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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. FOXX).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 30, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable VIRGINIA FOXX to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

PRAYER

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

Eternal God, thank You for giving us another day. Send Your spirit upon the Members of this people's House to encourage them in their official tasks. Especially during this season of budget deliberations, give them wisdom and an accurate understanding of the needs of the citizens of this country, most particularly those with narrow margins in their life options.

As the trees of the city are bright with flowers, may Your spirit enlighten the minds of those who serve, and may the beauty of Your creation show forth in the creative work of our Congress.

May all that is done be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mr. KILMER 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 PRO TEMPORE

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

CONGRATULATING PAT BRADFORD

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

Mr. ROUZER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to make special mention of Pat Bradford, who recently stepped down as publisher and editor of the local paper she founded, the Lumina News.

The Lumina News has served as the voice of Wrightsville Beach and its surrounding communities since 2002. This local paper covers a wide range of topics but sets itself apart by covering matters especially important to coastal communities.

The Lumina News has consistently been ranked first in its North Carolina Press Association newspaper category. In fact, first in nine new top awards for 2016.

With her recent departure from the paper, Pat is focusing her attention on the very successful monthly sister publication which she co-founded, the Wrightsville Beach Magazine.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know Pat in the past few years and will certainly miss interacting with her as publisher and editor of the Lumina News.

Congratulations to you, Pat, for your continued success in all these endeavors and for your continued contributions to the Wrightsville Beach community and beyond.

BERTEL SPIER CELEBRATES HER 107TH BIRTHDAY

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

Mr. KILMER. Madam Speaker, on Thursday, March 31, 1910, Bertel Spier was born, and tomorrow she will celebrate her 107th birthday.

Just imagine what she has seen: two world wars, technological advancements beyond our wildest dreams. When she sees a video on a telephone, she cannot believe it.

She has an extraordinary legacy: a loving daughter, four adoring and adorable great-grandchildren, and three grandsons to whom she is a hero. I am proud to be one of them.

My grandma is someone who is a testament to the greatness of this Nation and of the importance of what happens in this building.

She immigrated to the U.S. from Holland and was welcomed here and accepted here, built a life here. That is part of the greatness of this Nation.

A person born 10 years before women's suffrage, she proudly voted herself this past November. That is part of the greatness of this Nation.

A person who outlived any projected retirement, she has been able to retire and live with dignity because of two of our country's most successful public policies: Medicare and Social Security. That is part of the greatness of this Nation, too.

Madam Speaker, it is such an honor for me to say four of the most extraordinary and almost unbelievable words that I may ever say on this floor:

Happy 107th birthday, Oma. We love you.

MOMENT OF SILENCE HONORING JON RICHARDS

(Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to celebrate the life of Jon Richards, a Georgia treasure, a brilliant political journalist, a selfless mentor. He passed away this past Sunday after a battle with cancer. Our prayers go out and we grieve for the family and friends of Jon during this difficult time.

Madam Speaker, Jon grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, and later moved to Lawrenceville, Georgia, where he became active in various Gwinnett County civic, social, and political organizations.

He was well respected on both sides of the political aisle, serving with endless passion as editor-in-chief of georgiapol.com. Most notably, however, was his devotion to mentoring high school and college students who were interested in politics, and he left a lasting impression.

Madam Speaker, Jon was known by the Gwinnett community as someone who lived life to its fullest and made the most of every day. His leadership was unmatched and cannot be overstated.

I am grateful to know that, through Christ, we will be able to meet again.

Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to stand and join with me for a moment of silence to honor the life and legacy of Jon Richards, who will be sorely missed by many.

INVESTIGATING RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE ON OUR ELECTION

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, Russia's efforts to influence our election constitutes a direct assault on our democracy. These alarming events must be thoroughly investigated. In particular, we must determine if any Americans collaborated in these attacks and are legally culpable.

Sadly, the House Intelligence Committee chairman is either unwilling or incapable of conducting a fair investigation. How can Mr. NUNES run this investigation if he is briefing the President before talking with members of his committee? How can he be secretly meeting with so-called sources at the White House?

Madam Speaker, the American people need to know that democracy is intact, and that requires a full, fair, and impartial investigation.

Since December, I have repeatedly called for the Department of Justice to appoint a special counsel. I have also cosponsored legislation to create a bipartisan commission to investigate.

The bottom line is this: Chairman NUNES has lost all credibility. He must recuse himself. We need a real investigation. Appoint a special counsel now.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL FROZEN FOOD MONTH

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

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize March as National Frozen Food Month.

In my district, growers count on our food processors to ensure that their agricultural products make it from farms to kitchen tables.

Jobs in agriculture depend on the ability to transport our products to buyers across the country and around the world. In my district, there are over 6,000 jobs in the frozen food industry, ensuring that families across the U.S. can enjoy Washington's agricultural products.

As a farmer and a former State director of agriculture, I understand how important frozen foods are to enable timely delivery and freshness, despite seasonal changes. Freezing reduces food waste and increases safety and affordability. Freezing also allows Americans to have access to the diverse array of food products they enjoy every day.

Join me in celebrating National Frozen Food Month and all those who work to ensure that the U.S. has the safest, most reliable, and most affordable food supply in the world.

ENDING GLOBAL HUNGER WITH RISE AGAINST HUNGER

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, Rise Against Hunger, under the leadership of Rod Brooks, is a charitable organization committed to ending global hunger by 2030. They partner with other charities, faith-based organizations, and corporations to host meal-packaging events across the country where volunteers assemble nutritious meals that are sent to over 40 countries.

On Tuesday, I had the opportunity to participate in a Rise Against Hunger meal-packaging event sponsored by The Kraft Heinz Company. I joined 100 volunteers to package 7,500 meals that will reach hungry families across the globe.

Last year alone, Rise Against Hunger engaged over 387,000 volunteers at over 3,000 events nationwide to assemble over 64 million meals that reached nearly 1.1 million hungry people.

I applaud Kraft Heinz and its CEO, Bernardo Hees, for their commitment to packing 1 billion meals over the next 5 years. I appreciate all that Rise Against Hunger does to address chronic malnutrition and alleviate poverty worldwide.

Working together, we can end hunger now.

RUSSIA'S INTERFERENCE IN OUR DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

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

Mr. CARBAJAL. Madam Speaker, I rise today because the American people have the right to know the truth regarding Russia's interference in our democratic process.

I am a member of the House Armed Services Committee, and the message I hear from our military leaders is consistent: Russia is a top threat to the United States and our interests.

Russia has not only used its military to destabilize regions around the world, but it has completely undermined and disrupted the democratic values of this country.

This is unacceptable. And yet my colleagues from the other side of the aisle refuse to do their job as an oversight body and establish a bipartisan, independent commission to investigate Russia's egregious behavior.

We have a responsibility to be transparent with the American people. I strongly urge my Republican colleagues to not only immediately establish an independent investigation into Russia's interference in our election, but I also call for the release of President Trump's tax returns.

America's security and values are on the line. Any treasonous and unlawful relations with Russia cannot be tolerated.

EPA SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD REFORM ACT OF 2017

Mr. LUCAS. Madam Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 233, I call up the bill (H.R. 1431) to amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 to provide for Scientific Advisory Board member qualifications, public participation, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 233, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1431

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 ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017''.

SEC. 2. SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD.

(a) INDEPENDENT ADVICE.—Section 8(a) of the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978

(42 U.S.C. 4365(a)) is amended by inserting ''independently'' after ''Advisory Board which shall''.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—Section 8(b) of the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 (42 U.S.C. 4365(b)) is amended to read as follows:

''(b)(1) The Board shall be composed of at least nine members, one of whom shall be designated Chairman, and shall meet at such times and places as may be designated by the Chairman.

''(2) Each member of the Board shall be qualified by education, training, and experience to evaluate scientific and technical information on matters referred to the Board under this section. The Administrator shall ensure that—

''(A) the scientific and technical points of view represented on and the functions to be performed by the Board are fairly balanced among the members of the Board;

''(B) at least ten percent of the membership of the Board are from State, local, or tribal governments;

''(C) persons with substantial and relevant expertise are not excluded from the Board due to affiliation with or representation of entities that may have a potential interest in the Board's advisory activities, so long as that interest is fully disclosed to the Administrator and the public and appointment to the Board complies with section 208 of title 18, United States Code;

''(D) in the case of a Board advisory activity on a particular matter involving, or for which the Board has evidence that it may involve, a specific party, no Board member having an interest in the specific party shall participate in that activity;

''(E) Board members may not participate in advisory activities that directly or indirectly involve review or evaluation of their own work, unless fully disclosed to the public and the work has been externally peer-reviewed;

''(F) Board members shall be designated as special Government employees;

''(G) no registered lobbyist is appointed to the Board; and

''(H) a Board member shall have no current grants or contracts from the Environmental Protection Agency and shall not apply for a grant or contract for 3 years following the end of that member's service on the Board.

''(3) The Administrator shall—

''(A) solicit public nominations for the Board by publishing a notification in the Federal Register;

''(B) solicit nominations from relevant Federal agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, the Interior, and Health and Human Services;

''(C) solicit nominations from—

''(i) institutions of higher education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a))); and

''(ii) scientific and research institutions based in work relevant to that of the Board;

''(D) make public the list of nominees, including the identity of the entities that nominated each, and shall accept public comment on the nominees;

''(E) require that, upon their provisional nomination, nominees shall file a written report disclosing financial relationships and interests, including Environmental Protection Agency grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, or other financial assistance, that are relevant to the Board's advisory activities for the three-year period prior to the date of their nomination, and relevant professional activities and public statements for the five-year period prior to the date of their nomination; and

''(F) make such reports public, with the exception of specific dollar amounts, for each member of the Board upon such member's selection.

''(4) Disclosure of relevant professional activities under paragraph (3)(E) shall include all representational work, expert testimony, and contract work as well as identifying the party for which the work was done.

''(5) Except when specifically prohibited by law, the Agency shall make all conflict of interest waivers granted to members of the Board, member committees, or investigative panels publicly available.

''(6) Any recusal agreement made by a member of the Board, a member committee, or an investigative panel, or any recusal known to the Agency that occurs during the course of a meeting or other work of the Board, member committee, or investigative panel shall promptly be made public by the Administrator.

''(7) The terms of the members of the Board shall be three years and shall be staggered so that the terms of no more than one-third of the total membership of the Board shall expire within a single fiscal year. No member shall serve more than two terms over a ten-year period.''.

(c) RECORD.—Section 8(c) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 4365(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by inserting ''or draft risk or hazard assessment,'' after ''at the time any proposed'';

(B) by striking ''formal''; and

(C) by inserting ''or draft risk or hazard assessment,'' after ''to the Board such proposed''; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by inserting ''or draft risk or hazard assessment,'' after ''the scientific and technical basis of the proposed''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following: ''The Board's advice and comments, including dissenting views of Board members, and the response of the Administrator shall be included in the record with respect to any proposed risk or hazard assessment, criteria document, standard, limitation, or regulation and published in the Federal Register.''.

(d) MEMBER COMMITTEES AND INVESTIGATIVE PANELS.—Section 8(e)(1)(A) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 4365(e)(1)(A)) is amended by adding at the end the following: ''These member committees and investigative panels—

''(i) shall be constituted and operate in accordance with the provisions set forth in paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (b), in subsection (h), and in subsection (i);

''(ii) do not have authority to make decisions on behalf of the Board; and

''(iii) may not report directly to the Environmental Protection Agency.''.

(e) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.—Section 8 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 4365) is amended by amending subsection (h) to read as follows:

''(h)(1) To facilitate public participation in the advisory activities of the Board, the Administrator and the Board shall make public all reports and relevant scientific information and shall provide materials to the public at the same time as received by members of the Board.

''(2) Prior to conducting major advisory activities, the Board shall hold a public information-gathering session to discuss the state of the science related to the advisory activity.

''(3) Prior to convening a member committee or investigative panel under subsection (e) or requesting scientific advice from the Board, the Administrator shall accept, consider, and address public comments on questions to be asked of the Board. The Board, member committees, and investigative panels shall accept, consider, and address public comments on such questions and shall not accept a question that unduly narrows the scope of an advisory activity.

''(4) The Administrator and the Board shall encourage public comments, including oral comments and discussion during the proceedings, that shall not be limited by an insufficient or arbitrary time restriction. Public comments shall be provided to the Board when received, and shall be published in the Federal Register grouped by common themes. If multiple repetitious comments are received, only one such comment shall be published along with the number of such repetitious comments received. Any report made public by the Board shall include written responses to significant comments, including those that present an alternative hypothesis-based scientific point of view, offered by members of the public to the Board.

''(5) Following Board meetings, the public shall be given 15 calendar days to provide additional comments for consideration by the Board.''.

(f) OPERATIONS.—Section 8 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 4365) is further amended by amending subsection (i) to read as follows:

''(i)(1) In carrying out its advisory activities, the Board shall strive to avoid making policy determinations or recommendations, and, in the event the Board feels compelled to offer policy advice, shall explicitly distinguish between scientific determinations and policy advice.

''(2) The Board shall clearly communicate uncertainties associated with the scientific advice provided to the Administrator or Congress.

''(3) The Board shall ensure that advice and comments reflect the views of the members and shall encourage dissenting members to make their views known to the public, the Administrator, and Congress.

''(4) The Board shall conduct periodic reviews to ensure that its advisory activities are addressing the most important scientific issues affecting the Environmental Protection Agency.

''(5) The Board shall be fully and timely responsive to Congress.''.

SEC. 3. RELATION TO THE FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT.

Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this Act shall be construed as supplanting the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.).

SEC. 4. RELATION TO THE ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1978.

Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this Act shall be construed as supplanting the requirements of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma.

□ 0915

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUCAS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill, H.R. 1431.

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

There was no objection.

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

I thank Chairman SMITH and Environment Subcommittee Chairman BIGGS for their hard work on this important piece of legislation. I also thank my good friend, Representative

PETERSON for, yet again, working—helping, I should say—to make this bill a bipartisan effort. I appreciate his willingness to sponsor this bill with me.

I had the opportunity to speak in favor of this legislation when it passed this House with bipartisan support in the 114th Congress. Now, I come to the floor yet again to urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important reform. The SAB Reform Act was a good bill then, and it is a good bill now. This is a policy that is built on the values we should uphold regardless of which side of the political aisle we are on or who happens to be the President.

H.R. 1431, the Science Advisory Board Reform Act, ensures the best experts are free to undertake a balanced and open review of regulatory science. The Board was established to provide scientific advice to the EPA and Congress, and to review the quality and relevance of science EPA uses for regulations. But in recent years, shortcomings with the process have arisen. Opportunities for public participation have been limited, potential conflicts of interest have gone unchecked, and the ability of the Board to speak independently has been curtailed.

If the administration undermines the Board's independence or prevents it from providing advice to Congress, the valuable advice these experts can provide is wasted.

Despite the existing requirement that the EPA's advisory panels be fairly balanced in terms of point of view represented, the Science, Space, and Technology Committee has identified a number of past problems that have undermined the panel's credibility and work product. These include a number of advisory members who received money from the EPA. At the very least, this could create the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Some of the panelists have taken public and even political positions on issues they are advising about. For example, a lead reviewer of the EPA's hydraulic fracking study published an anti-fracking article titled, ''Regulate, Baby, Regulate.'' Now, this clearly is not an objective viewpoint, and should be publicly disclosed.

Public participation is limited during most board meetings. Interested parties have almost no ability to comment on the scope of the work, and meeting records are often incomplete and hard to obtain.

This bill is both pro-science, and pro-sound science. This bill is founded upon recommendations for reform outlined by the National Academy of Sciences, and the EPA's Peer Review Handbook. This bill ensures that the Board is balanced, transparent, and independent, all of which will help prevent the SAB from being manipulated by any group.

H.R. 1431 makes sound science the driving force of the Board, no matter who is the chief executive officer of our government.

Perhaps most importantly, this bill seeks to increase public participation that benefits all stakeholders. Currently, valuable opportunities for diverse perspectives are limited. The Federal Government does not have a monopoly on the truth. Ask your constituents back home if they know that.

The public has important expertise that can't afford to be ignored in a democracy. State, local, tribal, and private sectors have a long history of qualified scientific experts. Their contributions should be taken seriously.

Unfortunately, the history of the SAB shows that private sector representation is often lacking or simply nonexistent. Instead, in the past, EPA has picked the Board, ignoring the knowledge, experience, and contributions of those experts. This bill ensures that qualified experts are not excluded simply due to their affiliation. This will add value and credibility to future Board reviews.

Mr. PETERSON and I recognize the important role science should play in our policy debates and provides safeguards to give the public confidence in science. It restores the independent Science Advisory Board as a defender of scientific integrity.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in opposition to H.R. 1431, the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017. Like the bill we considered yesterday, the so-called HONEST Act, H.R. 1431 is designed to harm the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to use science to make informed decisions.

The bill before us today claims to reform the EPA's Science Advisory Board. And let's talk about what these reforms would mean.

First, the bill establishes a series of roadblocks to prevent independent academic scientists from serving on the Board. It accomplishes this by turning the term ''conflict of interest'' on its head by excluding scientists who have done the most relevant research on the topic being considered by the Board. The bill also prohibits Science Advisory Board members from obtaining extramural research grants for 3 years after their service on the Board, which would be a major disincentive for scientists to serve on the panel.

At the same time that this bill makes it much more difficult for academic researchers to serve on the Science Advisory Board, the bill also makes it much easier for corporate interests to serve. This is accomplished by gutting actual financial conflict-of-interest restrictions against industry representatives. Under this legislation, those industry representatives would simply have to disclose their financial conflicts, and they could serve on panels directly related to their corporate interests.

Finally, H.R. 1431 imposes exhaustive and duplicative notice-and-comment requirements on the Science Advisory Board. I say these requirements are exhaustive because, in addition to being an open-ended process, the Board would also have to respond in writing to any and all significant comments. In fact, I find it hard to believe that the advisory process created by this bill could ever be completed.

Of course, that is the real purpose of this provision. It is designed to throw sand in the gears of the Science Advisory Board process, and prevent board members from ever rendering their expert advice.

These additions are totally unnecessary. The Science Advisory Board already has statutorily mandated notice-and-comment obligations, and the Federal Advisory Committee Act already applies to their activities.

So if this bill passes, what would happen?

As an example, I will turn to a case study from the early 1990s. At that time, the EPA was forming a Scientific Advisory Panel to review evidence of harm from secondhand tobacco smoke. Thanks to internal tobacco industry documents that have been made public, we now know that Big Tobacco made a concerted effort to stack the Scientific Advisory Panel with tobacco industry hacks.

We take it for granted now that tobacco smoke is dangerous, but at that time, in the early nineties, Big Tobacco had succeeded in muddying the scientific waters around this issue by investing tens of millions of dollars in a coordinated attempt to defraud the American people.

If H.R. 1431 had been in effect back then, Big Tobacco likely would have succeeded in co-opting the Science Advisory Board.

What would the effects have been on public health to have had the EPA's science review body controlled by tobacco interests?

That is why a number of public health and environmental interest groups have come out against H.R. 1431. In a letter penned by the American Lung Association, the American Public Health Association, and several other health groups, the effects of H.R. 1431 are summed up like this:

''In short, EPA's Science Advisory Board Reform Act would limit the voice of scientists, restrict the ability of the Board to respond to important questions, and increase the influence of industry in shaping EPA policy. This is not the best interest of the American public.''

I couldn't agree more. I strongly urge Members to oppose this misguided bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUCAS. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, a fellow who has worked very diligently on the committee for many years.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman

from Oklahoma, Mr. LUCAS, the vice chairman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee for yielding to me, and I would also like to thank him for his leadership on H.R. 1431, the Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017.

This bill gives much needed transparency, fairness, and balance to the EPA's Science Advisory Board. These reforms will strengthen the public's trust of the science the EPA uses to support its regulations.

It also allows more public participation in the EPA science review process, and it requires the SAB to be more responsive to the public and to congressional questions, inquiries, and oversight.

Last Congress, similar legislation passed the House with bipartisan support. I appreciate Mr. LUCAS and the ranking member of the Agriculture Committee, Representative PETERSON, for introducing this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I support this bill, and recommend it to my colleagues.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER).

Mr. BEYER. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 1431, the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1431 is a blatant attempt to cripple the important mission of the EPA by stacking the EPA Science Advisory Board with industry insiders.

When Congress established the Science Advisory Board in 1978 to review the scientific data that informs the EPA's regulatory process, they did that with the requirement that the Board be balanced with representatives from industry and academia. The legislation we are considering today would skew that balance in favor of industry, with the intent of slowing down the EPA's regulatory process.

With a significant respect for the vice chair from Oklahoma, it makes no sense to suggest that the representatives of regulated corporate interests, however expert, can be credibly described as ''defenders of scientific integrity.''

I am particularly concerned about the double standard mandated by this bill. On the one hand, the bill makes it easier for industry representatives to serve on the Board by only requiring that they disclose their conflicts of interest. There is no recusal requirement for industry insiders, no matter how deep their financial ties may go or how much their industry is regulated by the EPA. But, astonishingly, on the other hand, the same scientists and researchers who received EPA research grants or contracts are automatically disqualified from service. Any scientists or researcher would be precluded from accepting any grant or contract for 3 years after their service.

So the scientists who spent their whole career becoming the world's top experts on a given topic must choose between advising our public health or continuing their research. They can bring their knowledge to the EPA and give up that work or continue.

Why oh why would we make it more difficult for the scientists and academic experts to participate in the Science Advisory Board while at the same time making it easier for industry experts to participate? Why would we want less science on the Science Advisory Board?

This proposal does nothing to advance science or protect public health. Instead, it creates senseless hurdles, burdensome red tape for the Science Advisory Board, and makes it more difficult to achieve its mission. We need to let scientists and researchers do their jobs by opposing this legislation.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. HIGGINS), a member of the Environment Subcommittee of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

□ 0930

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1431, the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act, of which I am an original cosponsor.

This bill intends not to deny science, but to deny manipulated science. This is a commonsense, good-government piece of legislation that will discourage ideologically based decisions by the Science Advisory Board and set it back on a path of making objective, science-based conclusions as originally intended by Congress.

Further, this bill would promote accountability within SAB, while also strengthening public participation, ensuring that there is a diverse makeup on its various boards and panels, reinforcing a strong system of peer-review requirements that work toward reducing conflicts of interest, providing ample opportunity for dissenting views by panelists, and, most importantly, requiring conclusions and reasonings be made available to the public.

Mr. Speaker, this is a crucial piece of legislation. The rules and regulations coming out of the Environmental Protection Agency have real-world implications on families in my State of Louisiana and, indeed, across the Nation.

The current system in place allows for the EPA to set forth ideological, biased, and nonscience-based rules and regulations. The standards set forth by this bill promote the use of good science and a strong and open system of transparency and peer review.

I urge all my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on H.R. 1431.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Ms. TSONGAS).

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, since President Trump took office, I have heard from hundreds of my constituents who are concerned about attacks by this new administration on the Environmental Protection Agency and the potential, long-term negative impacts on public health, clean water, clean air, and our Nation's work to play a leading role in combating climate change.

Thelma from Lowell wrote:

> Without EPA and its mission to protect our water and air, I fear that all the work done over the past 40 years will be erased.

Ingrid from Groton wrote:

> I need to be able to trust that the EPA will protect our air, water, land, and health. But Scott Pruitt has worked so closely with polluters, even suing the EPA more than a dozen times, how can we trust that he will protect our health and safety?

And demonstrating just how personal an issue this is for many people, Katherine from Acton wrote to me:

> This is my first time writing a congressional Representative, and I am proud to be doing so now, though my motivation is less heartening. As a mother of two precocious young kids, I have little time to do much beyond the essentials of daily living, much less writing a letter, so I assure you this one is written out of a feeling of necessity.

She went on to say:

> Environmental pollution is real and in our backyards. It contaminates our air, our water, and our land. Cleanup of these pollutants is extremely difficult, if not impossible, and the implications for our health are astounding.

Unfortunately, the legislation before us today will do nothing to assuage the fears of my constituents and millions of others around the country who support independent, unbiased, science-based decisionmaking at the EPA, which is essential to protecting public health, clean water, and combating climate change.

Instead of promoting sound science, this legislation would weaken the scientific expertise of the EPA's Science Advisory Board, the independent body that reviews scientific and technical information used in EPA decisionmaking and provides scientific advice to the EPA Administrator.

