followed by so many more—Sutherland Springs, Las Vegas, Orlando, Charleston, and each and every day in the news. Every day, none of our communities is immune from this scourge. It is truly a public health crisis.

I am hopeful that there may well be a crack in the united partisan front emerging. I am proud to be part of a very powerful bipartisan alliance involving our colleagues, Senators Scott and Cornyn, across the aisle, as well as Senator MURPHY and other Senators on this side of the aisle. I hope we can make modest and crucial improvements to the National Instant Criminal Background Check system.

The NICS system should be fixed. The Fix NICS Act will provide incentives and encourage States to do better reporting. Right now there are immense gaps in reporting in the States and even in the Federal Government, which is why, in fact, perhaps, Sutherland Springs occurred, because of a failure to report by the Air Force a domestic violence conviction by court-martial that would have barred the shooter from lawfully obtaining a weapon, had it been reported accurately.

The Fix NICS bill would ensure that Federal and State authorities comply with existing law and accurately report relevant criminal history records to the background check system. This step is the least we can do, not the most, but it is the bare minimum.

While there is broad support for this modest but significant measure, the Republican leadership in the House is already attempting to sabotage it by linking it and pairing it with the truly dangerous Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act. That act would sabotage the laws of States like Connecticut that seek to protect our citizens. It would, in effect, provide that permits from other States be treated like driver's licenses, no matter how lenient or even nonexistent the provisions may be for obtaining permits in those other States. It would eviscerate rights of States like Connecticut to protect our citizens with higher standards.

These basic measures to prevent gun violence have no threat whatsoever to gun ownership. They ensure that people who are a danger to themselves or others and convicted criminals and others already barred from buying weapons will not be permitted to carry a lethal firearm.

I respect the Second Amendment. It is the law of the land. No firearm should be taken away from law-abiding citizens. But the idea that there is nothing Congress can do to make a difference and save American lives is unacceptable and false. It is a political copout resoundingly rejected by the vast majority of Americans.

Ninety-five percent of Americans want background checks applied to all purchases. They overwhelmingly favor fixes to the present background check system that make the oversight of purchases more accurate, and they favor commonsense measures that will protect innocent human beings like the 20 beautiful children and sixth grade educators lost that day in Sandy Hook.

When I feel most discouraged and disgusted, I think of those families. I think of the parents of Olivia Engel, and I think of the parents of all of those beautiful children and wonder, as I am sure they often do, what lives they would be leading today. What would Olivia Engel be doing on this day filled with Sun and beauty? In Connecticut, this morning, it snowed. At 6 or 11, snow would still be a wonderful thing, never to be taken for granted by any child. This holiday—all of the wonder and beauty of this holiday—is never taken for granted by a 6-year-old or an 11-year old. The possibilities, opportunities, dreams, and hopes were shattered on that day and lost forever.

I was at the calling hours for one of the children killed at Sandy Hook, and it was a gut-wrenching moment—every one of them. I spoke to the mother of one of those children, and I said: When you are ready, we should do something about gun violence.

She said, without hesitation, through reddened eyes and cracking voice: I am ready now. I am ready now.

America should be ready. America is ready. This body should follow America's lead—honor with action. If nothing else is remembered of that day 5 years ago, let us honor with action those strong and courageous families who have suffered this unspeakable horror, this unimaginable grief, and who have come here in years past to ask us to honor with action the victims, survivors, and loved ones of Sandy Hook and of all gun violence horrors in this country.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the senior Senator from Connecticut for his words. The Senator from Connecticut is a former prosecutor who knows law enforcement backward and forward. I can only imagine the grief felt in his State. As a neighboring New England State, I recall the vigils, the

people coming to pray, and the sadness from what happened in our neighboring State of Connecticut. But as so many have said, we can express grief—and we should—but we have to do what the Senator from Connecticut and others have suggested, which is actually take some steps that might stop these things. So I applaud him for what he said.

Let me speak on another issue. This week, we voted on three circuit court nominees, just one step below the Supreme Court. All three of these nominees are extreme. One is objectively unqualified. The fact that we are so quickly casting floor votes on these troubling nominations, all of whom were reported out of the Judiciary Committee just last week, is a symptom of the Republicans' willingness to abandon decades of Senate tradition so that this body can serve as a rubberstamp for President Trump's nominees. The Senate will not be the conscience of the Nation or the check and balance it was always designed to be, but instead, a rubberstamp for the President.

Let me just cover a couple of things. Don Willett is a sitting justice on the Texas Supreme Court. That should mean something. Sitting judges have an obligation to exercise good judgment; to not say anything that would lead individuals to question their impartiality. A question I ask nominees all the time is: Can someone who comes into your court—whether they are Republican or Democrat, plaintiff, defendant, rich, poor, whatever—look at you and say: Well, at least this judge is going to show impartiality. Maybe I will win or maybe I will lose, but it will not be because the judge wasn't impartial. When you look at this sitting justice, Don Willett, he fails the standard of impartiality.

A few weeks ago, I questioned him about his tweet telling a young transgender woman, who was interested in playing softball to ''Go away, A-Rod.'' Justice Willett claimed that this tweet was in jest. But, let me say it again—a sitting justice telling a transgender teen to ''go away'' sends an unmistakable message to marginalized, vulnerable communities: Not all are welcome in my courtroom. Well, that is not a laughing matter.

This was not the first time that Justice Willett has worn his bias on his sleeve. As an aide to George W. Bush while he was Governor of Texas, he objected to then-Governor Bush declaring a ''Business Women's Week.'' He opposed the proclamation's mention of ''glass ceilings, pay equity . . . [and] sexual discrimination/harassment.'' He dismissed these very real barriers to women in the workforce as ''hype.'' For these and other reasons, I seriously question his judgment or that he would be seen by people coming into his courtroom as impartial.

Then we have James Ho, who is another troubling nominee. His views on social issues are, not surprisingly, extreme. He has even offered effusive praise for Jeff Mateer, another Trump nominee who has publicly proclaimed that transgender children are part of ''Satan's plan.'' Even as a judge, he has complained about the Supreme Court. Remember, these judges are supposed to follow the precedent of the Supreme Court. He has complained about the Supreme Court's Obergefell decision. He said that it is going to lead to ''people marrying their pets.'' I don't think any legal scholar anywhere from the right to the left would agree with that interpretation. Mr. Ho praised Mateer for ''protecting and enforcing the . . . civil liberties of every Texan.'' Well, it is not every Texan—just those he agrees with.

Of course, this race to confirm Mr. Ho that is zipping through here means that we will not have fully vetted him for this lifetime appointment. When he served in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, he authored a memorandum that was cited in one of the shameful ''torture memos.'' These torture memos have turned out to be a blot on the conscience of the United States. Mr. Ho has refused to answer questions about his involvement, despite the fact that the torture memos are now very much in the public domain. Unfortunately, these kinds of non-answers are considered sufficient as of late, since Republicans are more interested in rubberstamping President Trump's judicial nominees than asking serious questions of them as a coequal branch of government. I cannot believe that any Republican leadership would allow a nominee of a Democrat who would have been involved in the drafting of a key and controversial memorandum to be confirmed unless they are willing to answer questions about it.

Then we have Steven Grasz, whom the American Bar Association unanimously rated him as unqualified for the Federal bench. In the past 40 years, I recall seeing a unanimously unqualified rating only a few times, and those people never made it through. After an exhaustive review including more than 200 interviews about Mr. Grasz, the ABA concluded he could not separate his personal beliefs from his duties as a judge—a fundamental obligation of a judge. This is almost unprecedented to have a rating like this.

To have at least a qualified rating from the ABA is a basic qualification for a nominee to the Federal bench. Certainly, Republicans would insist on it if it was a Democrat's nominee. The Republicans made it very clear that if a Democrat nominated somebody who got a ''not qualified'' rating—I don't recall it happening, but if they did—they made it very clear that person would never be considered. Well, here is somebody who is declared ''not qualified,'' and yet they whipped him through. You would think ''qualified'' would at least be the bottom line for a nomination. You would think whoever is President, they are at least nominating somebody who could hit the threshold of being considered qualified.

Republicans are now casting aside the ABA as a biased institution; some have accused the ABA of opposing Mr. Grasz simply because of his opposition to abortion. Well, that is absurd. The ABA has rated 46 of President Trump's 50 nominees as ''qualified.'' Let's not delude ourselves, does anyone think that any of the 46 Trump nominees that the ABA rated as qualified support abortion rights? They would never get out of the White House if they did. So that argument—like so many others used to support these extreme nominees—does not pass the laugh test.

As the longest serving member of the United States Senate and a former chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I have spoken up about the steady erosion of the Committee's norms and traditions. The Committee has processed un-vetted, extreme nominees at an unprecedented rate. President Trump will have four times as many circuit court nominees confirmed in his first year than did President Obama. The reason President Trump has four times as many circuit court nominees confirmed in his first year than did President Obama is because Republicans removed any and all guardrails on our confirmation process—the guardrails they insisted on when there was a Democratic President. No matter how careful the Democratic President was in picking that person, they had to have these guardrails. I thought, actually, the guardrails made sense.

The second you have a President who nominates extreme judges, they decided we don't need those guardrails anymore because President Trump would never make a mistake. Nominees have had hearings scheduled before we even had the ABA ratings. Multiple circuit court nominees are regularly stacked on single panels. That is something Republicans insisted should not be done when there was a Democratic President. Now, unfortunately, the chairman—who is a friend of mine and a man I respect—has reversed his own blue-slip policy. He has begun to advance nominees without favorable blue strips from both home State Senators. That is the first time this has been done in the last two Presidents.

I fear we are doing lasting damage to our nomination process. I fear we are making the advice and consent process a completely laughable exercise. The three nominees who are set forth this week are evidence of that.

I am going to vote no on each of them because they are not qualified. I have voted for many Republican nominees. I might disagree with them philosophically, but they were qualified, just as I voted for many Democratic nominees. Some I disagreed with, but they were qualified. These nominees aren't qualified. They are extreme. I want the standard I always asked for; that whoever you are, when you come into a courtroom, you can look at the

judge and say: OK, whether I am a plaintiff or defendant, rich or poor, facing the State as the respondent, no matter my political background, I am going to be treated fairly. I will win or lose my case on the merits, not on the judge's bias.

We are closing our door to that. We are closing our door to it when the President of the United States turns the selection process over to an extreme political, partisan group and then asks Republicans to rubberstamp it. I respect my Republican colleagues, but I can't imagine many of them ever standing for a Democratic President doing anything like this. I wouldn't.

I wish they would bring the Senate back to where we should be, where we can be, and where the country is better off when we are.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, 2 days ago, the GOP-controlled Senate confirmed Leonard Steven Grasz to a Federal appeals court. This is a man who is so aggressively ideological that he earned a rating of ''not qualified'' from the American Bar Association.

The ABA reached that conclusion, in part, after speaking with many of Mr. Grasz's peers who expressed concerns ''that Mr. Grasz' strongly held social views and/or his deeply rooted political allegiances would make it impossible for him to have an unbiased and open mind on critical issues.''

Those individuals have ample reason to be concerned. Among his many appalling views, Mr. Grasz believes discrimination against LGBTQ individuals is A-OK. He supports the harmful and discredited practice of conversion therapy and he opposes reproductive rights and the Republicans just confirmed him to a lifetime appointment as a Federal judge who will make life-changing decisions for millions of Americans.

The other judicial nominee the GOP-controlled Senate confirmed this week, Donny Willett, doesn't fall very far from that tree either. Mr. Willett, a current justice on the Texas Supreme Court, isn't shy about his radical right-wing views. He has bragged about being the most conservative justice on the Texas Supreme Court, and he has a record to show for it.

Mr. Willett believes judges should be able to easily overturn State and local laws that protect workers, including minimum wage laws and laws that allow workers to unionize. This view is so out of the mainstream that other conservative judges, including Chief Justice John Roberts and Judge Robert Bork, have rejected him.

Mr. Willett's radical views don't stop there. He has ruled to limit the rights of same-sex couples. He has mocked transgender individuals. He has demonstrated hostility to issues that affect working women, including pay equity, discrimination, and sexual harassment. Mr. Willett has ruled against efforts to help remedy discrimination in Texas schools. On issue after issue, Mr. Willett's record shows a stunning disregard of the issues that impact millions of Americans.

The truth is, Mr. Grasz and Mr. Willett are not unique. They are just a few of the many nominees whose records show they cannot fairly and impartially dispense equal justice under the law.

Right now, the GOP-controlled Senate is executing a breathtaking plan to fill our courts with rightwing, radical nominees like Mr. Grasz and Mr. Willett. It is a plan that has been long in the making. For years, Republicans have worked hand in hand with billionaire-funded, rightwing groups to ensure that our courts advance the interests of the wealthy and the powerful over everyone else.

First, after President Obama was elected, Republicans abused the filibuster to stop reasonable mainstream judges from filling vacancies on Federal courts. They didn't stop those nominees because of their qualifications. They didn't stop them because of their records. The Republicans stopped those nominees because they didn't want judges who cared more about justice than about protecting the powerful.

Then, once the filibuster was gone and Republicans had gained the majority in the Senate, they slowed the judicial nominations process to a crawl. Vacancies stacked up, and the courts became overloaded with cases.

Finally, last year, Republicans took their assault on our judicial system to new heights, refusing to consider any nominee put forward by the President to fill a Supreme Court vacancy. They threw the Constitution and Senate precedent right out the window to advance their radical agenda. It was shocking, and it was shameful.

Now that there is a Republican President who is committed to tilting our courts further in favor of the rich and the powerful, Republicans are looking to fill our courts with judges who share that commitment, no matter how unqualified they may be.

This week, the Senate will vote on one more of those judicial nominees, James Ho, a man who, like Mr. Grasz and Mr. Willett, will work to hand our courts over to powerful, pro-corporate interests. When it comes to money and politics, Mr. Ho's view is the more the better. He has argued that there should be no limits on campaign contributions, none—democracy for sale. According to Mr. Ho, the reason government is so corrupt isn't because there is too much secret money slithering through our political system but because government makes it too hard for those big donors to succeed in the private sector.

Tell that to the working families, the students, the teachers, and the small businesses that will be paying higher taxes to give those fat cat donors giant tax cuts.

Mr. Ho has also defended discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. While he was solicitor general of Texas, Mr. Ho defended Texas's ban on same-sex marriage. More recently, he has heaped praise on a Federal district court nominee who, among other disgusting statements, said that transgender children are part of ''Satan's plan.''

Here is another troubling aspect of Mr. Ho's record: his view on whether torture is illegal. While Mr. Ho worked in the Justice Department, he authored a memo relating to the treatment of prisoners of war. That memo is cited in one of the torture memos that became the basis for the Bush administration's illegal and immoral practice of torturing terrorism suspects. That memo was not provided to the Judiciary Committee, and Mr. Ho has refused to fully answer questions regarding his involvement in what ultimately became the Bush administration's policy on torture—information that every Senator should demand to see before we vote on his nomination.

Grasz, Willett, and Ho—just about all of Trump's judicial nominees—have a lot in common. They will put powerful interests before the rights of workers, before the rights of women, before the rights of LGBTQ individuals, people of color, religious minorities, and pretty much everyone else. Their radical, rightwing views mean that in their courts, it will be easier for giant corporations and wealthy individuals to get relief and harder for everyone else to find justice. That is the perverted, upside-down justice system that every Member of this Congress should be working to fix.

Now more than ever, we need judges who will stand up for equal justice for all, not just for the rich and the powerful. The records of the nominees before us this week show that they cannot meet that standard. That is why I voted no on the nominations of Mr. Grasz and Mr. Willett, and that is why I will be voting no on Mr. Ho. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. President, I yield.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss the three judicial nominations we are considering this week: Steven Grasz, for the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, and James Ho and Don Willett, both for the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Before I talk about those nominees, I would like to offer some background on the importance of circuit courts and remind my colleagues why we have so many judicial vacancies.

The Supreme Court hears between 100 and 150 cases each year out of the more than 7,000 it is asked to review. But in 2015 alone, more than 55,000 cases were filed in Federal appeals courts.

These cases range from crime and terrorism to bankruptcy and civil matters, and the judges who hear these cases will affect millions of Americans.

So it is extremely important who is confirmed to these lifetime positions. Federal judges have a tremendous impact on individuals, businesses, and the law. In a way, circuit courts serve as the de facto Supreme Court to the vast majority of individuals who bring cases. They are the last word.

These nominations are very important. That is why it is so concerning that Republicans for years refused to allow judgeships to be filled.

The simple fact is the rush to fill judicial vacancies is the direct result of Senate Republicans' historic obstruction of judicial nominees during President Obama's administration.

During President Obama's last 2 years in office, just 22 judicial nominees were confirmed. That is the fewest in a Congress since Harry Truman was President. In contrast, during the last 2 years of the George W. Bush administration, Senate Democrats confirmed 68 judicial nominees.

At the end of last year, three circuit court nominees and 20 district court nominees had been approved by the Judiciary Committee and were waiting for votes on the Senate floor. Republicans refused to schedule votes for those nominees, many of whom Republicans themselves voted for, so they could hold those seats open. Four more circuit court nominees and 52 district court nominees were pending in committee and never even received a hearing.

Now, 1 year later, the Senate is voting this week to confirm the 10th, 11th, and 12th circuit court nominees this year. Republicans went from delaying all nominees to cramming them through at a breakneck pace.

The 11 circuit court nominees who have already been confirmed are more than any President in the first year of office since Richard Nixon.

Two nominees we are considering this week, James Ho and Don Willett, lay out the Republican playbook.

These seats on the Fifth Circuit have been vacant since 2012 and 2013, even though the Obama White House tried to work with my colleagues from Texas to fill these seats with consensus nominees.

But once President Trump entered the White House, they wasted no time in rushing to put conservative judges in those seats.

Don Willett was nominated on October 3, James Ho on October 16.

Just a month later, on November 15, the Judiciary Committee held a hearing for both circuit court nominees on the same day, and cloture was filed immediately on both nominations after the committee advanced them.

The speed at which these judges are being rammed through the process is stunning.

In fact, on four occasions in the last 6 months our committee has held hearings for two circuit court nominees at the same time. This happened only three times in all 8 years of the Obama administration.

This is a problem because it gives Senators less time to review each nominee's record and less time to ask each nominee questions. Candidly, it makes it very difficult for us to exercise our constitutional duty to ''advise and consent.''

We are already seeing the ramifications. Just yesterday, the White House announced that two of its nominees would not be moving forward. One nominee, Brett Talley, had already been voted out of the Judiciary Committee, but we learned of troubling undisclosed information while he was pending on the floor. This may not have happened if we had sufficient time and cooperation to fully review these nominees.

In the month of November, the Judiciary Committee had hearings for five circuit court nominees. I have served on this committee since 1993, and we have never held hearings for five circuit court nominees in a single month before. That is during a month when we spent a week at home for Thanksgiving.

Republicans refused to advance seven circuit court nominees last year, but now we are speeding through the process to fill those seats with conservative judges. Fairness aside, we should all be concerned that we are giving lifetime appointments to potentially unqualified nominees.

Now, I would like to talk about the three nominees we're considering this week. This week, Steven Grasz was confirmed to the Eighth Circuit.

The American Bar Association has rated 1,755 judicial nominees since 1989, and only two of those have been unanimously rated ''not qualified'' based on concerns over their impartiality.

One was a nominee for the Fifth Circuit in 2006 who was never confirmed. The other is Steven Grasz.

Let me repeat that. This week, for the first time since at least 1989, the Senate voted to confirm a nominee who was unanimously rated as ''not qualified'' by the American Bar Association.

The ABA doesn't rate nominees based on what the evaluators think. Rather, they review a nominee's written record, talk to the nominee, and interview many people who have direct personal and professional knowledge about the nominee.

Here are just two direct quotes from the ABA's review:

''Mr. Grasz's professional peers expressed concerns about his views of stare decisis, and questioned his commitment to it.''

''[A] number of Mr. Grasz's professional colleagues expressed the view that, in terms of judicial temperament . . . Mr. Grasz is not 'free from bias.' Specifically, they expressed the view that he would be unable to separate his role as an advocate from that of a judge.''

These are stunning indictments of a man who was confirmed to a lifetime seat on a circuit court.

Some of my Republican colleagues argue that the ABA is biased. The numbers just don't bear that out.

Over the last 30 years, during both Republican and Democratic Administrations, the ABA has rated nearly 1,800 nominees and rated only two ''not qualified'' based on their temperament.

I voted against Mr. Grasz's nomination and am very concerned that he was confirmed on Tuesday. He did not have the support of a single Democratic Senator.

Next I would like to talk about James Ho, nominated to the Fifth Circuit.

During his time at the Office of Legal Counsel, Mr. Ho wrote a legal analysis of the scope of the term ''cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment,'' which is prohibited under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

Unfortunately, this memo remains classified, and we haven't seen it.

The reason we know this memo exists is because Jay Bybee cited it in one of the so-called torture memos, which were used to justify torture and have since been widely discredited.

The Bybee memo also appears to have relied on Mr. Ho's analysis to argue that because the term ''cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment'' ''appears to . . . have a rather limitless reach,'' conduct that qualifies as torture should be defined more narrowly than what is prohibited under international law.

It is this kind of flawed legal reasoning that allowed the U.S. Government to torture people, and I have argued that no vote should have taken place on Mr. Ho's nomination until we had access to that memo.

The Justice Department has provided us access to similar memos written by nominees for judgeships, so there is no reason to deny us access to the memo James Ho authored.

I can't possibly vote in favor of a nominee to a lifetime appointment who may have helped provide the legal basis for torture, and it is a shame we are voting on this nominee this week.

Finally, I would like to speak about Don Willett's nomination to the Fifth Circuit.

At his hearing, my first question was about his 1998 comments on a draft proclamation for then-Governor George W. Bush to honor the Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women in 1998.

Let me quote from them: ''I resist the proclamation's talk of 'glass ceilings,' pay equity (an allegation that some studies debunk), the need to place kids in the care of rented strangers, sexual discrimination/ harassment, and the need generally for better ''working conditions'' for women (read: more government).''

I asked Justice Willett if these were still his beliefs, and he refused to answer. I asked again, and again, he refused to answer. Senator DURBIN asked

the same question, and Justice Willett refused to disavow these beliefs.

As the National Women's Law Center wrote, ''Mr. Willett's skepticism of the existence of sex discrimination should disqualify him from the bench. Litigants coming before Mr. Willett . . . would have reason to question whether their claims of discrimination, including sexual harassment and pay discrimination, would be fairly and impartially heard or, instead, treated as 'hype' to 'debunk.' ''

I could not support Justice Willett's nomination.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Mr. CORNYN pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 361 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on a separate and happier note, today is a great day for our Nation's Federal judiciary. Yesterday afternoon, we confirmed Justice Don Willett, who currently serves on the Texas Supreme Court, who has been nominated by President Trump to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Soon we will be voting on Jim Ho, the former solicitor general of the State of Texas, who has also been nominated to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

These are two outstanding nominees, and they reflect the best of Texas. They are each fathers, lawyers, scholars, public servants, and active participants in their communities. I wish to take just a few minutes to discuss each of their unique stories, as well as their sterling records of professional accomplishment.

Don Willett was raised in Talty, a small town outside of Dallas, TX. He was adopted at a young age and raised by a single mom for most of his life. She must have been one heck of a lady because her son went on to achieve great things from those humble beginnings.

He attended Baylor for undergraduate and Duke Law School. He clerked on the same court to which he has been nominated and now confirmed, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. He worked in private practice and served Governor, and then President, George W. Bush.

That is not all, though. He went on to work at the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Policy and later served as deputy attorney general of Texas before his appointment to the Texas Supreme Court. He was elected to his first full term in 2006 and reelected in 2012.

While serving on my State's highest court, Justice Willett was recognized for his excellence by the Texas Review of Law and Politics, which named him as its ''Distinguished Jurist of the Year'' in 2014.

Justice Willett's confirmation now is good news, and, perhaps, the best news for him personally is that he will no longer have to run for election, as he has had to do as a member of the Texas Supreme Court, because, of course, his appointment now is for life tenure.

Jim Ho's story is no less remarkable. Jim was born in Taiwan, and his parents immigrated to New York when he was a toddler. Jim learned English by watching Sesame Street.

When he was young, his parents moved to California, where Jim later attended Stanford before moving on to law school at the University of Chicago. As an adult, in his professional life, Jim clerked for Judge Jerry Smith on the Fifth Circuit, the court to which he has now been nominated and will be confirmed, and he later clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Jim has worked in a variety of legal capacities in the private sector. He has also served at the Civil Rights Division and the Office of Legal Counsel at the Department of Justice.

It is when he was at the Civil Rights Division that I first met Jim and I offered him a job on my Judiciary Committee staff, where he served as my chief counsel. Later, serving as solicitor general, he had the highest win rate before the U.S. Supreme Court of any person who has served in that role. When I was attorney general of Texas, we created this position of solicitor general because we had line lawyers who would, literally, handle cases for State agencies and who would handle those cases all the way to the Supreme Court, but really they didn't have the experience or training as an appellate advocate that we needed to speak with a single voice for the entire State before the Federal courts. Jim held that role and performed with distinction. As I said, he was enormously successful in his appellate advocacy.

Jim also bears the distinction as the first Asian-American solicitor general of Texas, and he has taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Texas and is published in numerous scholarly journals.

Simply put, Jim Ho and Don Willett are two stars in the Texas legal firmament. They were extensively vetted by the bipartisan Texas Federal Judicial Evaluation Committee, appointed by Senator CRUZ and myself, as well as the Office of White House Counsel and the Department of Justice. I am glad we are now elevating them to the Federal bench.

I wish to commend the President on these excellent nominations, and I thank my colleagues for their votes to support these two exceptionally qualified men.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. REED. Madam President, as Republicans in both Chambers rush to conclude their secret negotiations on the final details of their tax bill, I want to make clear to my colleagues what should be obvious about this legislation. We may not yet know the results of all of their horse-trading leading up to the final legislation, but the American people are watching this process. It is plain to see that, should this Republican bill become law, Republicans will have knowingly and deliberately made worse the most dangerous threats that we face to our economic and national security. Worse yet, they will have drained the public coffers that our children and our children's children will need to take up these challenges.

We all know what these challenges are. We face unprecedented income and wealth inequality that threatens to stifle the social mobility that is the hallmark of the American Dream. There is also declining productivity, which has kept middle-class wages stagnant, and bred economic anxiety for too many parents wondering if their children will attain a higher standard of living—much higher, they hope—than they have achieved. We have a surging deficit from decades of trickle-down economics and unpaid-for wars that, if left unaddressed, could apply huge pressure to our ability to keep our most basic promises to the American people, not to mention meeting our obligations as a world power.

To the families watching what is going on in Washington right now, the Republican end game appears to be to invite fiscal crisis due to irresponsible tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations, and then, because we have already given trillions of dollars away in tax cuts, to demand that Congress shred Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other vital programs in order to pay our bills. We know this is the road that this bill sets us upon, and the American people certainly see this coming. So let no one who votes for this bill say that they did not know the consequences of their actions. This will not be remembered as tax reform, but rather as a serious mistake to be corrected in the future.

How do middle-class Americans know that Republicans did not write this bill for them? Because they have watched Republican economics rig the tax system in favor of the wealthy and corporations for years, even as wealth and income inequality have reached historic levels. They took the Republicans at their word when Republicans promised that the Bush tax cuts of 2001 and 2003, which skewed tax relief to the top

1 percent over the bottom 20 percent of Americans by more than 6 to 1, would eventually trickle down. That is what they thought, but on the eve of the great recession, aftertax income for the richest 1 percent had soared while middle-class wages continued to stagnate. We are still waiting for the Bush tax cuts to trickle down and to pay for themselves. They likely never will.

These Republican proposals make matters even worse by financing tax giveaways for big business and the rich on the backs of those just trying to get by. Economists, relying on the Federal Survey of Consumer Finances, recently determined that the top 1 percent of American households now hold about 40 percent of the Nation's wealth, which is a 50-year high. This legislation overwhelmingly benefits them while raising taxes on 48 percent of American taxpayers by 2027.

Many of the families whose taxes will go up have already been through tough economic times during the Great Recession. Productivity in the American workforce has been declining, and wages have grown at an even slower pace than that. These families don't need numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to know our Nation's recovery was historically slow. But our middle-class weathered the Great Recession as Americans have always done. Now, because of the lopsidedness and deficit-busting features of the Republican tax bill, Moody's Analytics has warned that this ''fiscal policy mistake'' could very well take us prematurely into an economic bust. Middle-class families have just emerged from the last crisis of Republican economics, still battered and bruised, and they know that, if Republicans force a plan like this on the Nation again, it will be their children who are on the hook to pay for it.

Make no mistake, there are times when running a deficit is advisable or even economically necessary—particularly when times are tough and families need help to stay in the working class and get back on their feet. But regressive tax cuts just sit on our credit card with little to show for all that red ink, and the tab we are leaving the next generation is still running from 16 years ago.

Like many of my colleagues, I was here to take the tough votes and make the hard choices that led to the Clinton-era surplus. The failed experiments of supply-side economics turned that surplus into a CBO-projected deficit of over $10 trillion over the next decade. And even if we accept all of the rosy assumptions of dynamic scoring and take it on faith, yet again, that wealth will trickle down and that no recession will come in the next decade—all of which are assumptions on which I wouldn't wager anything—the Joint Committee on Taxation calculates that this bill would still increase the deficit by over $1 trillion. Facts do not go away simply because we ignore them, and if Republicans continue to ignore the budget hole their policies create, then this massive deficit and the budget pressures that follow it will be their legacy for future generations.

More importantly, however, I must ask: What national priorities will our colleagues on the other side deem too expensive after we have given 1 trillion more borrowed dollars to the wealthy? What choices will Republicans try to force on the American people when they decide there simply isn't enough for the Armed Forces, the jobless, the sick, and the elderly? Republican leadership is already vowing to take up ''entitlement reform'' next year, which is Washington-speak for giving the top 1 percent everything they want and then forcing practically everyone else to choose who loses their Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid to plug the budget hole. Therefore, before Republicans blow apart the Federal budget yet again, it is worth reviewing the massive costs the American people are already committed to pay.

First, as I have discussed before, this bill essentially guarantees that we will struggle to meet the needs of our national defense. Our war deficits from the past 16 years alone are projected to add over $1 trillion to the national debt by 2023 and over $8 trillion by 2056. We all know we must modernize the nuclear triad, which will cost $1.2 trillion in 2017 dollars over the next 30 years. A 355-ship Navy would cost, on average, $102 billion per year through 2047. Necessary additions to the end strengths of the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps will cost an additional $18 billion, $6 billion, and $3.6 billion, respectively. Where will this money come from, since we have already given it away to the wealthiest Americans?