If Congress really wants to promote sound science, I would urge consideration of the Scientific Integrity Act, legislation that I introduced along with Ranking Member EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas and Representatives LOWENTHAL and TONKO. Our bill will protect scientific research at Federal agencies from political interference and special interests. This legislation currently has 93 cosponsors, and it deserves debate in this House.

The majority is trying to claim that the legislation before us today helps us achieve goals similar to those of the Scientific Integrity Act, but my constituents aren't fooled.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on H.R. 1431.

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

I include in the RECORD the following letters: a letter of support from the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, a letter of support from the American Chemistry Council, a letter

of support from the National Cotton Council of America, another letter of support from the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, a letter of support from the Independent Petroleum Association of America, a letter of support from the CO_2 Coalition, and a letter of support from the Cato Institute.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC, March 29, 2017.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the ''Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment (HONEST) Act of 2017'' and the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017.'' These bills would improve the transparency and reliability of scientific and technical information that Federal agencies rely heavily upon to support new regulatory actions.

The HONEST Act is designed to ensure that the studies and data Federal agencies cite when they write new regulations, standards, guidance, assessments of risk—or take other regulatory action—are clearly identified and available for public review. Additionally, information must be sufficiently transparent to allow study findings to be reproduced and validated. This is a critical safeguard to assure the public that the data Federal agencies rely on is scientifically sound, unbiased, and reliable.

The EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017 would help ensure that the Science Advisory Board (SAB), which directly counsels the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on key scientific and technical issues, is unbiased and transparent in performing its duties. The bill would establish requirements that SAB members are qualified experts, that conflicts of interest and sources of bias are disclosed, that the views of members—including dissenting members—are available to the public, and that the public has the opportunity to participate in the advisory activities of the Board and view EPA's responses. Because EPA relies on SAB reviews and studies to support new regulations, standards, guidance, assessments of risk, and other actions, the actions of the SAB must be transparent and accountable. This is a critical safeguard to assure the public that the data Federal agencies rely on is scientifically sound and unbiased.

The HONEST Act and the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act would improve the transparency and trustworthiness of scientific and technical reviews and information that agencies, including EPA, rely on to justify regulatory actions that can significantly affect society. The American public must have confidence that the scientific and technical data driving regulatory action can be trusted. Accordingly, the Chamber supports these important bills.

Sincerely,

NEIL L. BRADLEY,
Senior Vice President & Chief Policy Officer, Government Affairs.

AMERICAN CHEMISTRY COUNCIL,
Washington, DC, March 29, 2017.

Hon. FRANK LUCAS,
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Washington, DC.

DEAR VICE CHAIRMAN LUCAS: On behalf of the American Chemistry Council (ACC), we want to thank you for introducing H.R. 1431 ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017,'' to help improve the science employed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Agency's regulatory decision making processes.

The proposed legislation would increase the transparency and public confidence in the EPA's peer review panels.

The Science Advisory Board Reform Act would improve the peer review process—a critical component of the scientific process used by EPA in their regulatory decisions about potential risks to human health or the environment. The Act would make peer reviewers accountable for responding to public comment, strengthen policies to address conflicts of interest, ensure engagement of a wide range of perspectives of qualified scientific experts in EPA's scientific peer review panels and increase transparency in peer review reports.

We commend you for your leadership and commitment to advance this important issue. We look forward to working with you and other cosponsors for quick passage of H.R. 1431.

Sincerely,

CAL DOOLEY,
President and CEO.

NATIONAL COTTON COUNCIL
OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC, March 27, 2017.

Hon. LAMAR SMITH,
Chairman, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH: On behalf of the National Cotton Council, thank you and your committee for the work on the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 1431) and the Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act of 2017—HONEST Act (H.R. 1430). We support both of these critically important bills in an effort to return sound science and transparency to the regulatory process that affects our members and all of agriculture.

The NCC is the central organization of the United States cotton industry. Its members include growers, ginners, cottonseed processors and merchandizers, merchants, cooperatives, warehousers and textile manufacturers. A majority of the industry is concentrated in 17 cotton-producing states stretching from California to Virginia. U.S. cotton producers cultivate between 9 and 12 million acres of cotton with production averaging 12 to 18 million 480-lb bales annually. The downstream manufacturers of cotton apparel and home furnishings are located in virtually every state. Farms and businesses directly involved in the production, distribution and processing of cotton employ more than 125,000 workers and produce direct business revenue of more than $21 billion. Annual cotton production is valued at more than $5.5 billion at the farm gate, the point at which the producer markets the crop. Accounting for the ripple effect of cotton through the broader economy, direct and indirect employment surpasses 280,000 workers with economic activity of almost $100 billion. In addition to the cotton fiber, cottonseed products are used for livestock feed, and cottonseed oil is used as an ingredient in food products as well as being a premium cooking oil.

As you know, agriculture struggles with many factors in the production of fiber, food, and fuel, but the regulatory impact and burdens on our industry have greatly increased over the last several years. In addition, we have found ourselves unable to adequately defend and maintain many of our crop protection products and technologies because we are often unable to access the data used by federal government agencies to place additional restrictions on these products and technologies. We believe these two bills—H.R. 1430 and H.R. 1431—will greatly improve the transparency of regulatory review process. These two bills will substantially enhance the role of sound science that was intended to be a centerpiece of the regulatory process.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to get these bills enacted into law. If you have any questions or need any additional information from us, please have your staff contact Steve Hensley in our office.

Sincerely,

REECE LANGLEY,
Vice President—Washington Operations.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC, March 8, 2017.

Hon. LAMAR SMITH,
Chairman, Committee on Science, Space and Technology, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON,
Ranking Member, Committee on Science, Space and Technology, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH AND RANKING MEMBER JOHNSON: The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the ''Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment (HONEST) Act of 2017'' and the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017.'' These bills would improve the transparency and reliability of scientific and technical information that Federal agencies rely heavily upon to support new regulatory actions.

The HONEST Act is designed to ensure that the studies and data Federal agencies cite when they write new regulations, standards, guidance, assessments of risk—or take other regulatory action—are clearly identified and available for public review. Additionally, information must be sufficiently transparent to allow study findings to be reproduced and validated. This is a critical safeguard to assure the public that the data Federal agencies rely on is scientifically sound, unbiased, and reliable.

The EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017 would help ensure that the Science Advisory Board (SAB), which directly counsels the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on key scientific and technical issues, is unbiased and transparent in performing its duties. The bill would establish requirements that SAB members are qualified experts, that conflicts of interest and sources of bias are disclosed, that the views of members—including dissenting members—are available to the public, and that the public has the opportunity to participate in the advisory activities of the Board and view EPA's responses. Because EPA relies on SAB reviews and studies to support new regulations, standards, guidance, assessments of risk, and other actions, the actions of the SAB must be transparent and accountable. This is a critical safeguard to assure the public that the data Federal agencies rely on is scientifically sound and unbiased.

The HONEST Act and the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act would improve the transparency and trustworthiness of scientific and technical reviews and information that agencies, including EPA, rely on to justify regulatory actions that can significantly affect society. The American public must have confidence that the scientific and technical data driving regulatory action can be trusted. Accordingly, the Chamber supports these important bills.

Sincerely,

NEIL L. BRADLEY,
Senior Vice President & Chief Policy Officer, Government Affairs.

MARCH 8, 2017.

Hon. LAMAR S. SMITH,
Chairman, House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH: The American Exploration & Production Council (''AXPC'')

and the Independent Petroleum Association of America strongly support the enactment of both the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act and the Honest and Open New EPA Science-Treatment Act and are most grateful to you and your committee for your efforts in respect of the important objectives set forth in each of these pieces of proposed legislation.

AXPC is a national trade association representing 33 of America's largest and most active independent natural gas and crude oil exploration and production companies, each with considerable experience drilling, operating, and producing oil and natural gas on federal lands. AXPC members are ''independent'' in that their operations are limited to exploration for and production of oil and natural gas. Moreover, its members operate autonomously, unlike their fully integrated counterparts, which operate in additional segments of the energy business, such as downstream refining and marketing. AXPC members are leaders in developing and applying innovative and advanced technologies necessary to explore for and produce oil and natural gas, both offshore and onshore, from non-conventional sources.

IPAA represents the thousands of independent oil and natural gas explorers and producers, as well as the service and supply industries that support their efforts, that will most directly be impacted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) policy decisions to regulate methane directly from the oil and natural gas sector. Independent producers develop about 95 percent of American oil and natural gas wells, produce 54 percent of American oil, and produce 85 percent of American natural gas. Historically, independent producers have invested over 150 percent of their cash flow back into American oil and natural gas development to find and produce more American energy. IPAA is dedicated to ensuring a strong, viable American oil and natural gas industry, recognizing that an adequate and secure supply of energy is essential to the national economy.

The EPA's Science Advisory Board is a critical link in the EPA's policy making process and must, therefore, be unbiased and motivated only to seek the best possible policy result based on the best possible, publicly available, verifiable data. Moreover, open, public debate must be encouraged, not discouraged. The goal must be to get the best possible result, which is why the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act should be enacted.

Science used to support or as a basis for regulations or other policies should be based on publicly available scientific and technical data so as to allow for and even encourage independent fact finding and analysis. Transparency is critical to this process. The Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act would accomplish this result.

AXPC and IPAA urge passage of both of these critical pieces of legislation and stand ready to assist in any way you believe we might be able to add value to this process.

Should you have any questions or require additional information contact AXPC or IPAA. Thank you for your good work on these and other issues.

Very truly yours,

V. BRUCE THOMPSON,
President, AXPC.

LEE O. FULLER,
Executive Vice President, IPAA.

CO2 COALITION,
Arlington, VA, March 8, 2017.

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE LAMAR SMITH AND THE COMMITTEE: The CO2 Coalition supports the purpose and principles of the ''Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act of 2017'' and the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017.'' We would, in fact, support such principles applied on a government-wide basis.

The scientific method demands that the results of scientific studies be capable of replication. While it is generally up to individual scientists, journals and the larger scientific community as to how the replication requirement is satisfied, when it comes to science used to set public policy, there can be no doubt that the relevant methods and data must be publicly available for purposes of replication.

With respect to the federal government obtaining independent science advice from outside advisors, it goes without saying that advisory panels should not be unduly influenced by members hoping to curry government favor or to advance personal agendas. Panels should be truly independent and unbiased. Clear and enforceable standards will help meet this goal.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM HAPPER,
President, CO2 Coalition.

CATO,
Washington, DC, March 8, 2017.

Hon. LAMAR S. SMITH,
Chairman, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, House of Representatives.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN SMITH: Recently, Committee staff sent me copies of two draft pieces of legislation, the ''HONEST Act'' and the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017''.

The Cato Institute interprets its tax-exempt status as precluding any specific support of adoption (or recommendation of rejection) for pending legislation. However, I can comment on substantive aspects of such legislation.

The HONEST Act would require that regulations promulgated by EPA be backed by reproducible and transparent science. In the are of climate change, this will surely provoke a timely inquiry as to whether the climate models that are used to calculate the Social Cost of Carbon, and the justification of subsequent regulations, are indeed ''science''. I would argue that they are not.

A climate model is merely a complicated mathematical statement of multiple hypotheses. These include a prediction of a general warming of surface temperatures, and a greater warming of the tropical troposphere. All subsequent changes in weather regimes—such as rainfall, winter snows, and Atlantic hurricanes derive from the warming and its distribution.

As such, a reasonable test of hypothesis would be to examine the performance of these models as carbon dioxide has accumulated in the atmosphere, and during the period in which we have multiple, independent measures of bulk atmospheric global temperatures, which would be from 1979 to the present. As I noted in recent (February 28) testimony, there is a clear systematic failure of these models, with the central estimate of warming generally twice as large as what is being observed as a whole in the troposphere, and as much as seven times larger than what is being observed in the tropical upper troposphere.

This, and other recent refereed publications are finally beginning to detail the subjective fashion by which the equilibrium climate sensitivity is being derived, argue that these models do not constitute science in the classical sense. It would be more appropriate to call the field ''climate studies''.

Litigation deriving from the HONEST Act is likely to uncover this problem, with the likelihood that EPA's 2009 Endangerment Finding, which empowers subsequent regulation of carbon dioxide, should be vacated because of a lack of verifiable science associated with its determination.

The other piece of legislation will open up the EPA Science Advisory Board(s) to more institutional diversity and less political selection.

I hope you find my comments useful, and stand available to answer any questions or provide any amplifications you may desire.

Cordially,

PATRICK J. MICHAELS, Ph.D.,
Director, Center for the Study of Science.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I would note to the body, part of the challenge that we face here today on this bill is like so many challenges we face as Members of Congress: How do you avoid the short-term perspective? How do you take the long view? How do you set into motion things that, while they might not, perhaps, give us the great advantage in the short-term sense that either side of the room would want, in the long-term, they are in the best interest of the body?

I would remind my colleagues, the Scientific Advisory Board is appointed by the EPA; the EPA is managed by the Director; the Director is appointed by the President of the United States. If you believe that the work product, if you believe that the rules that have been generated by this in recent years reflect your perspective, I understand that, but nothing is ever static.

We have recently had a change of administration. We have a change of direction in the leadership of the EPA. That will be reflected in all the appointments and the actions of the EPA.

I implore my colleagues, we need to work in the perspective of what is in the long-term interest; and that long-term interest is providing scientific review at the SAB that our fellow citizens have confidence in and that will generate good rules and regulations when they have to be created.

Following this course of action advocated in H.R. 1431 will not make my most conservative constituents happy because they want to duplicate what they believe my most liberal constituents have advocated for years, but our goal here is not to empower one or the other side in these perspectives to force their will upon the country. Our responsibility with the SAB is to create a process where we can have confidence in the results and where, when appropriate, the end resulting regulations, the rules that come from it, will be in the best long-term interest of the Nation as a whole.

I know there are requirements in here that, if you have taken money as a scientist to do a research project from the EPA, you have to cool off for 3 years. But what is wrong with allowing a little separation between the people who take money to do the studies and then become the judges of other studies in the knowledge that perhaps the people who have done the studies will judge their studies? What is wrong with that?

And the public disclosure about allowing people with knowledge and expertise to participate, too, if they have

a conflict through these disclosures, we will know. I would hope that whoever leads the EPA on whatever day would act in a responsible fashion.

I just want, through this bill, to change the system so that the perception is out there that the SAB and the scientific process and the rulemaking that comes from it at EPA are being gained by one perspective or the other because that is in no one's best interest.

I know we live in tough times and challenging times to legislate. I think my colleagues know, in the legislation I have worked on before, that I have always worked across the aisle. I have always worked with every perspective within this body. I have always tried to take that long-ball perspective. I know it is a challenging time, but think about that as we continue this well-meaning, good-spirited, very focused debate.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD correspondence in opposition to this bill: a letter from the American Lung Association, the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, the American Public Health Association, the National Medical Association, the Health Care Without Harm Association, the Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the American Thoracic Society; along with a letter from the Clean Water Action, Earthjustice, League of Conservation Voters, and Natural Resources Defense Council; as well as a letter from the League of Conservation Voters.

MARCH 27, 2017.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: The undersigned health and medical organizations are writing to express our opposition to the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017 and the Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act of 2017. Our organizations are dedicated to saving lives and improving public health.

Science is the bedrock of sound medical and public health decision-making. The best science undergirds everything our organizations do to improve health. Under the Clean Air Act, EPA has long implemented a transparent and open process for seeking advice from the medical and scientific community on standards and measures to meet those standards. Both of these bills would restrict the input of scientific experts in the review of complex issues and add undue industry influence into EPA's decision-making process.

As written, the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act would make unneeded and unproductive changes that would:

Restrict the ability of scientists to speak on issues that include their own expertise;

Block scientists who receive any EPA grants from serving on the EPA Scientific Advisory Board, despite their having the expertise and conducted relevant research that earned them these highly competitive grants;

Prevent the EPA Scientific Advisory Board from making policy recommendations, even though EPA administrators have regularly sought their advice in the past;

Add a notice and comment component to all parts of the EPA Scientific Advisory Board actions, a burdensome and unnecessary requirement since their reviews of major issues already include public notice and comment; and

Reallocate membership requirements to increase the influence of industry representatives on the scientific advisory panels.

In short, EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act would limit the voice of scientists, restrict the ability of the Board to respond to important questions, and increase the influence of industry in shaping EPA policy. This is not in the best interest of the American public.

We also have concerns with the HONEST Act. This legislation would limit the kinds of scientific data EPA can use as it develops policy to protect the American public from environmental exposures and permit violation of patient confidentiality. If enacted, the legislation would:

Allow the EPA administrator to release confidential patient information to third parties, including industry;

Bolster industry's flawed arguments to discredit research that documents the adverse health effects of environmental pollution; and

Impose new standards for the publication and distribution of scientific research that go beyond the robust, existing requirements of many scientific journals.

Science, developed by the respected men and women scientists at colleges and universities across the United States, has always been the foundation of the nation's environmental policy. EPA's science-based decision-making process has saved lives and led to dramatic improvements in the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the earth we share. All Americans have benefited from the research-based scientific advice that scientists have provided to EPA.

Congress should adopt policy that fortifies our scientists, not bills that undermine the scientific integrity of EPA's decision-making or give polluters a disproportionate voice in EPA's policy-setting process.

We strongly urge you to oppose these bills.

Sincerely,

KATIE HUFFLING, RN, CNM,
Director, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments.

HAROLD P. WIMMER,
National President and CEO, American Lung Association.

GEORGES C. BENJAMIN, MD,
Executive Director, American Public Health Association.

STEPHEN C. CRANE, PhD, MPH,
Executive Director, American Thoracic Society.

CARY SENNETT, MD, PhD, FACP,
President & CEO, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

PAUL BOGART,
Executive Director, Health Care Without Harm.

RICHARD ALLEN WILLIAMS, MD,
117th President, National Medical Association.

JEFF CARTER, JD,
Executive Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility.

MARCH 29, 2017.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH AND RANKING MEMBER JOHNSON: We are writing to express our strong opposition to the draft legislation, the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017'' (H.R. 1431). The bill, which would amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978, would hinder the ability of the Environmental Protection Agency's Science Advisory Board (EPA SAB) to reach timely, independent, objective, credible conclusions that can form the basis of policy. While the bill is not identical to previous versions of this legislation, the bill would still weaken longstanding conflict-of-interest considerations for industry scientists while imposing unprecedented and unnecessary limitations on government-funded scientists, and complicating the SAB review process, with no discernible benefit to EPA or the public.

Our most serious specific concerns with the bill are described below, in the order in which the provisions appear:

P.3, lines 1–8, creating Section 8(b)(2)(C) in the underlying Act, promotes inclusion of panelists with financial conflicts, as long as they disclose their conflicts and obtain a waiver.

As with previous versions of this legislation, the bill shifts the current presumption against including people with financial conflicts on the SAB. The bill appears to effectively mandate the inclusion of scientists with financial conflicts, as long as the conflicts are disclosed, notwithstanding the reference to one portion of existing ethics law. Disclosure does not eliminate the problems that can occur when someone with a conflict influences policy guidance.

Policies and practices to identify and eliminate persons with financial conflicts, interests, and undue biases from independent scientific advisory committees have been implemented by all the federal agencies, the National Academy of Sciences, and international scientific bodies such as the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization. The bill's provisions are inconsistent with a set of nearly universally accepted scientific principles to eliminate or limit financial conflicts. Following these principles is the way agencies, the public, and Congress should ensure their scientific advice is credible and independent.

Moreover, EPA already grants exemptions as needed to allow scientists to participate if their expertise is required despite their potential conflicts.

P.3, line 23 to P.4, line 2, creating a Section 8(b)(2)(H) in the underlying Act, establishes an arbitrary and unwarranted bar on non-industry scientists who are receiving grants or contracts from EPA, or who may do so in the future.

This provision would bar participation by any academic or government scientist who is currently receiving a grant or under contract from EPA, and bar any Board member from seeking any grant or contract from EPA for three years after the end of their term on the Board. This arbitrary and unwarranted limitation on current or future recipients of government funding would severely limit the ability of EPA to get the best, most independent scientists on its premier advisory board—as well as any committees or panels of the board—without any evidence that no-strings government funding, such as research grants, constitute a conflict of interest.

P.6, lines 1–21, amending Section 8(c) of the underlying act, expands the scope of the SAB's work, and increases the burden.

This provision broadens the scope of documents that must be submitted to the SAB for review to include every risk or hazard assessment proposed by the agency, a dramatic and unnecessary expansion. The expansion

would provide an expanded platform for the new industry-stacked panels envisioned by this bill to challenge proposed actions by EPA, including hazard and risk assessments.

P.8, lines 8–23 creating a Section 8(h)(4) in the underlying Act, ensures endless delay, burden and red tape under the guise of ''transparency.''

This provision would give industry unlimited time to present its arguments to the SAB. Industry representatives already dominate proceedings because of their greater numbers and resources. In addition, the requirement for the SAB to respond in writing to ''significant'' public comments is vague (e.g., who defines what is ''significant,'' and how?) and would tie down the SAB with needless and burdensome process. It also misconstrues the nature of both the SAB's role and the role of public comment in the SAB process. The role of the SAB is to provide its expert advice to the Agency. The role of the public comments during this phase is to provide informative input to the SAB as it deliberates, but the final product of the SAB deliberation is advice from the panel members, not an agency proposal or decision that requires response to public comment. Members of the public, including stakeholders, have multiple opportunities to provide input directly to the agency.

In short, the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017'' would alter the nature of the SAB, which has been largely successful in providing the EPA expert review of key scientific and technical questions and would encourage industry conflicts in the review of scientific materials. It would also pile new and burdensome requirements on the Board, severely hampering its work and effectiveness. The result would be to further stall and undermine important public health, safety and environmental measures.

We urge you to abandon plans to advance this legislation. We would be happy to discuss our concerns with you further.

Sincerely,

CLEAN WATER ACTION.
EARTHJUSTICE.
LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS (LCV).
NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL.

LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS,
Washington, DC, March 28, 2017.

Re Oppose H.R. 1430 and H.R. 1431—Attacks on Science and Public Health.

United States House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of our millions of members, the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) works to turn environmental values into national, state, and local priorities. Each year, LCV publishes the National Environmental Scorecard, which details the voting records of members of Congress on environmental legislation. The Scorecard is distributed to LCV members, concerned voters nationwide, and the media.

LCV urges you to vote NO on H.R. 1430 and H.R. 1431. These two bills are backdoor attempts to undermine the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to use science in decision-making and obstruct the process for developing effective public health safeguards.

H.R. 1430, the ''HONEST Act'', would endanger public health by making it extremely difficult for the EPA to use the best available science. The bill contains favorable exemptions for industry and would restrict the health studies that the EPA is able to use by requiring that data is shared with anyone willing to sign a vague confidentiality agreement. These provisions would severely limit the EPA's ability to use data that includes studies with confidential health information. These types of studies are the basis for the best research on pollution's effects on people, but include individual health records that are legally required to remain confidential. H.R. 1430 would cripple the EPA's ability to develop effective public health safeguards by forcing them to disregard the results of these studies, resulting in less protective standards.

H.R. 1431, the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017'', would undermine the ability of the Science Advisory Board to provide independent, objective, and credible scientific advice to the EPA. This bill would facilitate greater industry influence of the Scientific Advisory Board by weakening conflict-of-interest protections while unnecessarily and arbitrarily limiting the participation of subject experts. Additionally, new burdens imposed on the Board and provisions that allow industry to significantly prolong the Board's scientific review process would delay key public health and environmental protections.

These two bills would significantly undermine the EPA's ability to protect public health and the environment. LCV urges you to REJECT H.R. 1430 and H.R. 1431 and will consider including votes on these bills in the 2017 Scorecard. If you need more information, please call my office and ask to speak with a member of our Government Relations team.

Sincerely,

GENE KARPINSKI,
President.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, less science, more pollution—that is, unbelievably, the Republican plan.

I want to just refer to what my colleague said. This is not long-ball time. This is emergency time where we have to deal with a worldwide environmental crisis, and this bill is just the latest attack on clean air and clean water. And as the threat of climate change becomes increasingly clear, Republicans are trying to reverse the progress that we have made to address this global challenge.

President Trump proposed gutting the Environmental Protection Agency, and this week he signed an executive order to ignore the effects of climate change, increase drilling on Federal lands, and undo efforts to promote renewable energy.

Meanwhile, Republicans in Congress have voted to block environmental protections. Republicans are replacing President Obama's Clean Power Plan with, essentially, a dirty power plan that will pollute our air and contaminate our water and put our children and our grandchildren at risk. Those actions further confirm Republicans' place on the wrong side of history.

It is time for America to lead, not to ignore reality. We should be investing in clean, job-producing energy. We should be at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

My constituents and most Americans expect to drink clean water and breathe fresh air. They want to protect our planet for future generations. Republicans, today, have it backward. We need more science and less pollution.

I urge my colleagues to oppose the bill and resist those attacks on our environment.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT), the former chairman of the Science, Space, and Technology's Subcommittee on Environment.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, have you ever had that deja vu all over again? Haven't we been doing this one since, what, 2013, 2014?

I accept I have been off the committee now for 4 years; yet we are talking past each other. I hear the gentlewoman and some of the others say things. It is a 12-page bill. It hasn't changed that much in the last couple Congresses.

How many of us would like to go back to the 2013 inspector general report that basically suggested going this direction because of the conflicts in these advisory committees?

□ 0945

If you really, once again—and this is sort of similar to yesterday's discussion—if you really care about the environment, then you really care about the data and the information and sort of the ethics and honesty of those who are both reviewing the data and giving you advice.

So what happens when the inspector general of the EPA hands you a report and says: These committees, these advisory councils are rife with conflicts? People who are on these advisory boards are making money.

Now, accept much of what we do here in Washington, D.C., if not almost all of it, is about the cash, and it is one of the ugly secrets that is not a secret, but we all pretend. It is always about the money.

Let's try something novel. Let's actually—this was an inspector general's report under the Obama administration. Why wouldn't we step up and respect it? It was very simple.

Hey, we need some more diversity on these advisory boards. And wouldn't it be wonderful if we had people advising us on air quality policy in non-attainment areas, or in regional interests that also weren't selling products, selling reports, making money off data with the EPA?

I mean, if it was reversed, if it was some other agency, if this same set of ethical lapses was reversed, I believe the left would be apoplectic. But the fact of the matter is that so many of these individual organizations that are represented on these advisory boards, that are making money from the EPA, even though they are advising in their own behalf, happen to be friends of the left. That makes it okay.

The ethical standards are the ethical standards. I have no concept how the left can oppose the concept of structured diversity.

Why shouldn't those of us from the Southwest, where substantial portions

of my State are Native American, have a voice? Why should we allow people on these advisory committees who, once again, are selling products, selling data, making a living, making money, one step away from the very work they are advising on?

It is a 12-page bill. It is not that complicated. I will make the argument that it makes our air, our water, the things around us safer, better, healthier, and it makes the way we get there sounder and more ethical, and we remove conflicts that right now taint the very decisions that are coming out of these advisory boards.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me thank the other side for their vigorous defense of this bill.

I must say that I am a nurse by profession, and I appreciate the gains we have made for using scientific data to determine what is unhealthy for the people; and it really does disturb me to see these protections being torn apart.

It is really unfortunate that we have spent so much time putting these protections of the people in place to see that, in this administration, they will probably fly away. Only the people of this Nation will be the losers, with more healthcare costs when they don't even want health care; more people not able to get out of dirty areas.

I live in the State of Texas where we have seen the detriment of all of the lack of these protections before they came about. Scientists are in science because they believe in the theories that put forth the procedures for us to follow for the safety and protection of human beings.

I regret that we are at a point this time in history where we are willing to throw all that away because of allowing the polluting companies to have more to say about policy. I regret that I have to stand against my colleagues that feel so strongly about getting rid of these protections, but I cannot sit idly by without saying that our Nation will not be in better shape when we take away all the protections for the people and their health.

Everybody wants clean air and clean food and protections from the damage that a bad environment brings, and all this is is taking away those protections.

I ask everyone to vote ''no'' on this bill.

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

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD the second set of letters which I referred to earlier.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS,
Washington, DC, March 8, 2017.

Hon. LAMAR SMITH,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH: On behalf of the 140,000 members of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), I am writing to express NAHB's strong support for the Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act of 2017 and the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017. These bills would ensure an open and honest scientific process by allowing the public access to the science that underpins regulations developed by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and ensuring that scientists advising the EPA on regulatory decisions are not the same scientists receiving EPA grants.

It is important for the EPA to use sound science in order to support their rulemakings. Far too often, the EPA relies on science that lacks transparency and reliability to buttress their rulemakings. This is a consequence of the EPA conducting their scientific review of rulemakings behind closed doors. The EPA frequently ignores scientific integrity by limiting public participation, excluding state and private sector expertise, and pushing a specific agenda by appointing scientists who are biased. In some cases, scientists that have been appointed to review proposed regulations have received EPA grants which the EPA disregards as a conflict of interest.

The EPA should not be able to create costly regulations without being transparent, fair and open to public input when considering the science behind a rulemaking. However, the EPA has sacrificed the integrity of the rulemaking process by using biased science to push their agenda. It is important to address these shortcomings so that future rules can be transparent and honest.

For these reasons, NAHB urges the House Science, Space and Technology Committee to support the Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act of 2017 and the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017, in order to bring transparency and integrity to the regulatory process.

Thank you for giving consideration to our views.

Sincerely,

JAMES W. TOBIN III,
Executive Vice President & Chief Lobbyist, Government Affairs and Communications Group.

SMALL BUSINESS & ENTRENEURSHIP COUNSEL,
Vienna, VA, March 7, 2017.

Hon. FRANK LUCAS,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. LAMAR SMITH,
Chairman, Science, Space and Technology Committee, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH AND REPRESENTATIVE LUCAS: On behalf of the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council (SBE Council) and its more than 100,000 members nationwide, I am pleased to voice our strong support for the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017.''

This important legislation reforms the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Science Advisory Board (SAB) and its subpanels by strengthening public participation, improving the process for selecting expert advisors, expanding transparency requirements by board members, opening the board's research to public review, and limiting nonscientific policy advice. The reforms proposed by the legislation are especially critical given the growing impact of EPA's regulations on America's small business sector, the controversial science used as the basis to advance certain rulemakings, and the need to ensure that sound science is guiding EPA actions.

Balance, independence and transparency are critical to EPA's scientific advisory process. The bill addresses key concerns with the SAB, such as placing limitations on its members who receive environmental research grants, applying conflict of interest standards, and ensuring balanced representation on the board's membership.

These are sensible reforms that will strengthen the SAB's integrity and work, and by extension EPA's regulatory process.

SBE Council supports solutions that improve the regulatory system to ensure the voice of small businesses and entrepreneurs is heard and considered, that they operate and compete under rational rules, and transparency throughout the regulatory process. The ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017'' is an important legislative initiative that brings fairness, transparency and objectivity to the SAB and EPA rulemakings.

Please let SBE Council know how we can further support your efforts to advance this important legislation into law. Thank you for your leadership, and support of America's small business and entrepreneurial sector.

Sincerely,

KAREN KERRIGAN,
President & CEO.

NATIONAL STONE, SAND & GRAVEL ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA.

The National Stone Sand and Gravel Association supports both The Honest and Open New Science Treatment Act of 2017 (HONEST Act) and the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017.

Both acts go a long way towards addressing many of the current issues our industry has with regulatory science, and we encourage the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology to mark up both pieces of legislation.

Our association represents 100,000 jobs across the United States. The regulatory burden on our workforce dramatically impacts our ability to provide cost-effective materials for America's roads, runways, bridges and ports. Our members pride themselves on their commitment to environmental stewardship and are heavily involved in sustainability and reclamation in their communities.

Federal regulations must balance industry's voice and environmental and health concerns. Unfortunately, we often see problems in the scientific underpinnings of regulations when agencies select studies that are neither public nor reproducible as the basis of new rules. This practice chips away at the credibility of any regulatory action and makes it difficult for industries to respect the regulatory process. Our members have the right to comment on regulations and it is not reasonable to ask hard working men and women of any industry to trust that an agency has selected good science without if an agency is not being transparent.

Stakeholder input in the regulatory process is required under federal law and valuable for the justification and the implementation of rules.

NSSGA stands ready to work with Congress to ensure that industry, states and the scientific community can work together openly and honestly to create regulations.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL W. JOHNSON,
President and CEO,
National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association.

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, March 7, 2017.

Chairman LAMAR SMITH,
The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Washington, DC.

Ranking Member EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON,
The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH AND RANKING MEMBER BERNICE JOHNSON: The Portland Cement

Association (PCA) supports the EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) Reform Act of 2017 and the Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act (HONEST Act) of 2017. PCA is the premier policy, research, education, and market intelligence organization serving America's cement manufacturers. PCA members represent 92 percent of U.S. cement production capacity and have facilities in all 50 states. The Association promotes safety, sustainability, and innovation in all aspects of construction, fosters continuous improvement in cement manufacturing and distribution, and generally promotes economic growth and sound infrastructure investment.

PCA supports these bills because they would improve fairness and transparency in the regulatory process, while promoting use of the best available science. As you know, SAB reform is needed to update and strengthen the scientific foundation of EPA's regulatory decisions. The SAB Reform Act would improve the Science Advisory Board by ensuring balance among its members and providing better public access to scientific information and data. SAB reform is an important step toward improving EPA's regulatory process, public access to information, and transparency.

The HONEST Act would similarly improve transparency and access to information. Scientists reviewing agency studies and rulemakings need a fair chance to evaluate and validate the studies EPA relies on in the rulemaking process. The HONEST Act protects the sensitive and confidential information often covered by confidentiality agreements, while allowing EPA to make critical information available for public comment and access. The HONEST Act follows the data access requirements of many scientific journals. This level of transparency and potential for peer review are critical to improving regulatory decisions.

PCA supports the Committees' efforts to improve accountability, public access, and better science in the EPA rulemaking process. Please feel free to contact Rachel Derby, PCA's Vice President of Government Affairs, for further information on this matter.

Sincerely,

A. TODD JOHNSTON,
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs.

AMERICAN FARM
BUREAU FEDERATION,
Washington, DC, March 8, 2017.

Hon. LAMAR SMITH,
Chair, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Washington, DC.

Hon. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON,
Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH AND RANKING MEMBER JOHNSON: Later this week, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee will consider legislation to provide for Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) member qualifications and public participation. The American Farm Bureau strongly supports this legislation and pledges our commitment to work with the committee in pressing for its swift consideration.

This legislation is a priority because it reforms the SAB process by strengthening public participation, improving the process of selecting expert advisors, and expanding the overall transparency of the SAB. While the SAB should be a critical part of the scientific foundation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) regulatory process, EPA has systematically used its authority to silence dissenting scientific experts. Rather than promote fairness, transparency and independence to ensure unbiased scientific advice, EPA routinely has ignored its own Peer Review Handbook and silenced dissenting voices on expert panels.

This legislation seeks to reinforce the SAB process as a tool that can help policymakers with complex issues while preventing EPA from muzzling impartial scientific advice. This legislation deserves strong, bipartisan support. We applaud your leadership in this effort and will work with you to ensure passage.

Sincerely,

ZIPPY DUVALL,
President.

MARCH 9, 2017.

Hon. LAMAR SMITH,
Chairman, House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH: We are writing to express our strong support for H.R. 1430, the ''Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act of 2017'' (HONEST Act), and H.R. 1431, the ''EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017.''

For too long now, the Environmental Protection Agency has hidden key scientific data from the public and corrupted its own boards of outside science advisors. This subversion of science and the regulatory process has produced costly, job-killing regulations of dubious-to-no merit to public health and the environment.

We welcome these bills in the names of transparent government, and unbiased and balanced peer review.

Sincerely,

CRAIG RICHARDSON,
President, Energy & Environment Action Team (E&E Action).
AMY OLIVER COOKE,
Executive vice president, Independence Institute.
KATHLEEN SGAMMA,
President, Western Energy Alliance.

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

Mr. Speaker, again, I reiterate to my colleagues, this is a situation where the goal really is not to empower one perspective or one faction over another. The goal, ultimately, of this bill—and, yes, this did come out of the inspector general's report, the initial work and effort. The goal of the bill is to add transparency, accountability. The goal of the bill is to increase the American people's confidence in the work product that is then used by the EPA to craft the rules and regulations that impact every life in this country on a daily basis.

Whatever your perspective may be, remember, the pendulum in this great Nation, when it comes to the executive branch, in my time, every 8 years, has swung back and forth. Just because at the present moment or the past moment you think you got your perspective's way, or if perhaps you think with the pendulum swing now you will get your perspective's way, that is not what the focus should be here.

I would also remind my colleagues, in my 23 years, I have served in the minority soon to be for 4½ years. But the other 18½ years, I have served in the majority. I have served in the majority. So when I step up to you and say we can do better, we can enhance the quality of information, we can do it in a way that the American people have more confidence in ultimately what goes on, and we can do it in a way that makes it more difficult for anyone to hijack the process, I say that sincerely.

There is nothing wrong with full disclosure for everyone who can add to the process, who should be available for consideration. There is nothing wrong with a financial cooling-off between benefiting from the studies and analyzing someone else's studies. There is nothing wrong with this.

But if you stay with the status quo, this Board and this Agency are in change. Get ready for 8 years of a dramatically different way of doing things.

Now, maybe you are so confident that the pendulum will swing back again that you are willing to accept that. But as for me, I want to stay between the lines. I want to focus in ways that, for the long term, represent the best interests of this great country.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote for H.R. 1431. I ask my colleagues to think about 10 or 20 years down the road. I ask my colleagues to put the long-term best interests of their constituents first.

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

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of H.R. 1431, the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017 and urge my colleagues to vote in support.

The Science Advisory Board's work is important to making sure the EPA considers all scientific information when writing regulations that will impact American farmers, families and small businesses. Unfortunately, concerns have been raised about the current review process.

This legislation addresses those concerns and builds on the work done in the 2014 Farm Bill to create an agriculture committee under the Science Advisory Board. This bill is necessary to ensure the EPA takes into account the best information possible with input from public and independent stakeholders.

H.R. 1431 will ensure a balanced and independent Science Advisory Board and will help alleviate some of the unintended consequences surrounding EPA regulations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN). All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 233, the previous question is ordered on the bill.

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

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

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

Mr. FOSTER. I am opposed.

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

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Foster moves to recommit the bill H.R. 1431 to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology with instructions to

report the same back to the House forthwith, with the following amendments:

Page 5, line 4, strike ''and''.

Page 5, line 9, strike the period and insert ''; and''.

Page 5, after line 9, insert the following:

''(I) a Board member, during that member's term of service on the Board and for a period of 3 years following the end of that member's service on the Board, shall not be employed with any corporate or other entity which has interests before the Board.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes in support of his motion.

Mr. FOSTER. 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.

This amendment is a commonsense and logical addition to this bill. It will help ensure that members of the EPA's Science Advisory Board will act in the best interests of the American people and our environment.

I think that we can all agree that, now more than ever, we need integrity in government. And this amendment would simply prohibit any member of the EPA's Science Advisory Board from being employed by any entity, corporate or otherwise, which has interests before the Board. This prohibition would be in place during the member's time on the Board and would extend for 3 years after they leave the Board.

My Republican colleagues have taken up this bill with the stated intent of protecting the scientific integrity of the EPA, and this amendment will go a long way to making sure that they keep their word.

The underlying bill also includes a similar prohibition on board members applying for a grant or contract from the EPA during their service or for 3 years after. And as the chairman just said, there is nothing wrong with a financial cooling-off period.

However, the authors of this bill are apparently concerned that members of the Board would be tempted to favor environmental concerns in the hopes of getting an EPA grant. Therefore, it also stands to reason that they should worry equally about a board member tilting the scales in favor of a specific industry in return for future financial compensation or career advancement, the classic revolving door problem.

So what this motion to recommit does is something that I think we all should be able to agree is a good thing. We have seen too many people in the President's Cabinet who appear to have connections too close to the big interests they regulate rather than the interests of the American people.

This amendment would ensure that no one can unduly personally profit from their time at the EPA, and that members are there to represent the interests of the American people and our environment rather than their own self interests.

Finally, I would like to close by bringing up a more general question of why we seem to be having variations on this repetitive theme of whether or not we can pollute our way out of the structural and economic challenges that our country faces.

Mr. Speaker, you and your party have been very successful at selling yourselves and your supporters on the idea that if we can just, once again, dump unlimited pollutants into our rivers and streams, into our groundwater, our food, air, lungs, our bloodstreams and those of our children, then everything will be great again in America.

This week, we saw our President surrounded by earnest and hopeful young coal miners as he gutted environmental regulations and promised them that all their jobs were coming back. And then we have seen interviews on TV with desperate families in Appalachia using up their life savings to pay for training for underground coal jobs that they have been told will be coming back now that Donald Trump is President.

Then we have seen interviews with coal executives quietly pointing out that those jobs will not come back; that it was machines and fundamental economic forces that took those jobs in coal country.

The story is the same in oil country, where even as oil production has rebounded, the jobs and wages have not come back because of automation, the same way that machines took the jobs in rural America, manufacturing America, and increasingly middle class, white-collar America.

□ 1000

So until we realize that we are all in this together and that a fundamental restructuring of our economy is needed rather than a mindless retraction of the protections on environmental quality on the land that we will pass on to our children, then I am afraid that we are destined to repeat this infinite loop of marginally productive debate. I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on this motion to recommit.

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

Mr. LUCAS. I claim the time in opposition to the motion, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I look at this language—and I am a farmer by trade; I am not an attorney; I will confess that—but the phrase ''or other entity'' seems to be a very broad concept. How will that affect people who work for research foundations at institutions of higher education? How will that affect entities, people who are part of so-called think tanks in places like Washington, D.C.? I personally believe the language is intended more to simply turn the bill inside out.

On that basis, I would ask my colleagues to reject the motion to recommit with instructions and to pass the underlying bill.

But I go one step further, and I offer this in the most sincerest of ways: if you look at the discussion today and if you look at the discussion that has gone on for some time on these issues, it is almost as though there are those with certain perspectives who are trying to force their will—their perspective of what is right and wrong scientifically or economically or socially—on the rest of the country, on the rest of us, and, for that matter, on the rest of the world.

That is why I am the author of this bill. No one entity should have the power by manipulating the bureaucratic process or the rulemaking process to enforce their definitions of everything on the rest of us. We have both the right and the responsibility to judge this information and to make decisions about what is in our enlightened self-interest, as the old economist would say, or in the best interest of the country or of society as a whole.

That is why I want all of us—the great American people—to have access and some certainty about the people and the process that are driving everything in our world.

Reject the motion, pass the bill, create greater transparency, incorporate more input, and when it is necessary to have rules and regulations, generate good rules and regulations so that we all have a chance to prosper and to live up to our potential in this country. Don't let the tyranny of the idealistic—whatever perspective they may have—drive us all into despair and destruction.

With that, I respectfully ask my colleagues to reject this motion and pass the underlying bill.

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

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.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the minimum time for any electronic vote on the question of passage of the bill.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 189, nays 233, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 207]

YEAS—189

Adams	Blunt Rochester	Capuano
Aguilar	Bonamici	Carbajal
Barragán	Boyle, Brendan F.	Cárdenas
Bass	Brady (PA)	Carson (IN)
Beatty	Brown (MD)	Cartwright
Bera	Brownley (CA)	Castor (FL)
Beyer	Bustos	Castro (TX)
Bishop (GA)	Butterfield	Chu, Judy
Blumenauer		Cicilline

Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Conyers
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
Evans
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
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.
Jones
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
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
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Raskin
Rice (NY)
Richmond
Rosen
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sires
Smith (WA)
Soto
Speier
Suozzi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Tsongas
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Welch
Yarmuth

NAYS—233

Abraham
Aderholt
Allen
Amash
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barletta
Barr
Barton
Bergman
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Bost
Brady (TX)
Brat
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Buchanan
Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Byrne
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Cheney
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Cook
Costello (PA)
Cramer
Crawford
Culberson
Curbelo (FL)
Davidson
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Donovan
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Dunn
Emmer
Farenthold
Faso
Ferguson
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gaetz
Gallagher
Garrett
Gibbs
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Griffith
Grothman
Guthrie
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)
Katko
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
Marchant
Marshall
Massie
Mast
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Mullin
Murphy (PA)
Newhouse
Noem
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
Sinema
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—7

Calvert
Duffy
Marino
Quigley
Rush
Slaughter
Wilson (FL)

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Messrs. FLORES, CRAWFORD, GROTHMAN, Ms. GRANGER, and Mrs. BLACKBURN changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Mses. BLUNT ROCHESTER, JACKSON LEE, Messrs. HIGGINS of New York, and LANGEVIN changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

(By unanimous consent, Mr. SESSIONS was allowed to speak out of order.)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY COMMITTEE ON RULES REGARDING AMENDMENT PROCESS FOR H.R. 1343, ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP ACT, AND H.R. 1219, SUPPORTING AMERICA'S INNOVATORS ACT

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Rules Committee issued announcements outlining the amendment processes for two measures likely to come before the Rules Committee next week.

An amendment deadline has been set for Monday, April 3, at 10 a.m., for the following measures:

H.R. 1343, Encouraging Employee Ownership Act; and H.R. 1219, Supporting America's Innovators Act.

The text of these measures is available on the Rules Committee website. Feel free to contact me or my staff if anyone has any questions.

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

There was no objection.

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.

RECORDED VOTE

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

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

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 229, noes 193, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 208]

AYES—229

Abraham
Aderholt
Allen
Amash
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barletta
Barr
Barton
Bergman
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Bost
Brady (TX)
Brat
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Buchanan
Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Byrne
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Cheney
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Cook
Cramer
Crawford
Culberson
Davidson
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Donovan
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Dunn
Emmer
Farenthold
Faso
Ferguson
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gaetz
Gallagher
Garrett
Gibbs
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Griffith
Grothman
Guthrie
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)
Katko
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
Marchant
Marshall
Massie
Mast
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Murphy (PA)
Newhouse
Noem
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.
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Royce (CA)
Russell
Rutherford
Sanford
Scalise
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smucker
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

NOES—193

Adams
Aguilar
Barragán
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Beyer
Bishop (GA)
Blumenauer
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
Conyers
Cooper
Correa
Costa
Costello (PA)
Courtney
Crist
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Curbelo (FL)
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
DeSaulnier
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle, Michael F.
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Espaillat
Esty
Evans
Fitzpatrick
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
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)
Kennedy
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
Pingree
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Raskin
Rice (NY)
Richmond
Ros-Lehtinen
Rosen
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sinema
Sires
Smith (WA)
Soto
Speier
Stefanik
Suozzi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Tsongas
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—7

Calvert
Duffy
Marino
Mullin
Quigley
Rush
Slaughter

□ 1040

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. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall votes 207 and 208 I was unable to vote due to obligations in my congressional district. Had I been present, I would have voted "no" on rollcall 207, the Motion to Recommit, and "yes" on rollca11 208, related to H.R. 1431, the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017, which would ensure EPA administrator and the Science Advisory Board make public all reports and relevant scientific information at the same time they are received by members of the Science Advisory Board.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. DUFFY. Mr. Speaker, on March 30, 2017, on rollcall No. 207 on motion to recommit with instructions, I am not recorded. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay."

On rollcall No. 208 on final passage of H.R. 1431, the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017, I am not recorded. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote Nos. 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, and 208. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on votes 205 and 207. I would have voted "nay" on votes 203, 204, 206, and 208.

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 the schedule for the week to come.

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

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

Mr. MCCARTHY. 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.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the House will meet at 10 a.m. for morning-hour and noon for legislative business.

On Thursday, the House will meet at 9 a.m. for legislative business. Last votes of the week are expected no later than 3 p.m.

On Friday, no votes are expected in the House.

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.

In addition, the House will consider several bipartisan measures from the Committee on Financial Services that will create jobs and support American entrepreneurship. First, H.R. 1343, the Encouraging Employee Ownership Act, sponsored by Representative RANDY HULTGREN, which will open up more opportunities for employees to share a stake in the companies they work for every day.

Next, H.R. 1219, the Supporting America's Innovators Act, sponsored by Chief Deputy Whip PATRICK MCHENRY. This bill will increase access to capital for America's small businesses and startups and ensure our entrepreneurs have the best chance to succeed. Mr. MCHENRY's bill is also a key component of our Innovation Initiative in the House, which aims to accelerate private sector innovation and leverage more innovation in government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, additional legislative items are possible, and I will relay scheduling information to Members if any items are added.