This chart shows what happens to the defense budget when large-scale tax reductions are put into effect, starting in the Reagan era of the 1980s. One of President Reagan's first initiatives was to build up defense. This chart shows the percentage of GDP devoted to defense spending. President Reagan promised to make America strong. To actualize his feeling and view of peace through strength, he built up the defense budget significantly—going from a little over 5 percent of GDP when he took office up to almost 7 percent. But in the mid-1980s, he also engineered tax cuts that lowered taxes on the wealthy in proportion to lower income Americans, and eventually, those tax cuts and the deficit caught up with defense spending. As we notice, through the later 1980s and all the way into the 1990s, except for one respite, we had a declining defense budget. In the first year of the George Herbert Walker Bush administration, there was another attempt to decrease defense spending. So the line went up a bit, but after that, of course, with deficits increasing, with other pressures mounting on the budget, defense spending plummeted.

Then, within the Clinton administration, there was a conscious effort to reduce defense spending. The so-called Cold War peace dividend took place. At the same time, though, because of the tough votes on tax reform that we took, we were building up a significant surplus.

We saw again here, with the beginning of the George W. Bush administration, an increase in defense spending. Once again, that was a product the desire of the President to lower taxes, which he did, but more importantly, was the unexpected and catastrophic attack on the United States on September 11, 2001. That, together with the later decisions to go into Iraq and maintain our presence in Afghanistan, led us to increase defense spending, but, once again—once again—a growing deficit with tax cuts, with no increases to pay for wartime operations, saw the defense budget peak and then begin to decline, and we are in that decline right now.

If history is any judge, when we pass these tax cuts, I think we will see a further decline as defense spending is squeezed by an already-acknowledged increased deficit and by the difficulty of cutting other programs to relieve budget pressures. We are not positioning ourselves well. As I previously mentioned, we are already looking ahead at necessary expenditures totaling trillions of dollars over the future, and if we don't make them, it will leave our Armed Forces, and indeed our position in the world, in a very precarious position.

The irony will be that many of my colleagues will come down here and vote one day soon on a huge tax reduction for the wealthiest, including a $1.5 trillion deficit increase, and on the next day say: ''We need more money for our military, that is the most important thing.'' If our military were the most important thing, we would be voting on a bill to provide that type of financial support and relief to the military today, and letting the tax cuts for the wealthy wait.

This is one of the remarkable periods in our history; probably the first time in our history, that we have conducted a war for 16 years, and have yet to ask the American people, in any significant way, to participate by paying their fair share for the national defense. In fact, throughout this period, with rare exceptions, we have cut taxes, and the cuts have basically benefited the wealthiest Americans. That is why all of this together has caused former Secretaries of Defense Leon Panetta, Ash Carter, and Chuck Hagel to indicate that this tax bill is ill-advised. Following 16 years of debt-financed war, providing even bigger deficit-busting tax cuts doesn't make any sense for our national security.

My previous comments, along with the comments of former Secretaries of Defense and others seem to have touched a nerve with Speaker RYAN because, when asked specifically, he took some umbrage at these comments. In an interview with NPR, he said he simply could not understand where our

concerns were coming from. To put it bluntly, I am comfortable siding with three former Secretaries of Defense over the Speaker when it comes to budgeting for the men and women of our Armed Forces, for the reasons I outlined in my discussion of the history of defense spending and tax cuts over the last 30-plus years. Inevitably, the tax cuts to the wealthy and corporations, because of the way this bill is structured, will put pressure on defense spending. What I don't want to happen is to have people down here 2 months from now pounding the desks about how we are not responding to the needs of our troops, saying that we haven't made them the most important thing in our lives, or that we are neglecting our national defense. Frankly, they have ignored this whole topic by committing to give tax cuts and increase the deficit. That is the wrong priority, in my view.

As the chart clearly demonstrates, these tax cuts eventually catch up with us. They produced defense cuts—maybe not immediately, but we are not working on a situation like we had in 2001. When President George W. Bush instituted his tax cuts, we had a $5 trillion surplus on the books. That was because we took those tough votes in the 1990s to increase taxes and to build up a surplus.

We don't have that pad any longer. We are already $10 trillion in the hole, so the effect of these cuts will be much quicker and much more dramatic when it comes to the situation we will face not only in terms of supporting our military, but actually taking major steps to upgrade the platforms, the technology, the training, the readiness, and the quality of life of the Armed Forces. We don't have a $5 trillion surplus to dip into to pay off the wealthiest while we try to fix defense. We are in a situation where advocacy for this tax cut, in my view, totally and deliberately ignores the costs we are going to have to pay to protect ourselves. For the first time in our history, we have conducted almost 20 years of war, and we have asked our troops and their families to serve, but we haven't asked any other American to stand up, at least with their financial support, and help us deal with the crises we face across the globe.

It is not just our Armed Forces that will be squeezed and crowded out of the Federal budget because of these Republican proposals; the middle class and the working poor will also have to do a lot more with a lot less.

Many of my colleagues have already pointed out that the CBO has estimated that 13 million Americans will lose their health insurance because Republicans will repeal the individual mandate to pay for tax cuts. They can try to spin this as an expansion of choices, but the bottom line is that more people will be sick, and fewer of them will get the care they need.

Other middle-class American families can expect to lose access to critical tax advantages that allow them to remain self-sufficient during hard times. This approach promises to crush families on two fronts. It will force more families who are down on their luck to slip out of the working class, and then, because of massive deficits, the social safety net will be weakened when these families need it the most. This legislation will likely trigger a $25 billion cut to Medicare in 2018 alone, and with the Republicans' entitlement reform on the docket for next year—publically announced by Speaker RYAN—this may just be the tip of the iceberg. If we pass this tax bill, under our pay-go rules, we are in a position where we will be facing a $25 billion cut to Medicare just next year, in 2018. Indeed, for many Americans, this vote is not about taxes, it is about Medicare—what they thought they had earned and are entitled to, what their children believe they need in order to withstand the obvious health problems as one ages.

This does not even begin to cover the struggles facing working-class Americans every day. We are in the midst of a historic decline in labor force participation that economists are struggling to explain, and many States that are experiencing deep declines in labor force participation are among those hardest hit by the opioid epidemic. A few weeks ago, President Trump declared a public health emergency on opioids. Where are the resources coming from to face that national emergency? There will not be that much left after this tax cut.

What we are beginning to see—this is not cause and effect, but it is a correlation—is that a lot of individuals are leaving the workforce because they feel displaced by new technology or because they are noncompetitive or for a number of reasons, and this seems to correlate very highly in those States with large losses with this opioid epidemic. In my home State of Rhode Island, this epidemic is real. It is taking the lives of individuals. On a national scale, it is something that has already been proclaimed a public health emergency by the President. Again, where will the money come from after these tax cuts? Will the problem just go away? I doubt it. The money is going away, but not the problem.

We have to ask ourselves: If we are in a national public health emergency, why aren't we standing up and providing the resources to help Americans face this problem? It goes back to the same logic: If we are in our 16th or 17th year of war, why aren't we standing up and saying that we better put up some money for the troops, their equipment, and their families?

No—what my colleagues are saying is: We had better cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans, for corporations. We have to create loopholes for passthrough entities that give advantages to private equity concerns, legal firms, accountants, and others.

As we look at these problems, millions of Americans are sitting around their dinner tables, and they don't believe we need to give trillion-dollar tax cuts to corporations that have international operations. They are more likely thinking about more mundane things closer to their lives, such as, what about the roads and bridges in my community? Why does this country have an investment backlog in transportation of $836 billion for highways and bridges and $122 billion for transit? Why aren't we doing the big infrastructure bill that the President indicated during the campaign—which is going to cost real money? Instead, we are giving real money away.

This makes a huge difference—because pursuing tax cuts first doesn't just neglect infrastructure, it neglects jobs. The jobs infrastructure projects create are middle-class jobs. These are not the private equity analysts. These are not the sophisticated financial engineers. These are the laborers, the structural engineers, and the men and women who pour the concrete. They are not going to get much out of this tax bill. At the family dinner table, they are probably wondering how they can afford to send their children to college.

How can they even continue to send their children to elementary and secondary schools that are in a horrendous state of repair? The Department of Education has estimated it would cost $197 billion to bring all public schools in the United States to good condition, and there is a $30 billion funding gap in annual capital construction and new facility funding. This is not just a Rhode Island problem; this is a problem in every State of the Union. Public school buildings are decrepit, and we are sending children to those schools. If this legislation passes, where will we find the money to help State and local communities deal with these issues so that children can go to schools that are modern, up-to-date places where they can learn?

Once you get past the elementary and secondary education levels, today everyone insists the jobs of the future all require more than a high school education. We have a generation that has racked up about $1.3 trillion in student loans and is facing a job market that provides few opportunities and not enough opportunities to pay them off. They are worried. People are worried that their children—many of whom are still living with them after college—will never be able to pay off these loans. Where is the multibillion-dollar package of assistance, aid, and loan forgiveness that will allow this generation of Americans to have the same benefits that my generation had? That is not the situation today. Everyone in this Chamber knows this because, when they go home, they hear from parents who are wondering when their child will ever get out from underneath the significant debt they have.

These are all real problems that working families face. There is another

problem that is looming and will exacerbate these problems even more dramatically. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, up to 30 percent of the work done by 60 percent of occupations today is vulnerable to automation. By 2030, 75 million to 375 million—up to 14 percent—of the global workforce will need to change jobs. These advances in artificial intelligence could cause a huge erosion in human jobs.

What are families doing? What should we be doing? Frankly, we should be thinking of ways we can help people make the transition, and prepare them for what we know is coming. We know there is going to be a huge loss of jobs. We know that, when people drop out of the workforce, when companies get smaller, their pension obligations don't get that much smaller. We are also facing huge shortages in terms of pensions.

One of the ironies I suggest will happen—''irony'' is too gentle of a word—is that these corporations that are getting huge tax benefits are not going to raise wages. They are not going to turn it over to the people who work for them. They will buy back their stock, and some of these companies will buy back their stock even though their pension plans are not fully funded. That is not only an irony but an additional problem with the approach we are taking to this legislation.

The jobs in danger are not all entry-level positions. This is not about somebody who has a pick and a shovel and is displaced by a machine. We are talking about jobs, for example, in radiology. With computers and artificial intelligence today, doctors will admit they can read x-rays better than many technicians. They can do it in such a way that you don't need as many radiologists to review the records. They can be much more efficient. We are talking about jobs that are not core, entry-level jobs done by people who can easily do something else. We are talking about people who have master's degrees, who have years of training. This is going to come very quickly. What do they do? How do they compensate? Where do they get a job?

We know that this is going to happen, and we are weakening ourselves financially from being able to respond. Yet the legislation that is being proposed is oblivious to what we know is going to happen.

People will come here and say: ''We need more money for national defense.'' Why don't we do that now, instead of giving a big tax cut and raising the deficit?

In a few years or few months, people will say: ''This opioid crisis is out of control; it is even worse than it was when the President declared it an emergency.'' Let's do something.

We don't have the money. In a very few years, when people say, ''We are losing hundreds of thousands of good jobs; let's do something,'' the answer will be ''Sorry, we can't.''

By the way, we don't have much of a safety net for those people who are being displaced by these machines because we have eroded that too. We have huge challenges before us. The American people are watching us. They know these things. They are seeing in their workplace machines gradually replacing human beings. If you are a driver for UPS and you haven't figured out yet that these big companies are buying autonomous vehicles, they are using drones to deliver packages, et cetera—they understand what is coming. They see their children with huge debt living at home because they can't afford to buy a home, given their school loans. They sense the fragility of not only their own job but also the support for their parents on Medicare and Medicaid.

One of the things I thought was interesting when I heard we were going on to entitlement reform is the fact that the biggest amount of money spent in Medicaid go to nursing homes, and it goes to individuals who are not the poorest of poor. They are middle-class people, seniors, or people with long-term disabilities who have exhausted most of their funds. They have sold their house or mortgaged their house, et cetera, and they are the ones who are taking the bulk of the Medicaid money and funding. If we cut Medicaid, what we are going to do is tell a lot of middle-class people: You are out; you are out of this nursing home. Or we are going to tell their sons and daughters: You thought you had a problem paying off your children's tuition; you thought you had a problem at work because you haven't had a raise in several years. Guess what. Unless you come up with $1,000 extra a month, your mother is out of that nursing home.

That is the reality. That is what Americans around their kitchen tables and coffee shops are talking about. They are not talking about big tax cuts for the wealthiest corporations and individuals. It is no surprise that, if you look at any of the polling with respect to this tax bill, the American people are against it. My colleagues, particularly on the other side, are committed to getting something through that the American people don't want. They have said it. The polling has been extensive: We don't want this; we have real problems at home.

I am here to say that I believe this is a great mistake. I don't think any of us going forward should be in a position to say: Someone should have told me; someone should have told me that we need trillions of dollars to improve our defense above and beyond the current money we are spending. Somebody should have told me that hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of good jobs are going away because of artificial intelligence. Someone should have told me that young people are drowning under college debt, and we should fix that. Someone should have told me that we are in a situation where working conditions and the prospect of work is so fragile for so many people.

I think this is a great mistake. I hope my colleagues will reflect on what we are about to do and reject it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 1:45 p.m. today, all postcloture time be yielded back and the Senate vote on the confirmation of the Ho nomination and that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

NAFTA

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I rise today because I believe that some here in Washington are under the illusion about what would happen if we were to withdraw from the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA.

Some people still, inexplicably, believe that this would be a good thing. They believe the relationship between the United States and Mexico and Canada is somehow a raw deal for Americans. Let's talk about Mexico for a while.

In reality, Mexico spends 26 percent of its GDP in its purchasing of goods from the United States, while we spend less than 1 percent of our GDP—I think it is 0.2 percent—in our purchasing of goods from them. Again, for those who obsess over trade deficits with Mexico, Mexico spends 26 percent of its GDP in its purchasing of goods from the United States while we spend less than 1 percent of our GDP in our purchasing of goods from them. Prior to NAFTA, our total trade with Mexico was under $80 billion. Now that trade approaches $600 billion. That is a good thing. That is good for us, and it is good for Mexico. Trade is not a zero-sum game.

These folks also seem to think that terminating NAFTA will have no lasting impact on this Nation or its economy. In reality, pulling out of NAFTA would have sweeping negative consequences for Americans all over the country. Let me briefly describe what America would look like without NAFTA.

It would be an America with fewer jobs and higher unemployment. Some of these jobs that would be lost would not return for decades, maybe even for a generation. Other jobs would never return. It would be a poorer America without NAFTA. The gross domestic product would drop. Much of the positive growth that we have seen recently may be erased. In the last year, we have seen impressive GDP numbers. We have achieved great growth through strong, conservative policies—in our having a better regulatory environment, in particular. I hope the days of 1-percent growth are behind us, but if we scrap NAFTA, that may not be the case. An America without NAFTA would be one crippled by subsidies.

I agree with my colleague from Kansas and the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee chairman, Senator ROBERTS. He recently explained that the withdrawal from NAFTA would add to farmers' demands for increased farm subsidies at a time when Congress simply cannot afford that. These farmers would prefer to sell their crops at reasonable prices, but in our exiting NAFTA, they will certainly ask for economic protection through increased farm subsidies. I believe that many of these subsidies are automatically added and that these subsidies would substantially grow the national debt and dramatically curtail any ability to rein in government spending.

Without NAFTA, we will likely find ourselves in a less secure America. The withdrawal from NAFTA will destabilize the Mexican economy and create a crisis on our southern border. Terminating this agreement will seriously undercut the important progress that has been made over the past several decades—that of improving drug enforcement and stabilizing the Mexican economy. Efforts toward privatization, criminal justice reform, and modernization have been good for the Mexican economy. In turn, it has been good for our economy as well.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, the number of people trying to cross illegally into the United States from Mexico has fallen to the lowest level in 46 years. That is largely due to there being a better economy in Mexico. If we pull out of NAFTA and allow Mexico to plunge into economic chaos and uncertainty, it will, certainly, drive up the number of those who want to come to the United States.

These are the real ramifications of terminating NAFTA—an America with higher unemployment, a lower GDP, more Federal subsidies, particularly for agriculture, and increased illegal immigration.

All of this—exiting NAFTA—would come before we would face the ultimate challenge of negotiating a new trade agreement to replace NAFTA. Anyone who suggests that this process is quick or easy is sadly mistaken. In today's global economy, people and nations have more choices than ever.

For evidence of this, look no further than to the disastrous decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Canada and Mexico, like other TPP nations, could decide to move ahead without the United States. These countries have more choices than ever. It used to be that we were the only game in town. That is not the case anymore. These countries have and will move on without us. They could simply refocus their efforts on alternative markets and explore new trade partners. It is a dangerous game when we in America are no longer seen as a reliable trade partner. We will have countries that will be reluctant to enter into agreements with us and that will simply not want to renegotiate.

Let's not be swayed by those who would have us believe that the impact of exiting this trade agreement would somehow be minor or short-lived. There are some who say that we have to exit the agreement in order to negotiate a better agreement. As I have explained, just exiting the agreement will have real ramifications—canceled contracts, particularly for those in agriculture when you are dealing with commodities. Let's not be misled by those who are under the illusion that negotiating an entirely new trade agreement, as I have said, will be simple or painless. It will not be.

In closing, we have seen the limits to the philosophy of ethno-nationalism and economic nationalism. We have seen those limits politically, gratefully, this week in Alabama. Let's not follow those who believe in that philosophy or who are advocating an ethnocentric, or an extreme, nationalistic trade policy. That would be disastrous for the economy of the United States in its moving forward.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM BILL

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I come here today to again speak in support of comprehensive tax reform. For weeks, I have worked to highlight the enormous benefits that our tax reform efforts will have for the economy. I am very excited about the point where I think we are now because I know this will help our middle-income families, workers, and businesses of all sizes.

I think it should not be lost that the tax reform bill doubles the standard deduction. In my small State of West Virginia, 83 percent of the people living there don't itemize. They are going to use the standard deduction, and that is going to be doubled. It also significantly increases the child tax credit, which is great for families and great for young families with children trying to make ends meet.

It will make America's businesses more competitive around the world, which I think will lead to higher wages and more opportunities for our workers.

I encouraged my colleagues to join these efforts as the Senate proposal worked its way through the Senate Finance Committee and again as it came to the Senate floor for debate. Next week, we hope to see the conference committee report on the Senate floor.

Last week, I explained why I was proud to cast my vote for this critical legislation. I expressed my optimism that the Senate and the House would come together, reconcile the differences between the two bills, and settle on an agreement that would provide real relief and real opportunity for the American people.

Today, we are closer than ever to getting comprehensive, pro-growth tax reform across the finish line, and that is why I am standing here to explain why it is so important that we move it all the way through this process and pass these reforms.

I asked you to take my word, and I have for the last several weeks and months, but now, today, I ask you to not simply take my word on this. Throughout the process, when I have been back at home in West Virginia, I have heard from constituents, friends, and even strangers who are really rooting for this effort. They are rooting for it because they understand what a difference it will make in their lives. Whether I am at a roundtable discussion or at the grocery store, so many West Virginians have shared with me what tax reform would mean for them and their families. They have encouraged me and they have encouraged us to get this done because they know what tax reform would do for our State in terms of jump-starting the economy.

One West Virginian I recently heard from, Donald from Beckley, recently wrote to me on behalf of his sons and grandchildren, who he said will ''reap the rewards'' of the tax reform bill. He wrote:

> There are too many minimum wage jobs in West Virginia and not enough higher-paying jobs for advancement. There is no ladder for the young people to climb anymore.

Donald added that he would be very surprised if the tax bill doesn't help solve this problem. If we don't see higher wages, which we believe we will, Donald said that he would be surprised. I know we are going to see higher wages. He said: ''I really hope that the Senate and House get this bill to the President's desk before Christmas so he can sign it.''

This week, similar support was echoed by a number of groups and organizations in West Virginia. The National Federation of Independent Business said that both the House- and Senate-passed tax reform proposals ''recognize the need for small business tax relief, which means businesses could reinvest in their businesses and employees, create local jobs in rural and urban areas of West Virginia.''

I had to kind of laugh when they said ''urban'' areas in West Virginia. I am not sure we truly have urban areas. We have many rural areas. But we have great towns in West Virginia.

The NFIB went on to say: ''We can't afford to miss this once-in-a-generation opportunity to help Main Street businesses grow and create jobs.''

The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce, which represents businesses small and large in the State, also expressed support for the tax reform effort this week by calling it a ''real win-win'' and noting that ''by making tax rates more competitive, small businesses will be able to reinvest in growing their operations and creating more

jobs, and individuals will be able to determine how best to spend their hard-earned money, further stimulating economic growth.'' The chamber also pointed out that this effort is expected to grow jobs in our State by roughly 5,000 new jobs. To some States, 5,000 might not sound like a lot, but in a State such as ours, 5,000 jobs would be welcomed and welcomed heartily. They also highlighted that West Virginians are expected to see an average reduction of nearly $2,000 in their Federal taxes that they pay. That is a significant amount of money for hard-working families across our State, to be able to determine how they want to spend their money.

Additionally, the State director of the West Virginia chapter of Americans for Prosperity recently said:

> This is a huge step for taxpayers. This is going to make American businesses competitive again. It's going to put more money in the pockets of West Virginians.

Finally, our West Virginia manufacturers—we have a great manufacturing sector—weighed in by saying:

> Manufacturers large and small know this reform will mean more jobs in America, more investment in America, and more men and women making things in America. . . . Our elected leaders now need to seize this opportunity, get tax reform across the finish line, and send it to President Donald Trump's desk.

I couldn't agree more.

Many of the folks I have quoted represent numerous businesses and numerous people who work in and for those businesses.

To get this economy growing is incredibly important, and that is what we are going to do. It is time to seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity. It is time to get tax reform across the finish line. It is time to send this pro-growth legislation to President Trump's desk. Families, workers, and small businesses in West Virginia and across this country are counting on us. They are counting on us to do the right thing, to be big and bold, to get this economy moving. That will result in more jobs, higher wages, more investment, and more opportunity and optimism about the future of our country.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I look forward to voting for this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

DACA

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I want to cover two topics. There is so much to cover between now and the end of the year, but I want to focus today on two issues. One is the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the second is the so-called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, the so-called DACA Program, and in particular the individuals affected by this policy, the Dreamers. I will start with that issue.

The Dreamers, of course, are something on the order of 800,000 young people who were promised that if they came forward and made disclosures, their government would protect them. That is the basic promise that our government made. This is a significant moment in their lives and in the life of the Nation as to whether we are going to keep what I would argue is a sacred promise to 800,000 young people and in my home State of Pennsylvania, at last count, thousands, as many as 5,900, approximately.

In this case, we are talking about this issue because a promise was made, and then in the transition from one administration to the other, a different approach was taken. In September, President Trump decided to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program. This announcement required those whose DACA waivers would expire within 6 months to submit a renewal application in just 1 month—not a lot of time to get that done.

Unfortunately, many DACA recipients were unable to meet this short deadline, and others who managed to get their applications in time were still rejected due to postal delays—not because of something that young person did but due to postal delays. While the administration has said these individuals may be able to resubmit, many are immediately at risk of deportation.

Just imagine that. In fact, it is impossible for me to imagine it, and maybe it is impossible for anyone in this building to imagine that you are an individual who came forward because of this program, because of a promise your government made to you that you would be protected if you came forward. You came forward after years of living in this country—many years wouldn't add up to a long life because these individuals are obviously very young. Some of them came when they were just a couple years old or a couple of months old, and they know no other country. In fact, one individual whom I met with around a big conference table of about 15 to 20 DACA recipients said to me in this meeting a couple of months ago, she said: The only country that I know, doesn't want us. That was her assessment of what the ending of this program should mean to her.

So that is what they are at risk of. They are not just at risk of some theoretical consequence. They are literally at risk of deportation after living here all these years and not knowing any other country because of their circumstances.

It is estimated that 12,000 DACA recipients have already lost their protection—12,000 young people—and that number will grow to some 20,000 by March. Why would our country break a promise to 12,000 individuals and then 20,000 and then potentially much, much higher numbers? So we can't wait one more day, in my judgment, to help these Dreamers.

Dreamers across Pennsylvania and the Nation already are living in fear and feeling the consequences of this horrific decision.

ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, has already picked up a young Dreamer during a routine traffic stop whose DACA waiver had expired. This Dreamer had been waiting to reapply for protection after his initial application was rejected due to—I will say it again—postal delays. While the administration has said they would allow these applications that were rejected due to postal delays the chance to reapply, the administration has been silent on what these individuals should do in the interim. For many Dreamers, this means they must choose between risking deportation and continuing to work and provide for their children and their families, depending on the circumstance.

These Dreamers have done everything right, and their applications were rejected, not due to any action they did not take, but they were rejected for other reasons—due to a failure of our government. Yet, now, they are paying the price.

Risking ICE detention and deportation to countries within which they have never lived as adults is totally contrary to our values. Dreamers are young people who have lived in this country since they were children. They are law-abiding residents who have learned English, paid taxes, gone to school, secured jobs that support themselves and their families.

This program has enabled almost 800,000 young people to grow and thrive in America. These impressive young people provide enormous contributions to our society, including paying an estimated $2 billion every year in State and local taxes. The economic loss to Pennsylvania is estimated to be in the hundreds of millions. To be exact, by one estimate, it is a $357.1 million loss to the State's GDP. How about the Nation overall? By one estimate, if this were to go forward and these young people were to be deported in the numbers some are talking about, it is a national number that is in the hundreds of billions of dollars—by one estimate, north of $400 billion. That is the impact.

So we have to get this done one way or the other. It would be a terrible failure of our government; worse than that, it would be an insult to our country, and it would be breaking a sacred promise.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Madam President, just a few remarks rather quickly about a major program we are also debating; that is, the Children's Health Insurance Program. We know CHIP expired on September 30. It is a total failure of the government to allow that to happen. It is hard to comprehend that even as some are debating about the size of a corporate tax break, which will be permanent, there is uncertainty, and any uncertainty about the Children's Health Insurance Program is also an insult to the country. Nine million children and their

healthcare and the security of their families is on the line. So we need to get the Children's Health Insurance Program passed.

The tragic irony is, the Finance Committee, of which I am a member, passed a bipartisan bill: The Keep Kids' Insurance Dependable and Secure Act, the so-called KIDS Act of 2017, reauthorizes the CHIP program for 5 years. There is no reason why—no reason whatsoever—that KIDS Act could not be voted on and passed on the floor of the Senate this afternoon or tomorrow or Monday without any impediment to getting that done, but it is being held up, I guess, as a negotiation tactic or as a way to get a deal on something else.

Children's healthcare should not be subject to any deal or any leverage or any engagement on other issues. We should get it done. If people can spend hours and hours and days and now weeks giving big corporations a permanent tax cut that exceeds $1 trillion, we ought to make sure an existing, effective, bipartisan program for children gets reauthorized.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to speak for a few minutes on two subjects. I don't have prepared remarks so I am going to speak from the heart.

Let me talk first about the CHIP program. One of my favorite people in the U.S. Senate is my colleague from Pennsylvania, Senator CASEY, and he just spoke very eloquently about a program called the Children's Health Insurance Program, which is part of our Medicaid Program. It provides health insurance for the children of America who are too poor to be sick.

That bill will pass. The Children's Health Insurance Program will be renewed. I want to look the American people in the eye right now and tell them: Do not worry. Do not worry.

This is an extraordinarily able program that has served the people of this country and our country well, and I don't want anybody to be unnecessarily frightened at Christmas. If you are a mom or a dad or a child or concerned citizen out there today and you hear that CHIP is in danger, with all the respect I can muster, I want to say it is not. Don't believe it. The CHIP program will be renewed.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. President, now, let me just talk a second about taxes. In a few days, we are going to vote on a tax system, and that vote will be a vote, as much as anything, on people's opinion about the current tax system. No reasonable person can look at America's current tax system and be impressed. For one thing, it is enormously complicated. It is 10 million words. You can stand on it and paint this ceiling.

I don't want to just talk about technicalities here because most Americans don't have time to worry about section 106(a) or section 807(b). They are too busy getting up every day and going to work and obeying the law and paying their taxes. They just want to know what the bottom line is.

So let me tell them what the bottom line is. We are going to pass a tax bill that is going to cut about $1.4 billion in taxes for the American people and the American businesswomen and the American businessmen over 10 years.

Let me talk, first, about the impact on people—ordinary people, Mr. President, like you and I. We are going to double the standard deduction. Why is that important? Right now, about 70 percent of Americans take the standard deduction. After we double it, probably about 90 percent will. The President is right. You will be able to file your taxes on a postcard if you want to. For Americans who have children, we are going to double the children's tax credit. We are going to lower every marginal tax rate. I know you have been told we are only going to help the wealthy. That is just not true. We are lowering every single tax rate. I am very proud of the fact that this bill starts—it doesn't end, but it starts with helping our middle class.

In my State, a mom and dad working hard, making $75,000 a year—mom makes 30-plus thousand and dad makes 30-plus thousand, and they have two children—right now, they pay about $3,500, $3,700 in Federal income taxes. Now, of course, that is not all they pay. They pay payroll taxes, they pay State taxes, and they pay local taxes. In fact, government taxes everything now at all levels. Government now taxes the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the homes we live in. Government started thinking it owns all our money. Government taxes us when we work. Government taxes us when we play. Government taxes us when we die. So when I tell you that a couple making $73,000, $75,000 in my State is paying $3,750, roughly, in Federal income tax, I don't want you to think that is all.

The point I am trying to make is, after we pass this bill, that couple is going to pay about $1,500, $1,700, $1,400 in Federal income taxes. That mom and dad who, as I said before, get up every day and go to work and obey the law and try to do the right thing by their kids and try to save a little money for retirement and try to teach their children values is going to have an extra couple thousand dollars in their paycheck, and that is a lot of money. It is to me, and I know it is to you, and it is going to be a lot of money for that mom and dad.

This bill is also going to help every businesswoman and businessman in America. Yes, it is going to help our large corporations. Right now, we tax them at a rate of 35 percent. This bill is going to reduce that to 21 percent, but it is not just going to help large businesses, it is going to help small businesses as well. I am talking about the subchapter S corporations and the LLCs and the LLPs and the sole proprietorships. I am talking about the family farms. I am talking about the American who decided to take a risk to create some jobs, start a small business, went and took a second mortgage on her home, maybe employs four or five people. If she fails in her business, government is not going to be there to bail her out. She is going to lose her home, but she wants to take a risk, to be her own boss, to create jobs in America. We are going to cut her taxes too.