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

As the majority leader knows, after today we will have 8 legislative days left before the CR runs out on April 28. We will be gone, as the gentleman knows, for 2 weeks, or a few more days than that, for the Easter break. We have not enacted any appropriation bills except for the MILCON–VA and the Defense Appropriation bill we passed through this House in a bipartisan vote and that is pending in the Senate.

□ 1045

Given the limited number of days in session before April 28, we are going to require relatively quick action if we are to fund the government for the balance of the year past April 28.

Mr. Leader, can you tell me—because no appropriation bill or CR or omnibus was on the schedule for next week, can the gentleman tell me when he expects some form of continuing to authorize expenditures for the balance of the year between now and September 30 will occur?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

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

Discussions are ongoing about the appropriations process and how to ensure the government is funded after April 28.

I thank my good friend from Maryland for being a good faith negotiating partner in this effort.

I do not currently anticipate floor action next week. But as always, I will advise Members as soon as possible when action is scheduled in the House.

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

Does the gentleman contemplate the possibility of a short-term CR being necessary?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

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

I was encouraged by the bipartisan agreements we reached on the MILCON/VA bill and the defense appropriations bill. As you know, together, these two bills make up roughly one half of our total discretionary spending.

However, I was disappointed to hear that Democrats have apparently walked away from the negotiating table on further bipartisan agreements like these. Personally, I was disappointed to hear rumors that Democrats are hoping for a government shutdown.

The New York Times is reporting that, ''as a minority party struggling to show resistance in the era of President Trump''—Democrats—''are now ready to let the lights of government go dark.''

I sincerely hope these rumors and reports are not true. I know the gentleman disagrees with ever having a government shutdown.

As I mentioned, discussions are ongoing about how to ensure the government is funded after April 28. I want everybody to know that my door is always open, especially to you, my friend from Maryland, and any other House

colleague who wants to play a constructive role in the process. I firmly believe the government will not shut down. It will be funded as we continue further.

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

Frankly, I want to tell the majority leader, honestly, nobody on my side, maybe someplace else, but nobody on my side is wanting to shut down the government. We don't want to shut down the government.

Of course, I will remind my friend, the majority leader—and I appreciate his comments about our cooperation and ability to work together—the only way the government has been kept open over the last 5 years has been with Democratic votes. My friend didn't have 218 votes on his side of the aisle that would do that. So I think that belies the fact that we want to shut down the government.

I would assure my friend that that is neither our intent or 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.

As we have in the past, we will be prepared to provide votes, as we have every time, to ensure that that does not happen.

Let me ask my friend, as we work towards the end of not shutting down government and passing, hopefully, an omnibus which will complete the 2017 appropriations process and fund the government through September 30, let me ask him—he was quoting some information. I have a quote for him as well. I know he would be disappointed if I didn't have a quote. This is not nearly as difficult as some of the others, however. It says:

House Republicans are considering making another run next week at the passing of the healthcare bill that they abruptly pulled from the floor in a setback to their efforts to repeal ObamaCare. Two Republican lawyers say the leaders are discussing holding a vote, even staying into next weekend, if necessary, but it is unclear what changes would be made to the GOP's healthcare bill . . .

That was in Bloomberg News on March 29.

Does the majority leader have any information or expectation that we would be considering another bill seeking to repeal the Affordable Care Act next week? I know the majority leader didn't announce that for next week, and I know on Thursday we will break for the Easter break.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

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

The gentleman does know, from the widespread disagreement, that ObamaCare is failing. He disagrees with that, but the majority of Americans agree that it is collapsing and that we have to solve this problem.

As of today, I do not have anything scheduled for next week. But as we continue discussions with our Members as we move forward, I anticipate in the future that we would have that vote.

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

If I hear what the gentleman just said, my interpretation is that we don't expect anything next week, but that does not mean that we don't expect something in the future. Is that a correct reading of it?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

Mr. MCCARTHY. That is correct.

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

ADJOURNMENT FROM THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2017, TO MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet on Monday, April 3, 2017, when it shall convene at noon for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

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

There was no objection.

CONGRATULATING PENN STATE WRESTLING NATIONAL CHAMPS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the Penn State men's wrestling team for winning the NCAA Division I National Championship earlier this month in St. Louis, Missouri.

Mr. Speaker, Penn State has been a force to be reckoned with in Division I wrestling. This is Penn State's sixth title in 7 years. It is the second consecutive national title.

I could not be more proud of my alma mater or this team that gave us a season to remember.

Many college athletes dream about participating at the NCAA championships. It marks the pinnacle of their athletic careers.

Among the Nittany Lion national champions, All-Americans Bo Nickal, Jason Nolf, and Zain Retherford combined for a total of 82.5 points, which would have placed the trio sixth overall in the final team standings.

Penn State also made history with All-Americans true freshman Mark Hall and redshirt freshman Vincenzo Joseph earning their first titles to become the first freshmen NCAA champions in program history.

Congratulations to Coach Sanderson and the Nittany Lions on this outstanding achievement. Your hard work and dedication shows, and you are the pride of Happy Valley.

SUPPORTING PLANNED PARENTHOOD

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

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my unwavering support for Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood is America's most trusted provider of reproductive health care. One in five American women has chosen Planned Parenthood for health care at least one time in her life.

The heart of Planned Parenthood is in our local and rural communities. These healthcare centers provide a wide range of safe, reliable health care; and the majority is preventive care, which helps prevent unintended pregnancies through contraception, reduce the spread of sexually transmitted infections through testing and treatment, and screen for cervical and other cancers.

In my district, Planned Parenthood was instrumental in providing the following services to over 50,000 constituents in 2016, including:

23,215 pregnancy tests and counseling;

5,798 breast exams; and

5,052 pap smears.

This is the end of Women's History Month. That is why I am here today to stand with Planned Parenthood, and I will continue to fight.

NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS 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, this week was the first-ever celebration of National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

Over 40 years ago, after the last remaining Vietnam veterans returned home, many faced poor treatment from the country they were fighting to protect. These brave men and women are getting the welcome home finally that they deserve.

Earlier this week, the U.S. Senate introduced a bill that was passed, which introduced the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act, which unanimously passed both the House and Senate, and President Trump signed it into law earlier this week.

I was proud to join my colleagues in supporting this bill. The overwhelmingly bipartisan support is proof that finally the perception of Vietnam veterans has shifted over the years as folks begin to better understand the sacrifices they have made.

Over 9 million Americans served in the military during the Vietnam war, and over 2.7 million actually served in Vietnam. I personally know many who came from my district and now live in northern California.

Over the course of the war, the United States of America suffered

58,000 casualties, with hundreds of thousands more wounded and disabled. We need to remember the sacrifice they made, whether it was from Agent Orange or disabilities, or even the 22 veterans we lose each day to suicide.

We welcome home the Vietnam veterans. I am glad we could have this recognition for them.

INVESTIGATE RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE

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

Mr. BROWN of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, the Russian cloud over this White House and over our democracy is darkening. I rise today to call on this body to come together to create a bipartisan, independent commission to investigate the full extent of Russia's influence on the Trump administration and our democracy.

Mr. Putin wants to weaken America and our allies, and he views democracy and human rights as obstacles to Russia's reemergence as a global power.

After Russia maliciously hacked emails and distributed false information to influence our elections for their favorite candidate, they have turned their eye to Germany and France. They want to sow disunity and weakness among Western democracies and undermine the transatlantic alliance.

Mr. Speaker, we must know the full truth of the Trump administration's ties to Putin and the Kremlin. There are too many unanswered questions about financial ties, personal ties, and political ties. Every new tie we discover is followed by another distorted fact from the administration.

The American people are demanding answers now. This House cannot become an accomplice to the administration's desperate efforts to divert attention from this investigation. An independent commission is now the only way to find out what happened and ensure it never happens again.

Mr. Speaker, we must follow the facts. We can't let ourselves be attacked this way ever again.

RECOGNIZING GRANDVIEW HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL

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

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Grandview High School girls basketball team from Aurora, Colorado. The Wolves triumphed in their 61–32 victory over Lakewood High School in the Colorado 5A State Championship.

Grandview finished the season with an impressive 27–1 record and celebrated the culmination of their season with the first girls basketball State championship win for their school.

Senior Michaela Onyenwere walked off the court with a game-high of 25 points and 8 rebounds.

During the championship game, the Grandview Wolves proved that with hard work, dedication, and perseverance anything is possible. The team was led to the championship title through the committed leadership of their coach, Josh Ulitzky, and his commendable staff.

Again, congratulations to the Grandview High School girls basketball team on their continued success and for their victory in the Colorado 5A State Championship.

□ 1100

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

(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, addressing climate change is one of the most important long-term challenges for our future. But this week's executive order from President Trump reverses recent progress and will worsen this slow-burning crisis.

The order undercuts the Clean Power Plan, weakens restrictions on emissions, and expands Federal coal mining leases. It undermines the success of the Paris Agreement and damages our relations with the signatories, including China and India. At the same time, the order makes it harder for our government and military to plan for the already occurring consequences of climate change—including assessing its impact on national security policy.

That is why today I am introducing the CLIMATE Act to prevent the irresponsible executive order from being implemented. Whether the Trump administration recognizes it or not, the international community understands climate change is real and is rapidly embracing a renewable energy future. The administration's decision to move our energy policy backwards only weakens the United States' global leadership role, making it more likely that green energy jobs of tomorrow will be created elsewhere.

We must come together to support policies that grow clean energy jobs in the United States and ensure we pass on a healthier planet to the next generation.

COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM

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

Mr. KUSTOFF of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1730, the Combating Anti-Semitism Act of 2017. I am proud to introduce this important legislation with my colleague from the other side of the aisle, Representative DEREK KILMER from Washington.

Since this January, we have seen a wave of disturbing violence and threats towards religious institutions across America. In 2017 alone, more than 100 bomb threats have been made at 81 Jewish Community Centers across our Nation in 33 States. Tennessee, the State I call home, is also on that list. It is time that we send a clear message: religious intolerance has no place in this country.

The Combating Anti-Semitism Act of 2017 would increase the penalty for these violent threats and make them punishable as hate crimes under Federal law. We have a moral duty and responsibility to protect the rights of all Americans to worship freely and without fear, whether at a church, a synagogue, or any religious institution.

With this bill, we will deter threats and stand united against religious intolerance.

HONORING BARB LUTZ

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

Ms. CHENEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Barb Lutz. Barb has spent her entire adult life faithfully serving our military as a Federal civil service employee, primarily at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, as well as in Europe.

Barb has held numerous positions at the base and is currently the executive assistant to the commander of the 20th Air Force and Task Force 214 at F.E. Warren. She is responsible for providing the commander and vice commander with executive support, as well as serving as protocol specialist for the headquarters staff.

After a distinguished 43-year career, Barb is retiring this week. When Barb's current and former coworkers at F.E. Warren reached out to me about recognizing her, General Cotton best summed up how her colleagues feel about her when he said: ''We all know Barb is a national treasure.''

I want to thank Barb for all she has done for Wyoming and for the country over her 43-year career, and I wish Barb and her family the best in retirement.

TOPICS OF THE DAY

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to be recognized to address you here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives and to once again continue this dialogue that we have with you, all of our Members and staff and the American people.

To initiate this dialogue, I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GALLAGHER) of the Eighth Congressional District, born in Green Bay.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Mr. GALLAGHER. Mr. Speaker, every time I have the privilege of addressing this body, I am reminded of

how lucky we all are to live in a country where I am free to speak my mind without fear of retribution or retaliation. It is one of the great privileges of being an American. Yet for far too many around the world, freedom of conscience is still a distant dream.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Russia, where Vladimir Putin's thuggish regime has poisoned the promise of the post-Soviet era and day by day has slid Russia back into the dark shadows of autocracy. Just last Sunday, thousands of Russians took to the streets and squares in protest of the Kremlin's corruption. And in return, Russian police arrested hundreds of protesters, including Vladimir Putin's political challenger, Alexei Navalny.

But the Putin regime's barbarity isn't just a polite policy difference. Russians of exceptional courage are dying, including as recently as last week, as the regime cultivates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

Vladimir Putin's campaign of murder is not limited to domestic political opponents. Like all dictators, Putin seeks to rally his nation's support by channeling public fear and anger against external enemies. Time and again, first in Georgia, then in Ukraine, and now in Syria, Vladimir Putin has warned us exactly who he is. As recent as last night, the commander of CENTCOM announced that Russia is likely providing support to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid we have exhausted our warnings. Russian aggression, if left unchecked, may soon cross a line past which there is no return.

You see, what Vladimir Putin wants is fundamentally at odds with American interests. After the Second World War, America laid the foundation for a new and better world, drawn together by common values and forged from the fires of war. We did this not just because we are a generous people but because we are a wise people.

Farsighted American statesmen realized that creating the architecture for peace in Europe was a far better investment than returning to isolationism and then one day having to pay the butcher's bill, as we did twice during the first half of the 20th century.

As Europe is changing, Vladimir Putin dreams of restoring the Soviet Union's prestige and power, and his ultimate goal is clear: the end of the postwar-American project in Europe and the return of power politics unencumbered by the rules of the road that we established to our benefit in concert with our allies.

And so the stakes, in my mind, could not be any higher. If we do not stand up to Putin now, his aggression will continue until one day he goes too far. On that day, we may face an unimaginable choice between war or the destruction of the NATO alliance. And whichever we choose, we will have lost.

Despite Putin telling us exactly who he is, I have heard some say we should try to work with Russia to find areas of common ground. Yet we have seen firsthand how the last administration's reset has not led to better relations but to a tide of Russian aggression.

I do not believe Putin desires war with the United States. What he desires is the fruits of conquest without the cost. He holds the cards of a bluffer, and he is gradually raising the stakes in an effort to get us to fold. Fortunately, it is the U.S., not Russia, who holds the stronger hand. We cannot, and we must not, give Putin the acquiescence he requires to succeed in his plot to overturn the world we created.

When it comes to Russia's interference in our elections, we must put the country and the sanctity of our democracy far above partisan interests. For any American to collaborate against our own government with a government that seeks to undermine our country would, indeed, be nothing short of treasonous. But I call on my Democrat friends to resist the urge to treat this critical issue as nothing more than an opportunity to score political points.

And I call on my fellow Republicans to unwaveringly pursue investigations into efforts by Vladimir Putin to undermine our democracy, wherever they may lead.

I will close with this, Mr. Speaker. In our twilight struggle against the clouds of dictatorship, we must maintain what the former Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky calls moral clarity. Sharansky contrasts free societies with fear societies, where citizens live in perpetual unease. While even free societies are not perfect, they must never play into the hands of fear society propagandists who assert the dubious sense of moral relativism.

After all of these years, we are still Ronald Reagan's America—a light on a hill shining brightly as a beacon for all mankind. There is no moral equivalence between the United States and any society based upon fear, let alone Vladimir Putin's Russia.

American exceptionalism remains buried deep in all our bones. We are not just a free society; we are the model free society. Our values and our deeds will endure long after each of us in this Chamber is gone.

Mr. Speaker, the conflict before us is a simple one: we cannot fall prey to false equivalencies or fail to recognize our adversaries for who they are. Let us steel ourselves today in this Chamber and rise to stop Mr. Putin's aggression in its tracks, both against our own Nation and against those who have proven themselves to be our closest friends and allies.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for his statement here and for bringing up the topic of American exceptionalism and bringing us back through some of this history that we need to revisit from time to time. That statement is very valuable to us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BABIN), an exceptional American in his own right.

TERMINATE GRANTS TO SANCTUARY CITIES

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the gentleman from Iowa, my good friend for yielding to me.

I rise to express my strong support for the announced policy by Attorney General Jeff Sessions that will terminate U.S. Department of Justice grants to sanctuary cities. These are the localities that have chosen not to cooperate with the Federal Government when its seeks to deport already-detained criminal aliens.

Under this Trump policy, your hard-earned tax dollars will no longer go to cities and counties that thumb their nose at the Federal immigration authorities and refuse to cooperate.

In President Trump's first 2 months in office, this administration has acted to secure our borders, to encourage compliance with Federal immigration law, and to deport criminal aliens. The previous administration put out the welcome mat for criminal aliens. Thanks to Trump, the welcome mat has now been removed.

A few short days ago, the national news broke on how two illegal aliens from Central America raped a 14-year-old girl in the boys bathroom of a public high school in Rockville, Maryland. These two young men, Henry Sanchez-Milian, an 18-year-old from Guatemala, and Jose Montano, a 17-year-old from El Salvador, came across our southern border last year as unaccompanied minors. The Obama administration initially targeted them for deportation proceedings, but they were later released to join relatives in Maryland.

When asked about the situation, Rockville school officials said that the legal status of these two individuals did not matter, as Rockville has declared itself to be a sanctuary city. I beg to differ. It does matter. If the Federal Government had done its duty and immediately returned these illegal immigrants to their home country, this young girl would not have been brutally raped.

For the sake of this young girl, we must secure our borders. This vicious crime would never have taken place had the Obama administration followed the law and secured our borders. The good news is that the new administration is working hard to secure our borders, to deport criminal aliens, and to protect the lives of American citizens.

Cracking down on sanctuary cities is an important first step. In the first month of the Trump administration, ICE issued 3,083 detainers. These are orders for local authorities to keep criminal aliens in custody for 48 hours to enable U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, agents to come and get these criminal aliens for deportation. 206 of these detainees were just declined, meaning that local authorities deliberately ignored ICE's detainer requests and released these individuals back out onto American streets.

This is especially concerning because 44 percent of those individuals had already been convicted of crimes in the United States. These weren't just petty crimes, folks. These include: homicide, rape, assault, domestic violence, indecent exposure with a minor, sex offense against a minor, aggravated assault with a weapon, resisting an officer, vehicle theft, kidnapping, driving under the influence, hit-and-run, and sexual assault.

Thank you, Mr. President, for holding accountable these sanctuary cities that released these criminals back out onto our streets.

We are also working to force foreign countries to take back their criminal alien citizens; 25-year-old Casey Chadwick was murdered by an illegal alien from Haiti, Jean Jacques. Jacques had been released 6 months earlier and ordered deported after serving a 19-year sentence for attempted murder.

Haiti had refused multiple times to take back Jacques, and under the Obama administration policy, Jacques was simply released onto U.S. streets to return to his life of crime, although Haiti had gladly taken billions of U.S. aid. That is why I have introduced H.R. 82, the Criminal Alien Deportation Enforcement Act. My bill withholds foreign aid from countries that do not repatriate their criminal aliens.

This commonsense step ensures that countries that benefit from the goodwill of the United States must hold up their end of the bargain and take back their criminal aliens. And through his recent executive order, President Trump declared that he would restrict the issuance of visas to certain residents of noncooperative countries. Congress should support the President by locking in this enforcement with legislation so that a future President does not reverse this enforcement.

□ 1115

On behalf of the American people, I applaud President Trump and I call on my colleagues to cosponsor my legislation to lock in these protections for future generations of Americans and keep them safe.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Reclaiming my time, I would like to pose a question to the gentleman from Texas.

The bill that you have proposed that mirrors the President's executive order to limit people coming in from those six countries, do you have the bill number for that? H.R.?

Mr. BABIN. That is H.R. 80.

Mr. KING of Iowa. 880?

Mr. BABIN. H.R. 80.

The gentleman from Iowa, I am going to correct myself. That is H.R. 81, H.R. 81.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Okay. And you also have H.R. 82.

Mr. BABIN. I have H.R. 82, which I just discussed, and that is the repatriation of criminal aliens.

Mr. KING of Iowa. For the record, I believe I am a cosponsor of both of those pieces of legislation.

Mr. BABIN. You are, Mr. KING. You are a sponsor. And I thank you for your cosponsorship and trying to keep our American citizens, our constituents, safe.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Reclaiming my time from the gentleman from Texas, I appreciate the approach that you brought to this Congress. It is not hard for me to get behind, and I support legislation that is brought by Mr. BABIN. He has been looking at the safety and security of the American people and coming up with good, solid, principled ideas on how to restore and strengthen our national security.

Each of those two pieces of legislation, the numbers which I did not know until now, H.R. 81 and H.R. 82, are pieces of legislation that I and many other conservatives have signed on to in our endeavor to make Americans safe again. This great America, making it great again, part of it is to make America safe again.

I would add to this, Mr. Speaker, that I am appalled at the audacity of the judges who are either out on the left coast or well beyond the left coast, as far west as Hawaii, who would just step in without any kind of a constitutional, foundational background in their arguments or decisions, without citing the statute is this, that Congress has the authority to control immigration in the United States of America.

If we want to pass a piece of legislation and it is in law that says the only people that we will let come into America are green Martians, then that is the law, and that is what a judge is obligated to determine when they read the law.

But on top of that, not only does Congress set the terms on what legal immigration is into America—and it is clear and it is defined—but we grant the President of the United States the authority to determine those who will not be allowed to come into America, just like any other sovereign nation-state in the world that controls its borders.

And if we don't have the authority, if Congress doesn't have the constitutional authority that is clearly defined, and if the statutes that are produced by Congress and signed into law by previous Presidents do not set that statutory authority on who comes into America but a judge someplace in Seattle or Hawaii can supercede the will of the American people, can supercede the supreme law of the land, the Constitution of the United States, can supercede Federal law just because, in their whim, they think a law might mean something that it doesn't say, that is what we are dealing with, Mr. Speaker. I intend to move further on this and examine these judges more closely.

As a matter of fact—and I thank the gentleman from Texas. But we had a hearing either earlier this week or last week—and my weeks run together, Mr. Speaker—and this hearing was a hearing where we discussed some of this statutory authority.

In fact, it was this week. I remember one of the witnesses, and the witness was a Sheriff Hodgson out of Maryland; and he testified that a State legislator in Maryland had learned that there was likely to be an ICE raid into a particular community, and the representative posted on their Facebook, essentially: Don't go out of your homes. Be careful because you might be picked up and deported if you are illegally in America.

That heads-up from an elected State official, I asked him this question, and his answer concurred with my opinion, that it is a direct violation of 8 U.S.C. 1324, which is a Federal ban on harboring illegal aliens. To harbor them, to encourage them to come here or stay here—and it can be either willfully or for financial purposes. If that is the case, they are facing a Federal felony of up to 10 years in a penitentiary; that is, if it is for profit. But if it is not for profit, then they are only facing 5 years in a Federal penitentiary for facilitating illegal immigration, harboring illegal aliens.

When I read the statute into the RECORD before the Judiciary Committee, it was clear to me that Sheriff Hodgson had read that statute multiple times. I don't know that he had it completely memorized, but he knew exactly what it meant; and he concurred with me that I believe the Justice Department should be investigating, should be looking into State legislators or any citizen—they are subject to the same laws as all the rest of us—who is harboring illegal aliens. We should bring this on the highest profile level that we can.

And furthermore, we have a judge out in Washington, again, who, according to news reports, helped facilitate an illegal alien who was before this judge's court to go out the back door when there were ICE agents waiting, guarding the front door. That also is a violation of 8 U.S.C. 1324, harboring illegal aliens.

So Congress passes laws, and these laws are to be respected; and we cannot be a real civilization if we don't have respect for the rule of law, Mr. Speaker. And not only has respect for the rule of law been so eroded, we had a previous President, and that is President Obama, who openly and blatantly violated the supreme law of the land, the Constitution, according to his definition.

Twenty-two times Barack Obama said he didn't have the authority to grant a legal status to the people who are defined as DREAMers, the deferred action for children of—I guess they say—well, it is children of aliens is what it really is. But President Obama, 22 times on videotape and who knows how may times it wasn't on videotape, said: I don't have the constitutional authority to change the law. Congress has to do that.

When he was pressed to change the law and he said he didn't have that authority those 22 times, then he concluded that he could get away with it

anyway. He issued the order, the DACA order—two of them that are really openly and blatantly unconstitutional. DAPA, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans, that is how they called it. Again, it is parents of those who were born here to illegal parents, and we need to move the birthright citizenship bill to put an end to that.

The President knew he didn't have the authority for that DAPA program, and he knew he didn't have the authority for the DACA program, and he said so at least 22 times. Then he issued those orders, and the executive branch of government began to carry out the President's orders, which are in violation of the law. So he has commanded the executive branch of government to violate the law.

Subsequent to the DACA order going out, President Obama went to Chicago and gave a speech and said publicly—and this is on videotape, too. He said this: I changed the law.