The passthrough rate, the top marginal tax rate, by my calculations after this bill is passed, is going to be about 29.6 percent. Right now, the top marginal tax rate for that businesswoman would be about 43 percent. And you say: Well, the small businesses get a 26-percent rate. Why do the big corporations get 21 percent?

Because the big corporations pay taxes twice. Saying they are going to pay 21 percent in our bill isn't the only part of it. When they declare dividends, they have to pay taxes again. So that is the reason for the disparity.

Let me tell you why this is important. So many of my colleagues—in fact, every one of my colleagues in the Senate says that they are for jobs. We are all for jobs, but you can't be for jobs if you are against business. You can't.

Businessmen and businesswomen need four things from government. They need reasonable regulation—not no regulation, reasonable regulation; they need a decent infrastructure; they need a skilled workforce; and they need low taxes. That is what government is supposed to provide. And then, in a free enterprise system like ours, government needs to get out of its way and let the free enterprise system work, which has lifted more people out of poverty than all the social programs put together.

Our bill is going to provide lower taxes. We have a lot of differences of opinion in this body. Some of my colleagues—most of whom happen to be Democrats—believe that it is possible to tax this country into prosperity. Once again, I say this with all the respect I can muster: They are in good faith in believing that. This is America. You can believe what you want. But if they believe that, then they were in the quad throwing a frisbee during economics 101. And that is just a fact.

Some of the opponents of this bill have suggested that tax policy has absolutely nothing to do with our economy, with economic growth. Once again, with all the respect I can muster, I would ask them very respectfully: What planet did you just parachute in from? Average Americans understand, ordinary Americans understand, people who work for a living understand that when you tax something, you get less of it, and when you tax it less, you get more of it.

This is a solid bill. It is not perfect. If I were king for a day—I am not, and I don't want to be—I would make some

changes. But reasonable people disagree sometimes, and I believe this body will come together.

I hope we get some Democratic votes because I think that in their hearts, some of our Democratic friends want to vote for this bill. They do. We will see whether or not they do, but I believe they do. But we are going to pass this legislation, and the American people are going to be better off. It is not going to add to the deficit. I would not vote for this legislation if I thought it would hurt us long term in terms of our deficit.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield to my colleague from Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SANDY HOOK MASS SHOOTING

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am on the floor this afternoon to mark 5 years since the unthinkable—since 20 6-year-olds and 7-year-olds and 6 of their educators were killed in an elementary school in Connecticut. It changed the town of Newtown. It changed this country in the way that we think about gun violence. And it certainly changed me. I want to offer a few thoughts today as we once again memorialize those beautiful children whose lives were cut far, far too short.

It is easy to spend today—especially those of us who come from Connecticut, who are very intimately connected to the tragedy and to those families—drowning in sadness. There is really no way to conceive of what it is like as a parent to lose a child that young, in that manner, in 5 short minutes in a hail of bullets emanating from a tactical assault weapon. Twenty kids who had just walked into their classroom, bright and cheery, were gone.

It is easy to hang your head, thinking of all of the things that haven't happened. I have been down to this floor over 50 times, often at my wit's end, raising my voice at my colleagues in frustration at our quiet and unintentional endorsement of the slaughter that happens in this country because we haven't passed a single piece of legislation trying to make sense of our Nation's gun laws. In fact, to the extent we have made changes in gun laws, it has compounded the problem, not remedied it.

But I want to spend my brief time here today not focusing on the sadness of today—it is there; it is inescapable—and not focusing on what we haven't done but focusing on so many miracles, big ones and small ones, that have occurred in and around the lives of those who have been affected in Newtown, CT, over the last 5 years.

First, there are these individual miracles that have happened within these families. Again, very few people understand the kind of crippling pain that comes with this loss. While these families will never be the same, they have found ways to rebound. They have found ways to still capture joy in their lives. Some have added to their numbers by welcoming new children into their family since then. They have rediscovered passions. They have made sure that the surviving children—the siblings—have been able to live lives of optimism rather than live lives of perpetual fear.

I have gotten to know so many of these families. The parents and the kids are now close, personal friends of mine. Watching the rebirth of these families instills a sense of faith in the human spirit that is hard to explain. Those are small miracles, but they are important ones to remember on this 5-year anniversary.

The miracles also come in ways that lives have been changed and saved through the efforts that have sprung forth out of this tragedy. So many of the families joined together with their friends and started up small charitable organizations in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, trying to find a way to take the beauty of these kids and transfer it to others. They are almost too numerable to mention.

The Ana Grace Project gives out a scholarship every year at Western Connecticut State University for incoming freshmen who are interested in studying music because for her whole life, Ana Grace was surrounded by music.

The Vicki Soto Memorial Fund donates five books every year to every K–6 classroom in her hometown of Stratford. She was one of the teachers—heroes of that day. Kids have the opportunity to read and to learn to love reading—which is what she taught to these kindergarten kids—because of her foundation.

The Charlotte Helen Bacon Foundation pays for therapy dogs for kids and families in need, reflecting Charlotte's love of dogs.

The Catherine Violet Hubbard Foundation opened an animal sanctuary on 32 acres in Newtown to help animals that had been rescued from abusive or neglectful environments because of Catherine's love of animals.

The list goes on and on. These are small, beautiful miracles that are happening all across Connecticut and all across the country in trying to honor the memory of these kids and their educators.

Then there are miracles that have happened in the context of public policy. A year ago this week, I sat at the White House with a few of the Sandy Hook parents, quietly in the back of an auditorium, as President Obama signed into law the 2016 Mental Health Reform Act, which would not have become law without the input and activism of the Sandy Hook parents and many other survivors of gun violence.

Our gun violence problem is not a mental health problem, per se. There is no inherent connection between mental illness and gun violence. But there is no mistaking that the shooter in Newtown—as has been the case in so many other of these mass slaughters—had deep mental health problems that went untreated. There have been public policy victories.

So today, on the 5-year anniversary, I hope that my friends here will celebrate these small but meaningful miracles that have happened over the last 5 years, and I hope that you will be reminded that we cannot take one day or one moment for granted. Those moms and dads who sent their kids to school that morning never imagined that would be the last time they would be able to interact with their children. So none of us should think that we will have another chance to say what we want to say to somebody we care about. None of us should think we can put off saying ''I love you'' for another moment. Those small things that we do for each other matter desperately.

I think about one story that I will leave you with from that morning. Daniel Barden is one of the young boys killed in that elementary school. His older brother went to school at a different time than he did. He would get up earlier and go down to the bus stop earlier than Daniel would, so they normally wouldn't really see each other in the morning. For some reason, the morning of the shooting at Sandy Hook, Daniel got up earlier than he normally did. He saw that his brother was at the end of the driveway waiting for the bus. He ran out of the house and down the driveway to say goodbye to his brother—goodbye for the day. It was just a small, tiny act of kindness that Daniel thought probably would be forgotten by his brother by the end of that day, but it has meant the world to that family, the idea that Daniel got the chance to walk down the driveway and say goodbye to his brother before he went to school that day and never came back.

Don't ever think you will have another chance to say what you want to say to a loved one, to someone who means something in your life.

A few months ago, one of the Sandy Hook parents arrived unexpectedly in my office. I got word from the front desk that she was there. She just wanted to stop in for a few minutes. I said: Of course, send her back. This mom had lost her child. I have come to know her very well. She burst into my office and she flung her arms around me and she whispered into my ear: Keep going. She unclasped her arms and looked at me and said: That is all I wanted to come and tell you. After a few pleasantries, she walked out the door.

Keep going. That is what Newtown has done over the last 5 years. That is what those families have found the courage to do over the last half a decade.

For those of us who believe the laws of this country must change in order to protect kids like those who lost their lives in Sandy Hook, it is what we do. As we mark 5 years since the violence at Sandy Hook Elementary School, we keep going.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Under the previous order, all postcloture time is yielded back.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 317 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heitkamp	Rounds
Cassidy	Heller	Rubio
Collins	Hoeven	Sasse
Corker	Inhofe	Scott
Cornyn	Isakson	Shelby
Cotton	Johnson	Strange
Crapo	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cruz	Lankford	Thune
Daines	Lee	Tillis
Donnelly	McCaskill	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young
Fischer	Murkowski	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Reed
Bennet	Harris	Sanders
Blumenthal	Hassan	Schatz
Booker	Heinrich	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kaine	Stabenow
Cardin	King	Tester
Carper	Klobuchar	Udall
Casey	Leahy	Van Hollen
Coons	Markey	Warner
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warren
Duckworth	Merkley	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murphy	Wyden
Feinstein	Nelson	
Franken	Peters	

NOT VOTING—4

Cochran	McCain
Manchin	Murray

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Utah.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, earlier today, the FCC voted to reverse a major impediment to a free and open internet—the title II internet regulations that were imposed under President Obama in 2015. These regulations are commonly referred to as net neutrality. For the sake of convenience, that is what I will call it.

I want to congratulate FCC Chairman Ajit Pai for his brave accomplishment today. He has fought for what he knows is right, and he has done so in the face of tremendous pressure and, at times, overwhelming opposition. I also want to use this opportunity to correct the record about what it is that the FCC has actually accomplished.

There is an astonishing amount of misinformation about this issue, and there is a lot of hyperbole surrounding it. If you believe the passionate voices defending these regulations, then you may believe that the FCC just jeopardized the entire internet as we know and love it and sometimes loathe it. These activists tend to paint a scary vision of America without net neutrality—a vision in which large internet service providers prey on ordinary consumers and startup businesses, a vision in which internet access would be rationed or bundled up in very expensive, unaffordable packages. One viral tweet even suggested that Google would start charging two bucks apiece for internet searches.

These are falsehoods, every one of them, and they will be exposed as such in the coming days, weeks, and months, when the internet hums right along just like usual and skyscrapers in all of our major cities remain standing. In the wake of that, we are going to look back at these dire predictions, these mere hysterics, like the Y2K bug or the Mayan apocalypse of 2012. In the present, these exaggerations have real-world consequences that go far above and beyond scaring the public.

In the last 6 months, Chairman Pai and his family have been attacked in the grossest and most unacceptable terms. Even his children have been singled out for intimidation. These kinds of attacks have absolutely no place in our public discourse. Why don't we tone down the rhetoric and see if we can get to the truth about net neutrality. We can start with a little background.

In 2015, the Democratic-controlled FCC issued the so-called open internet order. This order made dramatic changes to how the internet is classified for purposes of Federal regulation.

Until 2015, broadband internet was classified as an information service. As such, it was subject to light-touch regulations that allowed innovators to build without seeking permission from the Federal Government. This classification reflected common sense, and it reflected the intent of Congress.

The internet is a fast-moving information superhighway. If slow-moving government regulators had gotten involved decades ago, it could have inhibited innovation—the same kind of innovation that keeps service fast and keeps prices low for all Americans.

Not only was this a commonsense arrangement, it facilitated a virtual renaissance of innovation and discovery in this increasingly important part of our economy. This renaissance gave us things like smartphones, ridesharing, and super-fast fiberoptic internet services. It gave us 3G, 4G, and then, soon, 5G wireless service. This period also gave us Twitter. One could argue that maybe this wasn't all good but mostly good.

Overall, the light-touch regulatory arrangement works pretty well for ordinary users, big companies, and entrepreneurs who are just starting out in their garages. Contrary to net neutrality's most aggressive defenders, the internet of 2014 was not some sort of hopeless hellscape; it was actually pretty awesome.

The FCC threatened all of that in the early weeks of 2015 when it reclassified broadband internet as a ''telecommunications service.'' This innocuous-sounding change subjected the internet to a whole host of regulations that were originally meant for New Deal-era telephone monopolies like Ma Bell. In essence, the government imposed 1930s-style regulations on 21st-century technology. This outdated arrangement has worked about as well as one might expect. Broadband internet investment has fallen significantly since the net neutrality regulations were proposed in 2011. Dr. George Ford of the Phoenix Center estimates that between 2011 and 2015, just the threat of internet regulation scared off $200 billion in investment.

Since the regulations were imposed in 2015, broadband internet investment has declined by 5.6 percent. That is billions of lost dollars over just 2 years. As Chairman Pai has noted, this is the first ever decline in broadband investment outside of a recession, and this recession just happens to be self-imposed. It may not seem like a big deal to you that government is squeezing out billions in internet investment, but it hurts you and it hurts your fellow citizens in material ways, in ways that might not always be obvious. Less investment means less fiber optic cable, fewer towers, and fewer wi-fi hotspots. This translates into spottier coverage and slower speeds for Americans, especially those living on the periphery of

society, in poverty, or in rural areas. FCC regulations make it harder for these Americans to have equal access to the internet.

These regulations have also entrenched the market power of large internet service providers while hurting their smaller competitors. By their very nature, regulations impose conformity on a market. They limit companies' ability to distinguish themselves from their rivals by offering innovative services. This works out fine for the companies at the top. They have already made it. In fact, it can work out really well for some of them. They can kick back without worrying about some young punk coming along and changing the game. It works out less well for the young punks, the startups who want to win customers away from old-school companies.

That is how it works in theory, at least, and there is good evidence that this is exactly what is happening in practice. Small ISPs have been far more critical of net neutrality regulations than large ISPs. A group of two dozen small internet providers recently wrote that the regulations hang like a black cloud over their business, slowing or even halting their deployment of new technology. Likewise, 19 municipal internet providers told the FCC that they ''often delay or hold off'' on introducing new services because they cannot afford a potential complaint. Internet providers that serve predominantly rural areas have voiced similar concerns, reporting that they have reduced network expansion in parts of the country that are already underserved.

These examples show that net neutrality regulations are harming competition and increasing the consolidation of power in the internet industry, not decreasing it. Internet regulations have, in effect, sheltered large ISPs from competition and from the need to change. Be sure to think about that the next time you are on hold with customer support.

As Americans chart a path forward in the coming years, we will face an important choice: Do we want an internet that is run by regulators or do we want an internet that is run by innovators? The innovators have had a really strong track record over the last 30 years with regard to the internet. So they are the ones I am siding with, not with the regulators.

How can we empower the innovators? More importantly, how can we empower the millions of families who rely on fast and reliable internet service each and every day?

The FCC did its part by repealing net neutrality regulations and returning to the regulatory framework that governed the internet—successfully, I would add—until 2015. This move reclassifies the internet as an information service, but it goes well beyond that. The FCC will require every ISP to disclose information about its network management practices. If these companies block or throttle web traffic, rest assured that the public will know about it.

Importantly, this order restores enforcement power to the Federal Trade Commission to protect consumers from unfair or deceptive practices. The FTC had policed the internet successfully for years prior to 2015. Now the cop is back on the beat. The FCC's action today is a return to normalcy for the internet, but we should not rest easy. A future administration could undo all of Chairman Pai's hard work at a moment's notice if Congress doesn't act to solidify his accomplishment.

Over the summer, I introduced legislation entitled the Restoring Internet Freedom Act, which would prohibit the FCC from imposing utility-style regulations on the internet ever again. Passing this act would give companies the regulatory certainty they need to invest in improvements for their customers. We should not discount how important Congress can be in determining the success or in directing the failure of things like the internet.

In 1996 President Clinton and Congress inaugurated the light-touch regulations of the internet. They wanted the information superhighway to be unfettered by Federal or State regulations. They were rewarded—and we were rewarded—with a tremendous outpouring of innovation that has improved the lives of, basically, all Americans and people throughout the world. I say that we emulate their wise example and see what free men and free women can invent in the next 20 years.

Thank you.

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

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

REPUBLICAN TAX Bill

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon because of the reports that the House and Senate conference committees on the tax plan are nearing an agreement or may have reached an agreement. By all accounts, this would be shaping up to be one of the greatest legislative heists in American history.

It is hard to imagine that you could take a tax code that is already stacked in favor of the very wealthy and very powerful special interests and actually make it worse, but that is exactly what we are hearing coming out of the conference committee. This is being worked on, essentially, by our Republican House colleagues and our Republican Senate colleagues.

The actual conference committee is a bit of a charade because all the real discussions going on with respect to the tax bill are done behind closed doors, with lobbyists who are putting on the finishing touches.

Here is what we are hearing from the reports that are coming out. We have already gotten details; some of the details had been released.

From the Associate Press: ''Ample tax cuts for business, wealthy in new GOP tax accord.'' That is the headline about the tax plan that will be coming to this Senate soon.

The reality is that any tax cuts for middle-class families are going to be a lot smaller than the tax cuts for the very wealthy, and they are only temporary.

Also, make no mistake, you are going to see millions of middle-class families actually see a tax increase, but those who will get some small tax relief will see it only on a temporary basis, and then it will disappear. The corporate tax cuts—they are forever under this Republican plan.

Here is the headline of the Washington Post about what is coming out of the House-Senate Republican conference committee: ''Republicans reach compromise tax plan, expanding tax cuts for the wealthy.''

Let's get this straight. We had a Senate bill and a House bill. The Senate bill actually reduced the top rate—that is the rate that applies to the wealthiest in this country—to 38.5 percent. It is currently 39 percent; they reduced it to 38.5 percent. In the House, they kept the top rate where it was. So the Senate bill is 38.5 percent; the House bill is around 39 percent. Republicans from the House and the Senate go behind closed doors, and where does it end up? They actually cut that top rate for the wealthiest folks in this country to a place that is lower than either of the tax bills that went into conference.

So you take these bills and go behind closed doors, and all of a sudden, the wealthy—who are already doing really well under the House tax plan and the Senate Republican tax plan—do even better because they are dropping that top tax rate to 37 percent.

For those who think that a drop from 39 to 37 percent doesn't sound like a lot, I will tell you, if you are making $1 million, that is an average tax cut of $20,000 a year when millions of American middle-class families are seeing their taxes go up and so many others are getting crumbs and, again, just temporary crumbs.

We were promised this would be very different. This is what President Trump's Secretary of the Treasury, Steve Mnuchin, told us: ''There will be no absolute tax cut for the upper class.'' That is clearly false because the upper class is getting a big tax windfall. Not only that, but as I just said, those tax windfalls are getting larger in the bill coming out of the conference than they were going in.

What we are seeing is a lot of promises that sounded really nice to the American people, but it turns out it has been a scam. What people were told was that this was going to be out there

to help working folks, and that is not what they are getting. That is why all the public surveys show that the American public doesn't like what they see, and that is why there is this effort to rush this through so quickly.

My plea today is that there is still time. There is still time to turn back from this tax plan that is going to do so much harm to our country in the coming years.

There certainly is an opportunity here for our Members on the Republican side to take a final look at what is coming out of this conference and decide to turn back and work on a bipartisan basis for real tax reform, not just something masquerading as tax reform, which is really a tax break for the big corporations.

Exhibit A as to why this is not tax reform is the broken promise with respect to closing the carried interest loophole. People will remember President Trump talking about that. I don't know what is going to come out of conference in the end, but what I do know is that neither the House bill nor the Senate bill closed the carried interest tax break. For hedge fund managers who are making big bucks, that is the loophole that allows them to pay a lower tax rate than the folks working for them in their office—for the secretaries who work in their office, for the folks who come in and clean the offices. The hedge fund managers, through the carried interest loophole, actually pay a lower tax rate in many cases than those folks who are working for them.

In fact, it is such an outrageous loophole that Donald Trump got big headlines during the 2016 campaign. He promised during the campaign that he was going to close that loophole. In fact, when he was asked on the campaign trail for an example of what was wrong with the current Tax Code, for an example of how powerful special interests got their day using their lobbyists in Washington, he said: Take a look at that carried interest loophole. In fact, Candidate Trump specifically said: ''The hedge fund guys are getting away with murder.'' That is what he said on the campaign trail.

We are about to vote on a bill that claims it is tax reform; yet neither the House bill nor the Senate bill that went into conference touched this loophole. By all accounts, the bill coming back to the Senate doesn't close it either.

It is not as if we didn't have a chance to fix it. In fact, right here on the Senate floor, Senator TAMMY BALDWIN offered a motion to close the loophole, to do exactly what Candidate Trump said that he wanted to do. But every single one of our Republican colleagues voted against closing the carried interest loophole. I guess that means, in now-President Trump's words from the campaign, that this tax bill will let those hedge fund managers ''get away with murder.''

Don't tell us that this is about getting rid of special interest loopholes when it doesn't eliminate exhibit A of a special interest tax break that Candidate Trump talked about. It is exhibit A of broken promises. He said: Let's not let those hedge fund managers get away with murder when it comes to the Tax Code. Yet nothing was done about it in this piece of legislation.

It gives you a clear understanding that this is not about tax reform, not about getting rid of those loopholes. What it is about is stacking the deck even further in favor of very powerful corporate special interests and the very wealthy against middle-class, working Americans.

After all, President Trump said: This tax bill is going to put the middle class first. In fact, here is what he said, again, when he was running for President: ''Everybody is getting a tax cut, especially the middle class.''

More recently, this is what the Republican Leader Senator MCCONNELL said: ''Nobody in the middle class''—nobody in the middle class—''is going to get a tax increase.'' That is untrue, and the Republican leader has acknowledged that. But that is not what was promised to the American people, not by Senate Republicans and not by the President of the United States.

In fact, under the House and Senate bills, more than 10 million families—10 million families—who make less than $200,000 a year are going to see immediate tax increases. What happened to that promise of no tax increases for anyone in the middle class? It is already broken.

Instead of putting middle-class families first, the biggest tax cuts, by far, go to people making more than $1 million a year. In fact, those families making more than $1 million a year get an average tax cut of $35,000 a year right away. Just to give people some perspective, this is a tiny sliver of American households, fortunate households. We want more millionaires, but how do you explain in a bill masquerading as a middle-class tax cut that it is the millionaires who are doing so much better than everybody else?

Just to give you some perspective, for every 1,000 American families, there are four who make more than $1 million a year. That is great for them, and we want them to do well, but why we would give them the biggest tax cuts, rather than folks in the middle who are working hard every day, is something our Republican colleagues will have to explain.

We are now talking about 710,000 wealthy families getting that tax cut of an average $35,000 a year, compared to 10 million middle-class families who are going to see tax increases—tax increases. It gets worse because the tax cuts for families are only temporary. At first, many people will pay more right away. Other families may see a little tax break right away, but it goes away, except for the corporate tax cuts, which are permanent. In fact, some families are going to see permanent tax increases to pay for the permanent tax cuts for corporations.

This chart is from the nonpartisan professionals. This is the Joint Committee on Taxation. As we can see, when this bill fully kicks in, here is what the situation looks like. If you make $75,000 a year or less, your taxes are going to go up when it is fully kicked in. I am going to say that again. If you make $75,000 or less, your taxes are going up when this plan fully kicks in.

As you can see, in addition to that, that means, of course, that your after-tax income is going to go down. This chart takes into account the idea that because we are going to give tax cuts to corporations, some people are going to see some lift in their income. So what this chart tells us, which is very important, is that even if you take that into account, people's after-tax income, if they are at $75,000 or below—what they have for their family, what they have to pay the mortgage or pay the rent—is going down.

Then there are some folks between $75,000 and $100,000 who pretty much, when this is phased in, will see no real change.

But let's look out here. Let's look at the folks who make over $1 million. When this kicks in, they are going to be doing even better—much better—when it comes to their after-tax income. How much income do they have after paying taxes for their families? Even after many of the tax cuts phase out, the after-tax income for folks at the top will go up. Why? Because folks at the very top are the ones who have most of the stock holdings in our major corporations. So they are the ones who will continue to benefit over time from those permanent tax cuts to corporations.

So this is a really important chart done by the professionals here in Congress that lets people know the answer to the very important question, which is this: How much will I actually have in my pocket after taxes for my family when this thing fully kicks in? That is what that tells us.

In fact, this chart really undermines entirely the Republican claim that there is going to be some kind of big trickle-down benefit from this tax plan to most families. We have tried trickle-down before. We tried it in 2001 and 2003 with the Bush tax cuts. Trickle-down ran into the wall of reality around the country. After-tax incomes for the folks at the top went way up. The debt went way up. Everybody else was standing still or falling behind. That is what happened, and that is what will happen again.

Now, we were promised by the Secretary of the Treasury that they were going to do this analysis that showed that if you cut taxes for all of these folks at the top—the wealthiest Americans—and you cut taxes for corporations, it was somehow going to create

so much economic growth that the additional tax revenue from that additional growth would actually pay for the tax cuts. They promised we were going to get this big analysis. At the end of the day, they couldn't produce it; could they? They couldn't produce it.

Instead, just a little while ago, we got one page. We got one page from the Department of the Treasury. Nobody put their name on it because the Secretary of the Treasury couldn't find any professional person to put their name on this one page. When you actually read it, you know why. It is because it just assumes the answer to the question. It assumes there is going to be all of this additional economic growth. Although, if you actually read it, they even acknowledge that the tax plan itself will not generate enough economic growth. They talk about other policies that are going to generate all of that other economic growth to allow the tax cuts for corporations and others to pay for themselves. They don't tell you what it is. The Presiding Officer could make up a number or I could make up a number. That is all they did. They made up a number and put it on a page.

I really hope our Republican colleagues, who were serious when they asked the Treasury Department for that analysis, will recognize that they got taken for a total ride by the Treasury Department, because this doesn't pass the laugh test. This is intellectually dishonest, and I am sure that the folks who put it out know that.

So if it is not going to happen by magic—and economic growth is not going to happen by magic—how are we going to see the benefits that were promised by our Republican colleagues, that when you give those big tax cuts to corporations, it is going to result in higher wages and all of this economic growth? We know it is not going to be true because they couldn't come up with any serious analysis. We also know that it is not true because the CEOs of these corporations are themselves telling us it is not true.

Here is what happened just a little while ago. The Wall Street Journal had a forum. They invited CEOs. At this forum, they asked the CEOs in the room to raise their hands if they planned to use the tax cuts their corporations were getting to invest in their own businesses, to invest in their workers. Guess what. Hardly any of those CEOs raised their hands. In fact, Gary Cohn, one of President Trump's top economic advisers, looked around the room and saw just a few hands raised, and he asked: ''Why aren't the other hands up?''

The reason the other hands weren't up is because the CEOs of those corporations do not plan to use their big tax breaks to give their workers wages or to invest in their businesses. These corporations are making record profits now, and they are not using those profits for those purposes. In fact, as has been widely reported, those corporations plan to use their tax windfall for stock buybacks and to provide higher dividends to their stockholders. So stockholders are going to do great. CEOs are going to do great. Everyone else is going to be left holding the $1.5 trillion debt that they are putting on the national credit card.

Here is what MarketWatch reported. This is the MarketWatch, December 8, headline: ''Share buybacks spike—dropping a strong hint at what CEOs plan to do with tax savings.''

This is before the tax plan was even passed. People were just salivating at the idea that they are going to get this windfall that is going to go to CEOs and other executives and big shareholders.

Here is the subheadline in MarketWatch: ''Forget trickle-down economics: Shareholders, not workers, will be big beneficiaries of tax reform. . . . ''

Next sentence: ''Long-term investors and workers hoping that the tax overhaul and repatriation holiday will encourage investment in growth and a rise in wages should brace for a disappointment.''

No Senator should tell us a few months from now that they were not warned that this is exactly what is going to happen.

Do my colleagues want to know who a good chunk of those shareholders who are salivating about this windfall are? Well, 35 percent of the shareholders in American corporations are foreign stockholders. Thirty-five percent of those folks who are waiting for that big corporate tax windfall are foreign stockholders. In fact, the Senate tax bill gives these wealthy foreign shareholders a $31 billion tax cut in 2019 alone. In the House bill, it is even bigger: $50 billion in tax breaks to foreign shareholders in 2019 alone, paid for by increasing taxes on millions of middle-class Americans.

For those Americans who are getting a small tax cut, let's take a look at how their tax cut compares to the windfall for big corporations. Here is how skewed it is. In the year 2019, the House bill gives $11 billion more in tax breaks to foreign shareholders than it does to every single working-class and middle-class family in all of the States that voted for Donald Trump in 2016 combined—combined. Think about that. For every single middle-class family in every one of those States who voted for Donald Trump—those who are actually getting some tax cuts—you add it all up and foreign shareholders get $11 billion more than they do. Again, millions of middle-class taxpayers in these States are actually going to see their taxes go up so that the money goes into the pockets of foreign shareholders—so much for putting America first, so much for putting middle-class taxpayers first.

So just to be clear, it means that all of these families in all of the States that voted for Donald Trump with incomes of $100,000 or less, if you add up their small tax cuts, it is still $11 billion less than the tax cuts for foreign shareholders. That is for the folks who are actually getting tax cuts in those Trump States. As I say, millions are actually going to see their taxes go up.

Now, I want to focus on one other promise that was made by President Trump and Republicans about their tax plan. They said it is going to bring jobs back to America from overseas. As we look at this plan coming out of conference committee, this may be the worst and meanest of all the broken promises, because when you look at this plan and you talk to economists who don't care about political party, they will tell you that this plan is actually going to increase the incentive of American businesses to move their jobs and operations and factories overseas.

Let's just take a quick look at this because I am appealing to my Republican colleagues to fix this before it is too late.

First, it is important to understand that the Republican tax plan now will allow U.S. corporations to pay zero taxes on their foreign profits. If you have a company overseas, currently you have to pay U.S. taxes on the proceeds on that after you have paid the foreign government, but under the Republican plan, you pay zero taxes on those overseas profits. So under the new plan that reportedly is emerging, corporations will have a 21-percent U.S. tax rate, but if you move your business or company overseas, it is zero, not 21 percent.

Now, just like today, those corporations that move their businesses overseas will have to pay taxes to those foreign governments on the profits they make overseas. Lots of those corporations can shift those profits to parts of the world where there is zero income tax liability, and Republicans in the House and Senate claim that they solve this problem by going to a minimum tax on certain foreign profits.

Here is how our Republican colleagues claim they fix this problem. Let's say a company either has its headquarters or puts its profits in the Cayman Islands. I hope my colleagues will follow this and fix this while there is still time. You have $2 million in profits in the Cayman Islands, so you pay zero foreign taxes because the Cayman Islands doesn't have any tax. Of course, under this plan, you pay zero U.S. tax—except our Republican colleagues said they have a plan to address this problem; that is, in this situation, there will be a 10-percent minimum tax. So on the $2 million in profits in the Cayman Islands, you would actually pay a tax of $200,000. That sounds good. At least that is a small fix, supposedly. But then in the same bill there is a huge loophole to this fix, and that is that corporations get an exemption from this minimum 10 percent tax if they move their factories overseas. If you move jobs overseas, you

can escape that 10 percent minimum tax because in the Senate bill corporations get an exemption that equals 10 percent of the value of all their offshore factories and equipment. The House bill is similar. What does that mean? That means that if you are a corporation, you get an exemption from the foreign minimum tax by shipping factories and jobs overseas.