Mr. Speaker, no President ever had constitutional authority to change the law. It is Congress that writes all the laws in the House and in the Senate. The President gets an opportunity to sign them into law, and, as President, he is free to lobby the Congress to change the law. But no President should have the audacity to stand up in front of his hometown and the world and say: I changed the law.

Now, do we remember, Mr. Speaker, that there was a big national outrage over that statement or over the constitutional violations? No. There wasn't a great outrage. I am greatly outraged, and I remain outraged, but the American people were relatively complacent about this.

Now, there were plenty of them that did some work on this, true, but it wasn't like a big cultural movement. I would remind you about what happens when we are extremely offended by violations of law and decency. That is when Republicans and Democrats get together and do something about it.

One of those things I can think of, Mr. Speaker, is this. I reach in my pocket and I pull out—this is an acorn. I carry an acorn in my pocket every day, and I have done that for, oh, I don't know how long now—pretty close to 10 years.

But I brought an amendment to the floor of the House of Representatives to cut off all funding to ACORN about 2 years before we heard of the videotapes that came out of ACORN that were collected by James O'Keefe and Hannah Giles because I knew what was going on. I had had an investigator that was feeding me information. And I came to the floor and made an effort to cut off all the funding that was supporting ACORN, which admitted later on to 440- or maybe 444,000 false or fraudulent voter registration forms that they paid people commissions to produce.

Some of those forms included Mickey Mouse and the entire Dallas Cowboys football team, all registered to vote.

ACORN employees were paid on commission to collect the voter registrations. They were subverting our electoral process. They were advocating all kinds of things from within ACORN and helping to facilitate, as we know the allegation, prostitution and others.

This was so bad—this was so bad that Democrats were outraged. I know, Mr. Speaker, it is hard to fathom this now. But Democrats were outraged. Republicans were outraged. And when those videos became replete throughout the American consciousness, you—and I say, Mr. Speaker, I say the American people rose up and they called their Members of Congress, and they did interviews on TV, and they wrote letters to the editor. It was the talk of the coffee shop and the church and the school and the work and the town. America revolted at the idea that we would be sending hundreds of millions of tax dollars to an organization that was so immoral and so corrupt.

Underneath that was the corruption of our electoral process. So we came together here with moral and constitutional outrage and cut off all funding to ACORN or any of their affiliates or subordinates or successors, and that has been part of the appropriation process here ever since.

I carry this acorn in my pocket to remind me, to remind me not to ever let something like that happen again. But also, it is a point of pride for me when I hold this in my hand because I am proud of the American people, Mr. Speaker. It was the American people that got that done with bipartisan outrage about what was happening to our Republic and to the legitimacy of our elections in this Republic.

And I would remind people, Mr. Speaker, that we have a Constitution that I have said is the supreme law of the land. It is the foundation upon which our country is built. But that foundation sits on something. It sits on a bedrock, and the bedrock that it sits on is legitimate elections.

We can watch our Constitution erode by decisions in the Supreme Court and by loss of understanding of what its original meaning is and what it is to be a constitutional and contractual guarantee to succeeding generations, we can lose our Constitution that way, or we could just lose our country by allowing the bedrock that our Constitution sits on, legitimate elections, to be eroded and destroyed.

That is what I think the American people understood, maybe instinctively, maybe intuitively, maybe intellectually, what was happening to our country. All of that went together to build a giant snowball of public outrage that ripped the funding out from underneath ACORN, and we will hold that now for a long term and, hopefully, for the very long and increasingly healthy life of this Republic.

That is what needs to happen when we are outraged, when we see our Constitution being undermined. We did that with ACORN, and it is a symbol of what the American people should be doing.

But when you have a President of the United States that takes an oath of office to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States so help him God, and in that oath it is specified in another section of the Constitution that he, meaning the President, take care that the laws be faithfully executed—we call that the Take Care Clause—well, the President, President Obama, did not take care that the laws be faithfully executed. He refused to enforce the law. He refused to enforce the immigration law, and he issued orders that ordered his subordinates throughout the executive branch of government, including the Border Patrol, custom border protection, ICE, and USCIS, to defy the law.

The law of the United States says that, when law enforcement encounters someone who is unlawfully present in the United States, they shall—not ''may,'' but ''shall''—be placed into removal proceedings. That is the law.

Had that been the case and if the law had been followed, if the law had been followed ever since Ronald Reagan signed the amnesty act in 1986—which, by the way, was a legal act. I thought it was poor judgment on the part of President Reagan. He let us down on a principle of the rule of law. Thirty-plus years ago I knew that we would be fighting for a long, long time to restore the respect for the rule of law, particularly with regard to immigration.

When I watched the debate take place here in this Congress and in the House and in the Senate and I read what I could read about that, I reasoned that, even though we were losing in the House, the rule of law was losing in the House on the amnesty debate in 1986, and even though the rule of law lost in the Senate, I was confident that Ronald Reagan understood the principle that, if you reward people for breaking the law, there would have been more people that break the law.

□ 1130

If you say that this is the last amnesty ever, you also will have to continually fight the argument of we didn't really mean that; there are these other circumstances.

The three—well, it actually started out to be 1 million people that were going to get amnesty in 1986. And the rationale, which I don't actually think was rational, was we can't enforce the law against these million people that are here illegally, but we need to have the rule of law. So what we will do is we will grant an amnesty to the million people that are here illegally.

Then our promise will be, from this point forward, everybody who enters into the United States, or is unlawfully in the United States will have to face the law, and we will deport everybody that has violated our immigration laws. We will enforce the law from this point forward, from 1986.

Ronald Reagan believed he was going to get that; and, by the way, he did

command the executive branch of government, and the Republicans did run the executive branch of government not only from 1986, but all the way up until 1993, when Bill Clinton took office.

But what happened was they didn't get the enforcement. There was fraud. It was well over a million people—it was closer to 3 million people—who received amnesty under the 1986 amnesty act; and those 3 million people then were legalized in America, by law. And I don't dispute the validity of the law, but they were rewarded for breaking the law. That is what the amnesty did.

So I have talked to a number of them along the way, and they will argue: Yes, we deserved amnesty. We came to America. We wanted to live here. It is a good thing. My family is better off.

Well, is the rule of law better off, is America's Constitution better off, is our civilization better off because we decided that we would ignore the law and reward people for breaking it?

By the way, is the debate over? Did we restore the respect for the rule of law since 1986, Mr. Speaker? Or, instead, have we seen the respect for the rule of law be eroded day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, over the last 30-plus years since the amnesty act of 1986?

That is what happened. Ronald Reagan saw it in his lifetime. He recognized that and would have liked to have had that bill back again.

I have had the conversation with a glorious American, then-Attorney General Ed Meese, III, who also recognized that the advice that President Reagan got from his Cabinet on whether to sign the amnesty act in 1986, whether that advice was good, and I will tell you that the Cabinet members that I am aware of would like to have reversed that decision after they saw the actual results.

Well, it is not that I am the most clairvoyant Member of the United States Congress, but I can assert with great confidence here into this CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Mr. Speaker, I saw this coming in 1986. I wasn't in public life. I just wanted to raise my family and run my business and live with the freedoms that are guaranteed to me as an American citizen under the Constitution, but I wanted the rule of law.

I had been raised with a deep and abiding respect for the law. My father would sit me down at the supper table with the Code of Iowa on one side and the Constitution on the other side, and he would lecture to me how this fits. He would say over and over again: This is the law, and you will abide by the law. If you don't like it, if you think the law is not right, true, or just, there are means by which you go about changing it.

You can go lobby your State Representative. You can lobby your Congressman. You can run for office, which is what I ended up doing. And I am here defending the Constitution and the rule of law.

But we also are a First World country. We are the leaders of civilization for the world. We are the leaders of western civilization for the world. We are the American civilization. The American civilization is a dominant component of Western civilization, and if we take the values that formed America out of the values of the world, we don't have a lot of science and technology in progress to work with. We don't have a lot of economic dynamism.

I know that there have been wars and there have been dictators that have popped up within Western civilization. But, fortunately, we haven't had a dictator pop up in our American civilization. And one of the big reasons for that is because of our Constitution, and because we have public debate, and we come here to the floor of the House, and over there to the floor of the Senate, and across America, again, in our coffee shops, in our churches, in our workplaces and out on our parks and our streets, and we discuss this openly.

We should listen to other people's ideas and we should consider what they have to say and we should evaluate that. That is what our Founding Fathers envisioned. And as these ideas merge, what will happen is that sometimes there will be people on the right that are never going to compromise, and there will be some people on the left that are never going to compromise.

Maybe that doesn't matter so much because the people in the middle get to hear both of those arguments and make their own decisions, and they can move left or they can move right. But over time, we build a consensus. And when we get to that consensus, that is when we can move legislation here in the House and over in the Senate and to the President's desk for a signature, and then America continues to become an even better place.

But we have to have open dialogue to do this, and we have to have the rule of law that gives order to our society. If the rule of law is sacrificed because people are ruled more by their hearts than they are their heads, I would say: Come back to the history of America. Study our Founding Fathers. Read the Federalist Papers. Deliberate on this Constitution that we have, deliberate on this supreme law of the land and understand how deep the thought that went into the words that are there that are our guarantees.

Our Founding Fathers understood that we had to continue to educate each generation and raise them up not only in an understanding of the Constitution—and I double assert its original meaning—but they needed to be raised with an American experience. That is why it is required that our President of the United States be born in America. And that ''born in America'' is essentially shorthand for we want to ensure that all of our Presidents are raised with an American experience. That is how to interpret that.

I am not here to slice or dice, Mr. Speaker, the actual locations of birth of any President. And we have seen that Congress has some authority to address it by statute, should we choose to do that. But I am asserting that it is essential that the American civilization be preserved, protected, and expanded; and that we have leaders that are raised with the American experience that will come here and defend the American culture and civilization. And that is so important, that the leader of our thought process, the leader of the destiny and the direction of America is the President of the United States, our Commander in Chief.

The words that our President says reset and redirect America. We saw it happen under the 8 years of Barack Obama. We are seeing it begin now under the beginnings of the 65 or 66 days of the Trump administration, Mr. Speaker, and we have noticed that the dialog in America immediately shifts to: What is the President thinking about? What is the President talking about? What is the President tweeting about?

I think there is a high degree of anxiety on the part of the mainstream media, because they are never really off the clock because this President might wake up at 3 in the morning and send out a tweet that resets things. And so I am fine with that. I think it is important that we understand the thoughts of the President.

By the way, he isn't all-powerful. I used to say to the previous President: You are only the President. It is the American people that run this shop, and through a lot of different mechanisms.

But the President does have a lot of authority and he gets to set the tone for the debate and he gets to define many things, but especially the foreign policy.

But we still have this constraint, and the power of the purse exists here, especially in the House of Representatives. If the House doesn't appropriate money, nobody gets any money. That is kind of like when they say: If mama ain't happy, nobody's happy. Well, if Congress doesn't appropriate money, nobody gets any money.

So that power of the purse was designed by our Founding Fathers to be the controlling factor of the things that go on in this country. And if a President is out of line, we are obligated to shut the money off to those things that are out of line. Of course, the Senate will have to concur with any spending that the House should initiate, but just the same, it is the power of the purse that controls much of this.

But we are to be guided and bound by the Constitution. Earlier this morning, as the chairman of the Constitution and Civil Justice Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee, I held a hearing on constitutional rights, in particular the Kelo decision that came down in—if I get my date right—June 23 of 2005.

That decision was about property rights in New London, Connecticut, that the local government had decided that they were going to act by condemning the private property locally so that they could hand that private property over for a private interest to do expansion and development on multiple homes within the area of New London, Connecticut.

I recall my outrage when the Supreme Court ruled that that was constitutional; for a local government to condemn private property for private use, all it had to do was be facilitated by local government.

I had not read the decision at that time. In fact, I hadn't read the dissent. I had read part of the decision. But within a week, we brought a resolution of disapproval of the Supreme Court's decision on Kelo to the floor of this House. And, yes, I was engaged in that debate and some of the shaping of the resolution.

But the Supreme Court of the United States, which is there to protect the Constitution itself, to interpret the Constitution and the law, effectively stripped three words out of the Fifth Amendment of our Constitution.

The Fifth Amendment reads like this: '' . . . nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.''

Well, the people in New London Connecticut, particularly the Kelo family, had their private property, their home condemned, confiscated under eminent domain and handed over to private use and through the entity of local government. So I was outraged. America was outraged.

By the way, that is another time like I showed you the acorn, Mr. Speaker, but the Kelo decision was another time that the American people rose up and said: We disagree with this decision.

And it was—the polling that I recall from the time, 11–1, opposed the Supreme Court's decision that would allow local government to confiscate private property.

I came to this floor to add to the debate. And at the time I was queued up to speak, the speaker ahead of me was over at this podium, the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Barney Frank. Now, he and I had a history of disagreeing on a lot of issues, and I expected to disagree with Mr. Frank on that issue. So I sat here in a chair in front with my notepad to take notes on Mr. Frank's statements so I would be prepared to step up and rebut him because my turn was coming next.

I am writing notes furiously, keeping up with his quotes. And while this is going on, and he was almost finished with his speech before I realized I agreed with everything Barney Frank said on Kelo. Everything.

So I spoke, I came down here to this podium and gave my speech, but my speech fully supported the statement by Mr. Frank. And I added to that, that the effect of that decision was to strip those three words out of the Fifth Amendment ''for public use.'' I made that argument as emphatically as I was prepared to do, that now the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution that guarantees our property rights says: ''Nor shall private property be taken without just compensation.''

In other words, they have to pay you for it. But you don't get to keep your home if there is a private interest out there that can convince a local government that they will pay more taxes on that property than you are paying on that property.

Stripping those three words out of the Fifth Amendment was the exact effect of the Kelo decision. I did not know it at that time because later on is when I picked up the dissent, one of the last dissents written by Justice O'Connor, who had exactly the same analysis in her dissent as I had in my speech and, as I believe without utter clarity of the statement, that Mr. Frank would have agreed with it if he didn't say it or not.

So here we are. The American people have risen up and we have said: We disagree with the Supreme Court. We want to restore our Constitution, but amending it is pretty difficult.

By the way, if you wanted to amend the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution to fix Kelo, to have the Fifth Amendment mean ''nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation,'' if you want the Fifth Amendment to mean that—I asked a witness today: How do you rewrite the Fifth Amendment and amend our Constitution when the Supreme Court has so, I will say, subverted the meaning, they had de facto stricken those three words out?

How do you rewrite it? Do you start with: We really mean it this time that ''nor shall private property be taken,'' we really mean ''without just compensation,'' we really mean it ''for public use without just compensation''?

Do we keep adding? Do we really mean it? Or are there words in the language that can prevent a court from doing what they decide to do from an activist standpoint?

I don't think so. And a number of times I have tried to write amendments to the Constitution to fix problems that have been created by an activist court.

□ 1145

So I will say the Kelo decision in 2005 was a precursor to things that happened by the Supreme Court, although they are not connected and cited; and that would be June 2015—June 24 and June 25, 2015, as a matter of fact. It was King v. Burwell, the decision when the Supreme Court, on a Thursday—I believe if you look at the calendar, Mr. Speaker, it will be a Thursday, June 24, 2015, when the Supreme Court concluded and issued a decision that they could rewrite ObamaCare, that they could rewrite the statute—the law that was actually passed here by hook, crook, and legislative shenanigan, but still within the boundaries of the Constitution.

The law gave no authority to the Federal Government to establish exchanges under ObamaCare, but the Court considered this, and they concluded that: We must have really meant to say ''or Federal Government'' when Congress wrote that the States may establish exchanges. The de facto result of the King v. Burwell decision was that the States—and added these three words, in effect—''or Federal Government'' may establish exchanges under the law. The Supreme Court added words to the law. If they can add words to the law, then they can also subtract words from the law.

So I am appalled by this. This is Thursday, and before I can get my feet back underneath me, having been essentially knocked over by a Supreme Court truck believing that they would be bound by something within the Constitution, before that can happen, I am pulling into a Catholic church in Logan, Iowa, to do a 10 a.m. meeting with some priests and members of the parish synchronized just by providence or happenstance with former Senator Rick Santorum, who has been a definitive voice on marriage. We were both listening to the radio as we pulled into that church to do a joint event, and for the first time we had heard about the Obergefell decision, the decision that came down on Friday, June 25, 2015.

That decision goes even beyond the idea that the Court can insert words into Federal statute that was previously duly passed by Congress and signed by the President. And now under the gay marriage decision of Obergefell, the Supreme Court not only found a new right in the Constitution, they created a command in the Constitution—a command.

It is not in the Constitution about same-sex marriage. Our Founding Fathers never envisioned such a thing. There is no one that can assert that it was even in the imagination of any Founding Father. Neither can they assert that it was in the imagination of anybody that was in this Congress when the 14th Amendment was passed out of this Congress—out of the House and the Senate—and ratified by the American people with 75 percent of the legitimate States at the time.

No one can assert that that ever was out there in, let's just say, the emanations and penumbras of the Constitution or especially the 14th Amendment, the equal protection clause of the Constitution. They can't assert that.

They asserted in the Roe v. Wade decision that this right to privacy becomes a right to abortion under any circumstances to speak of—almost any circumstances, Mr. Speaker. They asserted that it was in the emanations and penumbras, and they kind of made it up. They found it in that shadowy area along the edge of the clouds that we all see something different if we see anything at all, but they could see something that nobody else had seen, and they wrote that into the decision.

But this Obergefell decision goes even beyond that, even beyond the audacity of Roe v. Wade, Doe v. Bolton, Griswold v. Connecticut, and the Eisenstadt decision. It goes beyond all of those.

It is this: the Supreme Court created—not only found a right, but they created a command in the Constitution.

And here is the command: if you are a political subdivision in America that recognizes civil marriage, then thou shalt conduct same-sex marriages and recognize same-sex marriages, regardless of where they might take place, but they shall take place in your jurisdiction as well. That is the Obergefell decision.

Now, if this had been a decision of the United States Congress, it would have been litigated and found unconstitutional. We don't have the enumerated power or the constitutional authority to impose same-sex marriage on America. That is outside the reach of this Congress, and I think there are Democrats that will agree with me on that, Mr. Speaker. But if the States were to pass same-sex marriage laws, they do have that constitutional authority. If that had happened in a statutory way, I would accept that. I don't agree with it, but I would accept it as a constitutional function of a legitimate subdivision within the United States.

That is how we need to do things in this country, in a constitutional fashion, not bypass the will of the people and allow the Supreme Court to assert an authority that they do not have constitutionally. I can chase this all the way back to Marbury v. Madison and have to take that argument apart, I know, with some of the people that would carry on this argument. But in the end, it is this: We get into big trouble when we start establishing special rights for immutable characteristics.

If you look at Title VII of the Civil Rights Act—and I don't have it committed exactly to memory, but in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, there is protection there for religion, but that is a specific constitutional protection in the First Amendment. Beyond that, it is protection for immutable characteristics that have to do with race, ethnicity, and national origin. I am fine with putting in disability. That is an immutable characteristic. Age is another immutable characteristic. And sex is an immutable characteristic. Gender is not, and sexual orientation is not.

When you go into that zone, then you are giving special protected status for characteristics that cannot be independently identified and can, at least potentially, be willfully changed. That is a zone that is too blurry a zone for law, and it is a zone then for our culture to accept, embrace, and love people of all walks of life and recognize that we are all God's children, we are all created in His image, and because of our immutable characteristics, they are tied to our origins.

By the way, our rights do come from God and not from government. If we think somehow that rights come from government, then it is okay for government to take our rights away. But they don't come from government. Our Founding Fathers understood that. In fact, they articulated that better than anyone ever had. They had a tough job. They had to first understand this divine right of humanity, natural law, as they described it. They had to first understand it, then they had to articulate it, then they had to debate it among themselves. They had disagreements amongst themselves, but they reached a consensus that got to the Declaration and a consensus that got to the ratification of the Constitution.

We fought a gruesome and a ghastly civil war to put away the sin of slavery. That also was a movement that came from the people of America and the people of Western civilization and the world. Slavery is an institution that has been part of every ancient civilization back to the beginning. America stepped up pretty early in this process. Great Britain was ahead of us. Not many other nations beat us to that punch. It was a brutal thing that America went through, but it was a consensus of America in the end that ended that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am making this point that this America that we are is built upon the pillars of American exceptionalism. Those pillars are inherited from Western civilization whose roots go to Western Europe, they go to Rome, they go to Greece, and they go back to Mosaic law. We have been a wise-enough civilization to adopt those values from outside of Western civilization that give us vitality, just like our English language has this unique vitality. One of the reasons for it is that it is adaptable, it is flexible. We are not stuck in time and place. We take on words into our language. Every year there is a list of new words that go into the dictionary because we create them to take care of the meaning that we need.

Daniel Hannan, a member of the European Parliament from the United Kingdom, has written a book about the English language. I think of Winston Churchill's book, ''A History of the English-Speaking Peoples.'' I read that book carefully forward and back and digested it so to speak. When I finished it, I remember I looked up at the ceiling, and it was about 1:30 in the morning, and I thought: My gosh, wherever the English language has gone, freedom has accompanied the language.

Now, Churchill didn't ever write that, that I recall, in his book, but that was a conclusion that came to me. I would call it an inescapable conclusion that might only mean ''if you think like I do.'' But he laid the case out without saying that the English language has carried freedom.

Well, Daniel Hannan's book—the title of which I forget at the moment, Mr. Speaker—goes further. He says that, as he sits in the European Parliament—and he is multilingual—he will have earpieces on listening to the interpreter while he is listening to another language in this ear, and the language he gets interpreted into his ear doesn't necessarily carry out the same values and meaning. His analysis is that the English language not only is a carrier of freedom, but it is a language that articulates freedom unique to any other, and that you can't really understand God-given liberty without having an understanding of the English language that has such a utility in our carrying out and talking about our values of language and liberty.

Liberty means something different from freedom. We have got two words, liberty and freedom. Many other languages only have one word, and they just use that word universally. But in our spirit is this—freedom is this: a wild coyote has freedom. He can jump the fences and go wherever he wants to go. But freedom is different. He has that freedom. But liberty is bridled by morality. We have liberty in America. We are bridled by the morality of the obligation that we are a civilization and a culture that is part of Judeo-Christianity, descended, at a minimum, from Judeo-Christianity, and our values that are rooted in there, as I said, are traceable back to Mosaic law.

We have to have a morality within America if we are going to be an America that achieves and that we can aspire, that the arc of history takes us to soaring heights instead of flattening that arc of history out and perhaps diminishing into the Third World.

So I revere this country, Mr. Speaker, and I revere our Constitution and our rule of law. The people in this country, all of us who are part of this civilization and part of this culture, all of us who get up every day and go out and do things to lift others up, all of us who scrub out some of the things that aren't so great and elevate those things that are great and pull ourselves together, whether it is a mom and a child, a dad and a child, whether it is a church group, whether it is home school, public school, or parochial school, whether it is work, whether it is your volunteer group, if you are out there handing out pamphlets to advance your cause and adding to the civil dialogue in America, keep a moral foundation behind it, and add to that civil dialogue, if we continue to do that, and if we protect, understand, and teach the values of America, and in particular the understanding and the original meaning of our Constitution, we will continue to be an even greater country.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the privilege to address you here on the floor of the House of Representatives. I am privileged to serve here and privileged to have the opportunity to go home and carry out some of the things that I have talked about here in this last hour.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has agreed to without amendment a joint resolution of the House of the following title:

H.J. Res. 67. Joint Resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 353. An act to improve the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's weather research through a focused program of investment on affordable and attainable advances in observational, computing, and modeling capabilities to support substantial improvement in weather forecasting and prediction of high impact weather events, to expand commercial opportunities for the provision of weather data, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 101–509, the Chair, on behalf of the Majority Leader, announces the appointment of the following individual to serve as a member of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress:

Deborah Skaggs Speth of Kentucky.

□ 1200

REPEALING HEALTH CARE LAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BANKS of Indiana). 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, it is indeed a pleasure to follow my good friend from Iowa, STEVE KING. I know Mr. KING cares deeply about America. He not only cares deeply, but having been in the private sector in business where he, like our President, was involved in building things and making things work and making things accessible, he has good solutions. I have no doubt if he were not in Congress, he probably would have gotten the bid on the sections of the wall that the President is taking bids on even now.

We are at an interesting time. It has been interesting to see some of the messages. Some are hurtful. I know the liberal papers like the Longview newspaper immediately pick up on any dissension in the Republican Party, especially if it is aimed at conservatives like me. I don't know why we use the term ''conservative.'' It used to be just somebody with common sense that believed in keeping our word, believed in following the Constitution.

We seem to get in trouble when we don't follow the Constitution. For example, it makes very clear that everyone who is an American citizen is supposed to have rights. We can't assure the rights of every person in every other country. That would turn into this remarkable experiment in a republican form of government that we have here.

It is really a democratic Republic—a Republic where you select representatives so that you don't have big gangs running around as a majority wreaking havoc when people disagree with them. We elect representatives so they can come together and, hopefully, read bills and not have to vote on them so they can find out what is in them, go ahead and read the bills in advance and hopefully have something to do with the writing of the bills, especially things that affect people's health.

When we see messages like have come out today, it is unpleasant. One was apparently sent out from the White House, condemning the Freedom Caucus, apparently, because we have the audacity to want Republicans, including those at the White House, to keep our promise. I still remain in favor of—as do my friends on the Freedom Caucus and a lot of others—and remain committed to our promise to repeal ObamaCare.

I realize there can be honest disagreement. Some think if we give more power to Health and Human Services, more Federal Government, and give more power to the people we trust in the Federal Government, whom I do trust, then they can do what Congress is not willing to do, and that is repeal ObamaCare and have a system in place that will assure people can get health care that is affordable.

The fact is most people talk about how we have got to make sure people can get health insurance. And then, over the years, they use the term ''health care'' synonymously with ''health insurance.'' Actually, the fact is we should be most concerned about people, all Americans, having access to affordable health care, whether they have insurance or not.

One of the problems that health insurance has gotten into over the last 50 years is that health insurance has ceased to be insurance. Under ObamaCare, health insurance was certainly not insurance.

If you look up the root of insurance, the word ''insure,'' insurance was intended to be something you could purchase very cheaply that would insure against an unforeseeable event some point in the future, maybe a catastrophic accident, a chronic disease, something that you don't expect and you hope never happens. For the insurance companies, it is actually a form of legalized wager that you are paying a little amount, hoping that never happens, but just in case it does, insurance will be able to take care of it at that point.

We have long since lost the idea of true insurance, and people began paying health insurance companies not to insure against an unforeseeable event in the future, but to pay them to manage their health care, to tell their doctors what medication they could prescribe, what procedures they would cover to help their patients, telling the patients which doctors they could see.

Actually, the truth is, as the Federal Government got more and more involved, we saw less and less insurance and more and more insurance companies managing people's health care, and the managing insurance companies were actually following the lead of the Federal Government.

The more we passed laws regarding health care and insurance, the more the Federal Government had a say in people's health care and well-being and the more insurance companies moved into a management role, much as the Federal Government in Medicare and Medicaid moved into a governing role.

This morning, I am meeting with constituents that are very caring individuals and who provide health centers that are extremely affordable, very, very cheap, but provide quality care for people that can't afford the care. They don't have to go to the emergency room, which costs more than going to a clinic for minor matters. It saves a lot of money. It is a lot of cheaper.

Of course, emergency room care is about the most expensive care you can get, and people who don't have insurance often go and line up at emergency rooms, which drives up the cost of everybody's health care and everybody's health insurance. We can break the cycle of that.

I understand there are very well-meaning friends on the Republican side of the aisle that think if we just give the Federal Government, give Health and Human Services, more power to control all of this, we have a guy in place that I do believe can do great things to cure the ills of health care.

My problem is, if we don't repeal the outrage known as ObamaCare, or the Affordable Care Act—which is really unaffordable—if we don't actually repeal it here in the House, have the Senate repeal it, then no matter how much those in the executive branch and those in Health and Human Services, including my friend, the Secretary, no matter how much they do to help Americans, the next liberal that comes in, the next Kathleen Sebelius who comes in thinking she knows more about what is best for you than you do, then all of those great reforms will go out the window. Because the Secretary will have more authority and more ability to make regulation under the Republican proposed bill, then I am quite certain that somebody that comes in, like Kathleen Sebelius, who knows better what you need than you do, will make sure that the regulations and the overreach become even more burdensome.

I totally understand the President's frustration. He was told that the Republican bill would basically repeal ObamaCare. The truth is I totally agree with the President. We need to act to repeal ObamaCare. I stand with the President, through whatever hardship, to repeal ObamaCare.

I have heard people referring already to the Republican bill as SwampCare. There are some good things in the bill,

but it appears to analysts that I trust and have a reputation for being accurate that premiums will go up and that this bill is not going to really bring down health insurance costs and that they may go up for the next 2 years.

Hopefully, in 2019, after Republicans have lost the majority because we didn't keep our promise, they are projecting that in 2019 the prices will go down maybe 10 percent if everything works out well. That would be good for the new Democratic majority because they will have taken office and they will get all the credit for costs coming down.

Even though it is very slightly, they will get the credit, and Republicans will be left out to dry, which means the American Dream—freedom, entrepreneurship, the ability to decide what health care you need, when, without government or an insurance company telling you otherwise—that dream of personal independence will be gone, and you will see a new America that begins to reflect the values of the former Soviet Union, which anybody that studies history like I majored in and never quit studying, you know there has never, ever been a time when socialism succeeded. It always has failed. It always will fail.

Even the Apostle Paul's effort to bring into the common storehouse and share and share alike, eventually he realized his error and that it is going to work in Heaven, but it is not going to work here. So, new rule: If you don't work, you don't eat.

The Pilgrims, just a beautiful Compact: Bring into the common storehouse, share and share alike. But after so many died that first winter, they realized: Maybe it will work out better if we let people have private property and they get to keep, use however they want, whatever they produce. What a great idea.

That kind of entrepreneurship, that kind of encouragement and incentive in this world for people to do well, to control their own destiny, is what made America the greatest country in the history of the world.

Now, as we proceeded over the years, we have moved toward more and more socialism, especially in the last 50 years. We have now allowed people like Bill Ayers to take over our educational facilities. They have been successful.

I understand 30, 40 percent of young people coming out of college today think that socialism would be a good thing. Well, it would be in a perfect world, where everybody worked as hard as they could and then shared and shared alike, but we have seen in this world that will never work. The only way socialism remains as long as it does, as it did in the Soviet Union, is if you have a ruthless totalitarian government that takes people's freedom away. But even then, it is all going to be for nothing.

We have an article from Mark Miller in Reuters, and the title is: ''Republican Health Reform Is the Real Disaster for Older Americans.''

One of the things I have got to say, Mr. Speaker, I was hoping in our bill—since we know and we have talked about all these years since ObamaCare passed that it cuts $716 billion from Medicare, and seniors need help. They are beginning to experience rationed health care the way the VA has been administering to our veterans for too long.

Hopefully, we will get that fixed. I don't know the person that President Trump appointed to head up the VA. She has been part of the VA system, so I am concerned she may not be able to deliver on reenergizing the VA to actually help veterans.

With all the problems that have existed across the Veterans Administration, which are a clear example of what happens when a federal government takes complete charge of a medical system, and with all the veterans we have in record numbers committing suicide because they just feel so hopeless—they feel like there is nowhere to turn. The VA doesn't help them. They have got nowhere to turn, and they do take that irreversible step of hopelessness. People that are seeing that in the VA now are coming and saying they want the Federal Government to have more control over people's health care, kind of like the VA, because that is such a good thing.

□ 1215

Do we need more people killing themselves in the general society at the levels of our precious veterans?

I mean, let's take care of our veterans. Let's drop that to zero for veterans and let's work on it for the general population.

I do believe that the bill that my friend Dr. TIM MURPHY helped push through, did such a great job on—it was bipartisan; we had people on both sides of the aisle working fervently on that bill—I think will be able to do some good. For 30 years or so the pendulum swung too far against people getting the mental health care they needed. So it is good to see that change.

But, Mr. Speaker, this bill—I left at the end of the week last week, and I know a lot of people were down, and I was in part, but the other side was. I really felt like this was going to be a good week, we were going to come together, we were going to discuss, we were going to find a way to come together. I thought on Tuesday—Monday evening, as I saw our leadership getting together with members of our party, I thought: Yeah, I bet we can get something by the end of the week. I got the feeling most of the Republicans felt if we don't have a bill that we can agree on and get passed for the good of the American people, let's actually take steps.

Okay, our leadership said we can't repeal ObamaCare. Well, let's repeal at least as much as we can. Let's at least repeal as much as we did 2 years ago. Let's at least not give more power to Health and Human Services. Let's at least take out some of the requirements from ObamaCare that have caused premiums to skyrocket. We are told: Well, trust HHS because they will be able to help bring down premiums so we don't have to take that action in this body ourselves.

For all of those who were ignorant and didn't understand, the Freedom Caucus was trying to reach an agreement so that we could vote a bill out of this House, but those of us in the Freedom Caucus all had heard over and over from constituents: You have got to do something to bring down the cost of our health insurance, of our health care. Our deductible is too high, we will never be able to get to our insurance help. Our premiums are so high.

I heard from businesspeople that their costs have tripled in the last few years. They cannot afford to stay in business and keep paying these high premiums for their employees. They will have to leave them high and dry, which means they go to Medicaid. And I am really shocked that even people in the Obama administration would brag about adding millions of people to Medicaid, which has not been the help that people needed. We were told: Oh, no, ObamaCare will drive them to great insurance.

No; it has driven millions to Medicaid that is even worse than Medicare.

So I know most of the Republicans on this side of the aisle believe that so many States have good solutions. So what is our solution to help the States?

Gee, if we give more power to the Federal Government, then they could start a high-risk pool that will be able to pull people out of the insurance policies where premiums are spiking, and then the Federal Government will run that for a while and then devolve it back to the States.

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, in my time in Congress and even my time on the bench as a judge and chief justice, I have watched government, and I just don't trust government. That was something I shared with our Founders. That was something Justice Scalia told to a group from my home in Tyler. There were probably 50 or 60 seniors who came up.

I asked: Is there something special you would like to see or do while you are here?

They said: Well, you seem to be friends with Justice Scalia. Do you think we could meet him?

Well, I will ask. Well, son of a gun, Justice Scalia found the time, and we met him over at the Supreme Court.

He said: Well, what questions do you have?

He didn't start with a speech.

He said: Well, okay, LOUIE said you wanted to meet me. Here I am. What questions have you got?

He leaned back against the table at the front of the room, and nobody said anything.

He said: Oh, come on, I have taken time. I want to come here and let you meet me.

I loved how abrupt he was and straight to the point.

He said: Come on, here I am, have the courage, ask your question.

One of our seniors said: Well, Justice Scalia, would you say that the United States is the most free country in the history of the world because of our Bill of Rights, that it is the best ever?

Justice Scalia surprised me, but then I thought, well, yeah, he is exactly right.

He said: Oh, gosh, no. The Soviets had a better bill of rights than we have. It had a lot more rights in there. No, no, no. The reason we are the most free country in the history of the world is because the Founders did not trust government. So they gave us a Constitution that tried to put as many obstacles as it possibly could between people in Washington—at the time, first New York, Philadelphia, then Washington. But people at the Federal level creating laws or regulations, they wanted it as hard as possible. That is why the President is not a Prime Minister selected by the Congress. It is why we have three branches instead of one or two. They wanted to make it hard to pass laws.

He went into further deliberation on that. It was very informative. He was exactly right. I studied the Soviet Government. I remember in college when I was at Texas A&M I did a paper—and I got an A on it—about the Soviet Constitution, the Soviet rights. They did have more rights spelled out. But the trouble is, their founders wanted government to do things, and trusted government implicitly so that it was totalitarian, so the bill of rights they wrote meant nothing, the Constitution meant nothing.

That is where we are headed here, it is with bureaucrats having taken charge over people's lives, their health care, their financial situations, usurping or at least getting copies of people's finance records. You used to have to get a warrant to do that.

Now the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau just gets them when they want to. That should be illegal. It should be unconstitutional. It should require a warrant with probable cause established under oath that a crime has been committed and this person probably committed it. I used to sign warrants if probable cause was established. Not anymore.

Under Obama, the Democratic Congress passed a law saying: Yeah, let them do whatever they want to somehow help us with our financial situation.

Well, when you combine what they have done with what the NSA, CIA, and Justice Department have done to invade people's rights, we are severely limited in the privacy we once had.

I know there were people who were shocked that Congress passed a bill regarding internet privacy rights, but the fact is that our party should have done a better job of getting the message out of what it really did. It just repealed the intrusion that the Obama administration had with regulation and got us back to where we were a few years ago. So there are still protections; it is just not the intrusiveness of the Federal Government that President Obama created.

Some of us were convinced that he was not as concerned with privacy rights as we were or as others in America were, and he was not as concerned about the United States' control of the internet as we were because he gives away the ability to do websites to an international group instead of trusting the United States. That is different. President Obama didn't trust the United States to be fair to the world. Those of us in Congress, at least on our side of the aisle, thought we would do a better job. I still think we will do a better job.

What has been heartbreaking the last day and a half is to see it doesn't appear that Republican leaders are trying to work with conservatives to get to a solution. We have now seen the solution is: go to war with those who want to stand on the Constitution; contact everybody who donates to the National Republican Congressional Committee, the National Republican Party, contact the big donors who donate to candidates; and make sure they send messages to all the Republicans that they better get on board and vote for a bill that those people who are calling never read, like some of us have, and that they didn't research. They are just trusting the people they have been donating to to do the right thing.

If that were the case, Republicans would have repealed ObamaCare a long time ago, and it would have been the first thing we took up in January, and we would never have had ObamaCare because Republicans would have stopped it when we did have the chance. We had multiple chances. But that is another story for another day.

So I am sorry, this bill is going to ultimately result in Republicans losing the majority. But that is not my number one concern. Yes, it bothers me that I think this bill could lead to our loss of majority in 2018; and, yes, it concerns me that, from what I am hearing from friends across the aisle, the first thing they want to do if they get the majority in 2018 is impeach and remove from office Donald Trump.

So it has really been amazing to see the war develop the last day and a half, that those in October who stood with the President when our leaders were saying: Forget Trump. Our numbers are clear, he has no chance of winning. So our best hope is for every Republican Member to save yourself. Win your election so that when Hillary Clinton is President next January, we can, in the House, rein her in.

But I am so grateful the rank and file of our party stood fast and said: No, if Trump doesn't win, we are not going to rein in president Hillary Clinton. She will do whatever she wants.

Heck, we couldn't even get our party to impeach Koskinen when the guy clearly lied to us here. Other members of the Cabinet in the Obama administration clearly lied, and we couldn't get our group together to remove perjuring people from the Cabinet?

At least now, hopefully, we are going to get the documentation that shows the kind of crimes that were being committed in the last administration.

But in the meantime, people are hurting. They need their premiums to come down. I know we can trust Health and Human Services in this administration to try to bring down costs. But the words of my late friend Justice Scalia: If you guys in Congress, with the power to repeal a bad bill, don't have the guts to do it, don't come running across the street to us and ask us to repeal your bad bill. Heck, just go to the floor, repeal the bad law, and leave us alone.

That is all I am asking, Mr. Speaker. The courts have not worked out extremely well for people who love the Constitution in recent years, and I know the President is frustrated. He is probably nearly as frustrated as I am almost maybe. I am told that maybe some of these anti-Freedom Caucus tweets originated with his Chief of Staff Priebus.

But I want to suggest, as Sam Rayburn did when he was Speaker: My friends, Mr. Speaker, the Republican brothers and sisters are not your enemy. They are your friends. They want to repeal ObamaCare, bring down costs, get more control back to people. If we pass a bill that doesn't bring down premiums and give the American people hope and not give more power to the government and hope they do a better job in this administration, then we will deserve to be voted out.

I just hope, Mr. Speaker, we will do what we promised to do. I hope those who are getting calls and emails demanding they call their representatives, if they have been big donors, tell their Congressmen to get on board with the bill. I hope they will trust us who are reading the bills on their behalf.

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

PUBLICATION OF COMMITTEE RULES

RULES OF THE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS FOR THE 115TH CONGRESS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ETHICS,
March 29, 2017.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to clause 2 of rule XI, I submit to the House the Rules of the Committee on Ethics for the 115th Congress for publication in the Congressional Record.

Sincerely,

SUSAN W. BROOKS,
Chairwoman.

Enclosures.

(Adopted March 22, 2017)

FOREWORD

The Committee on Ethics is unique in the House of Representatives. Consistent with

the duty to carry out its advisory and enforcement responsibilities in an impartial manner, the Committee is the only standing committee of the House of Representatives the membership of which is divided evenly by party. These rules are intended to provide a fair procedural framework for the conduct of the Committee's activities and to help ensure that the Committee serves well the people of the United States, the House of Representatives, and the Members, officers, and employees of the House of Representatives.

PART I—GENERAL COMMITTEE RULES

RULE 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

(a) So far as applicable, these rules and the Rules of the House of Representatives shall be the rules of the Committee and any subcommittee. The Committee adopts these rules under the authority of clause 2(a)(1) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, 115th Congress.

(b) The rules of the Committee may be modified, amended, or repealed by a vote of a majority of the Committee.

(c) When the interests of justice so require, the Committee, by a majority vote of its members, may adopt any special procedures, not inconsistent with these rules, deemed necessary to resolve a particular matter before it. Copies of such special procedures shall be furnished to all parties in the matter.

(d) The Chair and Ranking Minority Member shall have access to such information that they request as necessary to conduct Committee business.

RULE 2. DEFINITIONS

(a) ''Committee'' means the Committee on Ethics.

(b) ''Complaint'' means a written allegation of improper conduct against a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives filed with the Committee with the intent to initiate an inquiry.

(c) ''Inquiry'' means an investigation by an investigative subcommittee into allegations against a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives.

(d) ''Investigate,'' ''Investigating,'' and/or ''Investigation'' mean review of the conduct of a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives that is conducted or authorized by the Committee, an investigative subcommittee, or the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee.

(e) ''Board'' means the Board of the Office of Congressional Ethics.

(f) ''Referral'' means a report sent to the Committee from the Board pursuant to House Rules and all applicable House Resolutions regarding the conduct of a House Member, officer, or employee, including any accompanying findings or other supporting documentation.

(g) ''Investigative Subcommittee'' means a subcommittee designated pursuant to Rule 19(a) to conduct an inquiry to determine if a Statement of Alleged Violation should be issued.

(h) ''Statement of Alleged Violation'' means a formal charging document filed by an investigative subcommittee with the Committee containing specific allegations against a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives of a violation of the Code of Official Conduct, or of a law, rule, regulation, or other standard of conduct applicable to the performance of official duties or the discharge of official responsibilities.

(i) ''Adjudicatory Subcommittee'' means a subcommittee designated pursuant to Rule 23(a) that holds an adjudicatory hearing and determines whether the counts in a Statement of Alleged Violation are proved by clear and convincing evidence.

(j) ''Sanction Hearing'' means a Committee hearing to determine what sanction, if any, to adopt or to recommend to the House of Representatives.

(k) ''Respondent'' means a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives who is the subject of a complaint filed with the Committee or who is the subject of an inquiry or a Statement of Alleged Violation.

(l) ''Office of Advice and Education'' refers to the Office established by section 803(i) of the Ethics Reform Act of 1989. The Office handles inquiries; prepares written opinions in response to specific requests; develops general guidance; and organizes seminars, workshops, and briefings for the benefit of the House of Representatives.

(m) ''Member'' means a Representative in, or a Delegate to, or the Resident Commissioner to, the U.S. House of Representatives.

RULE 3. ADVISORY OPINIONS AND WAIVERS

(a) The Office of Advice and Education shall handle inquiries; prepare written opinions providing specific advice, including reviews of requests for privately-sponsored travel pursuant to the Committee's travel regulations; develop general guidance; and organize seminars, workshops, and briefings for the benefit of the House of Representatives.

(b) Any Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives may request a written opinion with respect to the propriety of any current or proposed conduct of such Member, officer, or employee.

(c) The Office of Advice and Education may provide information and guidance regarding laws, rules, regulations, and other standards of conduct applicable to Members, officers, and employees in the performance of their duties or the discharge of their responsibilities.

(d) In general, the Committee shall provide a written opinion to an individual only in response to a written request, and the written opinion shall address the conduct only of the inquiring individual, or of persons for whom the inquiring individual is responsible as employing authority.

(e) A written request for an opinion shall be addressed to the Chair of the Committee and shall include a complete and accurate statement of the relevant facts. A request shall be signed by the requester or the requester's authorized representative or employing authority. A representative shall disclose to the Committee the identity of the principal on whose behalf advice is being sought.

(f) Requests for privately-sponsored travel shall be treated like any other request for a written opinion for purposes of paragraphs (g) through (l).

(1) The Committee's Travel Guidelines and Regulations shall govern the request submission and Committee approval process for privately-sponsored travel consistent with House Rules.

(2) A request for privately-sponsored travel of a Member, officer, or employee shall include a completed and signed Traveler Form that attaches the Private Sponsor Certification Form and includes all information required by the Committee's travel regulations. A private sponsor offering officially-connected travel to a Member, officer, or employee must complete and sign a Private Sponsor Certification Form, and provide a copy of that form to the invitee(s).

(3) Any individual who knowingly and willfully falsifies, or who knowingly and willfully fails to file, a Traveler Form or Private Sponsor Certification Form may be subject to civil penalties and criminal sanctions pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §1001.

(g) The Office of Advice and Education shall prepare for the Committee a response to each written request for an opinion from a Member, officer, or employee. Each response shall discuss all applicable laws, rules, regulations, or other standards.

(h) Where a request is unclear or incomplete, the Office of Advice and Education may seek additional information from the requester.

(i) The Chair and Ranking Minority Member are authorized to take action on behalf of the Committee on any proposed written opinion that they determine does not require consideration by the Committee. If the Chair or Ranking Minority Member requests a written opinion, or seeks a waiver, extension, or approval pursuant to Rules 3(m), 4(c), 4(e), or 4(h), the next ranking member of the requester's party is authorized to act in lieu of the requester.

(j) The Committee shall keep confidential any request for advice from a Member, officer, or employee, as well as any response thereto. Upon request of any Member, officer, or employee who has submitted a written request for an opinion or submitted a request for privately-sponsored travel, the Committee may release to the requesting individual a copy of their own written request for advice or submitted travel forms, any subsequent written communications between such individual and Committee staff regarding the request, and any Committee advisory opinion or travel letter issued to that individual in response. The Committee shall not release any internal Committee staff work product, communications, or notes in response to such a request, except as authorized by the Committee.

(k) The Committee may take no adverse action in regard to any conduct that has been undertaken in reliance on a written opinion if the conduct conforms to the specific facts addressed in the opinion.

(l) Information provided to the Committee by a Member, officer, or employee seeking advice regarding prospective conduct may not be used as the basis for initiating an investigation under clause 3(a)(2) or clause 3(b) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, if such Member, officer, or employee acts in good faith in accordance with the written advice of the Committee.

(m) A written request for a waiver of clause 5 of House Rule XXV (the House gift rule), or for any other waiver or approval, shall be treated in all respects like any other request for a written opinion.

(n) A written request for a waiver of clause 5 of House Rule XXV (the House gift rule) shall specify the nature of the waiver being sought and the specific circumstances justifying the waiver.

(o) An employee seeking a waiver of time limits applicable to travel paid for by a private source shall include with the request evidence that the employing authority is aware of the request. In any other instance where proposed employee conduct may reflect on the performance of official duties, the Committee may require that the requester submit evidence that the employing authority knows of the conduct.

RULE 4. FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

(a) In matters relating to Title I of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, the Committee shall coordinate with the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Legislative Resource Center, to assure that appropriate individuals are notified of their obligation to file reports required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act and that such individuals are provided in a timely fashion with filing instructions and forms developed by the Committee.

(b) The Committee shall coordinate with the Legislative Resource Center to assure that information that the Ethics in Government Act requires to be placed on the public record is made public.

(c) Any reports required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act filed by Members of the Board of the Office of Congressional Ethics that are forwarded to the Committee by the Clerk shall not be subject to paragraphs (d) through (q) of this Rule. The Office of Congressional Ethics retains jurisdiction over review of the timeliness and completeness of filings by Members of the Board as the Board's supervising ethics office.