Here is the math. A corporation made $2 million in the Cayman Islands. Remember, they were going to pay $200,000 in taxes on that. But now they move the factory overseas. That is worth $100 million, and it makes a $5 million profit. Now they add up their overseas profits, and they are now below that—they are 7 percent—and they pay no foreign minimum tax on that.

Since then, Gene Sperling and many economists have raised alarm bells about this. Yet our Republican colleagues seem to have blinders on about the commitment they made to make sure that we don't offshore more American jobs. This will offshore American jobs.

This bill is full of broken promises. I ask my colleagues to go back and look at what was promised by Candidate Trump, President Trump, and our Republican colleagues, because the tax bill doesn't do that. I also urge my colleagues to allow the newly-elected Senator from Alabama, Doug Jones, to have a vote on this incredibly consequential piece of legislation. He was just elected by the will of the people of Alabama, and we should not rush headlong into passing this bill, which will impact the people of Alabama like everybody else, without his having a chance to vote on it.

This is something Senator MCCONNELL mentioned in a similar situation many years ago when Scott Brown from Massachusetts was elected to fill the seat of Senator Kennedy. He asked people to wait and allow Senator Brown to weigh in on the healthcare bill. They did. Doug Jones and the people of Alabama deserve the same respect, and the people of this country deserve a Senate that is duly elected to make this very important decision.

There is still time. There is still time to turn back in the conference committee. There is still time for Senators to say that the bill that is emerging doesn't match the promises that were made. We can go back to the drawing board and come up with real, bipartisan tax reform. Let's do that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

RECOGNIZING THE 4TH BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, once a week when we are in session, I come to the floor to recognize a person or group of people in my great State of Alaska who make it very special. We call them our Alaskan of the Week.

Alaska is beautiful, it is big, and it is special. Right now, much of the State is gearing up for the skiing season. Snow is out, and there is nothing more beautiful and invigorating than taking to the slopes of Alaska. It is also a great time to see the Northern Lights dancing in the sky. So I urge everybody to come out to Alaska. Winter or summer, it will be the trip of a lifetime.

Of course, it is much more than snow and beautiful dancing lights; our people are what make us so special—rugged, independent, generous, and giving to their families, their communities, our State, and our country.

Alaska is a patriotic State—I would argue, the most patriotic State in our great Nation. For one, we have the most veterans per capita of any State in America. We have the very best military forces, and we have a lot of them. Let me name just a few.

We have the Army's 1st Stryker Brigade, based at Fort Wainwright. Chike Springer, one of my staffers helping me out here, served there in the 1st Stryker Brigade's Aviation Task Force. We have the Northern Warfare Training Center; the 59th Signal Battalion; the 17th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion; the Air Force's Third Wing, 11th Air Force; the 176th Wing; the 673rd Air Base Wing; the Air Force reservists of the 477th Fighter Group; the 354th at Eielson; and the 213th Space Warning Squadron at Clear Air Force Station. You get the picture—some of the best military forces. The 49th Missile Defense Battalion, the cornerstone of America's missile defense, protecting the entire Nation, is right there at Fort Greely. These are the thousands of men and women in the Reserves and on Active Duty who are stationed in our great State. We are proud of them, and we owe them and their families a huge debt of gratitude for their service, especially now that we are approaching the holiday season.

Today, I want to particularly recognize the men and women who make up the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division—the only airborne brigade combat team in the Pacific theater and in the Arctic. As my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee know, they are referred to in Alaska and throughout the Army as the 4–25. This unit, over 3,000 men and women strong, is our Alaskans of the Week.

I want to talk a little bit about the 4–25. It has a very strong lineage and heritage. Although it was created relatively recently—in 2004—and was the first new U.S. airborne unit created since the end of World War II, its heritage springs from the 25th Infantry Division, which was first activated in 1941 and played a seminal role in World War II and all of our country's conflicts since.

Just like the 25th Infantry Division, the 4–25 has played a major role in our country's conflicts since its inception. Members of the 4–25 have deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and just last September, a couple months ago, they were again deployed to Afghanistan to train and advise Afghan security forces.

As part of a larger drawdown of our military and the Army—a misguided drawdown by the previous administration, announced in 2015—the 4–25 was part of 40,000 Active-Duty Army soldiers to be cut, just gotten rid of. This would have been an enormous strategic mistake for the Army and for America's national security, especially as it related to the 4–25, the only mountain, cold weather, airborne BCT in the entire Arctic and Asia Pacific. They are also a critical reserve force for any contingency on the Korean Peninsula given how close we in Alaska are to Korea.

So what happened? Alaskans circled the wagons. Rallies with hundreds, if not thousands, of my fellow Alaskans came out in our great State, urging the Department of Defense and the U.S. Army: Don't make this mistake. Don't cut this unit. Keep it intact.

Here in Washington, we did our work. I had a heart-to-heart with a number of senior Army and DOD officials with one simple goal in mind: to get them to personally visit this unit, to come see them train, to see how capable they were, and to understand their strategic value to America's national security. And that happened. Many senior Army officials—the Army Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Army—went to Alaska, went to JRTC, and watched the 4–25 in action.

I remember standing on the second floor of a building in a mock Middle Eastern town watching members of the 4–25 jump into an LZ at JRTC in the middle of the night for a nighttime airfield seizure operation. There is something awe-inspiring about watching 1,000 airborne paratroopers silently fall out of the night sky to seize terrain—something that probably sends chills up the spine of our Nation's enemies.

Fast-forward to today. Of the 40,000 soldiers slated to be cut from the U.S. Army, only one unit was spared—one—and it was the 4–25. Why did this happen? It happened because they made it happen. This great unit saved themselves. When the Army's top brass went to Alaska, went to Fort Polk and watched them train at JRTC, they saw what a great unit this was and realized they were making a big mistake. When General Milley, Chief of Staff of the Army, made the final decision to reverse the previous decision of the Army and retain the 4–25, he said it was ''one of the most trained and ready units in the entire United States Army.'' That was the Chief of Staff of the Army.

The 4–25 didn't rest. They are deployed, back in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, while deployed, just a few days ago, on December 11, Alaska lost a son and the 4–25 lost one of its own as part

of this mission. It is heartbreaking for the families and for the unit. These brave young men and women are willing to sacrifice and have already sacrificed, and our prayers are with them during these holidays.

They are our Alaskans of the Week.

I plan on visiting them overseas during the holidays. My wife Julie will also be attending an event this weekend in Anchorage for the families of those who are deployed, showing our support and our respect for the men and women in this unit and their families, because, as many know, when a family is deployed, it is not just the young man and woman in the unit who sacrifice, it is the entire family.

To the families, we say thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for your service and sacrifice. To the men and women who make up the 4–25, we also say thank you for all you are doing for us—for serving us, for keeping us safe, for protecting this country, when Americans are enjoying the holidays.

I look forward to seeing you in theater. Please be assured that all Members of this body—Senators, Democrats, Republicans—know your record of service and wish all of you Godspeed this holiday season. Thank you for being our Alaskans of the Week.

Army Strong. Arctic Tough. Sparta Lives.

COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I rise today to commend this body. My colleagues, every single Senator, voted in unanimous consent to move forward on the National Defense Authorization Act, which was signed into law just this week by President Trump. In particular, I want to thank the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, JOHN MCCAIN, who did so much to shepherd this important piece of legislation through this body and to the President's desk. I thank Senator MCCAIN for all his service and sacrifice to America for decades.

The NDAA, as we all know, is an important, critical piece of legislation, boosting our national security, rebuilding our military readiness, and protecting the men and women in uniform who serve our Nation. It has been a piece of legislation that for 56 consecutive years on a bipartisan basis has moved through the Senate and the House to be signed by the President. Many times you hear there is not a lot of bipartisanship that is going on in Washington. On issues like this, there is. This bill, which authorizes almost $700 billion for our troops who need it, passed the Senate unanimously.

Not all the members of the military had their bill, which authorized spending and funding for what they are doing, moved through the Congress. Unfortunately, our men and women in the U.S. Coast Guard—our Nation's fifth branch of service—have been, once again, left behind. The NDAA covers the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act focuses on the heroic men and women in the Coast Guard. This year, we worked hard on that bill, S. 1129, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2017. I sponsored this bill with Chairman JOHN THUNE, the chairman of the Commerce Committee; Ranking Member BILL NELSON; and Senator LISA MURKOWSKI. This bipartisan bill—and it is very bipartisan—will give the Coast Guard the resources it needs to protect our waterways and coastlines, block illegal traffickers and smugglers of drugs, and more efficiently procure future Coast Guard cutters, which our country, and my State, desperately need. It is a very, very important bill.

In constructing this legislation, we worked in a bipartisan manner for months. However, despite broad support from both Republicans and Democrats, it appears the Coast Guard Authorization Act—a critical bill for homeland security, for the safety of our mariners and fishermen, and for showing support to the thousands of men and women who serve in the Coast Guard—has become stuck.

As chairman of the committee responsible for the U.S. Coast Guard, I must speak up for the men and women of this important service and the critical services they provide. This bill should have been moving months ago. Not only does this bill contain critical needs and authorizations and funding authorizations for the Coast Guard, it also contains provisions of vital importance to our maritime and fishing communities. Included in this legislation is important language to permanently fix an issue that has been around for years—one that pertains to incidental discharges for those in our fishing fleets. It is also known as the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, or VIDA, as part of the Coast Guard bill.

Currently, vessel owners and operators are forced to comply with a patchwork of burdensome Federal and State regulations for vessel ballast water and incidental discharges. This creates inefficiency, adds costs, and inhibits economic prosperity for my State and for the country, while not providing a uniform standard to protect the environment, which is also critical. This fix that is in the Coast Guard bill would provide the maritime industry, the fishing industry, with a consistent, uniform regulatory structure, restoring cost-effective commerce while also ensuring environmental protection of our Nation's ports, waterways, and fisheries. Notably, for a large number of my constituents, this provision—the VIDA provision in the Coast Guard bill—provides a permanent exemption on incidental vessel discharge for all fishing vessels and small commercial boats.

It is very important because previous legislation required even small fishing vessels to get a discharge permit from the EPA to simply hose down their decks. These fishing vessels and small vessels are facing potential noncompliance if we fail to pass the Coast Guard bill soon. They should not be penalized for the refusal of some of my colleagues—very few of my colleagues—who are opponents of this important fix to allow for what we think is a bipartisan, negotiated solution to move forward.

The fix in this bill on VIDA is supported by all segments of the maritime industry, with U.S. and international vessel owners and operators, fishing vessels—both large and small—passenger vessels, charter boat operators, labor unions, the Navy League of the United States, marine terminals, and port authorities throughout the country, just to name a few, all in support.

There is broad bipartisan support and agreement by Democrats and Republicans that this bill—with the VIDA provision in the Coast Guard Authorization Act—should move forward. I was going to come here this evening and ask unanimous consent that we pass the bill now. Out of respect for some of my colleagues who are still working in good faith on this issue, I have decided to refrain from that, but we are losing patience.

There have been numerous suggested compromises to help get a few Senators to yes on this. We have accepted almost every single one of them. We are negotiating in good faith. We even held a big meeting this afternoon with many staff on another suggestion, which the EPA said was an unworkable idea.

I believe we are now down to one single issue on this important piece of legislation. Out of respect for my colleagues—one of whom I just got off the phone with, the Senator from Michigan, whom I have a very close working relationship on the committee that oversees the Coast Guard because he is my ranking member—we are going to try to work through the weekend and resolve this. I hope that the remaining Senators act in good faith. What we don't want to see, as we accept every single compromise put forward, is the goalpost continuously being moved.

The deadline is fast approaching for our fishermen and maritime fleet. We must get this done. The deadline has long past to show that we respect, care for, and want to do all we can to support the men and women in the Coast Guard the way we support the other military services, as we saw this week when President Trump passed a very bipartisan NDAA.

I call on all of my colleagues to work through the weekend so that we can get to yes on this very important bill—the Coast Guard bill—and so that we can support them the way we are supporting the other men and women in our military.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I first thank my friend from Alaska for

his enthusiasm for getting the Coast Guard legislation completed. As a fellow ocean State, albeit a somewhat smaller ocean State, we are strong supporters of our Coast Guard and appreciate very much their service on our waters.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here for my 189th ''Time to Wake Up'' speech to discuss the Republican tax bill. Who knew? Folks watching today's debate from home are probably wondering what the tax bill has to do with climate change. That is a good question. They might also ask, as I do, why the tax bill includes massive giveaways to fossil fuel producers or what opening up precious wilderness to oil drilling has to do with tax reform.

The chairman of the Senate Finance Committee said: ''We need a simpler tax code that puts more money back into the pockets of workers and families.'' Republicans, he said, want to create ''a fairer, more predictable system for taxpayers across the country.''

Their tax plan is none of those things. Its benefits are weighted heavily to big corporations, not workers and families. The corporate tax cuts are permanent, while the modest breaks for some workers disappear after a few years. What is fair or predictable about that?

The chairman also said:

> I want a bipartisan process that renders a bipartisan result. . . . I think we need a vigorous and open debate in the Senate, which, in my view, should include a full process in committee and regular order on the Senate floor.

We got none of that. Republicans have rammed this bill through, using every procedural and parliamentary trick at their disposal, as a purely partisan measure, in the dead of night, producing amendments in handwritten chicken scratch in the margins of the bill at the last minute.

If we were to ask middle-class families their top priorities for fixing our tax system, I don't think very many would say: You know, we really need to let oil companies pump crude in an Alaskan wildlife refuge. But that is what they do.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1960 to preserve ''unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values.'' It now encompasses almost 20 million acres, with around 8-million acres designated as wilderness. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the refuge, which is roadless, trailless, and represents the best of wild Alaska in a world where wilderness is increasingly scarce and vanishing far too fast.

The Republican tax bill opens the refuge's 1.5 million-acre coastal plain to the oil drillers. Opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development does little to provide energy security. The oil-producing potential of the area is estimated by the U.S. Geological Survey to be, at a maximum, around 12 billion barrels total of recoverable oil. In 2016, the United States consumed 7.2 billion barrels of petroleum products just in that year. So all of the oil we get from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which will take decades, represents fewer than 2 years of current consumption, and that is according to the most optimistic estimate.

The budget resolution required that this venture raise $1 billion over 10 years. Republicans need that $1 billion to fund the big tax cuts they are giving out to the wealthy and to big corporations. When the numbers were finally crunched, though, drilling in that Arctic coastal plain couldn't produce those numbers. Did this reality dissuade my Republican colleagues? No. Instead, they have proposed to make up the difference by selling off 7 million barrels from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve—the United States' emergency supply of crude oil, which actually does help guarantee our energy security. They want to sell reserve oil to fund those cuts for the wealthy and the big corporations.

An auction last week of oil and gas leases in another part of Northern Alaska bodes ill for Republican hopes about drilling in the wilderness preserve. On 900 tracts of land offered up to oil and gas companies, the Bureau of Land Management fielded just seven bids—900 tracts of land, 7 bids.

Why is that?

For one thing, low prices for crude oil make the prospect of exploring undeveloped Alaskan wilderness less appealing. In general, current industry appetite for high-risk ''frontier'' exploration is very low, observed an energy analysis at Raymond James & Associates. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge ''would suffer from much the same thing.''

A second problem is that oil companies are likely overstating their achievable existing reserves already. They will have to leave a lot in the ground of what they are now claiming as reserves. Buying more when you cannot sell what you already have is not a great strategy. Low-cost renewables and excess supply will further drive oil prices down and down if the laws of supply and demand hold true.

This may be one reason the World Bank just announced in this new story, dated 2 days ago, that it will end its financial support for oil and gas exploration within the next 2 years. It is in response to the growing threat that is posed by climate change. That is where they are going. We are going the wrong way.

The sad irony of Arctic drilling is that the American Arctic will feel the effects of burning fossil fuels most severely. The U.S. Global Change Research Program's ''Climate Science Special Report,'' authored by scientists and experts from top universities and across the Federal Government, found that while all regions of the United States will see significant warming by the end of the century, Alaska is expected to take the hardest hit—potentially over 12 degrees Fahrenheit warmer by 2100, which is under the high-emission scenario shown down here at the bottom right.

The northern edge of Alaska, including the historic whale-hunting village of Utqiagvik—and please forgive me, the people of Utqiagvik, for mangling the village's pronunciation—could see temperature increases of 18 degrees Fahrenheit. This village, which is only about 300 miles west of the area in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge targeted for oil and gas development, is already seeing its coastlines overrun by rising seas, its permafrost melting beneath its buildings, and its beaches washing out to sea in strong winter storms as the protective shoreline sea ice forms later and later each year.

Here is another news flash from Utqiagvik: 320 miles north of the Arctic Circle, a weather station in America's northernmost city of Utqiagvik has been collecting temperature data since the 1920s. Just recently, the average temperature went so off the chart at the weather station there that the instrumentation shut down the recording because the algorithm that monitored this figured that something must have gone wrong with the instrumentation because the numbers were so out of whack.

The numbers were not out of whack. It was actually very real climate change that changed the environment and sent that signal that blew through the algorithm that the scientists had set up.

But, in this building, in this room, the warnings from our best scientists about the consequences of our carbon emissions just don't count. The hyped economics about oil drilling don't count here. The weird budgetary jujitsu required to shoehorn this environmental hit into a tax bill doesn't matter here. What matters here is that the oil companies want to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and so Republicans are making it happen.

Republicans claim to be cleaning up the Tax Code, but their so-called tax reform leaves in place most of the oil and tax giveaways that have benefited that industry for decades. The Big Oil giants, like BP, Shell, ExxonMobil, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips, have enjoyed nearly $1 trillion in profits over the past 10 years. Yes, let's rush to their assistance. Never mind the beleaguered American families, many of whom will see taxes go up from this bill. Let's rush to the defense of those companies with $1 trillion in profits over the past 10 years. They continue to benefit from multibillion-dollar tax subsidies.

I am proud to have repeatedly cosponsored Senator MENENDEZ's bill that would close the loopholes for the Big Oil giants, saving $22 billion for taxpayers and debt holders over the next decade. The Republican bill not

only leaves most of the old loopholes in place, but it offers new giveaways to the oil and gas industries. A last-minute change scribbled in during the Senate vote-arama will allow traded oil and gas partnerships to use the so-called passthrough loophole that the Republicans claim is designed to help small businesses.

While the Republican tax plan boosts the fossil fuel polluters with this new tax gift, it singles out renewable energy to undermine those jobs. The way this works is that, under the historic bipartisan agreement that many of us worked on in 2015, developers of new wind energy were given a period in which tax credits for projects for which construction begins by the end of 2019 would be protected. There was a bargain struck in this body. We came together, and we agreed on a bipartisan result. This tax bill breaks that deal and breaks that result for wind and for solar. For wind, it was until the end of 2019. For solar, it was through 2021.

These tax credits have been vital to the growth of the renewable industry across the country. It has grown in red States and in blue States. In fact, the five States that get the largest percentage of their electricity from wind and that have all of those wind energy jobs are Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and North Dakota. Texas produces the most wind power of any State. The Republican tax bill is likely to upend the progress that we have made on renewables, disrupt ongoing projects, and ruin those jobs—all with clever provisions, the trick being to render those renewable tax credits that we bargained for practically valueless.

Renewable developers don't usually turn a profit in the early years. So they don't have taxes against which to apply the tax credits. They sell the tax credits to others, and they use the revenue from selling the tax credits to support those wind and solar investments. The clever fossil fuel trick in the Senate bill—specifically, the corporate AMT and base erosion so-called provisions—would make these credits worthless to the businesses that have been buying them. With no buyers for the tax credits, funds for new wind and solar projects will dry up.

There is even more nonsense in the House bill that takes direct aim at the wind and solar credits, including changing the rules on how projects would qualify for the credits, not just in the future but also retroactively. They go back to undo deals that have already been done. So $20 billion in projects have frozen up, developers say, just from the threat of these changes.

Renewable energy industry organizations, including the American Wind Energy Association, the American Council on Renewable Energy, the American Conservation Coalition, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions, the Conservative Energy Network, and Conservatives for Clean Energy, all warn that the tax bill will jeopardize growth and jobs in wind and solar projects.

''If these provisions are retained,'' the groups wrote to Senators, ''they will result in broad instability and uncertainty for businesses and investors across many sectors, including the clean energy sector.''

Gosh, I hope my Republican friends will listen to our wind and solar producers, particularly the ones in their home States. I hope they will listen to the people who are counting on the jobs of those $20 billion in projects that have now been put on the shelf. I hope they will listen to American taxpayers, who are sick of midnight-deal corporate welfare like this.

If they do listen, they can scrap this terrible bill. They can sit down and work with Democrats. It would be a novelty, but we would welcome it. We could have a bipartisan tax bill that works for the middle class, for the economy, and for the environment, but with the oil and gas industry calling the shots around here, fat chance of that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, first of all, I thank my friend, the Senator from Rhode Island, for two things—one, for being a constant voice on the need for us to diversify our energy sources and supplies and for recognizing the enormous challenge around climate change.

I come from a State that is not too dissimilar from his in terms of its having a great deal of shoreline. We see the effects of the changing climate each and every day. At high tide, we have parts of the city of Norfolk that have never before flooded that flood on a regular basis.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. On a sunny day.

Mr. WARNER. On a sunny day.

We have a church that has to regularly change its schedule of worship, not because the Lord has asked them to change the schedule of worship but because it floods on a regular basis.

Let me also thank him for his comments about the tax legislation. I share his concern as somebody who feels very strongly that there is a right way and a wrong way to do tax reform. Unfortunately, the product I believe we will be voting on next week, not only the provisions the Senator from Rhode Island talked about, will also add close to $2 trillion to our debt.

In many ways, it does not even take care of the problems we are supposed to solve, in terms of the ability of companies to bring back profits from overseas in a way to reinvest in this country. Frankly, it exacerbates the problem where companies can further hide their profits abroad.

I share his doubt about whether our colleagues will join us in starting anew, but if they would, I would join with them and others in trying to make sure we do tax reform in a fair, balanced way that is fiscally responsible. I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for his comments.

DACA

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I stand today to talk about a different subject; that is, to stand in solidarity with over 12,000 of my Virginia constituents who are students, entrepreneurs, members of our military, and individuals who have the distinction of being Dreamers, like the nearly 800,000 Dreamers across our country.

These people, many of them young folks, are worried about facing deportation—not for anything they have done wrong but because the vast majority of these young people were brought to this country as children many years ago. Today, unfortunately, due to no actions of their own, they are caught up in some of the worst of our Nation's politics.

Up until this past September, these young people were living in the United States legally under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program or what has been called DACA. As part of this program, these young people came out of the shadows, paid a fee, went through an extensive background check, and complied with all the other requirements of the DACA Program. Unfortunately, Dreamers and their families are now in a perilous situation because, unfortunately, President Trump ended the DACA Program, literally putting hundreds of thousands of these young people in a state of legal limbo.

Unfortunately, while a number of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to work through this problem, we hear the Republican leadership has done nothing to provide that permanent solution for these hard-working young Americans. That is who they are, folks who have lived here oftentimes for decades. This is not how the greatest country on Earth should treat anyone, especially these young people who, in most cases, have only one nation they have called home, and that is our country, the United States.

I am not the only one who thinks this. As I mentioned, there are colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have been coming to the floor for weeks making this point. The fact is, more than three-quarters of Americans of all political stripes support a pathway to permanent legal status for Dreamers. Here in the Senate, my friends, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and Senator DICK DURBIN, have introduced the bipartisan Dream Act and have been actively working toward its passage.

In the Senate and the House, there are enough votes to pass this bipartisan legislation if leadership would only bring it to the floor, and that is just not the case in the Senate. Last week, my friend Congressman SCOTT TAYLOR, a fellow Virginian and a Republican, led a bipartisan group of 30 Members in the House again asking the House leadership to find a legislative solution—not next year, not next month but now.

Unfortunately, it seems like folks on the other side of the aisle would rather

treat this as a political issue and a political pawn to be negotiated, probably not even this year but at some future date. By doing so, they leave these young people in a state of limbo and really subject to a great deal of legal uncertainty. For many of these young people, as they cycle out of the program—close to 1,000 a week—even if we come up with a legal solution, their ability to rejoin the program and reclaim their legal status may be extinguished. The truth is, this is not just another political leverage point.

Let me take a moment or two and talk about some of the folks who are affected in my State—folks in my State, folks whom I call real Virginians.

I think about one young student from Northern Virginia, whom I chose as my guest to the President's State of the Union Address a few years ago. I was so impressed with her work ethic and her passion for improving the lives of others that I asked her to serve after that as an intern in my office, where she did great work serving fellow Virginians.

I think about a law student I met recently in Williamsburg who was born in England and brought here when she was just 1 year old. Right now, it is getting close to the holidays. She is probably tucked away in some corner of the library studying for her law school exams. She told me she wanted to get that law degree to help fellow Virginians when she graduates. I say we shouldn't stand in her way.

I think again about a young man I met from Newport News whose mother brought him to the United States when he was just 6 years old. Sadly, his mother passed away before he graduated from high school, but I know when he walked across the stage of that graduation as valedictorian of his class, his mom would have been proud. Hopefully, if this program is renewed when he graduates from Virginia Tech next year with a degree in engineering, he will put those skills to work.

These are just a few examples about the smart, successful, young Virginians who also carry the categorization of being called Dreamers. The truth is, in Virginia, we have a vibrant and growing immigrant community that contributes to all facets of life in the Commonwealth.

While I talk today about Dreamers, I also want to make mention of another program that is caught up in some of these last-minute negotiations, the so-called TPS individuals—oftentimes individuals from El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and certain folks who have lived in this country for decades whose legal status is also in jeopardy.

The truth is, whether they are a Dreamer or someone who has been a beneficiary of the TPS Program, the truth is, immigrants in Virginia are all across our community. They are doctors, caretakers, small business owners, high-tech entrepreneurs. Quite honestly, they are also our next-door neighbors. They are motivated, talented individuals who want to help and continue contributing to the Commonwealth of Virginia and to our country.

What we tell them every day that we fail to act, every day that more and more of these young people fall out of eligibility, we tell them, in pretty direct ways, that actually even though they have served, studied, and worked here, that at least some in this Chamber don't really want them here. They would rather urge them to take their talents elsewhere.

As somebody who has been in business longer than I have been in politics, I can state that these young people are an enormous asset, and urging them to leave the Commonwealth or our country is a bad business decision.

As I said, unfortunately, with every day that passes, more and more Dreamers face the very real and terrifying prospect of being oftentimes sent to a country they barely know or may not know at all for an offense they were too young to even know they committed. That is just not right.

It is not right that their lives should hang in the balance as they wait and wait and wait for Congress to solve this problem—a problem that I know, if it were brought to the floor, would receive overwhelming bipartisan support. These young people can't wait any longer and shouldn't wait any longer. It is time to pass the Dream Act right now.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 430. I ask consent that there be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form; that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 405 and 406.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Matthew Z. Leopold, of Florida, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; and David Ross, of Wisconsin, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Leopold and Ross nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 499 and 500.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Scott W. Brady, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania for the term of four years; and Andrew E. Lelling, of Massachusetts, to be United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts for the term of four years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Brady and Lelling nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar Nos. 548 through 551 and all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

IN THE COAST GUARD

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Coast Guard to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 271(d):

To be rear admiral

Rear Adm. (lh) Pat DeQuattro
Rear Adm. (lh) William G. Kelly
Rear Adm. (lh) John P. Nadeau
Rear Adm. (lh) Joanna M. Nunan
Rear Adm. (lh) David G. Throop

The following named officer for appointment to serve as the Director of the Coast Guard Reserve in the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 53(b):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Rear Adm. Andrew S. McKinley

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Coast Guard Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203(a):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. James M. Kelly

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Coast Guard to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 271(e):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Thomas Allan
Capt. Laura M. Dickey
Capt. Douglas M. Fears
Capt. John W. Mauger
Capt. Nathan A. Moore
Capt. Brian K. Penoyer
Capt. Matthew W. Sibley

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE COAST GUARD

PN1259 COAST GUARD nominations (10) beginning GEORGE BAMFORD, and ending TABITHA A. SCHIRO, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 16, 2017.

PN1260 COAST GUARD nominations (71) beginning STEPHEN J. ADLER, and ending TORRENCE B. WILSON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 16, 2017.

PN1261 COAST GUARD nominations (171) beginning LAWRENCE F. AHLIN, and ending RUSSELL R. ZUCKERMAN, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 16, 2017.

PN1277 COAST GUARD nomination of Meghan K. Steinhaus, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume 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.

NOMINATIONS OF STEVEN GRASZ, JAMES HO, AND DON WILLETT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week, Senate Republicans sought to confirm the 10th, 11th, and 12th circuit court nominees of the year. The Republican-controlled Senate has been moving at warp speed to try to confirm President Trump's circuit court nominees as quickly as possible. Twelve circuit court nominees is the same number of nominees confirmed in the first years of Presidents Obama, Bush, and Clinton combined.

In quickly rushing through President Trump's picks for these critical lifetime appointments, my Republican colleagues have been abandoning longstanding norms of due diligence and careful scrutiny. They want to rubberstamp these nominees despite a lack of complete information about the nominees' records and despite clear warning signs about the nominees' ideologies, temperaments and judgment.

Consider the nominees that came before us this week.

Eighth Circuit nominee Steven Grasz received a rare unanimous ''not qualified'' rating from the American Bar Association. Only 4 out of 1,755 nominees reviewed by the ABA since 1989 have received this rating. For those who are not aware, the ABA has worked since the Eisenhower administration to conduct a confidential peer review process for vetting judicial candidates. For their review of Mr. Grasz, the ABA conducted 207 interviews with his peers. These interviews revealed some very troubling things. People familiar with Mr. Grasz raised serious concerns about his objectivity, his gratuitously rude conduct, and his deeply held partisan loyalty. Those are major red flags for a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench.

After the ABA's review committee voted Mr. Grasz unanimously ''not qualified'' for the bench, rather than reconsidering their support for the nominee, a number of my Republican colleagues decided to aggressively attack the ABA. One Senator described the ABA as ''blatant partisans with a sad track record of hackery.''

These criticisms are over the top. The ABA peer review and vetting process provides the Senate with valuable information to consider when we decide how to vote on nominees. President Obama took ABA ratings seriously enough that he did not nominate anyone who received a ''not qualified'' rating.

Of course, Senators do not have to vote on nominees solely based upon ABA ratings. For example, I voted in committee for Kansas District Court nominee Holly Teeter despite the ''not qualified'' rating that she was given by the ABA. I have voted against nominees who received ''well qualified'' ratings, such as Neil Gorsuch, because I had serious questions about their judgment and their objectivity.

It would be foolish for Senators to ignore the ABA's peer review process altogether. In Mr. Grasz's case, his ABA rating is just one of many troubling signs. Just look at some of the controversial things Mr. Grasz has said and written. He wrote in a law review article that courts can ignore jurisprudence that they consider to be ''questionable.'' He wrote that the legacy of Roe v. Wade was ''moral bankruptcy.'' He described the possibility of Nebraska recognizing same-sex marriages as a ''grave danger.'' He falsely claimed that the term ''sexual orientation'' could include bigamy and pedophilia. He tried to amend the Omaha city charter because he was upset about a 2012 city ordinance protecting LGBT employees from workplace discrimination.

In Mr. Grasz's case, I share the ABA's unanimous view that he lacks the proper temperament and judgment to sit on the circuit court, and I am deeply concerned about his extreme views. That is why I opposed his nomination.

I also could not support the nomination of James Ho for the Fifth Circuit, for several reasons. First, I am very troubled by Mr. Ho's responses when I asked him whether waterboarding is torture and illegal under U.S. law. He said, ''It has always been my understanding that Congress enacted legislation for the purpose of expressing its serious opposition to waterboarding as illegal under U.S. law.'' That is not an answer about what the law says; that is an evasion. Mr. Ho should have said, with no equivocation and no uncertainty, that waterboarding is illegal, that it is cruel, inhuman, and degrading and that it is torture. That is the law under the 2006 McCain Torture Amendment.

This is a critical issue for me. I am deeply troubled that we are, once again, seeing nominees come before the Senate, like Mr. Ho and Greg Katsas, who are tap dancing around this issue. We need to take a clear stand when it comes to waterboarding.

This is not some abstract hypothetical for Mr. Ho. He wrote a 2002 Office of Legal Counsel memo for John Yoo that was cited in the infamous Bybee torture memo. It is critical that the Senate get access to Mr. Ho's memo. The Bybee torture memo was a dark chapter in our Nation's history, and Mr. Ho's work was cited in it more than once. I cannot in good conscience vote for Mr. Ho's nomination without seeing what he wrote.

In 2014, when former OLC attorney David Barron was nominated by President Obama to the First Circuit, Chairman GRASSLEY insisted on seeing his OLC memos. Chairman GRASSLEY wrote of Mr. Barron: ''The Senate simply cannot evaluate whether this nominee is fit for lifetime appointment to one of the nation's most important courts without complete access to his writings.'' The chairman's standard should apply to Mr. Ho's nomination as well.

I also have serious concerns with personal views that Mr. Ho has publicly expressed—in particular, his writings in opposition to campaign finance laws and the op-ed Mr. Ho wrote in praise of Jeff Mateer, who has described transgender children as part of ''Satan's plan.'' I could not support Mr. Ho's nomination.

I also was compelled to oppose the nomination of Don Willett to the Fifth Circuit. Justice Willett provided us with one of the more troubling nomination hearings we have had in recent years. The key moment was when Senator FEINSTEIN asked him if he stood by beliefs he expressed in a 1998 memo. In this memo, Willett explained his opposition to the issuance of a gubernatorial proclamation declaring ''Business Women's Week'' in Texas.

Willett's memo said:

> I resist the proclamation's talk of 'glass ceilings,' pay equity (an allegation that some studies debunk), the need to place kids in the care of rented strangers, sexual discrimination/harassment, and the need generally for better 'working conditions' for women (read: more government.) . . . I strongly resist anything that shows we believe the hype.

When Senator FEINSTEIN asked Justice Willett if he still held these beliefs, he was silent for 10 and a half painful seconds before he asked Senator FEINSTEIN to repeat the question. She did, and I repeated the question too; yet Justice Willett never gave the committee a straight answer. He should have, if he wanted to earn my vote.

Justice Willett is a prolific tweeter, and he has sent tweets that appear to mock same-sex marriage and transgender students. This raises questions about his judicial temperament. Justice Willett also has expressed troubling views about what he calls ''judicial passivism.'' He said it is ''corrosive'' when judges ''are not active in preserving the limits our Framers actually enshrined.'' Justice Willett seems to think that courts should be activist in limiting laws that he sees as burdening economic freedoms, such as regulations that protect the health and safety of working people.

In short, Justice Willett has not convinced me that he is in the mainstream when it comes to temperament and judgment, and I could not support his nomination.

Before I was a Senator, I was a lawyer in downstate Illinois, and I looked up to Federal judges. I thought that, to get that job, you had to be a cut above. Otherwise, you wouldn't make it through the Senate's rigorous advice and consent process, but sadly, this Republican Senate is turning advice and consent into a rubberstamp assembly line when it comes to Trump nominees.

Republicans want to pack the courts with judges who will support President Trump's agenda, and so they are hurrying to confirm as many of his picks as possible, even if they are not qualified or if we don't have all the information we need to evaluate them or if the nominees won't give us straight answers at their hearings. Our Federal judiciary is being diminished as a result.

I wish my Republican colleagues would stand up for an independent judiciary and a meaningful advice and consent process. We should not be rushing to hand lifetime appointments to problematic nominees. Instead, we should take our due diligence and vetting obligations seriously and only put people on the bench whose qualifications, integrity, independence, and judgment are indisputable.

Because that was not the case with this week's nominees, I could not support them.

THE EL MOZOTE MASSACRE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, those of us who remember the massacre at El Mozote, El Salvador, are reminded that last week was the 36th anniversary of that horrific tragedy.

For those who are not aware, on December 11, 1981, Salvadoran soldiers, including an elite battalion trained and equipped by the United States, systematically murdered more than 900 innocent men, women, and children. The Salvadoran military high command falsely denied the crimes had occurred, and their denials were echoed by the U.S. Embassy and the State Department. For more than 35 years, the perpetrators of the massacre avoided justice, due to the cover-up and an amnesty law passed in 1993, but in 2016, the Salvadoran Supreme Court overturned that law and the case was reopened. Let us hope that those who ordered, participated in, and covered up those crimes against humanity will finally receive the punishment they deserve.

On December 2, good friend Congressman JIM MCGOVERN traveled to El Salvador. More than any other Member of Congress, JIM has been a tireless advocate for human rights and justice in that country. After returning to Washington, on December 11, JIM spoke about the El Mozote massacre in the House of Represenatives. I ask unanimous consent that his remarks be printed in the RECORD.

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

[Five-Minute Special Order, Monday, December 11, 2017]

36TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EL MOZOTE MASSACRE

(By James P. McGovern (MA))

Mr. Speaker, thirty-six years ago, nearly one thousand men, women and children were murdered by Salvadoran soldiers in El Mozote, El Salvador. It's considered one of the worst massacres in modern Latin American history.

On December 2nd, I traveled to El Mozote with a delegation led by the Washington Office on Latin America. Four hours after leaving San Salvador, we arrived at El Mozote in the northern region of Morazán, near the border of Honduras.

Three decades ago, El Mozote included about 20 houses on open ground around a square. Facing the square was a church and, behind it, a small building known as ''the convent,'' used by the priest to change into his vestments when celebrating Mass. Nearby was a small school house.

Our delegation sat in the town square with survivors and victims of the massacre. We listened to their stories, shared prayers for their loss and suffering, toured the grounds where this atrocity took place, and visited memorials the community built to commemorate and preserve this tragic history. We also heard from lawyers with Cristosal, a U.S.-based NGO providing legal aid to the association of victims and survivors.

On December 10, 1981, the Salvadoran army brigade based in San Miguel and the Atlacatl Battalion, an elite infantry unit based in San Salvador, arrived in El Mozote. Over the next two days, these troops methodically and viciously murdered the town's residents and those of nearby villages.

On the morning of December 11th, troops assembled the people in the town square. They separated the men from the women and children and locked them in separate groups in the church, the convent, and various houses. According to eye-witness accounts, they then interrogated, tortured, and executed the men at several different sites.

Around noon, they began taking the women and girls in groups, separating them from their children and machine-gunning them after raping them. Many families were ordered to remain in their homes while soldiers set fire to the houses.

Over 140 of the children, some mere infants, were jammed into ''the convent'' next to the church. There, soldiers blocked the doors, aimed guns through the windows, and fired into the mass of children, murdering them all in cold blood. They then threw an incendiary bomb into the building, collapsing the roof and adobe walls.

I walked with members of the community to the site where the children were murdered. A garden cultivated in their memory blooms on the site where they perished. A mural on the side of the church facing the garden depicts tiny angels ascending to heaven.

Beneath the mural are plaques with the names and ages of the children killed so brutally. They range from zero to sixteen years. Walking on such hallowed ground, I was deeply moved and outraged by the atrocity that took place there.

In October 1990, the Salvadoran courts opened an investigation into the El Mozote

case, and in January 1992, the civil war ended with peace accords signed between the Salvadoran government and FMLN guerrillas. In November 1992, the U.N. Truth Commission on El Salvador supervised exhumations of El Mozote remains by Argentine forensics experts, confirming that the stories told by survivors were indeed true. Then, everything was cut short when the Salvadoran congress passed a sweeping amnesty law in 1993.

However, last year, in July 2016, the Salvadoran Supreme Court overturned the amnesty law as unconstitutional. And in October 2016, a judge reopened the El Mozote case and began taking testimony, which continues today.

There are many reasons why we in Congress should be engaged in the search for justice in the El Mozote case.

First, in the post-war period, the U.S. has supported a strong and independent judiciary in El Salvador, capable of prosecuting corruption and human rights abuses. El Mozote is viewed as an exemplar case on whether this is possible to achieve.

Second, in the 1980s, the United States armed, trained and equipped the Salvadoran armed forces, in particular, the Army. At El Mozote, U.S. guns and bullets were used to massacre infants, children, women and men.

Third, the U.S. established and trained the Atlacatl Battalion. Ostensibly an elite rapid reaction counter-insurgency force, it was a major actor in the mass murder at El Mozote; nine years later, the unit also murdered six Jesuit priests and two women at the University of Central America in San Salvador.

Finally, at the time of the massacre, the Salvadoran High Command denied that it had happened. The U.S. embassy and State Department echoed those denials and denigrated the Washington Post and New York Times reporters who traveled to El Mozote and published detailed stories about the massacre.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. should support the Salvadoran judge presiding over the El Mozote case and the Attorney General's Office, including releasing all information in our military and intelligence files relevant to that period of the civil war. It would be a significant contribution to ending the culture of impunity in El Salvador.

REMEMBERING EDWIN M. LEE

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my colleague, the senior Senator from California.

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

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, Californians and San Franciscans have lost a tireless champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mayor Edwin M. Lee was the son of Chinese immigrants and the city's first Asian-American mayor. Mayor Lee grew up in public housing and moved from Seattle to the Bay Area to attend law school at UC Berkeley in the mid-1970s. As a former civil rights attorney, Mayor Lee began his career in public service fighting for fair housing and went on to serve in five different city departments under four mayors before becoming mayor himself. As mayor of one of America's largest cities, Mayor Lee worked hard to transform San Francisco into a hub for innovation and technology while still upholding the city's longstanding values of equity and justice.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Throughout his career, Mayor Lee broke down barriers while approaching public service with tremendous skill, efficiency, and purpose. On behalf of the city of San Francisco, Mayor Lee led the fight to protect our immigrant communities, build and rehabilitate affordable housing, and expand investment in public transportation and critical infrastructure projects, among countless other fights on behalf of his city.

Ms. HARRIS. For 65 remarkable years, Mayor Lee demonstrated to all those he worked with, knew, and came to serve that through humble and steadfast leadership each one of us can create a more inclusive and just community for future generations.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. He was our friend, and we will miss his wise counsel and fearless leadership. The thoughts of San Franciscans and Californians are with Mayor Lee's wife, Anita, his daughters, Brianna and Tania, his family, city leaders, and the people of San Francisco at this difficult time.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO THE ALSTON FAMILY

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate Luke and Deedee Alston of Polk County. The Alstons were recently named the 2017 Arkansas Farm Family of the Year.

The owners of Holly Springs Homestead—a cattle, poultry and agritourism farm near Mena, AR—Luke and Deedee, along with their sons Ryan and Drey, are fifth-generation farmers who are working the land as their parents and grandparents did before them. Holly Springs Homestead is an Arkansas Century Farm that was established in 1897 and has been in operation for 120 years.

The Alstons took a leap of faith a few years ago, leaving corporate jobs to return to the family farm full-time. Luke proudly says that he was born to farm, and it is a lifelong dream to look over the hood of a tractor every day. Through hard work and determination, the Alstons are enjoying tremendous success not only commercially but also in their efforts to educate visitors to the homestead about agriculture and the many reasons it is so important to our State's past and future.

As 2017 Arkansas Farm Family of the Year, Luke and Deedee will represent Arkansas well and use this award as a platform to promote farming and agriculture and foster respect for all the farmers, ranchers, and producers who contribute so much to our economy and food supply. They will also compete for the honor of being named the 2018 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year in Moultrie, GA.

I wish the Alstons good luck in that competition and once again congratulate them on all their hard work that has culminated in this well-deserved honor.•

TRIBUTE TO BOB BURNISON

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing Bob Burnison of Richland County for many years of volunteer service and leadership in his local community. Bob has a long history of supporting charitable activities in northeastern Montana. His efforts have inspired others to volunteer their time and strengthened the spirit of giving. When folks like Bob come together to help others, it brightens the holiday season for everyone.

This Christmas is the 39th year that Bob has been involved with collecting donations for the Salvation Army. Over the years, Bob has organized scores of volunteers to help make each giving season a success. This commitment to helping others is commendable considering Bob's professional obligations as the undersheriff of Richland County. He has given over four decades of service in law enforcement. The vast majority of the donations Bob has helped generate have remained in the local community to help offset essential living costs for those in need. Neighbors helping neighbors is a cornerstone for sustaining healthy communities, and local leaders like Bob are often a catalyst for this type of activity.

With nearly four decades of volunteer service and over four decades of public service, Bob has done a good job leading by example. Organizations across Richland County have pitched in to make sure the spirit of giving remains strong, and the next generation of volunteers are finding the joy that comes with helping others. Merry Christmas, Bob, and thank you for preserving the charitable traditions in your community.•

''MEMOIRS OF A STATE INTERN''

• Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, today I submit for the RECORD a poem written by one of my Georgia interns, Mr. Dalton Kane of Suwanee, GA, a student at the University of Georgia.

''Memoirs of a Senate Intern'' by Dalton Kane, a.k.a. ''Dolvin'':

The sound of footsteps echoes throughout the halls of the Russell Building as senators hurry to and fro before a salient vote. Chiefs of staff fervently address the concerns of elite constituents while legislative staff assistants frantically seek out last-minute details of the bill. Meanwhile, back home in the district, case workers tirelessly assist constituents with their government agency-based woes and field reps travel all across the state to ensure every voice is heard. Behind the scenes, an IT guy (who's probably a die-hard liberal) labors ceaselessly to make it all happen. This is democracy in action-the realization of a three-hundred-year-old experiment that connects the government to its people. Yet, there is one important link to this Constitutional dream that has been forgotten. That link is the Senate intern.

Located at the lowest echelon of power, the senate intern watches his phone light up like a Christmas tree as the constituency descends upon the office. He answers call after call with the simple reassurance that it will be passed on. Yet, as the mountain of the constituency begins to overwhelm him, he may slowly start to lose hope. However, as he glances at the Reagan portrait hanging before him, he knows that he is the gate between the senator and his constituency, and he must carry on. And I Dalton, aka Dolvin, have come to find myself in this valued position fall semester of 2017.●

REMEMBERING JAMES DOUGLAS MACY

● Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, last month, Oregon lost one of our most esteemed landscape architects, James Douglas Macy. Doug dedicated his life to protecting places that brought Oregon's unmatched natural beauty to millions of visitors. He will be sorely missed.

Doug grew up on a cattle ranch in Madras, OR, where he soaked up the natural beauty of his dramatic surroundings. It was there that his passion for landscape architecture first took hold. That passion grew as Doug studied landscape architecture at the University of Oregon and moved to Portland where he founded the urban design firm Walker Macy.

Doug blended his passionate advocacy for the protection of Oregon's natural treasures with his dedication to civic causes, the arts, and beautifying outdoor spaces. Through his design firm, he has influenced and mentored generations of landscape architects who have shaped cities and public spaces across the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

Anyone who has visited my hometown of Portland has felt Doug's influence in his designs of some of the city's most beloved spaces, including Pioneer Courthouse Square, Waterfront Park, and the Vietnam Veterans of Oregon Memorial. He was behind much of the revitalization that turned downtown Portland into a thriving, diverse, and green city where so many people enjoy living.

Visitors can also get a sense of Doug's love of nature in his designs for projects at national parks, including Crater Lake, private natural preserves like Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center, the scenic wonders of the Columbia River Gorge, State parks such as Oregon's Cottonwood Canyon, and hundreds of municipal parks and open spaces. Doug's work didn't stop there; his work can also be seen on college campuses, museums, vineyards, hospitals, and scenic highways.

In addition, Doug was a selfless citizen who donated his time and professional expertise to a countless number of causes, such as the Pacific Northwest College of Art, the Portland Parks Foundation, and the Portland Japanese Garden, which recently opened an expansion designed with Doug's guidance.

Doug will be remembered by those whose lives he touched and for creating beautiful and inspiring places for people across the West. He will especially be remembered as a dedicated father to his son Aaron, who died tragically in 1999, and as a caring sibling to his sisters Marilyn Macy Brown and Rebecca Macy and his brother Gregg Macy.

Today I honor the esteemed life and career of James Douglas Macy and recognize his enduring legacy as a landscape architect who fiercely protected and improved Oregonians' quality of life and many unique public and cultural resources throughout the Northwest.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:58 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1638. An act to require the Secretary of the Treasury to submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees on the estimated total assets under direct or indirect control by certain senior Iranian leaders and other figures, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1638. An act to require the Secretary of the Treasury to submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees on the estimated total assets under direct or indirect control by certain senior Iranian leaders and other figures, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with amendments:

S. 584. A bill to amend chapter 6 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Regulatory Flexibility Act), to ensure complete analysis of potential impacts on small entities of rules, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115–194).

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1769. A bill to require a new or updated Federal website that is intended for use by the public to be mobile friendly, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115–195).

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment:

S. 1869. A bill to reauthorize and rename the position of Whistleblower Ombudsman to be the Whistleblower Protection Coordinator (Rept. No. 115–196).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. INHOFE for Mr. MCCAIN for the Committee on Armed Services.

Air Force nomination of Maj. Gen. Anthony J. Cotton, to be Lieutenant General.

Air Force nomination of Col. Sharon A. Shaffer, to be Brigadier General.

Air Force nomination of Col. Robert J. Marks, to be Brigadier General.

Air Force nominations beginning with Col. Ronald G. Allen, Jr. and ending with Col. Alice W. Trevino, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 14, 2017. (minus 1 nominee: Col. Jeffrey H. Hurlbert)

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Lt. Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, to be General.

Navy nomination of Rear Adm. Nancy A. Norton, to be Vice Admiral.

Navy nomination of Rear Adm. Richard A. Brown, to be Vice Admiral.

Air Force nomination of Col. Mitchel Neurock, to be Brigadier General.

Air Force nominations beginning with Brig. Gen. Hubert C. Hegtvedt and ending with Brig. Gen. John B. Williams, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on December 1, 2017.

Mr. INHOFE for Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed Services I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORDS on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

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

Air Force nomination of Arianne R. Morrison, to be Major.

Air Force nomination of Richard A. Hanrahan, to be Major.

Air Force nominations beginning with Aleck A. Brown and ending with John D. Ritter, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on December 1, 2017.

Army nomination of Jennifer A. Mahoney, to be Major.

Army nominations beginning with Yon T. Chung and ending with Michael B. Payne, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on October 16, 2017.

Army nominations beginning with Nathele J. Anderson and ending with Brian R. Horton, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 27, 2017.

Army nominations beginning with Thomas W. Green and ending with Kenneth M. Koop, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 27, 2017.

Army nomination of Adam R. Liberman, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Michael E. Steelman, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Gerald D. Gangaram, to be Major.

Army nomination of Brian R. Johnson, to be Major.

Army nominations beginning with Scott T. Ayers and ending with Tyesha L. Smith, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 27, 2017. (minus 1 nominee: Shawn D. Smith)

Army nomination of Peter J. Armstrong, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Ali S. Zaza, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Phillip T. Buckler, to be Major.

Army nomination of Vernice K. Favor-Williams, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Army nomination of Heather M. Lee, to be Major.

Navy nominations beginning with William L. Arnest and ending with Karen J. Wood, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 14, 2017.

Navy nomination of Sharif H. Calfee, to be Captain.

By Mr. GRASSLEY for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Andrei Iancu, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

Duane A. Kees, of Arkansas, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas for the term of four years.

Stephen R. McAllister, of Kansas, to be United States Attorney for the District of Kansas for the term of four years.

Ronald A. Parsons, Jr., of South Dakota, to be United States Attorney for the District of South Dakota for the term of four years.

Ryan K. Patrick, of Texas, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas for the term of four years.

Michael B. Stuart, of West Virginia, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia for the term of four years.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. PETERS, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 2229. A bill to direct the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to conduct coastal community vulnerability assessments related to ocean acidification, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Ms. HEITKAMP):

S. 2230. A bill to require the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to improve services for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. HATCH):

S. 2231. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for institutional ineligibility based on low cohort repayment rates and to require risk sharing payments of institutions of higher education; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. KING:

S. 2232. A bill to amend the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 to provide for the integration of distributed energy resources, to modernize electricity grid infrastructure, to provide for the consideration of non-wires alternatives, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. UDALL (for himself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Ms. CORTEZ MASTO):

S. 2233. A bill to protect Native children and promote public safety in Indian country; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. WICKER (for himself and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 2234. A bill to require the Federal Trade Commission to develop cybersecurity resources for consumer education and awareness regarding the purchase and use of devices that are part of the Internet of Things, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. DONNELLY (for himself and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 2235. A bill to establish a tiered hiring preference for members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. ERNST, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. HARRIS, Ms. HASSAN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. WARREN, and Mrs. MCCASKILL):

S. 2236. A bill to require covered discrimination and covered harassment awareness and prevention training for Members, officers, employees, interns, fellows, and detailees of Congress within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter, to require a biennial climate survey of Congress, to amend the enforcement process under the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights for covered discrimination and covered harassment complaints, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 2237. A bill to amend the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council Act of 1978 to improve the examination of depository institutions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself and Mr. PORTMAN):

S. 2238. A bill to amend the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Canalway Act of 1996 to repeal the funding limitation; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. STABENOW:

S. 2239. A bill to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to improve the scheduling of appointments, the accountability of third party administrators, and payment to providers under such Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. 2240. A bill to direct the Election Assistance Commission to carry out a pilot program under which the Commission shall provide funds to local educational agencies for initiatives to provide voter registration information to secondary school students in the 12th grade; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. KING:

S. 2241. A bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act by clarifying that State Exchanges are prohibited from imposing fees or assessments on issuers of excepted benefits and standalone dental plans not sold through an Exchange; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. RISCH, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. STRANGE, and Mr. INHOFE):

S. Res. 361. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States Government shall, both unilaterally and alongside the international community, consider all options for exerting maximum pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), in order to denuclearize the DPRK, protect the lives of United States citizens and allies, and prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 45

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 45, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to increase penalties for individuals who illegally reenter the United States after being removed and for other purposes.

S. 223

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) 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. 818

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 818, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow individuals with disabilities to save additional amounts in their ABLE accounts above the current annual maximum contribution if they work and earn income.

S. 946

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 946, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to provide treatment court services to justice-involved veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 1693

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1693, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to clarify that section 230 of that Act does not prohibit the enforcement against providers and users of interactive computer services of Federal and State criminal and civil law relating to sex trafficking.

S. 1774

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) were added as cosponsors of S. 1774, a bill to provide protections for workers with respect to their right to select or refrain from selecting representation by a labor organization.

S. 2152

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2152, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide for assistance for victims of child pornography, and for other purposes.

S. 2157

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2157, a bill to require drug manufacturers to disclose the prices of prescription drugs in any direct-to-consumer advertising and marketing to practitioners of a drug.

S. 2219

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2219, a bill to reduce the number of preventable deaths and injuries caused by underride crashes, to improve motor carrier and passenger motor vehicle safety, and for other purposes.

S. 2226

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 2226, a bill to prohibit recipients of disaster recovery relief assistance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development from penalizing applicants that declined assistance from the Small Business Administration.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Ms. HEITKAMP):

S. 2230. A bill to require the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to improve services for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2230

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Help End Abusive Living Situations Act'' or the ''HEALS Act''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term ''domestic violence project'' means a project administered by a victim service provider designed to meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking;

(2) the term ''homeless'' has the meaning given the term in section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302);

(3) the terms ''homeless individual with a disability'', ''permanent housing'', ''tenant-based'', ''transitional housing'', and ''victim service provider'' have the meanings given those terms in section 401 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360);

(4) the term ''rapid re-housing project'' means supportive services and short- or medium-term tenant-based rental assistance, as necessary, to help a homeless individual or family, with or without a disability, move as soon as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing; and

(5) the term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

SEC. 3. STRENGTHENING HOUSING RESOURCES PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, AND STALKING.

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall take the following measures to improve services provided to survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking:

(1) EQUAL CONSIDERATION.—For purposes of scoring applicants in the notice of funding availability for the Continuum of Care program authorized under subtitle C of title IV of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11381 et seq.) in any fiscal year, the Secretary shall give equal consideration to—

(A) rapid re-housing projects;

(B) projects that provide permanent supportive housing; and

(C) domestic violence projects that maximize client choice, including transitional housing that provide services and help participants to secure permanent housing.

(2) TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall authorize any defunded transitional housing project to reapply for funding.

(B) TREATMENT AS RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT.—The Secretary shall consider a program receiving funds under section 40299 of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12351) to be a rapid re-housing project if the program—

(i) provides not less than 6 months of housing assistance to survivors; and

(ii) meets other criteria established by the Secretary.

(3) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall develop—

(A) measurable criteria upon which applicants are evaluated to demonstrate their collaboration with victim service providers to develop local policy priorities focused on survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, including survivor-centered coordinated entry processes that appropriately assess and prioritize those survivors and take into account the safety and confidentiality needs of those survivors; and

(B) mechanisms that promote the provision of technical assistance and support for programs to improve outcomes instead of reallocating or not awarding funds.

(4) RESEARCH AGENDA.—The Secretary shall develop a research agenda that focuses on survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking and the housing modalities that best support them, especially the critical safety concerns and the link between trauma and residential stability.

SEC. 4. INCREASING ACCESS TO SAFE HOUSING FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, AND STALKING.

Section 427(b)(1) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11386a(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) by redesignating clauses (vii) and (viii) as clauses (viii) and (ix), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after clause (vi) the following:

''(vii) success in addressing the safety needs of homeless survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking;'';

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) in clause (iv)(VI), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(B) by redesignating clause (v) as clause (vi); and

(C) by inserting after clause (iv)(VI) the following:

''(v) how the recipient will measure the success of the victim service providers in meeting the housing, safety, and trauma needs of victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, with an explanation of how the recipient will allow flexibility on other metrics that may be impacted by the needs of survivors; and'';

(3) in subparagraph (F)(ii), by striking '', and'' at the end;

(4) by redesignating subparagraph (G) as subparagraph (H); and

(5) by inserting after subparagraph (F) the following:

''(G) success of the recipient in meeting the housing, safety, and trauma needs of survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, including access to safe housing; and''.