(d) The Chair and Ranking Minority Member are authorized to grant on behalf of the Committee requests for reasonable extensions of time for the filing of Financial Disclosure Statements. Any such request must be received by the Committee no later than the date on which the Statement in question is due. A request received after such date may be granted by the Committee only in extraordinary circumstances. Such extensions for one individual in a calendar year shall not exceed a total of 90 days. No extension shall be granted authorizing a non-incumbent candidate to file a statement later than 30 days prior to a primary or general election in which the candidate is participating.

(e) An individual who takes legally sufficient action to withdraw as a candidate before the date on which that individual's Financial Disclosure Statement is due under the Ethics in Government Act shall not be required to file a Statement. An individual shall not be excused from filing a Financial Disclosure Statement when withdrawal as a candidate occurs after the date on which such Statement was due.

(f) Any individual who files a report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act more than 30 days after the later of—

(1) the date such report is required to be filed, or

(2) if a filing extension is granted to such individual, the last day of the filing extension period, is required by such Act to pay a late filing fee of $200. The Chair and Ranking Minority Member are authorized to approve requests that the fee be waived based on extraordinary circumstances.

(g) Any late report that is submitted without a required filing fee shall be deemed procedurally deficient and not properly filed.

(h) The Chair and Ranking Minority Member are authorized to approve requests for waivers of the aggregation and reporting of gifts as provided by section 102(a)(2)(C) of the Ethics in Government Act. If such a request is approved, both the incoming request and the Committee response shall be forwarded to the Legislative Resource Center for placement on the public record.

(i) The Chair and Ranking Minority Member are authorized to approve blind trusts as qualifying under section 102(f)(3) of the Ethics in Government Act. The correspondence relating to formal approval of a blind trust, the trust document, the list of assets transferred to the trust, and any other documents required by law to be made public, shall be forwarded to the Legislative Resource Center for such purpose.

(j) The Committee shall designate staff who shall review reports required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act and, based upon information contained therein, indicate in a form and manner prescribed by the Committee whether the Statement appears substantially accurate and complete and the filer appears to be in compliance with applicable laws and rules.

(k) Each report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act shall be reviewed within 60 days after the date of filing.

(l) If the reviewing staff believes that additional information is required because (1) the report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act appears not substantially accurate or complete, or (2) the filer may not be in compliance with applicable laws or rules, then the reporting individual shall be notified in writing of the additional information believed to be required, or of the law or rule with which the reporting individual does not appear to be in compliance. Such notice shall also state the time within which a response is to be submitted. Any such notice shall remain confidential.

(m) Within the time specified, including any extension granted in accordance with clause (d), a reporting individual who concurs with the Committee's notification that the report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act is not complete, or that other action is required, shall submit the necessary information or take appropriate action. Any amendment may be in the form of a revised report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act or an explanatory letter addressed to the Clerk of the House of Representatives.

(n) Any amendment shall be placed on the public record in the same manner as other reports required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act. The individual designated by the Committee to review the original report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act shall review any amendment thereto.

(o) Within the time specified, including any extension granted in accordance with clause (d), a reporting individual who does not agree with the Committee that the report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act is deficient or that other action is required, shall be provided an opportunity to respond orally or in writing. If the explanation is accepted, a copy of the response, if written, or a note summarizing an oral response, shall be retained in Committee files with the original report.

(p) The Committee shall be the final arbiter of whether any report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act requires clarification or amendment.

(q) If the Committee determines, by vote of a majority of its members, that there is reason to believe that an individual has willfully failed to file a report required to be filed under Title I of the Ethics in Government Act or has willfully falsified or willfully failed to file information required to be reported, then the Committee shall refer the name of the individual, together with the evidence supporting its finding, to the Attorney General pursuant to section 104(b) of the Ethics in Government Act. Such referral shall not preclude the Committee from initiating such other action as may be authorized by other provisions of law or the Rules of the House of Representatives.

RULE 5. MEETINGS

(a) The regular meeting day of the Committee shall be the second Tuesday of each month, except when the House of Representatives is not meeting on that day. When the Committee Chair determines that there is sufficient reason, meetings may be called on additional days. A regularly scheduled meeting need not be held when the Chair determines there is no business to be considered.

(b) The Chair shall establish the agenda for meetings of the Committee, and the Ranking Minority Member may place additional items on the agenda.

(c) All meetings of the Committee or any subcommittee shall occur in executive session unless the Committee or subcommittee, by an affirmative vote of a majority of its members, opens the meeting to the public.

(d) Any hearing held by an adjudicatory subcommittee, or any sanction hearing held by the Committee, shall be open to the public unless the Committee or subcommittee, by an affirmative vote of a majority of its members, closes the hearing to the public.

(e) A subcommittee shall meet at the discretion of its Chair.

(f) Insofar as practicable, notice for any Committee or subcommittee meeting shall be provided at least seven days in advance of the meeting. The Chair of the Committee or subcommittee may waive such time period for good cause.

RULE 6. COMMITTEE STAFF

(a) The staff is to be assembled and retained as a professional, nonpartisan staff.

(b) Each member of the staff shall be professional and demonstrably qualified for the position for which the individual is hired.

(c) The staff as a whole and each individual member of the staff shall perform all official duties in a nonpartisan manner.

(d) No member of the staff shall engage in any partisan political activity directly affecting any congressional or presidential election.

(e) No member of the staff or outside counsel may accept public speaking engagements or write for publication on any subject that is in any way related to the employment or duties with the Committee of such individual without specific prior approval from the Chair and Ranking Minority Member.

(f) All staff members shall be appointed by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Committee. Such vote shall occur at the first meeting of the membership of the Committee during each Congress and as necessary during the Congress.

(g) Subject to the approval of the Committee on House Administration, the Committee may retain counsel not employed by the House of Representatives whenever the Committee determines, by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Committee, that the retention of outside counsel is necessary and appropriate.

(h) If the Committee determines that it is necessary to retain staff members for the purpose of a particular investigation or other proceeding, then such staff shall be retained only for the duration of that particular investigation or proceeding.

(i) Outside counsel may be dismissed prior to the end of a contract between the Committee and such counsel only by a majority vote of the members of the Committee.

(j) In addition to any other staff provided for by law, rule, or other authority, with respect to the Committee, the Chair and Ranking Minority Member each may appoint one individual as a shared staff member from the respective personal staff of the Chair or Ranking Minority Member to perform service for the Committee. Such shared staff may assist the Chair or Ranking Minority Member on any subcommittee on which the Chair or Ranking Minority Member serves. Only paragraphs (c) and (e) of this Rule and Rule 7(b) shall apply to shared staff.

RULE 7. CONFIDENTIALITY

(a) Before any Member or employee of the Committee, including members of an investigative subcommittee selected under clause 5(a)(4) of Rule X of the House of Representatives and shared staff designated pursuant to Committee Rule 6(j), may have access to information that is confidential under the rules of the Committee, the following oath (or affirmation) shall be executed in writing:

''I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will not disclose, to any person or entity outside the Committee on Ethics, any information received in the course of my service with the Committee, except as authorized by the Committee or in accordance with its rules.''

Copies of the executed oath shall be provided to the Clerk of the House as part of the

records of the House. Breaches of confidentiality shall be investigated by the Committee and appropriate action shall be taken.

(b) No member of the staff or outside counsel may make public, unless approved by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Committee, any information, document, or other material that is confidential, derived from executive session, or classified and that is obtained during the course of employment with the Committee.

(c) Committee members and staff shall not disclose any evidence relating to an investigation to any person or organization outside the Committee unless authorized by the Committee.

(d) Members and staff of the Committee shall not disclose to any person or organization outside the Committee, unless authorized by the Committee, any information regarding the Committee's or a subcommittee's investigative, adjudicatory, or other proceedings, including but not limited to: (i) the fact or nature of any complaints; (ii) executive session proceedings; (iii) information pertaining to or copies of any Committee or subcommittee report, study or other document which purports to express the views, findings, conclusions or recommendations of the Committee or subcommittee in connection with any of its activities or proceedings; or (iv) any other information or allegation respecting the conduct of a Member, officer, or employee of the House. This rule shall not prohibit the Chair or Ranking Minority Member from disclosing to the Board of the Office of Congressional Ethics the existence of a Committee investigation, the name of the Member, officer or employee of the House who is the subject of that investigation, and a brief statement of the scope of that investigation in a written request for referral pursuant to Rule 17A(k). Such disclosures will only be made subject to written confirmation from the Board that the information provided by the Chair or Ranking Minority Member will be kept confidential by the Board.

(e) Except as otherwise specifically authorized by the Committee, no Committee member or staff member shall disclose to any person outside the Committee the name of any witness subpoenaed to testify or to produce evidence.

(f) Except as provided in Rule 17A, the Committee shall not disclose to any person or organization outside the Committee any information concerning the conduct of a respondent until it has transmitted a Statement of Alleged Violation to such respondent and the respondent has been given full opportunity to respond pursuant to Rule 22. The Statement of Alleged Violation and any written response thereto shall be made public at the first meeting or hearing on the matter that is open to the public after such opportunity has been provided. Any other materials in the possession of the Committee regarding such statement may be made public as authorized by the Committee to the extent consistent with the Rules of the House of Representatives. If no public hearing is held on the matter, the Statement of Alleged Violation and any written response thereto shall be included in the Committee's final report on the matter to the House of Representatives.

(g) Unless otherwise determined by a vote of the Committee, only the Chair or Ranking Minority Member of the Committee, after consultation with each other, may make public statements regarding matters before the Committee or any subcommittee.

(h) The Committee may establish procedures necessary to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of any testimony or other information received by the Committee or its staff.

RULE 8. SUBCOMMITTEES—GENERAL POLICY AND STRUCTURE

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of these Rules, the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee may consult with an investigative subcommittee either on their own initiative or on the initiative of the subcommittee, shall have access to evidence and information before a subcommittee with whom they so consult, and shall not thereby be precluded from serving as full, voting members of any adjudicatory subcommittee. Except for the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee pursuant to this paragraph, evidence in the possession of an investigative subcommittee shall not be disclosed to other Committee members except by a vote of the subcommittee.

(b) The Committee may establish other noninvestigative and nonadjudicatory subcommittees and may assign to them such functions as it may deem appropriate. The membership of each subcommittee shall provide equal representation for the majority and minority parties.

(c) The Chair may refer any bill, resolution, or other matter before the Committee to an appropriate subcommittee for consideration. Any such bill, resolution, or other matter may be discharged from the subcommittee to which it was referred by a majority vote of the Committee.

(d) Any member of the Committee may sit with any noninvestigative or nonadjudicatory subcommittee, but only regular members of such subcommittee may vote on any matter before that subcommittee.

RULE 9. QUORUMS AND MEMBER DISQUALIFICATION

(a) The quorum for the Committee or an investigative subcommittee to take testimony and to receive evidence shall be two members, unless otherwise authorized by the House of Representatives.

(b) The quorum for an adjudicatory subcommittee to take testimony, receive evidence, or conduct business shall consist of a majority plus one of the members of the adjudicatory subcommittee.

(c) Except as stated in clauses (a) and (b) of this rule, a quorum for the purpose of conducting business consists of a majority of the members of the Committee or subcommittee.

(d) A member of the Committee shall be ineligible to participate in any Committee or subcommittee proceeding in which such Member is the respondent.

(e) A member of the Committee may seek disqualification from participating in any investigation of the conduct of a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives upon the submission in writing and under oath of an affidavit of disqualification stating that the member cannot render an impartial and unbiased decision. If the Committee approves and accepts such affidavit of disqualification, the Chair shall so notify the Speaker and ask the Speaker to designate a Member of the House of Representatives from the same political party as the disqualified member of the Committee to act as a member of the Committee in any Committee proceeding relating to such investigation.

RULE 10. VOTE REQUIREMENTS

(a) The following actions shall be taken only upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Committee or subcommittee, as appropriate:

(1) Issuing a subpoena.

(2) Adopting a full Committee motion to create an investigative subcommittee.

(3) Adopting or amending of a Statement of Alleged Violation.

(4) Finding that a count in a Statement of Alleged Violation has been proved by clear and convincing evidence.

(5) Sending a letter of reproval.

(6) Adopting a recommendation to the House of Representatives that a sanction be imposed.

(7) Adopting a report relating to the conduct of a Member, officer, or employee.

(8) Issuing an advisory opinion of general applicability establishing new policy.

(b) Except as stated in clause (a), action may be taken by the Committee or any subcommittee thereof by a simple majority, a quorum being present.

(c) No motion made to take any of the actions enumerated in clause (a) of this Rule may be entertained by the Chair unless a quorum of the Committee is present when such motion is made.

RULE 11. COMMITTEE RECORDS

(a) All communications and all pleadings pursuant to these rules shall be filed with the Committee at the Committee's office or such other place as designated by the Committee.

(b) All records of the Committee which have been delivered to the Archivist of the United States shall be made available to the public in accordance with Rule VII of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

RULE 12. BROADCASTS OF COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

(a) Television or radio coverage of a Committee or subcommittee hearing or meeting shall be without commercial sponsorship.

(b) Not more than four television cameras, operating from fixed positions, shall be permitted in a hearing or meeting room. The Committee may allocate the positions of permitted television cameras among the television media in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Radio and Television Correspondents' Galleries.

(c) Television cameras shall be placed so as not to obstruct in any way the space between any witness giving evidence or testimony and any member of the Committee, or the visibility of that witness and that member to each other.

(d) Television cameras shall not be placed in positions that unnecessarily obstruct the coverage of the hearing or meeting by the other media.

PART II—INVESTIGATIVE AUTHORITY

RULE 13. HOUSE RESOLUTION

Whenever the House of Representatives, by resolution, authorizes or directs the Committee to undertake an inquiry or investigation, the provisions of the resolution, in conjunction with these Rules, shall govern. To the extent the provisions of the resolution differ from these Rules, the resolution shall control.

RULE 14. COMMITTEE AUTHORITY TO INVESTIGATE—GENERAL POLICY

(a) Pursuant to clause 3(b) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee may exercise its investigative authority when:

(1) information offered as a complaint by a Member of the House of Representatives is transmitted directly to the Committee;

(2) information offered as a complaint by an individual not a Member of the House is transmitted to the Committee, provided that a Member of the House certifies in writing that such Member believes the information is submitted in good faith and warrants the review and consideration of the Committee;

(3) the Committee, on its own initiative, undertakes an investigation;

(4) a Member, officer, or employee is convicted in a Federal, State, or local court of a felony;

(5) the House of Representatives, by resolution, authorizes or directs the Committee to undertake an inquiry or investigation; or

(6) a referral from the Board is transmitted to the Committee.

(b) The Committee also has investigatory authority over:

(1) certain unauthorized disclosures of intelligence-related information, pursuant to House Rule X, clauses 11(g)(4) and (g)(5); and

(2) reports received from the Office of the Inspector General pursuant to House Rule II, clause 6(c)(5).

RULE 15. COMPLAINTS

(a) A complaint submitted to the Committee shall be in writing, dated, and properly verified (a document will be considered properly verified where a notary executes it with the language, ''Signed and sworn to (or affirmed) before me on (date) by (the name of the person))'' setting forth in simple, concise, and direct statements—

(1) the name and legal address of the party filing the complaint (hereinafter referred to as the ''complainant'');

(2) the name and position or title of the respondent;

(3) the nature of the alleged violation of the Code of Official Conduct or of other law, rule, regulation, or other standard of conduct applicable to the performance of duties or discharge of responsibilities; and

(4) the facts alleged to give rise to the violation. The complaint shall not contain innuendo, speculative assertions, or conclusory statements.

(b) Any documents in the possession of the complainant that relate to the allegations may be submitted with the complaint.

(c) Information offered as a complaint by a Member of the House of Representatives may be transmitted directly to the Committee.

(d) Information offered as a complaint by an individual not a Member of the House may be transmitted to the Committee, provided that a Member of the House certifies in writing that such Member believes the information is submitted in good faith and warrants the review and consideration of the Committee.

(e) A complaint must be accompanied by a certification, which may be unsworn, that the complainant has provided an exact copy of the filed complaint and all attachments to the respondent.

(f) The Committee may defer action on a complaint against a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives when the complaint alleges conduct that the Committee has reason to believe is being reviewed by appropriate law enforcement or regulatory authorities, or when the Committee determines that it is appropriate for the conduct alleged in the complaint to be reviewed initially by law enforcement or regulatory authorities.

(g) A complaint may not be amended without leave of the Committee. Otherwise, any new allegations of improper conduct must be submitted in a new complaint that independently meets the procedural requirements of the Rules of the House of Representatives and the Committee's Rules.

(h) The Committee shall not accept, and shall return to the complainant, any complaint submitted within the 60 days prior to an election in which the subject of the complaint is a candidate.

(i) The Committee shall not consider a complaint, nor shall any investigation be undertaken by the Committee, of any alleged violation which occurred before the third previous Congress unless the Committee determines that the alleged violation is directly related to an alleged violation which occurred in a more recent Congress.

RULE 16. DUTIES OF COMMITTEE CHAIR AND RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

(a) Whenever information offered as a complaint is submitted to the Committee, the Chair and Ranking Minority Member shall have 14 calendar days or 5 legislative days, whichever occurs first, to determine whether the information meets the requirements of the Committee's rules for what constitutes a complaint.

(b) Whenever the Chair and Ranking Minority Member jointly determine that information submitted to the Committee meets the requirements of the Committee's rules for what constitutes a complaint, they shall have 45 calendar days or 5 legislative days, whichever is later, after the date that the Chair and Ranking Minority Member determine that information filed meets the requirements of the Committee's rules for what constitutes a complaint, unless the Committee by an affirmative vote of a majority of its members votes otherwise, to—

(1) recommend to the Committee that it dispose of the complaint, or any portion thereof, in any manner that does not require action by the House, which may include dismissal of the complaint or resolution of the complaint by a letter to the Member, officer, or employee of the House against whom the complaint is made;

(2) establish an investigative subcommittee; or

(3) request that the Committee extend the applicable 45-calendar day period when they determine more time is necessary in order to make a recommendation under paragraph (1) or (2) of Rule 16(b).

(c) The Chair and Ranking Minority Member may jointly gather additional information concerning alleged conduct which is the basis of a complaint or of information offered as a complaint until they have established an investigative subcommittee or the Chair or Ranking Minority Member has placed on the agenda the issue of whether to establish an investigative subcommittee.

(d) If the Chair and Ranking Minority Member jointly determine that information submitted to the Committee meets the requirements of the Committee rules for what constitutes a complaint, and the complaint is not disposed of within 45 calendar days or 5 legislative days, whichever is later, and no additional 45-day extension is made, then they shall establish an investigative subcommittee and forward the complaint, or any portion thereof, to that subcommittee for its consideration. If at any time during the time period either the Chair or Ranking Minority Member places on the agenda the issue of whether to establish an investigative subcommittee, then an investigative subcommittee may be established only by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Committee.

(e) Whenever the Chair and Ranking Minority Member jointly determine that information submitted to the Committee does not meet the requirements for what constitutes a complaint set forth in the Committee rules, they may (1) return the information to the complainant with a statement that it fails to meet the requirements for what constitutes a complaint set forth in the Committee's rules; or (2) recommend to the Committee that it authorize the establishment of an investigative subcommittee.

RULE 17. PROCESSING OF COMPLAINTS

(a) If a complaint is in compliance with House and Committee Rules, a copy of the complaint and the Committee Rules shall be forwarded to the respondent within 5 days with notice that the complaint conforms to the applicable rules.

(b) The respondent may, within 30 days of the Committee's notification, provide to the Committee any information relevant to a complaint filed with the Committee. The respondent may submit a written statement in response to the complaint. Such a statement shall be signed by the respondent. If the statement is prepared by counsel for the respondent, the respondent shall sign a representation that the respondent has reviewed the response and agrees with the factual assertions contained therein.

(c) The Committee staff may request information from the respondent or obtain additional information relevant to the case from other sources prior to the establishment of an investigative subcommittee only when so directed by the Chair and Ranking Minority Member.

(d) The respondent shall be notified in writing regarding the Committee's decision either to dismiss the complaint or to create an investigative subcommittee.

RULE 17A. REFERRALS FROM THE BOARD OF THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS

(a) The Committee has exclusive jurisdiction over the interpretation, administration, and enforcement of the Code of Official Conduct pursuant to clause 1(g) of House Rule X. Receipt of referrals from the Board under this rule does not limit the Committee's discretion to address referrals in any way through the appropriate procedures authorized by Committee Rules. The Committee shall review the report and findings transmitted by the Board without prejudice or presumptions as to the merit of the allegations.

(b)(1) Whenever the Committee receives either (A) a referral containing a written report and any findings and supporting documentation from the Board; or (B) a referral from the Board pursuant to a request under Rule 17A(k), the Chair shall have 45 calendar days or 5 legislative days after the date the referral is received, whichever is later, to make public the report and findings of the Board unless the Chair and Ranking Minority Member jointly decide, or the Committee votes, to withhold such information for not more than one additional 45-day period.

(2) At least one calendar day before the Committee makes public any report and findings of the Board, the Chair shall notify in writing the Board and the Member, officer, or employee who is the subject of the referral of the impending public release of these documents. At the same time, the Chair shall transmit a copy of any public statement on the Committee's disposition of the matter and any accompanying Committee report to the individual who is the subject of the referral.

(3) All public statements and reports and findings of the Board that are required to be made public under this Rule shall be posted on the Committee's website.

(c) If the OCE report and findings are withheld for an additional 45-day period pursuant to paragraph (b)(1), the Chair shall—

(1) make a public statement on the day of such decision or vote that the matter referred from the Board has been extended; and

(2) make public the written report and findings pursuant to paragraph (b) upon the termination of such additional period.

(d) If the Board transmits a report with a recommendation to dismiss or noting a matter as unresolved due to a tie vote, and the matter is extended for an additional period as provided in paragraph (b), the Committee is not required to make a public statement that the matter has been extended pursuant to paragraph (b)(1).

(e) If the Committee votes to dismiss a matter referred from the Board, the Committee is not required to make public the written report and findings of the Board pursuant to paragraph (c) unless the Committee's vote is inconsistent with the recommendation of the Board. A vote by the

Committee to dismiss a matter is not considered inconsistent with a report from the Board that the matter is unresolved by the Board due to a tie vote.

(f) Except as provided by paragraph (g):

(1) If the Committee establishes an investigative subcommittee respecting any matter referred by the Board, then the report and findings of the Board shall not be made public until the conclusion of the investigative subcommittee process. The Committee shall issue a public statement noting the establishment of an investigative subcommittee, which shall include the name of the Member, officer, or employee who is the subject of the inquiry, and shall set forth the alleged violation.

(2) If any such investigative subcommittee does not conclude its review within one year after the Board's referral, then the Committee shall make public the report of the Board no later than one year after the referral. If the investigative subcommittee does not conclude its review before the end of the Congress in which the report of the Board is made public, the Committee shall make public any findings of the Board on the last day of that Congress.

(g) If the vote of the Committee is a tie or the Committee fails to act by the close of any applicable period(s) under this rule, the report and the findings of the Board shall be made public by the Committee, along with a public statement by the Chair explaining the status of the matter.

(h)(1) If the Committee agrees to a request from an appropriate law enforcement or regulatory authority to defer taking action on a matter referred by the Board under paragraph (b)—

(A) The Committee is not required to make public the written report and findings of the Board pursuant to paragraph (c), except that if the recommendation of the Board is that the matter requires further review, the Committee shall make public the written report of the Board but not the findings; and

(B) The Committee shall make a public statement that it is deferring taking action on the matter at the request of such law enforcement or regulatory authority within one day (excluding weekends and public holidays) of the day that the Committee agrees to the request.

(2) If the Committee has not acted on the matter within one year of the date the public statement described in paragraph (h)(1)(B) is released, the Committee shall make a public statement that it continues to defer taking action on the matter. The Committee shall make a new statement upon the expiration of each succeeding one-year period during which the Committee has not acted on the matter.

(i) The Committee shall not accept, and shall return to the Board, any referral from the Board within 60 days before a Federal, State, or local election in which the subject of the referral is a candidate.

(j) The Committee may postpone any reporting requirement under this rule that falls within that 60-day period until after the date of the election in which the subject of the referral is a candidate. For purposes of calculating any applicable period under this Rule, any days within the 60-day period before such an election shall not be counted.