SEC. 5. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on—

(1) the trends in allocating resources to address the housing needs of survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking; and

(2) the increase in the allocation of resources for domestic violence projects beginning after the date of enactment of this Act.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 361—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT SHALL, BOTH UNILATERALLY AND ALONGSIDE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, CONSIDER ALL OPTIONS FOR EXERTING MAXIMUM PRESSURE ON THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA (DPRK), IN ORDER TO DENUCLEARIZE THE DPRK, PROTECT THE LIVES OF UNITED STATES CITIZENS AND ALLIES, AND PREVENT FURTHER PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. RISCH, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. STRANGE, and Mr. INHOFE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 361

Whereas the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is a brutal Communist regime that has consistently pursued a nuclear weapons program since the early 1960s;

Whereas the DPRK has a long history of humanitarian abuses against its own people;

Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, the DPRK kidnapped foreign nationals from countries including Japan, South Korea, China, France, and Italy to train DPRK spies;

Whereas the DPRK has unjustly detained visiting United States citizens, including

Otto Warmbier, who died after being detained for more than a year;

Whereas the DPRK and Republic of Korea (ROK) in 1992 signed a Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, promising to cease testing and production of nuclear weapons;

Whereas the United States agreed to provide energy assistance to the DPRK in exchange for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula in 1994;

Whereas the United States Government revealed in October 2002 that the DPRK admitted operating a secret nuclear weapons program in violation of agreements and international commitments;

Whereas, following six-party talks in 2005, the DPRK agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons program in exchange for energy assistance, economic cooperation, and steps toward normalization with the United States and Japan;

Whereas the DPRK proceeded to conduct multiple missile tests and its first nuclear weapons test in 2006;

Whereas the DPRK agreed to disable its nuclear facilities in exchange for energy assistance in February 2007 and ''to provide a complete and correct declaration of its nuclear programs'' in October 2007, but ultimately did not fulfill its commitment;

Whereas the DPRK tested a long-range missile directed at the United States in 2009;

Whereas the DPRK attacked and sunk the South Korean ship Cheonan, murdering 46 sailors in 2010;

Whereas DPRK forces fired approximately 170 artillery shells and rockets at Yeonpyeong Island, hitting ROK military and civilian targets and killing two ROK marines and two civilians in November 2010;

Whereas the DPRK agreed to cease long-range missile and nuclear tests in exchange for United States food aid in February 2012;

Whereas the DPRK proceeded to test yet another long-range missile in April 2012;

Whereas the DPRK has conducted almost three times the number of ballistic missile and nuclear weapons tests during Kim Jong-un's six years in power than in the nearly 60 years before him under Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il;

Whereas Kim Jong-un's regime has accelerated the pace of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles program, by—

(1) conducting 86 ballistic missile tests, successfully testing both ground-launched and submarine-launched solid fuel missiles;

(2) conducting 20 ballistic missile flight tests in 2017, including a recent test that is reported to be capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and reaching anywhere in the continental United States;

(3) improving upon missile ranges and testing re-entry capability; and

(4) conducting a total of four nuclear weapon tests, including three that have occurred since January 2016 and a claimed hydrogen bomb test with a yield estimated to be 150 kilotons;

Whereas a high ranking DPRK defector has publicly testified that as long as Kim Jong-un remains in power there is no chance to improve the human rights conditions in the DPRK and that Kim Jong-un will never relinquish the country's nuclear capabilities;

Whereas the collective development and testing of DPRK's nuclear weapons program pose a real and critical threat to the United States and global stability;

Whereas the United Nations Security Council has passed nine sanctions resolutions regarding North Korea's nuclear missile and space development programs since North Korea's first nuclear test in 2006;

Whereas the United States Congress passed the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016 (Public Law 114–122) in February 2016 and the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (Public Law 115–44) in July 2017 to provide sanction authorities to deter the DPRK's provocative behavior;

Whereas the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution to sanction the DPRK economy in September 2017;

Whereas the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), in its 2017 Worldwide Threat Assessment, assessed that North Korea's ''weapons of mass destruction program, public threats, defiance of the international community, confrontational military posturing, cyber activities, and potential for internal instability pose a complex and increasingly grave national security threat to the United States and its interests'';

Whereas the DNI further assessed that Kim is intent on proving the DPRK's capability to strike the contiguous United States with nuclear weapons;

Whereas the People's Republic of China accounts for 80 to 90 percent of trade with DPRK;

Whereas the People's Republic of China acts as the DPRK's primary advocate and must join the United States in a committed effort to dismantling the DPRK nuclear and missile programs; and

Whereas the President has authority to impose secondary sanctions on any financial institution or other entity that conducts business with DPRK entities in order to apply maximum pressure on the regime to abandon their nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses that the United States of America should not tolerate the DPRK's possession of nuclear weapons or continued development of nuclear weapon and ballistic missile capabilities;

(2) believes the United States and the international community, including the United Nations Security Council and United States regional allies, should develop and immediately implement the strictest sanctions regime and continue to exhaust every reasonable diplomatic option necessary to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of the DPRK's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs;

(3) expresses that the United States Government should plan for every military contingency necessary to defend the American people and ensure regional and global security;

(4) acknowledges that the ROK and Japan, both treaty allies of the United States, would likely face immediate retaliation by the DPRK in response to any potential military action by the United States and therefore that any military action by the United States should be coordinated with the Governments of the ROK and Japan;

(5) asserts that Congress is unified in its condemnation of the DPRK's dangerous pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capability and should be appropriately consulted prior to any use of military force; and

(6) recognizes that Congress possesses the authority under Article I of the Constitution of the United States to declare war, and affirms that the authorization of Congress is needed prior to any pre-emptive or preventative ground war on the Korean Peninsula initiated by United States forces.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as the Presiding Officer knows, today I am submitting a resolution, joined by the junior Senator from Alaska, the Presiding Officer, and the senior Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, as well as Senators RISCH, INHOFE, RUBIO, TILLIS, and STRANGE. The purpose of this resolution is to expressly declare that Congress is unified in its condemnation of the increasingly hostile and perpetually intransigent behavior of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

North Korea, as the world knows, has been dangerously pursuing its nuclear weapons capabilities for a long time. Since dictator Kim Jong Un took power 6 years ago, he has ordered at least four nuclear tests, including the September detonation of what his regime and outside experts generally agree was a hydrogen bomb.

Despite great efforts made by the United States, including a recent Executive order by our President, North Korea's history as a bad-faith negotiator continues unabated on the world's stage. It obstinately violates diplomatic norms and human rights at will and was recently redesignated as a state sponsor of terrorism.

We simply can't afford to wander naively down a path of appeasement when lessons learned over more than half a century have laid bear North Korea's behavioral patterns. They have exposed the regime's militant refusal to cooperate with the world community and simply denuclearize.

Our resolution asserts that the United States, as well as the United Nations Security Council and our regional allies, should continue to implement the strictest of sanctions regime possible required to change the bad behavior of North Korea.

Further, we have to continue to exhaust every reasonable diplomatic option to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic programs. Our resolution recognizes that the President has constitutional responsibilities to protect the United States, but it emphasizes that a congressional authorization is necessary prior to committing U.S. forces to sustain military operations on the Korean Peninsula.

Of course, we hope that the worst outcome—open military conflict—will never come to pass, but, as it continues to increase its nuclear yield and ballistic missile capabilities, North Korea has become one of, if not the single, greatest threat to peace in the world.

As the resolution makes clear, the United States must continue to take all necessary precautions through a mix of diplomacy, economic sanctions, and contingency planning. Our focus should be on exerting as much pressure as we can on North Korea to end its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programs.

I hope our colleagues will join us in adopting this resolution in short order to send a very important and clear message about the gravity of the threat and the severity with which we are confronting it.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I have 5 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 ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 14, 2017, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 14, 2017, at 10 a.m. to hold a hearing entitled ''New Counterterrorism Guidance''.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 14, 2017, at 10 a.m., in room to conduct a hearing on the nomination of Margaret Weichert, of Georgia, to be Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 14, 2017, at 10 a.m., in room SD–226 to conduct a hearing on S. 2152, ''Amy, Vicky, and Andy Child Pornography Victim Assistance Act of 2017'' and on the following nominations: Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, David Ryan Stras, of Minnesota, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit, Fernando Rodriguez, Jr., to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas, Andrei Iancu, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and Duane A. Kees, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas, Stephen R. McAllister, to be United States Attorney for the District of Kansas, Ronald A. Parsons, Jr., to be United States Attorney for the District of South Dakota, Ryan K. Patrick, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas, and Michael B. Stuart, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, all of the Department of Justice.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 14, 2017, at 2 p.m. to conduct a closed hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that JASON SMITH, a Coast Guard fellow from the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, be granted floor privileges for the duration of the 115th Congress.

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

PREVENTING ANIMAL CRUELTY AND TORTURE ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 654 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 654) to revise section 48 of title 18, United States Code, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 654) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 654

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act'' or the ''PACT Act''.

SEC. 2. REVISION OF SECTION 48.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 48 of title 18, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 48. Animal crushing

''(a) OFFENSES.—

''(1) CRUSHING.—It shall be unlawful for any person to purposely engage in animal crushing in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce or within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States.

''(2) CREATION OF ANIMAL CRUSH VIDEOS.—It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly create an animal crush video, if—

''(A) the person intends or has reason to know that the animal crush video will be distributed in, or using a means or facility of, interstate or foreign commerce; or

''(B) the animal crush video is distributed in, or using a means or facility of, interstate or foreign commerce.

''(3) DISTRIBUTION OF ANIMAL CRUSH VIDEOS.—It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly sell, market, advertise, exchange, or distribute an animal crush video in, or using a means or facility of, interstate or foreign commerce.

''(b) EXTRATERRITORIAL APPLICATION.—This section applies to the knowing sale, marketing, advertising, exchange, distribution, or creation of an animal crush video outside of the United States, if—

''(1) the person engaging in such conduct intends or has reason to know that the animal crush video will be transported into the United States or its territories or possessions; or

''(2) the animal crush video is transported into the United States or its territories or possessions.

''(c) PENALTIES.—Whoever violates this section shall be fined under this title, imprisoned for not more than 7 years, or both.

''(d) EXCEPTIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—This section does not apply with regard to any conduct, or a visual depiction of that conduct, that is—

''(A) a customary and normal veterinary, agricultural husbandry, or other animal management practice;

''(B) the slaughter of animals for food;

''(C) hunting, trapping, fishing, a sporting activity not otherwise prohibited by Federal law, predator control, or pest control;

''(D) medical or scientific research;

''(E) necessary to protect the life or property of a person; or

''(F) performed as part of euthanizing an animal.

''(2) GOOD-FAITH DISTRIBUTION.—This section does not apply to the good-faith distribution of an animal crush video to—

''(A) a law enforcement agency; or

''(B) a third party for the sole purpose of analysis to determine if referral to a law enforcement agency is appropriate.

''(3) UNINTENTIONAL CONDUCT.—This section does not apply to unintentional conduct that injures or kills an animal.

''(4) CONSISTENCY WITH RFRA.—This section shall be enforced in a manner that is consistent with section 3 of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 2000bb–1).

''(e) NO PREEMPTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to preempt the law of any State or local subdivision thereof to protect animals.

''(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

''(1) the term 'animal crushing' means actual conduct in which one or more living non-human mammals, birds, reptiles, or amphibians is purposely crushed, burned, drowned, suffocated, impaled, or otherwise subjected to serious bodily injury (as defined in section 1365 and including conduct that, if committed against a person and in the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States, would violate section 2241 or 2242);

''(2) the term 'animal crush video' means any photograph, motion-picture film, video or digital recording, or electronic image that—

''(A) depicts animal crushing; and

''(B) is obscene; and

''(3) the term 'euthanizing an animal' means the humane destruction of an animal accomplished by a method that—

''(A) produces rapid unconsciousness and subsequent death without evidence of pain or distress; or

''(B) uses anesthesia produced by an agent that causes painless loss of consciousness and subsequent death.''.

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 3 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by striking the item relating to section 48 and inserting the following:

''48. Animal crushing.''.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m., Monday, December 18; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be

deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, 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 proceed to the consideration of Calendar Nos. 241 and 193 under the previous order, en bloc, with the debate time on the nominations to run concurrently; finally, that at 5:30 p.m., the Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations in the order listed with no intervening action or debate.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2017, AT 3 P.M.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:19 p.m., adjourned until Monday, December 18, 2017, at 3 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 14, 2017:

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

MATTHEW Z. LEOPOLD, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY.

DAVID ROSS, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

SCOTT W. BRADY, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS.

ANDREW E. LELLING, OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS.

THE JUDICIARY

JAMES C. HO, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT.

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 271(D):

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) PAT DEQUATTRO
REAR ADM. (LH) WILLIAM G. KELLY
REAR ADM. (LH) JOHN P. NADEAU
REAR ADM. (LH) JOANNA M. NUNAN
REAR ADM. (LH) DAVID G. THROOP

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO SERVE AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE COAST GUARD RESERVE IN THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 53(B):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

REAR ADM. ANDREW S. MCKINLEY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203(A):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. JAMES M. KELLY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 271(E):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. THOMAS ALLAN
CAPT. LAURA M. DICKEY
CAPT. DOUGLAS M. FEARS
CAPT. JOHN W. MAUGER
CAPT. NATHAN A. MOORE
CAPT. BRIAN K. PENOYER
CAPT. MATTHEW W. SIBLEY

COAST GUARD NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH GEORGE BAMFORD AND ENDING WITH TABITHA A. SCHIRO, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 16, 2017.

COAST GUARD NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH STEPHEN J. ADLER AND ENDING WITH TORRENCE B. WILSON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 16, 2017.

COAST GUARD NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH LAWRENCE F. AHLIN AND ENDING WITH RUSSELL R. ZUCKERMAN, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 16, 2017.

COAST GUARD NOMINATION OF MEGHAN K. STEINHAUS, TO BE COMMANDER.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF AMY T. SAJDA

HON. DONALD S. BEYER, JR.

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and recognize the outstanding contributions made by Ms. Amy T. Sajda, who will retire from the Defense Logistics Agency in Fort Belvoir, Virginia, on February 28, 2018.

Ms. Sajda's distinguished government career spans over 32 years, and her record of achievement during this period reflects greatly upon herself and upon the organization at which she has served, including her most recent role as DLA's Director of the Office of Small Business Programs. Her contributions to the national defense were significant and she will be missed as she moves on to new and exciting opportunities.

Ms. Sajda, originally from Bellmawr, New Jersey, entered the Federal service working for the Defense Industrial Supply Center, a Major Subordinate Command of the Defense Logistics Agency, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in July 1985. There, she held a series of positions in contracting, eventually becoming a contracting officer in August 1988. Ms. Sajda attended Glassboro State College (now Rowan University), the University of Phoenix, and is the recipient of special achievement and performance awards, including the Exceptional Civilian Service Award in 2009 and the Meritorious Civilian Service Award in 2014. In 2014, she was selected into the Executive Development Program and attended the Federal Executive Institute in Charlottesville, Virginia; a program designed to provide a Department of Defense framework for developing future civilian leaders.

In 1991, Ms. Sajda joined the Defense Logistics Agency Headquarters as a procurement analyst providing contracting expertise and guidance to field contracting activities. From 1993 through 2006 she participated in numerous Procurement Management Reviews of DLA's contracting activities, ensuring the integrity of the procurement process; becoming the Procurement Management Review Program Manager in 2004. In 2007 Ms. Sajda was selected to implement the Base Realignment and Closure Act 2005 decision to transfer procurement management and related support functions for Depot-Level Reparable from the Military Services to DLA. Her procurement expertise and conscientious commitment to serving the warfighter facilitated the smooth transfer a year ahead of schedule at a savings of $357 million.

Ms. Sajda reached a career benchmark in 2011 with her selection as DLA's Director of the Office of Small Business Programs. In this role she is responsible for increasing the amount of Federal contract dollars awarded to small businesses. Her guidance and vision propelled DLA to steadily increase the amount awarded to small businesses during her tenure culminating in award of over 33.5 percent of eligible contract dollars to small businesses in fiscal year 2017 for an Agency high $10 billion dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Amy T. Sajda's contributions to the Defense Logistics Agency and the American people, and I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating her on her retirement from civil service. She epitomizes the dedication and professionalism that make our Federal civil service a model all over the world.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS MARKUP

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today the House Committee on Foreign Affairs held a markup of very important pieces of legislation. I wish to commend Chairman Royce and the Ranking Member for the bipartisan approach to advancing a number of important measures.

Briefly, I want to comment on the Chairman's H.R. 2219 on increasing the role of the financial industry in combatting human trafficking.

This bill will force an appraisal of best practices to stop the flow of funds from human trafficking and integrate the Treasury Department into a whole-of-government effort to combat the scourge of human trafficking. In this regard, it echoes provisions in H.R. 2200, which passed the House earlier this year.

Wisely, it takes a "follow the money" approach, and asks the question, why do traffickers traffic? Because that is where the money is. Unlike hard to transport drugs, which are sold only once to end users and then consumed—human traffickers cynically see people as a commodity which can be bought and sold, used and exploited, over and over again. This will help staunch the flow of funds from such exploitation, and thereby disincentivize those whose greed drives them to reduce their fellow human beings as a means to an end.

Last week our subcommittee held a hearing on Advancing Human Rights to Combat Extremism. One of the takeaways underscored the need on supporting key allies in the Muslim world who bravely stand up against the extremists. In this fight, we have no more important an ally than Jordan. I, therefore, strongly support the Chairman's "United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Extension Act."

The War Crimes Rewards Expansion Act, an amendment to the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, is yet another effort to provide for the means to punish those who engage in genocide or war crimes. Since we continue to see such crimes committed in countries such as Syria, Iraq and the Central African Republic, we must continue our efforts to apply justice to those who so heartlessly take the lives of entire groups of people.

While there is an International Criminal Court, and regional tribunals have been established to punish these criminals in countries such as Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, these criminals too often manage to escape punishment. Russia or China often block our efforts to engage the ICC, and even when the court is empowered to move forward, very little is accomplished.

That was why I introduced the concurrent resolution in the last Congress to create a special court for Syria. Unfortunately, while the House overwhelmingly passed that measure, the Senate declined to consider it.

Nevertheless, we must continue to press forward with efforts to make it easier to bring perpetrators of genocide and war crimes to trial—both to bring justice for their victims and as a warning to others that their actions don't provide for impunity. That is why I support Representative FOXX's bill.

CELEBRATING THE MILITARY SERVICE OF SENIOR AIRMAN KATIE MAE COGBILL, USAF

HON. BRIAN BABIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank a great woman for her military service and to recognize her unprecedented accomplishments, Senior Airman Katie Mae Cogbill of the United States Air Force. Airman Cogbill was born on November 26, 1989 in Big Spring, Texas to Vickie Scales and Wayne Dial.

Airman Cogbill exemplifies all that is right with our young people of today and is an example of the great accomplishments one can achieve with determination and dedication.

After graduating from Bridge City High School, Katie married her husband, Daniel and on July 29, 2010 their son Barrett was born. That is when the course of Airman Cogbill's life changed and little did she know her destiny defined.

Barrett was diagnosed with Autism and Katie's fight for resources to help her son began. While fighting financial stress and a lack of resources, Katie's strength and hope never wavered. Her love, tenacity and dedication to her family led her to join the United States Air Force in 2014.

In addition to financial stability, Katie receives therapy benefits for Barrett and was shown that the Air Force fulfills its promise to take care of its people. Barrett now exceeds expectations and thrives.

Today, Katie is known as Senior Airman Katie Cogbill, 19th Medical Operations Squadron at Little Rock Air Force Base where she works as an Aerospace Medical Services Technician and is responsible for the patients of the Women's Health Clinic.

Katie's Air Force career is impressive and she has received several awards and recognition for her work ethic and dedication to her patients. Her most impressive and recent award was the 2017 Air Force Medical Service Aerospace Medical Technician of the Year for Air Medical Command, coined by 19th, MDG Commander, Col. Dawn Brooks.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Airman Cogbill for this prestigious award and thank her for her selfless service to our great nation and the United States Air Force.

TRIBUTE TO THE RAILSWEST MUSEUM

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate the RailsWest Museum of Council Bluffs, Iowa, for maintaining 150 years of railroad history in Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County, Iowa. RailsWest Museum is located in the former depot of the Chicago, Rock Island Pacific railroads.

The RailsWest Museum is operated by the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County and the building and grounds have been renovated to preserve its rich history. The depot that houses the current museum was built in 1899, but the original depot was built in 1870. During its years in operation the depot saw thousands of local soldiers leave Council Bluffs for military duty, and it was also a welcome sight when many of them returned home after their military service. The Rock Island Line's last day of operation was March 31, 1980. Today, the museum promotes 150 years of railroad history with displays, artifacts, and exhibits.

Mr. Speaker, I commend and congratulate the RailsWest Museum for their dedicated and devoted service in preserving the railroad history of Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County. It is with great pride that I recognize them today. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating the RailsWest Museum's accomplishments and in wishing the staff and volunteers nothing but the best.

CONGRATULATING KEWANEE, ILLINOIS FOR BEING NAMED A FINALIST FOR THE 2017 GOVERNOR'S HOMETOWN AWARD

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Kewanee, Illinois for being named a finalist for the 2017 Governor's Hometown Award due to its outstanding Step Ladder Tutoring Program.

The Step Ladder Tutoring Program targets middle school special education, borderline, and struggling general education students who need academic assistance. Certified middle school teachers serve as site coordinators for the Step Ladder Tutoring Program, while a system of community volunteers, middle school students, high school students, college students and AmeriCorps members serve as tutors for the program. During the 2014–2015 school year, all eighth grade students receiving assistance were promoted to the ninth grade. 75 percent of the students had improved skills in math and reading, and 80 percent of the students had improved attendance rates and an overall improved attitude toward school and learning.

The generous and ambitious volunteers and leaders of the Step Ladder Tutoring Program make me especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to again formally congratulate Kewanee, Illinois for being named a finalist for the 2017 Governor's Hometown Award and recognize all who organize and contribute to the Step Ladder Tutoring Program for their outstanding efforts and accomplishments.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE RETIREMENT OF MARK WHITE

HON. DAVID A. TROTT

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. TROTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the retirement of Wixom, Michigan resident, Senior Inspector Mark White of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection.

We honor Mark for his years of bravery and protection of our land, sea, and air borders.

During his time at the Detroit border, Mark committed himself to the interception of contraband. He apprehended numerous pieces of drug paraphernalia and in 1995; he seized nearly $2.7 million dollars' worth of munitions bound for illegal exportation in Operation Exodus.

His most notable act of bravery occurred in October of 1997 at the Detroit Windsor Tunnel. A gunman under the influence of drugs attempted to hijack cars at inspection lanes and shot a civilian. Mark fatally wounded the gunman and provided first aid to the injured civilian. This act of heroism earned him a number of awards, including the U.S. Customs Service Meritorious Service Award for Valor.

Since 2000, Mark has worked as the Senior Inspector at Oakland County International Airport and spends his free time as a lacrosse coach for the Walled Lake Gladiators.

After 31 years of service, Mark will retire this December, and will return to his home state of Pennsylvania with his wife and daughter.

I applaud Senior Inspector Mark White for his service to the State of Michigan.

THE LONG ARM OF CHINA: EXPORTING AUTHORITARIANISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I made the following remarks at the hearing held by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China which I co-chair with Senator Marco Rubio:

This hearing is the second in a series looking at China's foreign influence operations and the impact on universally-recognized human rights. With the Congress and U.S. public focused on Russian influence operations, Chinese efforts have received little scrutiny and are not well understood. This must change.

Attempts by the Chinese government to guide, buy, or coerce political influence, control discussion of ''sensitive'' topics, and export its authoritarian practices globally are widespread and pervasive.

Long-time allies Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have been rocked by scandals involving Chinese sponsored influence operations targeting politicians, businesses, and academic institutions.

Australia in particular is in the midst of a national crisis and all like-minded democratic allies should be supporting their efforts to root out those elements intended to corrupt or coopt Australian political and academic institutions.

All countries pursue soft power initiatives to promote a ''positive'' global image and build goodwill, but the Chinese government's use of technology, coercion, pressure, and the promise of market access is unprecedented and poses clear challenges to the freedoms of democratic societies.

An example of Chinese rewards given to companies and individuals for abiding by the Chinese government's rules is the case of publisher Springer Nature, the world's largest academic book publisher.

Springer Nature removed more than 1,000 articles from the websites of the Journal of Chinese Political Science and International Politics in order to comply with China's censorship directives and was later ''rewarded'' for its censorship by signing a lucrative strategic partnership with the Chinese tech giant Tencent Holdings.

In addition to academic publishers, the Chinese government is going to school on college and universities. American institutions are being seduced by the promised infusion of much-needed wealth from China.

But one always has to pay a price—play by China's rules, don't ruffle feathers and don't discuss or write about ''sensitive topics.'' Universities committed to academic freedom are bound to run into problems eventually.

I have held two hearings on the threat to academic freedom posed by Confucius Institutes and the creation of U.S. campuses in China.

We should all be for creative research partnerships and expanding educational opportunities for U.S. students, but not at the cost of fundamental freedoms.

I have asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate academic partnerships between the U.S. colleges and the Chinese government. The first report came out last Spring.

The GAO is now in the process of conducting investigations of Confucius Institutes. I have written to all U.S. colleges with Confucius Institutes and asked them to make their contracts public and available for public inspection.

Many foreign businesses in China have already faced similar dilemmas. Some, like Apple, which recently removed from its Chinese app store applications that help users

bypass China's "Great Firewall." The networking site LinkedIn agreed to censor content and Facebook is promising to do the same in order to get access to the Chinese market.

Chinese operations to curtail the activities of dissidents and critics of the Communist Party are also pervasive, troubling, and must be stopped. We have heard multiple stories from U.S. citizens and foreign nationals living in the U.S. about efforts to intimidate, censor, and silence them.

The case of Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui is just the latest example of egregious behavior. High-ranking Chinese security ministry officials, in the US on transit visas no less, met with Mr. Guo multiple times in order to threaten and convince him to leave the U.S.

Chinese agents have repeatedly violated U.S. sovereignty and law according to the Wall Street Journal report on the incident.

These incidents and those we will discuss today are just the tip of the iceberg.

The Commission's 2017 Annual Report contains several recommendations to counter Chinese foreign influence operations—including expanding the mandate of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) to include Chinese government media organizations and think-tanks, expanded Internet Freedom initiatives and efforts to counter Chinese propaganda and disinformation at the State Department. I encourage those interested to look at our recommendations.

As we start to grapple with the scale and scope of Chinese influence operations, we will be looking for new legislative ideas and I hope our witnesses today can provide recommendations for the Commission's action.

We must be clear from the outset that we support better relations with the people of China and the United States. The issues we are discussing here today are part of influence operations conducted by the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government.

President Xi Jinping, who has concentrated more power than any Chinese leader since Mao, is determined to make the world safe for authoritarianism. Beijing is intent on exporting its censorship regime, intimidating dissidents and their families, sanitizing history, and stifling critical discussions of its repressive policies.

These actions pose direct threats to deeply held core values and fundamental freedoms enjoyed by all democratic societies. We must find ways to effectively and resolutely push back. Doing so should be a critical national interest.

CONGRATULATING LANARK, ILLINOIS FOR BEING NAMED A PROJECT WINNER FOR THE 2017 GOVERNOR'S HOMETOWN AWARD

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Lanark, Illinois for being named a project winner for the 2017 Governor's Hometown Award due to its project, Workation 2016.

A group of volunteers from Lanark First Brethren Church, who were previously involved in Alaskan mission work camp programs, believed they needed a more local, neighbor-helping-neighbor type of program in Lanark. From this idea, Workation 2016 was created. This project sought requests from older residents that had small projects that they were not able to accomplish on their own. Volunteers would then complete these maintenance projects, safety upgrades, or landscaping projects at no cost to the resident. 30 different projects around town were completed by 30 volunteers. According to the volunteers, the greatest benefit of the program is the relationships that are developed and the rewarding feeling of making a home safer or more comfortable for a resident.

The hard work and generosity visible through Lanark's Workation 2016 project makes me especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to again formally congratulate Lanark, Illinois for being named a project winner for the 2017 Governor's Hometown Award.

RECOGNIZING JUDGE WALTER F. DRAG UPON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. TOM REED

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Judge Walter F. Drag, who is retiring after more than three decades of judicial service to the City of Dunkirk, New York.

Judge Drag was recommended for appointment as Acting City Court Judge on January 1, 1985, and became City Court Judge in 1990. Over that time, he has heard thousands of cases and upheld the law with distinction. In addition, he maintained a private law practice until 2007, and spent several stints teaching law as a college professor.

Among Judge Drag's many accomplishments as City Court Judge is the establishment of a Treatment Court in 2002 for individuals charged with crimes related to substance abuse. In the years since then, more than seven hundred people have participated, with the majority successfully completing the treatment program.

It is a privilege to congratulate Judge Walter F. Drag on a distinguished career of service to the City of Dunkirk, and to wish him all the best in retirement. He leaves behind a legacy that will benefit the residents of his community for years to come.

TRIBUTE TO JODY REYNOLDS

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Jody Reynolds of Des Moines, Iowa, for being named one of dsm Magazine's 2017 "Sages Over 70."

The "Sages Over 70" award honors community leaders who continue to serve as mentors and leaders when others have retired. Jody has been a tireless advocate for children her entire life. Her experience with birth complications with her third child opened her eyes to what services were and were not available, and led her to advocacy. She's helped to raise $109 million for Variety—The children's Charity over the years, and served as the first female president of Variety International. One of the many words of advice she offered to the magazine was to press forward through adversity, and to also enjoy the journey.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Jody for being named a "Sage Over 70" by dsm Magazine, and applaud her for her service to her community. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Jody for this outstanding achievement and in wishing her nothing but the best.

HONORING PEDDRICK M. YOUNG, SR. OF PENNSYLVANIA ON HIS RETIREMENT AFTER MORE THAN 29 YEARS OF SERVICE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

HON. SCOTT PERRY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, today I extend my sincere congratulations to my constituent, Peddrick M. Young, Sr., upon his retirement from almost 30 years of service with the Lower Allen Township Board of Commissioners.

First, I thank Mr. Young for his service to our Nation in the United States Marine Corps. I've long appreciated the commitment of people who devote themselves selflessly to serving our Nation.

Mr. Young also has a demonstrated record of service to our communities. He previously retired from his position as facilities manager with Commerce Bank, staff to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, and staff assistant in the U.S. House to one of my predecessors, the late Congressman Bill Goodling.

Mr. Young's civic service included the Pennsylvania Crime Stoppers, Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners, and many others. He also served as an active member of many community service organizations.

Mr. Young's tireless dedication, professionalism and sacrifice touched the lives of countless people and challenged all with whom he served to be the best. His legacy of service to our communities will endure.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's Fourth Congressional District, I thank and congratulate Peddrick M. Young, Sr. on his service and wish him and his family Godspeed, great happiness and success in their future adventures.

RECOGNIZING THE LENA-WINSLOW PANTHERS FOOTBALL TEAM FOR THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Lena-Winslow Panthers Football

Team for their Class 1A championship win against the Tuscola Warriors.

The Panthers held a 21–7 lead at half-time, with 267 yards of total offense. By the fourth quarter, the Warriors had closed the Panthers' lead to one point. The Warriors had a chance at a game winning touchdown when Panther player Rahveon Valentine broke up a pass on fourth down with only 10 seconds remaining in the game. This secured Lena-Winslow's third state championship title in the last eight years and the program's first-ever unbeaten season.

Mr. Speaker, as a former athlete, I understand how important this is to the young men, the coaches and the community. They never gave up. They kept playing their best, and their team spirit and belief in themselves helped them become state champions. Their efforts and resilience should inspire us all.

HONORING MRS. JUANITA KNOTT

HON. JOHN J. FASO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. FASO. Mr. Speaker, it is with profound respect that I rise today to recognize and celebrate Mrs. Juanita Knott for being named a ''New York State Registered Historian''. This designation is reserved for those special few in our state who exemplify ingenuity and have an authentic passion for promoting local history.

Mrs. Knott has served the Town of Stuyvesant as its historian for over twenty years. Through actively conserving, interpreting, and presenting the town's history in unique and engaging ways, she has unearthed the wonders, heroes, and stories of Stuyvesant's past. Understanding local history is a key way in which we discover a shared identity and strengthen our democracy. That is why historians like Mrs. Knott play such a vital role in communities throughout New York and nationwide.

I am grateful for Mrs. Knott's years of dedicated service to the Stuyvesant community, to the 19th District, and to New York state. I wish her the best as she continues to preserve the historical integrity of Stuyvesant. Her work will be remembered for generations to come.

TRIBUTE TO PAUL DANFORTH

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Paul Danforth of Des Moines, Iowa, for being named one of dsm Magazine's 2017 ''Sages Over 70.''

The ''Sages Over 70'' award honors community leaders who continue to serve as mentors and leaders when others have retired. Paul is a longtime leader in the clinical social work community, having the distinction of being the first African-American to have a private practice in Des Moines and serving as an instructor at three universities. He's been a longtime advocate for social justice, and has devoted countless hours to making a difference for the community's most vulnerable people. One of the many words of advice he gave to the magazine included to not give up, and to think positively.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Paul for being named a ''Sage Over 70'' by dsm Magazine, and applaud him for his service to his community. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Paul for this outstanding achievement and in wishing him nothing but the best.

HONORING CHIEF DAVE BROWN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

HON. RAUL RUIZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to congratulate Hemet Police Chief David M. Brown on his retirement after more than 30 years in law enforcement. His dedication to ensuring the residents of Hemet are safe and secure is truly commendable. Today, I want to recognize his outstanding life achievements and years of service.

Chief Brown is an esteemed member of our community. He moved to the San Jacinto Valley when he was a child and graduated from Hemet High School. He obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Behavioral Science from California State Polytechnic University and a Master's Degree in Leadership and Organizational Studies from Azusa Pacific University.

His commitment to keeping our citizens safe earned him many promotions over the years, starting as a patrol officer and eventually becoming Chief of Police. During his early years with Hemet Police Department, Chief Brown was one of the founding members of the department's first gang team, raising awareness about gang issues and providing enforcement training to fellow officers and members of the community. Throughout his stellar career in law enforcement, Chief Brown has excelled in several other positions, including field training officer, gang investigator, and SWAT team commander.

Chief Brown is an exceptional leader in our community, dedicating his life to public service. He has served as President of the Riverside County Police Chiefs' and Sheriff's Association, President of the Inland SWAT Commanders Association, a member of the Statewide Committee on Regionalized SWAT Teams, and a member of the CA Police Chiefs' Municipal Policing Resource Workgroup. His wealth of proven leadership experience earned him the award of ''Man of the Year'' by the Hemet/San Jacinto Valley Chamber of Commerce in 2013 and 2015.

Chief Brown has dedicated his life serving the residents of Hemet. His valuable contributions and arduous work strengthening our community will be felt for years to come.

On behalf of the entire 36th Congressional District, I am humbled to honor and recognize Chief Brown. I offer my sincerest congratulations on his accomplishments and years of public service. I wish him, his wife, and his children all the best on his well-deserved retirement.

FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF SANDY HOOK SHOOTING

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 13, 2017

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I'd like like to thank the gentlelady from Connecticut for organizing this special order and for her commitment to honoring the victims of the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012.

I rise to join her in remembrance and to call on my colleagues to take immediate action to end gun violence across our nation.

The horrific shooting spree in Newtown, Connecticut, five years ago shocked us all. Twenty innocent children and six brave educators fell victim to unspeakable violence—the work of a deeply disturbed young man armed with a semiautomatic rifle and two handguns.

More than ever, it revealed the desperate need to reform our gun laws.

But five years later, we have nothing to show for it but more mass shootings—more innocent lives lost. We have made no meaningful progress, and we have not passed any commonsense legislation, like banning high-capacity magazines, which the Sandy Hook shooter used.

It is far past time to enact laws to strengthen our background check system, closing loopholes that allow unlicensed gun dealers to sell firearms to Americans without background checks at gun shows and over the internet, putting us all at risk.

Instead, my Republican colleagues continue to try to weaken gun safety laws by passing legislation like the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act, which would override state law and allow domestic abusers, teenagers, and people untrained in gun safety to carry concealed weapons freely across the nation.

Moreover, they block federal funds from being used to even research gun violence, for fear it will be used to ''advocate gun control.''

This is simply unacceptable and morally irresponsible. As members of Congress, it is our duty to pass laws to make our communities safer. The only way to respond to mass shootings like the one at Sandy Hook Elementary is to take action that will prevent such tragedies from happening in the future.

Since 2012, more than 170,000 other lives have been ended by gun violence, more than 170,000 families devastated. The gun violence epidemic continues to plague our nation, and we must act now to stop it.

CONGRATULATING MS. PAM VAN KIRK FOR BEING NAMED AN ILLINOIS LIBRARY LUMINARY FOR 2017

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Pam Van Kirk for being named an Illinois Library Luminary for 2017.

Pam Van Kirk's library career started at sixteen years old with typing catalog cards at the

Western Illinois Library System. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Monmouth College and a Master's in Library Science from Rosary College. In 1998, Pam became the director of the Galesburg Public Library after working in school libraries in Illinois and Colorado for 19 years. In 2010, she retired as director of the Galesburg Public Library to serve as president of the Illinois Library Association in 2012 and 2013.

Pam was a member of the Galesburg Area Chamber of Commerce and served on the board of the Downtown Galesburg Business Association. She also served on the board of directors for the Illinois Center for the Book and the Alliance Library System, where she participated in regional and statewide library conferences. Pam has been named Administrator of the Year by the Alliance Library System and a Paul Harris Fellow for her contributions to Galesburg. She has served as a mentor to many librarians. Her cheerful and determined attitude has made a positive impact on the Illinois library community.

I'm very proud of Pam's work and am pleased she has gained the title of Illinois Library Luminary. Mr. Speaker, I want to again formally congratulate Pam on her award, and I join the rest of our community to wish her every success in the future.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 150th Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church. As the church's congregation celebrates this valued center of worship, I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring this historical place in Sacramento.

The first service at St. John's Lutheran was held on September 29th, 1867, when Pastor Matthais Goethe led the church's first members in prayer. Two months later, 23 founding members signed St. John's Lutheran's first charter. Although the building itself has been relocated twice, once in 1873 and again in 1912, it has remained a vibrant meeting place for both the faithful and other members of our Sacramento community.

Today, St. John's is more beloved than ever by its community. The congregation is renowned for geniality and generosity, and the church welcomes all who would take communion, worship, or simply observe with open arms. Despite its venerable age, this Sacramento institution shows no sign of slowing down.

Mr. Speaker, as our community celebrates the 150th Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church, I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring this staple of the Sacramento area and all it has provided to the community.

TRIBUTE TO JOYCE CHAPMAN

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Joyce Chapman of Des Moines, Iowa, for her being named one of dsm Magazine's 2017 ''Sages Over 70.''

The ''Sages Over 70'' award honors those community leaders who continue to serve as mentors and leaders when others have retired. Joyce dedicated 55 years to West Bank in Des Moines, where she became the first female executive vice president, established the bank's foundation which provides grants to charities, and served as a mentor to other women in the banking industry. Today, women make up half of the officers of the bank to which she devoted so many decades. She was also honored to be the first female president of the West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce. One of the many words of advice she offered to the magazine was to ''show up each day to contribute and make a difference.''

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Joyce for being named a ''Sage Over 70'' by dsm Magazine, and applaud her for her service to her community. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Joyce for this outstanding achievement and in wishing her nothing but the best.

IN MEMORY OF MARK B. IHDE

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mark B. Ihde, who served as Sheriff of Sonoma County for seven years and worked as the Chief Operating Officer of the local chapter of Goodwill Industries until he passed away on November 14, 2017 at the age of 69.

Mark was born in Santa Rosa, California to Maurice and Louise Ihde. He had tremendous respect and admiration for his parents. He inherited his optimism and leadership style from his father. Mark was a loving husband to Barbara and a proud father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

A graduate of Mt. Whitney High School, in Visalia, California, Mark was a track and field athlete and a tuba player in the marching band. He earned his Associate Degree in Criminal Justice from the College of the Sequoias and studied Law Enforcement Administration at Sacramento State University. He was an FBI Academy graduate in Executive Development and Leadership.

Mark had a successful 27-year career with the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department, where he served as Sheriff from 1990 to 1997. As Sheriff, Mark restored public trust in the department, adopted a community policing model and improved collaboration with local police departments.

Mark worked as a consultant and served on many boards, including the local chapter of Goodwill Industries. The board drafted him to become their Chief Executive Officer in 2017. Following his prostate cancer diagnosis, he continued to work for Goodwill, organizing work meetings in his home within a week of his passing. He led Goodwill to become a thriving local business, more than doubling the number of stores.

Mr. Speaker, Mark B. Ihde had a passion for life, adventure and community. He was a loving, generous and kind man, known for his great smile and quick wit. It is fitting and proper that we remember him here today.

RECOGNIZING KENNY BARMAN

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Kenny Barman on his retirement as a Clover Township Trustee. For 44 years, Mr. Barman has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving his community.

Over the course of his elected service, Mr. Barman focused on keeping roads and equipment in good condition. During his time as a trustee, he was able to witness many positive changes in the community such as the building of a new township building. The Woodhull Municipal Building is now a shared structure with the village and township—another important project carried out during his tenure. Mr. Barman also helped the township through some tough times. During the snowstorm of 1979, many residents were left housebound for up to a week while area roads were closed for days. Mr. Barman gathered funds to purchase special equipment to plow the roads. He was a true public servant through times good and bad.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize Kenny Barman for his longtime commitment to serving his community. Mr. Barman has undoubtedly had a positive impact on the citizens of Clover Township. I congratulate him on a well-earned retirement and wish him the very best in his future endeavors.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF ANDRE LACY

HON. SUSAN W. BROOKS

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Indianapolis businessman, Andre Lacy, an icon in the Indianapolis community. Andre was born and raised in Indianapolis and graduated from nearby Shortridge High School in 1957. Andre's grandfather H.J. Lacy founded their family business, U.S. Corrugated Fiber Box Company, in 1912. Andre spent most of his career working, leading and transforming U.S. Corrugated into the successful distribution company it is today. Andre's first experience in the family business was at age nine. After his father's unexpected death in 1959, Andre, while still in college, came home to help his mother Edna with day-to-day operations. Andre graduated in 1961 with a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from Denison University in Ohio and

his professional career began as an analyst at U.S. Corrugated Fiber Box Company. In 1972 under Andre's direction, U.S. Corrugated was renamed Lacy Diversified Industries (LDI) to reflect its expanded interests. LDI has made several dozen acquisitions since 1972 and while it has since sold many of its holdings LDI still owns OIA Global, UltiMed Inc., and an office building on the Circle in downtown Indianapolis. Andre served as the Chief Executive Officer of LDI from 1983 until his retirement in 2006 and was the Chairman of the Board from 1991 until his passing.

Andre's remarkable career as a transformative figure both within his family business and in his community is truly unmatched. Andre served as a board member for several companies including Patterson Companies, Inc., Ethyl Corporation, Albemarle Corporation, Tredegar Corporation, First Colony Insurance Co., IPALCO, National Bank of Indianapolis, and Merchants National Bank. He has held leadership positions with numerous civic organizations including as a trustee at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, board member of the Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools and The Nature Conservancy of Indiana. Andre is a former chairman of the 500 Festival, Indiana Chamber of Commerce, and the United Way of Central Indiana, where he and his late wife, Julia, were Meridian Society members. Meridian Society members are the movers and shakers of our community. They lead the charge in improving the lives of thousands of people in Central Indiana through their leadership, dedication and generous gifts of $25,000 or more annually. In 2016, Andre and Julia donated more than $25 million dollars to Butler University's Business School, which now bears his family's name. This is the largest gift from an individual or family in the history of Butler University. In addition to his monetary donation, Andre donated his time and expertise to both the faculty and students at Butler University. From 2009 until his passing, Andre served as chairman of the Indiana State Fair Commission and was the driving force in the $63 million renovation of the Indiana State Fairgrounds Coliseum. Andre and Julia donated $2 million dollars to jumpstart this campaign.

In October of 2017, he was inducted into the Indiana Academy for lifetime achievement and contributions throughout the state by The Independent Colleges of Indiana. He was recently recognized as the 2017 Indiana Philanthropy Awards recipient by the Indiana Chapter of The Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Typically, the Sagamore of the Wabash honor is given for wisdom, public commitment, and a concern for the well-being of others. Andre embodied this award to the fullest, as he has been recognized as a Sagamore of the Wabash by Governors Roger Branigan, Robert Orr and Mitch Daniels. The Sagamore of the Wabash is the highest honor an Indiana governor can bestow.

In November of 2017 Andre was awarded the Whistler Award by The Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee. The annual Whistler Award recognizes individuals who, outside the regular duties of their chosen professions, have brought together the public and private sectors for civic improvement in Indianapolis. Andre's name will be added to a limestone and granite monument located in the Charles L. Whistler Memorial Plaza at the City Market in downtown Indianapolis.

Andre's legacy as a brilliant business and community leader will live on through his countless contributions to the Hoosier State. Andre had a well-known passion for motorcycling and adventure seeking. He tragically passed away at the age of 78 following a motorcycle crash on a private tour of Botswana. He lived his life to the fullest and chased his dreams and passions with such great vigor. Andre was a great son of Indianapolis, a leader in Indiana, who deeply loved our country. He will be missed by me and so many. I want to extend my most heartfelt condolences to his three sons, J.A., Mark, and Peter, and their families in their time of mourning as they carry on the Lacy Family legacy.

TRIBUTE TO DON BLUMENTHAL

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Don Blumenthal of West Des Moines, Iowa, for being named one of dsm Magazine's 2017 ''Sages Over 70.''

The ''Sages Over 70'' award honors community leaders who continue to serve as mentors and leaders when others have retired. Don grew up in his father's scrap-iron yard company, and launched several businesses over his career beginning in 1964 with Steel Warehousing, Inc. Don and his wife, Margo, are just as well-known through for their philanthropic efforts in the Des Moines area, supporting organizations such as Youth Emergency Services and Shelter, United Way of Central Iowa, Varity—The Children's Charity, Animal Rescue League of Iowa, and the Blank Park Zoo. One of his many words of wisdom he has offered to the magazine is to ''remember the community that has made your life possible.''

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Don for being named a ''Sages Over 70'' by dsm Magazine, and applaud him for his service to his community. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Don for this outstanding achievement and in wishing him nothing but the best.

IN RECOGNITION OF LORI S. LIU

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Lori Liu who is leaving public service after four years on the Brisbane City Council, the last year as Mayor of this storied town near San Francisco Bay. Lori's deep commitment to public service is evident from her accomplishments and contributions to her community. She is a champion of education, children, the arts, recreation, economic development and the environment.

Lori was first elected to the council in 2013. While on the council, she served on, or as representative to, a number of organizations, including the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Peninsula Clean Energy Board of Directors, the County Library JPA, the council's Economic Development Subcommittee, the Health and Safety Subcommittee, the League of California Cities, the liaison to the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Airport Community Roundtable, the Planning Commission, the liaison to the Open Space and Ecology Committee, the Community Choice Energy Advisory Committee and many others. You may justifiably surmise from this lengthy list that Lori is well-versed in a variety of issues affecting the residents of Brisbane and the region.

Her leadership is notable as she tackled one of the most longstanding opportunities and challenges in the community. the Baylands Project. Lori was indefatigable as she conducted council meetings and listened closely to the community through hours of discussions involving possible offices, open space, housing, environmental cleanup and restoration, and the overall concept of a sustainable community She carefully weighed the impacts of this project on Brisbane and our region.

She was instrumental in laying the groundwork to build a new library which will be constructed starting next year. Libraries are community spaces that connect generations and nurture life-long learning. The Brisbane Library will include a Maker's Space to spark the creativity of the next generation of innovators, spaces for children and teens, a quiet study area, an outdoor garden, a community center, and the first public arts project triggered by a city ordinance.

Lori has a long track record of working on environmental issues. In fact, when she moved to Brisbane m 2004, her very first volunteer activity was to attend an Earth Day clean up event While on the council, she helped to secure a grant to renovate Crocker Park Trail. This funding will make the trail more usable for bicyclists, joggers and parents with strollers It will also establish a safe pedestrian and bike-friendly connection between residential development at the Ridge and Lipman Middle School. Due in part to Lori's outstanding work, Brisbane received the Platinum level Spotlight Award from the Institute for Local Government for environmental leadership and best practices. With her support, the city signed up to have all municipal electric accounts serviced by 100 percent renewable energy

Lori understands that a high quality of life for residents depends on a healthy balance of physical and financial security, education, functioning infrastructure, clean air and clean water, and recreation and entertainment. Life without music and fun would not be complete, so Lori supported the launch of two spectacular, family-friendly community events, the Marina Kite Festival and the Star City Music Festival The kite festival celebrated its first anniversary this June and the music festival will have its premier in July next year.

Lori holds a B.A from Tufts University and a J.D. from Northwestern University School of Law. She and her husband Raymond Liu live in Belmont with their two young children, Samantha and Noah.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to rise with me to honor Lori Liu for her exemplary service on the Brisbane City Council. Her public service made Brisbane a better place to live, work and visit. I personally regret

that she is leaving office and hope she will return to offer Brisbane her skills and talents in addressing the issues facing her beloved city. I have no doubt that Lori will continue to make enormous contributions to any effort she undertakes.

HONORING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CITALLI ORTIZ AS THE 2017 WOMEN'S YOUTH WORLD CHAMPION

HON. RAUL RUIZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the determination, perseverance, and accomplishments of Citlalli Ortiz, a young constituent who became the first female boxer in the Coachella Valley to win the gold medal for Team USA in the 2017 Women's Youth World Championships.

Citlalli is a Coachella Valley High School student with an inspiring commitment and passion for boxing. Her dedication to giving her all in the ring has led her to become the first female boxer from Coachella Valley Boxing Club gym to achieve such high recognition.

She began boxing when she was a little girl, inspired by her father, Alex Ortiz, and her older sister, who was also a boxer. Her training started when a couple of boys were teasing and punching Citlalli. Her father saw this and took the opportunity to teach her how to use some boxing moves for self-defense, including the ''one-two'' move. Citlalli defended herself successfully against the boys, and decided to become a boxer, following in her sister's footsteps.

Citlalli's road to success hasn't always been easy. In the beginning, trainers did not want to work with her due to her weight. As a result, her father decided to become her trainer and empowered her to fight for her dreams. After long hours of training in the gym, Citlalli achieved her first victory at the age of 12 at the Desert Showdown.

Citlalli brings agility and strength to the ring in every fight. She has won medals and beat national champions at the 2016 USA Junior and Youth Boxing Championships in Nevada, the 2016 USA Boxing Junior Olympic, and the Prep National and Youth Open Championships in Texas. Citlalli is also the 2016 Oxnard National PAL Champion, 3x Desert Showdown Champion, and the 2015 Gene Lewis Champion. To this day, she remains undefeated.

Throughout her 8 years in boxing, Citlalli has witnessed a large gender disparity in the ring. She is committed to become a professional boxer so she can represent women in boxing. Citlalli's greatest inspirations are female professional boxers such as Cecilia Braekhus and Hannah Gabriel. Her goal is to represent USA at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Citlalli Ortiz. On behalf of California's 36th Congressional District, I commend her accomplishments and passion for boxing. I look forward to her many more victories in the ring.

RECOGNIZING RETIRED UNITED STATES AIR FORCE CAPTAIN NATHAN NELSON

HON. MATT GAETZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize a true American hero and patriot.

Captain Nelson, USAF, Retired, enlisted in the military in 2006. After 4 years of enlisted service, Nelson applied to Officer Training School with the encouragement of his commanding officer. He attended Officer Training School in Montgomery, Alabama in 2011, followed by Intelligence Officer Training at Goodfellow AFB in San Angelo, TX.

Once Nelson finished training there, he was assigned to Joint Base Lewis-McChord as the Director of Intelligence for the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron.

Nelson was serving on his third tour in Afghanistan as the Special Tactics Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance liaison. While assisting a combat controller assigned to a 7th Special Forces Group ODA, Nelson was hit by a 107mm rocket and suffered a spinal cord injury from the blast.

In addition to that injury, Nelson also suffered severe shrapnel wounds, multiple spinal fractures, severe tissue damage to his left ankle, collapsed lungs, major shrapnel damage to his torso and lower extremities, and severely bruised organs. He also underwent a massive blood transfusion and tracheotomy, and suffered numerous other injuries.

Nelson spent 18 months in physical therapy, underwent 9 surgeries, and 46 units of blood. His injuries left him paralyzed from the chest down.

Nelson served 9 years honorably in the USAF and retired in November of 2015.

For his service to the country, Nelson received the Meritorious Service Medal, Purple Heart, Air Force Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal, among many others.

Nelson has not let his injuries damper his tenacious spirit or hinder him from continuing to serve his country. He currently holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Intelligence Studies, and an MBA in Finance. Nelson also helps countless veterans and active duty members by serving as my Deputy Director of Military Affairs for Florida's First Congressional District. His guidance and expertise is an invaluable asset to me and my team. His determination, bravery, and fortitude are an inspiration to all who are blessed to know and work with him.

To honor his great sacrifice for our country, Nelson will be gifted a mortgage-free home from nonprofit Building Homes for Heroes, an organization that builds and modifies homes to gift mortgage-free to wounded veterans and their families. Nelson, his wife Jennifer, and their daughter Eva will be welcomed into their new home for the very first time in Santa Rosa Beach, FL.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Nate and his family for all they've sacrificed for their country and their community.

Mr. Speaker, on 'behalf of the United States Congress, I am privileged to recognize and honor Nathan Nelson, Jen, and Eva, and congratulate them on their well-deserved, new home.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF RUTH BANCROFT

HON. MARK DeSAULNIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and service of Ruth Bancroft, renowned expert on drought-tolerant plants, founder of the Ruth Bancroft Garden, and resident of Walnut Creek.

Ruth had a keen intellect and an insatiable curiosity about plants and nature. She collected and categorized seashells and planted flower gardens around the home she shared with her husband and three children on the Bancroft property.

With the help of the New York-based Garden Conservancy, the Bancroft family formed the nonprofit Ruth Bancroft Garden on Bancroft Road which is protected by a conservation easement. It opened to the public in the early 1990s. In August, the garden broke ground on a visitor and education center with space for events and classes as well as offices for staff. Ruth worked in the garden every day until she was 97 years old.

Ruth was an inspiration and a friend. She was a stalwart in the Contra Costa community and we shared a passion for conservation and the environment. She passed away on November 26, 2017 at the age of 109. She is survived by her children Peter Bancroft, Nina Dickerson and Kathy Hidalgo and four grandchildren. Her friend, family, and our community will miss her dearly.

CONGRATULATING ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS FOR BEING NAMED A PROJECT WINNER FOR THE 2017 GOVERNOR'S HOMETOWN AWARD

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Rock Island, Illinois for being named a project winner for the 2017 Governor's Hometown Award due to its outstanding Kids Invested in Natural Growth (KING) Program.

The Kids Invested in Natural Growth Program is provided by the Martin Luther King Center. The program provides a variety of activities for youth ages 6 through 18, including homework help, sports and recreation, service learning, mentoring, life skills, and character development. The program's goal is to provide safe and enriching activities and encourage academic success. The Kids Invested in Natural Growth Program reaches approximately 1,200 kids each year. Thirty-five dedicated volunteers make the yearlong commitments to the sports component. An additional 15 volunteers are involved in the afterschool and summer programs.

The generous and caring volunteers and leaders of the Kids Invested in Natural Growth (KING) Program in the City of Rock Island make me especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to again formally congratulate Rock Island, Illinois for being

named a finalist for the 2017 Governor's Hometown Award and recognize all who organize and contribute to the Kids Invested in Natural Growth (KING) Program for their outstanding efforts and accomplishments.

HONORING MR. JOHN F. TRENTACOSTA

HON. ELIZABETH H. ESTY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Ms. ESTY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor John Trentacosta upon his retirement as President and CEO of Newtown Savings Bank in Newtown, Connecticut. For two decades, John has provided experienced and insightful leadership at Newtown Savings Bank, and his contributions have been crucial to guiding the institution through both successful and challenging economies.

John is a native of Bronx, New York, and completed his undergraduate degree at Manhattan College before going on to earn his Master of Business Administration at Iona College. He began working in finance in New York before moving with his wife Linda to Connecticut in 1988. Throughout his long and successful career in the financial industry, John has served in a number of leadership roles, such as Chief Financial Officer, for a variety of institutions. Following a decade of working at the Bank of New Haven, John joined Newtown Savings Bank as President and CEO in 1998. His experience and leadership have been instrumental in continuing the organization's success for the future.

In addition to his successful career, John has shared his time and expertise with a number of community and professional organizations in Connecticut. He currently serves on the Western Connecticut State University Foundation Board, and has previously been Director of Habitat for Humanity of New Haven and Chairperson of the Newtown Rotary Golf Fundraiser Event. John has also served as a board member of the Connecticut Society of CPAs' Educational Trust Fund, a member of the Connecticut Community Bankers Association's Executive Committee, and a member of the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce board.

Mr. Speaker, in his two decades of leadership at Newtown Savings Bank, John Trentacosta has been a successful leader in Connecticut's financial services industry, and he has also been a true partner to our community. Therefore, it is fitting and proper that we honor him here today.

TRIBUTE TO STEPHEN ROBERTS

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Stephen Roberts of Des Moines, Iowa, for being named one of dsm Magazine's 2017 ''Sages Over 70.''

The ''Sages Over 70'' award honors community leaders who continue to serve as mentors and leaders when others have retired. Stephen, a senior shareholder in the Davis Brown law firm, was an early advocate for women at the firm which lead to the quick hiring of its first five female attorneys. Stephen is well-known for his past service as chairman and national committee member for the Republican Party of Iowa, and has also been active with the American Cancer Society for over 40 years. One of the many words of advice he gave to the magazine included to ''give something back to the community. You'll get more out of it than what you put in.''

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Stephen for being named a ''Sage Over 70'' by dsm Magazine, and applaud him for his service to his community. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Stephen for this outstanding achievement and in wishing him nothing but the best.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, had I been present for the vote today on the Democratic Motion to Recommit H.R. 2396 (Roll Call No. 681), I would have voted aye. The motion would require financial institutions found to have engaged in deceptive or fraudulent practices to continue to annually report their policies and practices regarding the disclosure of nonpublic, personal information.

Additionally, had I been present for the vote on H.R. 2396 (Roll Call No. 682), I would have voted no. This bill would ease the annual privacy notice requirements for financial institutions that share consumers' non-public personal information with nonaffiliated third party companies, weakening important consumer protections.

I'm deeply frustrated that the House has, yet again, decided to take up a measure intended to violate U.S. obligations under the Iran nuclear agreement. Though the nuclear agreement explicitly commits the United States to resuming the licensing of new commercial aircraft sales to Iran for civilian use, H.R. 4324 would impose additional certification requirements on the Treasury Department in order to carry out these current obligations.

Given Trump's clear disdain for having to take affirmative action to keep the agreement intact, this attempt by Congressional Republicans to force his administration to act further on the sale of commercial aircraft is shameful. Thus, had I been present for the vote on the Motion to Recommit H.R. 4324 (Roll Call No. 683), I would have voted aye. Had I been present for the vote on final passage of H.R. 4324 (Roll Call No. 684), I would have voted no.

RECOGNIZING THE RIVERDALE RAMS' GOLF TEAM FOR THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor The Riverdale Rams' Golf Team for winning the state championship in the Class 1A tournament.

Riverdale won by six shots over Hillsboro. The boys played through gusty winds and occasional rain showers and witnessed their lead slip to a mere two shots, but held strong to pull out a victory. This title makes school history, both as the Rams' first-ever golf title and first-ever state team title. I congratulate the Rams on their outstanding victory in their Class 1A win—a testament to the impressive leadership provided by Coach Trent Groves and teammates Tyler Bussert and Anthony Ruthey.

Mr. Speaker, as a former athlete, I understand how important this is to the young men, the coaches and the community. Their efforts and resilience should inspire us all.

HONORING THE LIFE OF COL. WESLEY L. FOX, USMC (RET.)

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Col. Wes Fox. Col. Fox enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1950 at the start of the Korean War to begin his 43–year career. Wes served 16 years as a noncommissioned officer before commissioning as a second lieutenant and retiring as a colonel.

Col. Fox valiantly served the nation and became a recipient of the Medal of Honor for his actions in Vietnam. He led his men through heavy fire, even picking up the weapon of a Marine killed in action, to continue fighting the enemy. Col. Fox sustained severe injuries from shrapnel, continued to lead his Marines, and called in air support. After the battle was over, Fox refused medical treatment, set up and supervised a defensive perimeter, and remained until all the Marines were evacuated. According to his Medal of Honor citation, ''his indomitable courage, inspiring initiative, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of grave personal danger inspired his Marines to such aggressive actions that they overcame all enemy resistance and destroyed a large bunker complex.'' Col. Fox retired from the Marines in 1993 with decorations including the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

After retirement, Col Fox served as the Deputy Commandant of First Battalion in the Corps of Cadets at Virginia Tech. Col. Fox authored two books: ''Marine Rifleman: Forty-Three Years in the Corps (Memories of War)'' and ''Six Essential Elements of Leadership: Marine Corps Wisdom from a Medal of Honor Recipient.'' I am honored to have known Wes and to have served as a witness to the countless lives he touched through his selfless service and leadership. He is survived by his wife,

Dottie; three daughters; four brothers; four sisters; and nine grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me and countless others as we recognize the many contributions of Colonel Wesley L. Fox.

HONORING SUE SOUTHERN OF HALEYVILLE, AL

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize the talents, achievements and dedication of Mrs. Sue Southern of Haleyville, Alabama on the occasion of her retirement as Municipal Court Clerk of the city of Haleyville, Alabama, which is in Alabama's 4th Congressional District.

Sue Southern began her career with Haleyville 29 years ago back in 1988 and since then has worked alongside numerous municipal judges, attorneys, mayors and members of the city council. I was fortunate to be one of those municipal judges during her time of service. I worked alongside of Sue in the mid–1990s as a young municipal judge for the city, having just graduated from law school a couple of years earlier.

As someone who worked alongside Sue for several years, I can say without a doubt, she always strove to make sure that every person who came through the court system was treated fairly and with dignity, yet she made sure the trains ran on time, as they say.

During her almost three decades as municipal court clerk, Sue has taken a particular interest in strengthening domestic violence laws in the state of Alabama. She has seen numerous cases come through the court system, of women who had nowhere to turn and no way to escape abusive relationships. Sue worked to change this and give a voice to countless women across Alabama.

Sue's family is also immeasurably important to her. She is married to David Southern and has two children, Brian Berry and Jason Berry. Sue also has four grandchildren: Blake, Madison, David and Katie.

Sue will be missed by those she has served for so many years, but I know she will continue to be active in her community. She has earned this retirement with her many years of dedication. I wish her all the best in her retirement.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF JOSEPH ALLEN DUFFEL

HON. MARK DeSAULNIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and service of Joseph Allen Duffel, prominent Bay Area builder and real estate developer and resident of Orinda.

Joe's sharp intellect and irreverent sense of humor were his signature traits. He founded Duffel Financial and Construction Company in 1954, which grew to become one of Northern California's most active real estate development and building firms. His love of family, reverence for education, strong work ethic, and drive led him to many successes throughout his life. He continued to work as the active CEO of the company to the very end.

In addition to his career in building and development, Joe had a passion for politics. He ran for State Senator in 1966 against George Miller, Sr. That political involvement catapulted him into becoming the advance man for Ronald Reagan during his campaign for the presidency in 1968. He personally advanced Reagan's appearances at the state delegations in most of the southern states. He later served as a delegate to four Republican conventions and was appointed by Governor Deukmejian to the California Transportation Commission where he served for 12 years after being reappointed by Deukmejian and Governor Pete Wilson.

Joe was also proud to have served in many capacities in business, community, and local political organizations. He served as president of the Orinda Rotary Club, president of the Bay Area Mortgage Association, and president of the Homebuilders Association of Northern California (formerly known as the B.I.A., or Building Industry Association of which Joe was a founding member). He served on the board of directors for California Symphony, and was a 40-year active member of The Family, a San Francisco social and charitable club. Joe and his wife, Jackie were longtime members of the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church.

Joe was an inspiration and a friend. He was a stalwart in the Contra Costa community. He passed away on December 1, 2017 at the age of 94. Joe will be deeply missed.

TRIBUTE TO JIM COWNIE

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Jim Cownie of Des Moines, Iowa, for being named one of dsm Magazine's 2017 ''Sages Over 70.''

The ''Sages Over 70'' award honors community leaders who continue to serve as mentors and leaders when others have retired. After graduating from Notre Dame, Jim founded Heritage Communications which would become the ninth-largest cable TV operator in the country when he sold the company in 1987 and went into real estate development. Jim and his wife, Patty, have been longtime supporters of the United Way of Central Iowa and the Iowa State Fairgrounds. One of the many words of advice he offered to the magazine was to volunteer. ''That's more important than money,'' he said. He continued, ''We can't have a great city without great volunteers and philanthropists.''

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Jim for being named a ''Sage Over 70'' by dsm Magazine, and applaud him for his service to his community. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Jim for this outstanding achievement and in wishing him nothing but the best.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF EDWIN M. LEE, MAYOR OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my fellow San Francisco Representative, JACKIE SPEIER, as well as my Congressional colleagues, Representatives BARBARA LEE, JUDY CHU, MADELEINE BORDALLO, LOU CORREA, KEITH ELLISON, ANNA ESHOO, AL GREEN, JIMMY GOMEZ, COLLEEN HANABUSA, JARED HUFFMAN, RO KHANNA, RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHI, TED LIEU, ALAN LOWENTHAL, MARK TAKANO, NORMA TORRES, GRACE MENG, STEPHANIE MURPHY, GRACE NAPOLITANO, ADAM SCHIFF, ERIC SWALWELL, JIM COSTA, and NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, in great sorrow to pay tribute to a dear friend and an extraordinary leader: Mayor Edwin M. Lee, who died suddenly and tragically on December 12.

Ed Lee served as Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco with devotion and distinction. All who knew Ed understood him as a true gentleman of great warmth, positivity and kindness.

His passing is not only a tragic official loss for our city but also an immense personal loss for all who were fortunate enough to call him friend.

Even through our heartbreak, we think of the exceptional person Ed Lee was, and we smile.

Born the fourth of six children to hard-working Chinese immigrant parents of modest means, Ed was raised in public housing, and lost his father at the age of 15.

Ed excelled at academics, winning a scholarship to Bowdoin College in Maine, where he graduated summa cum laude in 1974. He then graduated Boalt Hall School of Law at the University of California, Berkeley in 1978.

Ed began his career as a community organizer and civil rights lawyer fighting for fair housing and on behalf of immigrant communities.

He started his public service as director of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, going on to serve as Purchasing Manager, Director of Public Works and City Administrator.

Ed then served seven remarkable years as Mayor of San Francisco, an office he held with exceptional dignity and great effectiveness. He took pride in being the first Asian American Mayor of a city with such a rich and robust Asian American heritage.

Ed's firm commitment to equality made strong progress toward securing affordable housing and a living wage for all.

His unwavering belief in justice helped combat the moral crisis of homeless in San Francisco, particularly for our veterans.

And his bold, hopeful vision for the future further secured San Francisco's role as a model city for the nation.

In all aspects of his life, Mayor Lee's first priority was always the people.

He fundamentally understood that the strength of a community is measured by its success in meeting the needs of all its people.

Mayor Lee's greatest source of joy was his beloved family. Our city owes a debt of gratitude to his wife Anita and his daughters

Brianna and Tania for sharing this remarkable man with us.

Our deepest love and prayers are with his family. May it bring them some measure of comfort that so many mourn with them and continue to be inspired by him.

During this difficult time, our full support is also with Acting Mayor London Breed, the Board of Supervisors and all the people of San Francisco.

RECOGNIZING THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SALVATION ARMY OF ROCK ISLAND COUNTY, ILLINOIS

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Salvation Army on its 125th anniversary in Rock Island County, Illinois.

The Salvation Army opened in Moline in 1892, 27 years after it was founded in London. The Moline Salvation Army was started after immigrants from Europe and Sweden came to the area in the 1890s in order to find work at John Deere. After arriving in the region, a group of Swedish men wrote back to their home country to ask that officers be sent to start a church. The Salvation Army's first services were held in a rented space above a saloon in the Browning Block Building on the southwest corner of 15th Street and 5th Avenue in Moline in 1892. A Rock Island Salvation Army opened just one year later. In 1993, the two merged to become the Moline Salvation Army, which has been in its current location since 2000.

The Salvation Army has given women the same leadership opportunities as men. Women serve as pastors, Bible teachers and social service workers; they also lead ministries and carry the same rank as male counterparts.

The Salvation Army's original mission has evolved over the years. It was first founded with the basic social services principles of taking care of the physical and emotional needs of the hungry and homeless, but has grown to take on disaster relief services, child care centers, summer camps, holiday assistance, services for the aging, veterans programs, shelters for women and children, family and career counseling, vocational training, correctional services, and substance abuse rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, I again want to congratulate The Salvation Army on its 125th anniversary in Rock Island County and wish it another successful 125 years.

HONORING FRAN MACALLISTER

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a dear friend, Fran MacAllister, who passed away on December 8, 2017.

Fran was born in Portland, Indiana on February 1, 1922. She attended Ball State University and helped in the World War II efforts by working as an accountant for a company that manufactured wings for bombers and volunteered as a nurse's aide for the Red Cross. Fran was deeply involved in the music and arts communities and played the organ and accordion. She shared her love for the arts with her family and enjoyed spending time with them in her favorite place, Naples, Florida. Fran also devoted her time to Habitat for Humanity, the local YMCA board, and the League of Women Voters.

On a personal note, Fran was a devoted wife to my good friend P.E. MacAllister who is one of my life heroes; a scholar, gentleman, sports fan, a devout Presbyterian, an extraordinary civic and business leader in Indiana, and one of the wisest and most decent men I have ever known.

Fran will be mourned most by those who knew her best, and she will be missed by all. Fran is survived by her husband, P.E., daughters Daphne (Walter), and Jodi; grandchildren Megan, Eryn, Corinne, Olivia, Thomas, Coulter, and Barrett and great-grandchildren Elena and Matthew, whom I give my deepest sympathies. Fran lived a gratifying life and had profound impact on countless Hoosiers, and her life should be an inspiration to us all.

THANKING THEODORE R. BECHLTOL, JR. FOR HIS DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE HOUSE

HON. GREGG HARPER

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special tribute to one of the truly outstanding individuals who works at the U.S. Capitol, Mr. Theodore R. Bechltol, Jr.

Better known to many of us as the Superintendent of the U.S. Capitol Grounds, Ted is responsible for preserving and maintaining more than 290 acres of the historic landscape and infrastructure across the U.S. Capitol campus.

Prior to being promoted to his current position in 2007, Ted served as the Deputy Superintendent for U.S. Capitol Grounds. As part of Ted's responsibilities, he ensures the routine and periodic landscape maintenance, comprehensive tree care, and upkeep of the supporting infrastructure, vehicles, and equipment are completed. Additionally, snow removal, trash collection, and support for major events, such as the annual December Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, are key responsibilities for supporting our U.S. Capitol campus. In total, Ted has taken part in 13 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree events.

Throughout Ted's years at the U.S. Capitol, he worked hard to bring recognition to the historical significance of the grounds and helped to produce cultural landscape reports. His depth of knowledge about Frederick Law Olmsted, the American landscape architect who designed the U.S. Capitol Grounds, has changed how each section of the grounds are cared for, with a focus on historical horticulture.

Ted has also consulted on historical horticulture work at many institutions throughout the east coast.

Under his leadership, the U.S. Capitol Grounds have received designation as an accredited arboretum, a notable industry standard.

On Friday, January 5, 2018, Ted Bechltol will retire from his position as Superintendent of the U.S. Capitol Grounds for the Architect of the Capitol.

In retirement, he will be spending more time with his granddaughter, working on home improvement projects, and enjoy hiking and beach trips. He will continue to explore American history trails—he and his wife recently hiked Gettysburg and Civil War trails.

Although we are sad to see someone with Ted's accomplishments leave the service of the institution, I offer him my sincere best wishes in his retirement.

TRIBUTE TO JAN AND KARL KNOCK

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Jan and Karl Knock for being inducted into the Creston High School Hall of Fame as Distinguished Contributors on Friday, September 29, 2017.

Karl and Jan were deeply involved in the Creston school district by providing programs and opportunities for students. One of those programs is the school's Environmental and Spatial Technology class (EAST). They have also been involved with the Character Counts program and with diversity programs. Karl was a 1968 graduate of Creston schools and after moving back to Creston with Jan in 1989, wanted to make Creston a place where today's students can thrive.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Jan and Karl for receiving this award, and for providing the youth in Iowa's 3rd district the education that they will need to be successful. It is with great pride that I recognize leaders like Jan and Karl in the United States Congress and I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating him for this outstanding achievement and in wishing them both nothing but the best.

HONORING BERTHA ROGERS AND BRIGHT HILL PRESS & LITERARY CENTER OF THE CATSKILLS

HON. JOHN J. FASO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. FASO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect and admiration that I rise today to recognize the illustrious career of Bertha Rogers, the Founding Director of Bright Hill Press & Literary Center of the Catskills, on the occasion of her retirement and the twenty-fifth anniversary of Bright Hill Press. With her husband, Ernest M. Fishman, Bertha co-founded Bright Hill Press in 1992. Since then, through her dedicated work as an educator, mentor and an artist, Bright Hill has become an epicenter of free thinking and creativity, and a haven for writers both young and old.

Bertha is gifted with remarkable literary talent. Her work has appeared in hundreds of literary journals and in several collections, and her translation of Beowulf was published in 2000. She has been the recipient several NYSCA and NYFA grants and residency fellowships to the McDowell Colony, the Millay Artists Colony, Jentel, Caldera, Saltonstall, Hedgebrook, and Hawthornden International Writers Residence (Scotland). Using this talent, Bertha has left a permanent mark on the Treadwell community through her work at Bright Hill.

What started as weekly poetry readings, Bright Hill has grown to become an established and respected literary organization, attracting authors and poets both locally and worldwide. Largely the result of Bertha's time and efforts, Bright Hill now offers youth and adult writing workshops, reading series, small press publishing, and boasts an impressive literary library. Bertha's excitement for literature and poetry, combined with an authentic passion for teaching, has fostered an increased appreciation for writing and the arts in the Catskills.

It is an honor to recognize Bertha and Bright Hill for their distinctive milestones. Leaving behind an organization marked by ingenuity, creativity, and passion, Bertha has given Bright Hill a buildable legacy which will grow in future years. I wish Bertha every happiness as she embarks on this new chapter, and I am confident that even in retirement she will continue to be an advocate for the literary arts. The 19th District and New York State are a better place because of Bertha and Bright Hill Press. I thank them for helping to make the Catskills a cultural center.

HONORING DEBRA HOOD OF HALEYVILLE, AL

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the talents, achievements and dedication of Mrs. Debra Hood on the occasion of her retirement as City Clerk of Haleyville, Alabama.

Debra Hood began her career with Haleyville 30 years ago and worked alongside numerous mayors and members of the city council. She has also worked with numerous municipal judges and attorneys in the municipal court system. As municipal judge for the city of Haleyville, I had the privilege to work alongside Debra back in the mid-1990s. Debra's goal was always to advance the city of Haleyville and make it a better place to live, work and raise a family.

During her three decades as clerk, Debra Hood has taken a particular interest in community and economic development. Her work has directly helped the city of Haleyville to continue to be one of the most prosperous communities in Winston County.

Debra, along with other local leaders, played a valuable role in keeping hundreds of jobs in Haleyville through Exxel Outdoors. Exxel provides 100 jobs for area citizens and is one of the major manufacturers of sleeping bag in the nation.

I would be remiss if I did not point out the most important job Debra has had as city clerk: the chief election official of the city. She has overseen numerous municipal elections in the past 30 years, ensuring that the people of Haleyville had their voices heard at the ballot box.

Debra's family is also immeasurably important to her. She and her husband Gary have two children, daughter Dana Saylor and son Bruce Hood. Debra and Gary have six grandchildren: Sydney, Bryant, Titus, Elijah, Abigail and Lydia.

Representing the city of Haleyville, my hometown, and the Fourth Congressional District, I appreciate the hard work and the dedication that Debra has given the city over the past three decades.

Debra will be missed by those she has served for so many years, but I know she will continue to be active in her community. She has earned this retirement with her years of dedication. I wish her all the best in her retirement.

RECOGNIZING TOM THOMS, JIM MILLMAN AND TOM ROWE FOR THEIR EXTRAORDINARY COMMUNITY SERVICE–

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Tom Thoms, Jim Millman and Tom Rowe for their extraordinary service to children and families.

These three bicyclists took a 1,827 mile, 21 day bicycle ride from Itasca, Minnesota to Venice, Louisiana. These men set out on this journey with one common goal: to help break the cycle of child abuse by raising money and bringing attention to this pressing issue. They originally set a goal of raising $42,000, but they drastically exceeded that goal by raising a total of $108,494. All of the money raised went to three Quad-City charities—Alternatives, the Child Abuse Council, and Bethany for Children & Families. The men spent 146 hours on their bikes, which is the equivalent of six days and one night. Collectively, their bicycle tires spun more than eight million times.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Thoms, Mr. Millman, and Mr. Rowe, once again, for their outstanding efforts and selfless community service. The generous actions of individuals such as these men make me especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District.

IN RECOGNITION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

HON. STEPHANIE N. MURPHY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, when I think about America's future, I know that its success will be driven by the bright, technologically-savvy minds of our young people.

That is why I am honored to recognize the winner of my district's 2017 Congressional App Challenge: Carlson Sharpless, a senior at Lake Brantley High School in Altamonte Springs, Florida.

Translating a good idea into lines of code, Carlson created an app called ''Grammarlets,'' a tutoring program designed to help students practice their grammar skills for the SATs. His creation stood out among several impressive and unique apps submitted by students seeking to solve everyday problems.

What these students have accomplished is an example of the kind of innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit that central Florida is known for.

As a nation, it's important that we continue to make meaningful investments in STEM education and that we empower our students with the tools needed to invent, to innovate, and to improve the lives of all Americans.

TRIBUTE TO RANDY HUGHES

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Randy Hughes. Randy was inducted into the Creston High School Hall of Fame as Distinguished Faculty on Friday, September 29, 2017.

For 36 years, Randy served the Creston community as an educator to their youth. He taught social studies with a relaxed style with which students could relate. He brought current events into the curriculum and related them to our country's history. He coached students for the Academic Decathlon for 10 years, served as the Student Council advisor and coached girls' tennis. After retirement from Creston high school, Randy taught at Southwestern Community College and continued to be an active part of the Creston community.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Randy for receiving this award, and for providing the youth in Iowa's 3rd district the education that they will need to be successful. It is with great pride that I recognize leaders like Randy in the United States Congress and I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating him for this outstanding achievement and in wishing him nothing but the best.

IN RECOGNITION OF MS. IRIS LIZZETTE VÉLEZ

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Iris Lizzette Vélez for her service to my office and the constituents of California's Twenty First Congressional District of California over the past year.

Iris Vélez was born on April 3, 1960 in the beach town of Guánica, Puerto Rico to Iris Lucía Santana Colón and Félix Gilberto Vélez Quiñones. Both high school teachers, her parents instilled in Iris the importance and love of learning at a young age. Iris and her three siblings spent most of their time feeding animals, harvesting crops, and fishing on their grandparents' farm in San German, Puerto Rico. It was during this time that Iris developed a true love and respect for nature.

After spending her youth in Puerto Rico and completing her high school education at the age of sixteen, Ms. Vélez attended the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico, where she received a Bachelor's of Arts in Political Science and Government. Following the completion of her undergraduate studies, Ms. Vélez went on to complete two Master's degrees—the first in Political Science at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, and the second in Public Relations at Sacred Heart University in Santurce, Puerto Rico.

In 1980, Iris began her eight-year teaching career as a Professor of Political Science at the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico but, in 1988, she was able to combine her passions of nature, political science, and public affairs while serving as the Public Affairs Specialist for the National Park Service at the San Juan National Historic Site. After two years of service, Ms. Vélez moved on to work for the United States Forest Service first as a Public Affairs Specialist and later as Program Manager.

In February of 2017, Ms. Vélez accepted a Congressional Fellowship in my Washington, D.C. office through the Brookings Institution. During her time in my office, Iris was a vital member of my team having handled legislative issues relating to natural resources, forestry, and energy policy. Iris was also instrumental in organizing constituent outreach programs to teach fire safety to the people of the California's Twenty First Congressional District. Outside of work, Iris enjoys meeting new people, exploring different places, and attending live musical performances.

On December 15, 2017, Ms. Vélez's time in my office will come to an end as she moves on to continue her dedication to public service. While I know she is very excited about her upcoming journey, she will be greatly missed as a member of my team.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join me in commending Iris Lizzette Vélez for her public service to the people of California's Central Valley and wishing her well as she begins the next chapter of her life.

RECOGNIZING TYLER BUSSERT FOR HIS STATE TITLE IN CLASS 1A GOLF

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Tyler Bussert, a senior at Riverdale High School, for earning the Class 1A title for the Illinois State Golf Championship.

Tyler Bussert shot a 36–37–73 both days at the state meet for a 146 total to earn his title as state champion, and I would like to recognize Tyler for this tremendous accomplishment. Tyler's first place win follows a ninth place finish as a sophomore and second place finish as a junior in the state championship. As a former athlete, I understand the amount of hard work and commitment it takes to earn such a title. Tyler is a competitor with strong dedication and work ethic. I am proud to see such young talent in our community, and to see him represent Port Byron on a state-wide platform.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to again formally congratulate Tyler Bussert on his title, and I join the rest of the community in wishing him every success in the future.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE SERVICE OF PHILLIP TODD STEPHENS

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Phillip Todd Stephens and his over thirteen years of dedicated service to Team Brady and the people of the Eighth Congressional District of Texas.

A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Todd began his life of public service as a Medical Specialist in the United States Army, which included a posting in the Demilitarized Zone of the Korean Peninsula.

Upon completing his service in the military, Todd went on to earn two Bachelor's Degrees in Philosophy and Political Science at the University of Kentucky and a Master's Degree in Political Science from Eastern Kentucky University.

Soon after his graduation, Todd returned to public service and began working in the Kentucky General Assembly—first in the office of the President of the State Senate and later as a bill drafter for the Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection.

In 2004, Todd relocated to Washington, D.C., where he served as a Legislative Assistant in my congressional office for two years. Dedicated to working for the people of the Eighth District, Todd and his wife, Sarah, relocated their young family to The Woodlands, TX, in 2006. Todd served as my Director of Regional Issues, handling disaster relief efforts, local transportation issues, and many additional policy concerns directly affecting our communities. In 2013, Todd began working tirelessly as the District Director of my congressional offices in Conroe and Huntsville.

Todd's steady and caring personality has guided him throughout his many years of service, and his dry humor and wit have time and again worked to encourage those around him and build relationships with the people of our community. He is an active member of Celebration Church and a volunteer with his son's Boy Scout troop—in addition to being a Texas burger and BBQ connoisseur.

Todd and Sarah, who also worked as my District Director, along with their children, Avery and Owen, are a perfect illustration of a family committed to serving their community.

On December 28, 2017, Todd will complete his final day of over thirteen years in my congressional office. While he will be sorely missed by my staff and me, I am fully confident that he will excel in his new role with The Woodlands Township. I am proud to join the entire Eighth District of Texas in thanking Todd for his years of public service and wishing him the best in the next chapter of his life.

TRIBUTE TO WAHL OPTICAL

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Wahl Optical of Council Bluffs, Iowa, for celebrating 80 years in business. Wahl Optical was founded in 1937 by Dr. G.H. Wahl. Today, they have two optometrists on staff who perform many services for their customers.

Bob Wahl, the current owner of his family business, has been working there since 1977. He came into the store to get his glasses fixed and started waiting on customers and answering the telephone. His father saw this and convinced his son to come on board to work in the family business. Bob decided to stay and give it a chance.

Over the years, Wahl Optical has built the reputation of being a friendly business, willing to go above and beyond for their customers. Bob said, ''I take a lot of pride in making sure people in the Council Bluffs area have every opportunity to look as fashionable as they want to be.''

Mr. Speaker, I commend and congratulate Wahl Optical for its many years of dedicated and devoted service to Council Bluffs, Iowa and the surrounding area. It is with great pride that I recognize them today and I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Wahl Optical for this outstanding achievement and in wishing them nothing but continued success.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S8017–S8050

Measures Introduced: Thirteen bills and one resolution were introduced, as follows: S. 2229–2241, and S. Res. 361. **Page S8046**

Measures Reported:

S. 584, to amend chapter 6 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Regulatory Flexibility Act), to ensure complete analysis of potential impacts on small entities of rules, with amendments. (S. Rept. No. 115–194)

S. 1769, to require a new or updated Federal website that is intended for use by the public to be mobile friendly, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. (S. Rept. No. 115–195)

S. 1869, to reauthorize and rename the position of Whistleblower Ombudsman to be the Whistleblower Protection Coordinator, with an amendment. (S. Rept. No. 115–196) **Page S8045**

Measures Passed:

PACT Act: Committee on the Judiciary was discharged from further consideration of S. 654, to revise section 48 of title 18, United States Code, and the bill was then passed. **Page S8049**

Newstead Nomination—Agreement: A unanimous-consent-time agreement was reached providing that at a time to be determined by the Majority Leader, in consultation with the Democratic Leader, Senate begin consideration of the nomination of Jennifer Gillian Newstead, of New York, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State; that there be 10 minutes of debate on the nomination, equally divided in the usual form, and that following the use or yielding back of time, Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination with no intervening action or debate. **Page S8041**

Compton and West Nominations—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that at approximately 3 p.m., on Monday, December 18, 2017, Senate begin consideration of the nomination of J. Paul Compton, Jr., of Alabama, to be General Counsel of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the nomination of Owen West, of Connecticut, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, under the order of Wednesday, December 13, 2017, en bloc, with the debate time on the nominations to run concurrently; and that at 5:30 p.m., Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations in the order listed, with no intervening action or debate. **Pages S8049–50**

Nominations Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nominations:

By 53 yeas to 43 nays (Vote No. EX. 317), James C. Ho, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit. **Pages S8017–33, S8050**

Matthew Z. Leopold, of Florida, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

David Ross, of Wisconsin, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. **Pages S8041, S8050**

Scott W. Brady, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania for the term of four years.

Andrew E. Lelling, of Massachusetts, to be United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts for the term of four years. **Pages S8041–42, S8050**

14 Coast Guard nominations in the rank of admiral.

Routine lists in the Coast Guard. **Pages S8042, S8050**

Messages from the House: **Page S8045**

Measures Referred: **Page S8045**

Executive Reports of Committees: **Pages S8045–46**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S8046–47**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S8047–48**

Additional Statements: **Pages S8044–45**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Page S8049**

Privileges of the Floor: **Page S8049**

Record Votes: One record vote was taken today. (Total—317) **Page S8033**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 5:19 p.m., until 3 p.m. on Monday, December 18, 2017. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on pages S8049–50.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Armed Services: Committee ordered favorably reported 137 nominations in the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

MIDDLE EAST POLICY AND STRATEGY

Committee on Armed Services: Committee concluded a hearing to examine United States policy and strategy in the Middle East, after receiving testimony from Ryan C. Crocker, Princeton University Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs; Eric S. Edelman, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments; James F. Jeffrey, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; and Stuart E. Jones, The Cohen Group.

COUNTERTERRORISM GUIDANCE

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee received a closed briefing on new counterterrorism guidance from Nathan Sales, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Department of State; and Major General Albert M. Elton II, Deputy Director for Special Operations and Counterterrorism, The Joint Staff, and Andrew Knaggs, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Operations and Counterterrorism, both of the Department of Defense.

NOMINATION

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nomination of Margaret Weichert, of Georgia, to be Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget, after the nominee testified and answered questions in her own behalf.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee ordered favorably reported the nominations of Andrei Iancu, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and Duane A. Kees, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas, Stephen R. McAllister, to be United States Attorney for the District of Kansas, Ronald A. Parsons, Jr., to be United States Attorney for the District of South Dakota, Ryan K. Patrick, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas, and Michael B. Stuart, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, all of the Department of Justice.

INTELLIGENCE

Select Committee on Intelligence: Committee met in closed session to receive a briefing on certain intelligence matters from officials of the intelligence community.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 19 public bills, H.R. 4642–4660, were introduced.

Pages H9939–40

Additional Cosponsors: **Page H9941**

Report Filed: A report was filed today as follows:

H.R. 4292, to reform the living will process under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, with an amendment (H. Rept. 115–465). **Page H9939**

Privacy Notification Technical Clarification Act: The House passed H.R. 2396, to amend the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act to update the exception for certain annual notices provided by financial institutions, by a yea-and-nay vote of 275 yeas to 146 nays, Roll No. 682. **Pages H9905–16**

Rejected the Maxine Waters (CA) motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Financial Services with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with an amendment, by a yea-and-nay vote of 185 yeas to 235 nays, Roll No. 681.

Pages H9914–16

Pursuant to the Rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted. **Page H9905**

Agreed to:

Clay amendment (No. 1 printed in H. Rept. 115–462) that strikes the term ''financial institution'' and replaces it with ''vehicle financial company'' and defines ''vehicle financial company''.

Pages H9913–14

H. Res. 657, the rule providing for consideration of the bills (H.R. 2396) and (H.R. 4015) was agreed to yesterday, December 13th.

Strengthening Oversight of Iran's Access to Finance Act: The House passed H.R. 4324, to require the Secretary of the Treasury to make certifications with respect to United States and foreign financial institutions' aircraft-related transactions involving Iran, by a yea-and-nay vote of 252 yeas to 167 nays, Roll No. 684. Consideration began yesterday, December 13th. **Pages H9916–18**

Rejected the Swallwell (CA) motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Financial Services with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with an amendment, by a yea-and-nay vote of 188 yeas to 233 nays, Roll No. 683. Consideration began yesterday, December 13th.

Pages H9916–17

H. Res. 658, the rule providing for consideration of the bills (H.R. 1638) and (H.R. 4324) was agreed to yesterday, December 13th.

Clerk to Correct Engrossment: Agreed by unanimous consent that, in the engrossment of H.R. 4324, the Clerk be authorized to correct section numbers, punctuation, and cross references, and to make other necessary technical and conforming corrections. **Page H9918**

Clerk to Correct Engrossment: Agreed by unanimous consent that, in the engrossment of H.R. 2396, the Clerk be authorized to correct section numbers, punctuation, and cross references, and to make other necessary technical and conforming corrections. **Page H9918**

Unanimous Consent Agreement on H.R. 2815: Agreed by unanimous consent to the amendment to H.R. 2815, designating the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 30 East Somerset Street in Raritan, New Jersey, as the ''Sergeant John Basilone Post Office'', offered by Representative Gianforte. **Page H9918**

Suspensions—Proceedings Resumed: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures. Consideration began Tuesday, December 12th.

Designating the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1415 West Oak Street, in Kissimmee, Florida, as the ''Borinqueneers Post Office Building'': H.R. 4042, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1415 West Oak Street, in Kissimmee, Florida, as the ''Borinqueneers Post Office Building''; and

Page H9918

Designating the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 30 East Somerset Street in Raritan, New Jersey, as the ''Sergeant John Basilone Post Office'': H.R. 2815, amended, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 30 East Somerset Street in Raritan, New Jersey, as the ''Sergeant John Basilone Post Office''; **Page H9918**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: ''To designate thefacility of the United States Postal Service located at 30 East Somerset Street in Raritan, New Jersey, as the 'Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Post Office'.''. **Page H9918**

Meeting Hour: Agreed by unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 5:30 p.m. tomorrow, December 15th and further, when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourns to meet at 12 noon on Monday, December 18th for Morning Hour debate. **Page H9925**

Quorum Calls—Votes: Four yea-and-nay votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H9915–16, H9916, H9916–17, and H9917. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 9 a.m. and adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

Committee Meetings

EXAMINING THE OPERATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES (CFIUS)

Committee on Financial Services: Subcommittee on Monetary Policy and Trade held a hearing entitled ''Examining the Operations of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS)''. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Full Committee held a markup on H.R. 2219, the ''End Banking for Human Traffickers Act of 2017''; H.R. 2646, the ''United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Extension Act''; H.R. 1997, the ''Ukraine Cybersecurity Cooperation Act of 2017''; and H.R. 3851, the ''War Crimes Rewards Expansion Act''. H.R. 1997, H.R. 2219, and H.R. 2646 were ordered reported, as amended. H.R. 3851 was ordered reported, without amendment.

LEGISLATIVE MEASURE

Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on H.R. 4558, the ''Grand Staircase Escalante Enhancement Act''. Testimony was heard from Representative Stewart; Leland Pollock, Commission Chairperson, Board of Commissioners, Garfield County, Utah; Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism, Film and Global Branding; and public witnesses.

Joint Meetings

MAGNITSKY ACT

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Commission concluded a hearing to examine the accomplishments and challenges of the Magnitsky Act, after receiving testimony from William Browder, Hermitage Capital Management, London, United Kingdom; Garry Kasparov, Human Rights Foundation, New York, New York; and Irwin Cotler, Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights, Montreal, Canada.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2017

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

No meetings/hearings scheduled.

House

No hearings are scheduled.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

3 p.m., Monday, December 18

Senate Chamber

Program for Monday: Senate will begin consideration of the nominations of J. Paul Compton, Jr., of Alabama, to be General Counsel of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Owen West, of Connecticut, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, and vote on confirmation of the nominations in the order listed at approximately 5:30 p.m.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

5:30 p.m., Friday, December 15

House Chamber

Program for Friday: House will meet in Pro Forma session at 5:30 p.m.

Extensions of Remarks, as inserted in this issue

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