(k)(1) At any time after the Committee receives written notification from the Board of the Office of Congressional Ethics that the Board is undertaking a review of alleged conduct of any Member, officer, or employee of the House at a time when the Committee is investigating, or has completed an investigation of the same matter, the Committee may so notify the Board in writing and request that the Board cease its review and refer the matter to the Committee for its consideration immediately. The Committee shall also notify the Board in writing if the Committee has not reached a final resolution of the matter or has not referred the matter to the appropriate Federal or State authorities by the end of any applicable time period specified in Rule 17A (including any permissible extension).

(2) The Committee may not request a second referral of the matter from the Board if the Committee has notified the Board that it is unable to resolve the matter previously requested pursuant to this section. The Board may subsequently send a referral regarding a matter previously requested and returned by the Committee after the conclusion of the Board's review process.

RULE 18. COMMITTEE-INITIATED INQUIRY OR INVESTIGATION

(a) Notwithstanding the absence of a filed complaint, the Committee may consider any information in its possession indicating that a Member, officer, or employee may have committed a violation of the Code of Official Conduct or any law, rule, regulation, or other standard of conduct applicable to the conduct of such Member, officer, or employee in the performance of the duties or the discharge of the responsibilities of such individual. The Chair and Ranking Minority Member may jointly gather additional information concerning such an alleged violation by a Member, officer, or employee unless and until an investigative subcommittee has been established. The Chair and Ranking Minority Member may also jointly take appropriate action consistent with Committee Rules to resolve the matter.

(b) If the Committee votes to establish an investigative subcommittee, the Committee shall proceed in accordance with Rule 19.

(c) Any written request by a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives that the Committee conduct an investigation into such person's own conduct shall be considered in accordance with subsection (a) of this Rule.

(d) An inquiry shall not be undertaken regarding any alleged violation that occurred before the third previous Congress unless a majority of the Committee determines that the alleged violation is directly related to an alleged violation that occurred in a more recent Congress.

(e)(1) An inquiry shall be undertaken by an investigative subcommittee with regard to any felony conviction of a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives in a Federal, State, or local court who has been sentenced. Notwithstanding this provision, the Committee has the discretion to initiate an inquiry upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Committee at any time prior to conviction or sentencing.

(2) Not later than 30 days after a Member of the House is indicted or otherwise formally charged with criminal conduct in any Federal, State, or local court, the Committee shall either initiate an inquiry upon a majority vote of the members of the Committee or submit a report to the House describing its reasons for not initiating an inquiry and describing the actions, if any, that the Committee has taken in response to the allegations.

RULE 19. INVESTIGATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

(a)(1) Upon the establishment of an investigative subcommittee, the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee shall designate four members (with equal representation from the majority and minority parties) to serve as an investigative subcommittee to undertake an inquiry. Members of the Committee and Members of the House selected pursuant to clause 5(a)(4)(A) of Rule X of the House of Representatives are eligible for appointment to an investigative subcommittee, as determined by the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee. At the time of appointment, the Chair shall designate one member of the subcommittee to serve as the Chair and the Ranking Minority Member shall designate one member of the subcommittee to serve as the ranking minority member of the investigative subcommittee. The Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee may serve as members of an investigative subcommittee, but may not serve as non-voting, ex-officio members.

(2) The respondent shall be notified of the membership of the investigative subcommittee and shall have 10 days after such notice is transmitted to object to the participation of any subcommittee member. Such objection shall be in writing and must be on the grounds that the subcommittee member cannot render an impartial and unbiased decision. The members of the Committee shall engage in a collegial discussion regarding such objection. The subcommittee member against whom the objection is made shall be the sole judge of any disqualification and may choose to seek disqualification from participating in the inquiry pursuant to Rule 9(e).

(b) In an inquiry undertaken by an investigative subcommittee—

(1) All proceedings, including the taking of testimony, shall be conducted in executive session and all testimony taken by deposition or things produced pursuant to subpoena or otherwise shall be deemed to have been taken or produced in executive session.

(2) The Chair of the investigative subcommittee shall ask the respondent and all witnesses whether they intend to be represented by counsel. If so, the respondent or witnesses or their legal representatives shall provide written designation of counsel. A respondent or witness who is represented by counsel shall not be questioned in the absence of counsel unless an explicit waiver is obtained.

(3) The subcommittee shall provide the respondent an opportunity to present, orally or in writing, a statement, which must be under oath or affirmation, regarding the allegations and any other relevant questions arising out of the inquiry.

(4) The staff may interview witnesses, examine documents and other evidence, and request that submitted statements be under oath or affirmation and that documents be certified as to their authenticity and accuracy.

(5) The subcommittee, by a majority vote of its members, may require, by subpoena or otherwise, the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of such books, records, correspondence, memoranda, papers, documents, and other items as it deems necessary to the conduct of the inquiry. Unless the Committee otherwise provides, the subpoena power shall rest in the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee and a subpoena shall be issued upon the request of the investigative subcommittee.

(6) The subcommittee shall require that testimony be given under oath or affirmation. The form of the oath or affirmation shall be: ''Do you solemnly swear (or affirm) that the testimony you will give before this subcommittee in the matter now under consideration will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (so help you God)?'' The oath or affirmation shall be administered by the Chair or subcommittee member designated by the Chair to administer oaths.

(c) During the inquiry, the procedure respecting the admissibility of evidence and rulings shall be as follows:

(1) Any relevant evidence shall be admissible unless the evidence is privileged under

the precedents of the House of Representatives.

(2) The Chair of the subcommittee or other presiding member at any investigative subcommittee proceeding shall rule upon any question of admissibility or relevance of evidence, motion, procedure, or any other matter, and may direct any witness to answer any question under penalty of contempt. A witness, witness counsel, or a member of the subcommittee may appeal any rulings to the members present at that proceeding. A majority vote of the members present at such proceeding on such appeal shall govern the question of admissibility, and no appeal shall lie to the Committee.

(3) Whenever a person is determined by a majority vote to be in contempt of the subcommittee, the matter may be referred to the Committee to determine whether to refer the matter to the House of Representatives for consideration.

(4) Committee counsel may, subject to subcommittee approval, enter into stipulations with the respondent and/or the respondent's counsel as to facts that are not in dispute.

(d) Upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the subcommittee members, and an affirmative vote of a majority of the full Committee, an investigative subcommittee may expand the scope of its inquiry.

(e) Upon completion of the inquiry, the staff shall draft for the investigative subcommittee a report that shall contain a comprehensive summary of the information received regarding the alleged violations.

(f) Upon completion of the inquiry, an investigative subcommittee, by a majority vote of its members, may adopt a Statement of Alleged Violation if it determines that there is substantial reason to believe that a violation of the Code of Official Conduct, or of a law, rule, regulation, or other standard of conduct applicable to the performance of official duties or the discharge of official responsibilities by a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives has occurred. If more than one violation is alleged, such Statement shall be divided into separate counts. Each count shall relate to a separate violation, shall contain a plain and concise statement of the alleged facts of such violation, and shall include a reference to the provision of the Code of Official Conduct or law, rule, regulation, or other applicable standard of conduct governing the performance of duties or discharge of responsibilities alleged to have been violated. A copy of such Statement shall be transmitted to the respondent and the respondent's counsel.

(g) If the investigative subcommittee does not adopt a Statement of Alleged Violation, it shall transmit to the Committee a report containing a summary of the information received in the inquiry, its conclusions and reasons therefore, and any appropriate recommendation.

RULE 20. AMENDMENTS TO STATEMENTS OF ALLEGED VIOLATION

(a) An investigative subcommittee may, upon an affirmative vote of a majority of its members, amend its Statement of Alleged Violation anytime before the Statement of Alleged Violation is transmitted to the Committee; and

(b) If an investigative subcommittee amends its Statement of Alleged Violation, the respondent shall be notified in writing and shall have 30 calendar days from the date of that notification to file an answer to the amended Statement of Alleged Violation.

RULE 21. COMMITTEE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

(a) Whenever an investigative subcommittee does not adopt a Statement of Alleged Violation and transmits a report to that effect to the Committee, the Committee may by an affirmative vote of a majority of its members transmit such report to the House of Representatives;

(b) Whenever an investigative subcommittee adopts a Statement of Alleged Violation but recommends that no further action be taken, it shall transmit a report to the Committee regarding the Statement of Alleged Violation; and

(c) Whenever an investigative subcommittee adopts a Statement of Alleged Violation, the respondent admits to the violations set forth in such Statement, the respondent waives the right to an adjudicatory hearing, and the respondent's waiver is approved by the Committee—

(1) the subcommittee shall prepare a report for transmittal to the Committee, a final draft of which shall be provided to the respondent not less than 15 calendar days before the subcommittee votes on whether to adopt the report;

(2) the respondent may submit views in writing regarding the final draft to the subcommittee within 7 calendar days of receipt of that draft;

(3) the subcommittee shall transmit a report to the Committee regarding the Statement of Alleged Violation together with any views submitted by the respondent pursuant to subparagraph (2), and the Committee shall make the report, together with the respondent's views, available to the public before the commencement of any sanction hearing; and

(4) the Committee shall by an affirmative vote of a majority of its members issue a report and transmit such report to the House of Representatives, together with the respondent's views previously submitted pursuant to subparagraph (2) and any additional views respondent may submit for attachment to the final report; and

(d) Members of the Committee shall have not less than 72 hours to review any report transmitted to the Committee by an investigative subcommittee before both the commencement of a sanction hearing and the Committee vote on whether to adopt the report.

RULE 22. RESPONDENT'S ANSWER

(a)(1) Within 30 days from the date of transmittal of a Statement of Alleged Violation, the respondent shall file with the investigative subcommittee an answer, in writing and under oath, signed by respondent and respondent's counsel. Failure to file an answer within the time prescribed shall be considered by the Committee as a denial of each count.

(2) The answer shall contain an admission to or denial of each count set forth in the Statement of Alleged Violation and may include negative, affirmative, or alternative defenses and any supporting evidence or other relevant information.

(b) The respondent may file a Motion for a Bill of Particulars within 10 days of the date of transmittal of the Statement of Alleged Violation. If a Motion for a Bill of Particulars is filed, the respondent shall not be required to file an answer until 20 days after the subcommittee has replied to such motion.

(c)(1) The respondent may file a Motion to Dismiss within 10 days of the date of transmittal of the Statement of Alleged Violation or, if a Motion for a Bill of Particulars has been filed, within 10 days of the date of the subcommittee's reply to the Motion for a Bill of Particulars. If a Motion to Dismiss is filed, the respondent shall not be required to file an answer until 20 days after the subcommittee has replied to the Motion to Dismiss, unless the respondent previously filed a Motion for a Bill of Particulars, in which case the respondent shall not be required to file an answer until 10 days after the subcommittee has replied to the Motion to Dismiss. The investigative subcommittee shall rule upon any motion to dismiss filed during the period between the establishment of the subcommittee and the subcommittee's transmittal of a report or Statement of Alleged Violation to the Committee or to the Chair and Ranking Minority Member at the conclusion of an inquiry, and no appeal of the subcommittee's ruling shall lie to the Committee.

(2) A Motion to Dismiss may be made on the grounds that the Statement of Alleged Violation fails to state facts that constitute a violation of the Code of Official Conduct or other applicable law, rule, regulation, or standard of conduct, or on the grounds that the Committee lacks jurisdiction to consider the allegations contained in the Statement.

(d) Any motion filed with the subcommittee pursuant to this rule shall be accompanied by a Memorandum of Points and Authorities.

(e)(1) The Chair of the investigative subcommittee, for good cause shown, may permit the respondent to file an answer or motion after the day prescribed above.

(2) If the ability of the respondent to present an adequate defense is not adversely affected and special circumstances so require, the Chair of the investigative subcommittee may direct the respondent to file an answer or motion prior to the day prescribed above.

(f) If the day on which any answer, motion, reply, or other pleading must be filed falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, such filing shall be made on the first business day thereafter.

(g) As soon as practicable after an answer has been filed or the time for such filing has expired, the Statement of Alleged Violation and any answer, motion, reply, or other pleading connected therewith shall be transmitted by the Chair of the investigative subcommittee to the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee.

RULE 23. ADJUDICATORY HEARINGS

(a) If a Statement of Alleged Violation is transmitted to the Chair and Ranking Minority Member pursuant to Rule 22, and no waiver pursuant to Rule 26(b) has occurred, the Chair shall designate the members of the Committee who did not serve on the investigative subcommittee to serve on an adjudicatory subcommittee. The Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee shall be the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the adjudicatory subcommittee unless they served on the investigative subcommittee. The respondent shall be notified of the designation of the adjudicatory subcommittee and shall have 10 days after such notice is transmitted to object to the participation of any subcommittee member. Such objection shall be in writing and shall be on the grounds that the member cannot render an impartial and unbiased decision. The members of the Committee shall engage in a collegial discussion regarding such objection. The member against whom the objection is made shall be the sole judge of any disqualification and may choose to seek disqualification from serving on the subcommittee pursuant to Rule 9(e).

(b) A majority of the adjudicatory subcommittee membership plus one must be present at all times for the conduct of any business pursuant to this rule.

(c) The adjudicatory subcommittee shall hold a hearing to determine whether any counts in the Statement of Alleged Violation have been proved by clear and convincing evidence and shall make findings of fact, except where such violations have been admitted by respondent.

(d) The subcommittee may require, by subpoena or otherwise, the attendance and testimony of such witnesses and production of such books, records, correspondence, memoranda, papers, documents, and other items as it deems necessary. A subpoena for documents may specify terms of return other than at a meeting or hearing of the subcommittee. Depositions, interrogatories, and sworn statements taken under any investigative subcommittee direction may be accepted into the hearing record.

(e) The procedures set forth in clause 2(g)(1)–(4), (6)–(7) and (k) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives shall apply to adjudicatory hearings. All such hearings shall be open to the public unless the adjudicatory subcommittee, pursuant to such clause, determines that the hearings or any part thereof should be closed.

(f)(1) The adjudicatory subcommittee shall, in writing, notify the respondent that the respondent and respondent's counsel have the right to inspect, review, copy, or photograph books, papers, documents, photographs, or other tangible objects that committee counsel intends to use as evidence against the respondent in an adjudicatory hearing. The respondent shall be given access to such evidence, and shall be provided the names of witnesses committee counsel intends to call, and a summary of their expected testimony, no less than 15 calendar days prior to any such hearing. Except in extraordinary circumstances, no evidence may be introduced or witness called in an adjudicatory hearing unless the respondent has been afforded a prior opportunity to review such evidence or has been provided the name of the witness.

(2) After a witness has testified on direct examination at an adjudicatory hearing, the Committee, at the request of the respondent, shall make available to the respondent any statement of the witness in the possession of the Committee which relates to the subject matter as to which the witness has testified.

(3) Any other testimony, statement, or documentary evidence in the possession of the Committee which is material to the respondent's defense shall, upon request, be made available to the respondent.

(g) No less than 5 days prior to the hearing, the respondent or counsel shall provide the adjudicatory subcommittee with the names of witnesses expected to be called, summaries of their expected testimony, and copies of any documents or other evidence proposed to be introduced.

(h) The respondent or counsel may apply to the subcommittee for the issuance of subpoenas for the appearance of witnesses or the production of evidence. The application shall be granted upon a showing by the respondent that the proposed testimony or evidence is relevant and not otherwise available to respondent. The application may be denied if not made at a reasonable time or if the testimony or evidence would be merely cumulative.

(i) No later than two weeks or 5 legislative days after the Chair of the Committee designates members to serve on an adjudicatory subcommittee, whichever is later, the Chair of the adjudicatory subcommittee shall establish a schedule and procedure for the hearing and for prehearing matters. The procedures may be changed either by the Chair of the adjudicatory subcommittee or by a majority vote of the members of the subcommittee. If the Chair makes prehearing rulings upon any question of admissibility or relevance of evidence, motion, procedure, or any other matter, the Chair shall make available those rulings to all subcommittee members at the time of the ruling.

(j) The procedures regarding the admissibility of evidence and rulings shall be as follows:

(1) Any relevant evidence shall be admissible unless the evidence is privileged under the precedents of the House of Representatives.

(2) The Chair of the subcommittee or other presiding member at an adjudicatory subcommittee hearing shall rule upon any question of admissibility or relevance of evidence, motion, procedure, or any other matter, and may direct any witness to answer any question under penalty of contempt. A witness, witness counsel, or a member of the subcommittee may appeal any ruling to the members present at that proceeding. A majority vote of the members present at such proceeding on such an appeal shall govern the question of admissibility and no appeal shall lie to the Committee.

(3) Whenever a witness is deemed by a Chair or other presiding member to be in contempt of the subcommittee, the matter may be referred to the Committee to determine whether to refer the matter to the House of Representatives for consideration.

(4) Committee counsel may, subject to subcommittee approval, enter into stipulations with the respondent and/or the respondent's counsel as to facts that are not in dispute.

(k) Unless otherwise provided, the order of an adjudicatory hearing shall be as follows:

(1) The Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the subcommittee shall open the hearing with equal time and during which time, the Chair shall state the adjudicatory subcommittee's authority to conduct the hearing and the purpose of the hearing.

(2) The Chair shall then recognize Committee counsel and the respondent's counsel, in turn, for the purpose of giving opening statements.

(3) Testimony from witnesses and other relevant evidence shall be received in the following order whenever possible:

(i) witnesses (deposition transcripts and affidavits obtained during the inquiry may be used in lieu of live witnesses) and other evidence offered by the Committee counsel,

(ii) witnesses and other evidence offered by the respondent,

(iii) rebuttal witnesses, as permitted by the Chair.

(4) Witnesses at a hearing shall be examined first by counsel calling such witness. The opposing counsel may then cross-examine the witness. Redirect examination and recross examination by counsel may be permitted at the Chair's discretion. Subcommittee members may then question witnesses. Unless otherwise directed by the Chair, questions by Subcommittee members shall be conducted under the five-minute rule.

(5) The Chair shall then recognize Committee counsel and respondent's counsel, in turn, for the purpose of giving closing arguments. Committee counsel may reserve time for rebuttal argument, as permitted by the Chair.

(l) A subpoena to a witness to appear at a hearing shall be served sufficiently in advance of that witness' scheduled appearance to allow the witness a reasonable period of time, as determined by the Chair of the adjudicatory subcommittee, to prepare for the hearing and to employ counsel.

(m) Each witness appearing before the subcommittee shall be furnished a printed copy of the Committee rules, the relevant provisions of the Rules of the House of Representatives applicable to the rights of witnesses, and a copy of the Statement of Alleged Violation.

(n) Testimony of all witnesses shall be taken under oath or affirmation. The form of the oath or affirmation shall be: ''Do you solemnly swear (or affirm) that the testimony you will give before this subcommittee in the matter now under consideration will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (so help you God)?'' The oath or affirmation shall be administered by the Chair or Committee member designated by the Chair to administer oaths.

(o) At an adjudicatory hearing, the burden of proof rests on Committee counsel to establish the facts alleged in the Statement of Alleged Violation by clear and convincing evidence. However, Committee counsel need not present any evidence regarding any count that is admitted by the respondent or any fact stipulated. Committee counsel or respondent's counsel may move the adjudicatory subcommittee to make a finding that there is no material fact at issue. If the adjudicatory subcommittee finds that there is no material fact at issue, the burden of proof will be deemed satisfied.

(p) As soon as practicable after all testimony and evidence have been presented, the subcommittee shall consider each count contained in the Statement of Alleged Violation and shall determine by a majority vote of its members whether each count has been proved. If a majority of the subcommittee does not vote that a count has been proved, a motion to reconsider that vote may be made only by a member who voted that the count was not proved. A count that is not proved shall be considered as dismissed by the subcommittee.

(q) The findings of the adjudicatory subcommittee shall be reported to the Committee.

RULE 24. SANCTION HEARING AND CONSIDERATION OF SANCTIONS OR OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) If no count in a Statement of Alleged Violation is proved, the Committee shall prepare a report to the House of Representatives, based upon the report of the adjudicatory subcommittee.

(b) If an adjudicatory subcommittee completes an adjudicatory hearing pursuant to Rule 23 and reports that any count of the Statement of Alleged Violation has been proved, a hearing before the Committee shall be held to receive oral and/or written submissions by counsel for the Committee and counsel for the respondent as to the sanction the Committee should recommend to the House of Representatives with respect to such violations. Testimony by witnesses shall not be heard except by written request and vote of a majority of the Committee.

(c) Upon completion of any proceeding held pursuant to clause (b), the Committee shall consider and vote on a motion to recommend to the House of Representatives that the House take disciplinary action. If a majority of the Committee does not vote in favor of the recommendation that the House of Representatives take action, a motion to reconsider that vote may be made only by a member who voted against the recommendation. The Committee may also, by majority vote, adopt a motion to issue a Letter of Reproval or take other appropriate Committee action.

(d) If the Committee determines a Letter of Reproval constitutes sufficient action, the Committee shall include any such letter as a part of its report to the House of Representatives.

(e) With respect to any proved counts against a Member of the House of Representatives, the Committee may recommend to the House one or more of the following sanctions:

(1) Expulsion from the House of Representatives.

(2) Censure.

(3) Reprimand.

(4) Fine.

(5) Denial or limitation of any right, power, privilege, or immunity of the Member if under the Constitution the House of Representatives may impose such denial or limitation.

(6) Any other sanction determined by the Committee to be appropriate.

(f) With respect to any proved counts against an officer or employee of the House of Representatives, the Committee may recommend to the House one or more of the following sanctions:

(1) Dismissal from employment.

(2) Reprimand.

(3) Fine.

(4) Any other sanction determined by the Committee to be appropriate.

(g) With respect to the sanctions that the Committee may recommend, reprimand is appropriate for serious violations, censure is appropriate for more serious violations, and expulsion of a Member or dismissal of an officer or employee is appropriate for the most serious violations. A recommendation of a fine is appropriate in a case in which it is likely that the violation was committed to secure a personal financial benefit; and a recommendation of a denial or limitation of a right, power, privilege, or immunity of a Member is appropriate when the violation bears upon the exercise or holding of such right, power, privilege, or immunity. This clause sets forth general guidelines and does not limit the authority of the Committee to recommend other sanctions.

(h) The Committee report shall contain an appropriate statement of the evidence supporting the Committee's findings and a statement of the Committee's reasons for the recommended sanction.

RULE 25. DISCLOSURE OF EXCULPATORY INFORMATION TO RESPONDENT

If the Committee, or any investigative or adjudicatory subcommittee at any time receives any exculpatory information respecting a Complaint or Statement of Alleged Violation concerning a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives, it shall make such information known and available to the Member, officer, or employee as soon as practicable, but in no event later than the transmittal of evidence supporting a proposed Statement of Alleged Violation pursuant to Rule 26(c). If an investigative subcommittee does not adopt a Statement of Alleged Violation, it shall identify any exculpatory information in its possession at the conclusion of its inquiry and shall include such information, if any, in the subcommittee's final report to the Committee regarding its inquiry. For purposes of this rule, exculpatory evidence shall be any evidence or information that is substantially favorable to the respondent with respect to the allegations or charges before an investigative or adjudicatory subcommittee.

RULE 26. RIGHTS OF RESPONDENTS AND WITNESSES

(a) A respondent shall be informed of the right to be represented by counsel, to be provided at the respondent's own expense.

(b) A respondent may seek to waive any procedural rights or steps in the disciplinary process. A request for waiver must be in writing, signed by the respondent, and must detail what procedural steps the respondent seeks to waive. Any such request shall be subject to the acceptance of the Committee or subcommittee, as appropriate.

(c) Not less than 10 calendar days before a scheduled vote by an investigative subcommittee on a Statement of Alleged Violation, the subcommittee shall provide the respondent with a copy of the Statement of Alleged Violation it intends to adopt together with all evidence it intends to use to prove those charges which it intends to adopt, including documentary evidence, witness testimony, memoranda of witness interviews, and physical evidence, unless the subcommittee by an affirmative vote of a majority of its members decides to withhold certain evidence in order to protect a witness, but if such evidence is withheld, the subcommittee shall inform the respondent that evidence is being withheld and of the count to which such evidence relates.

(d) Neither the respondent nor respondent's counsel shall, directly or indirectly, contact the subcommittee or any member thereof during the period of time set forth in paragraph (c) except for the sole purpose of settlement discussions where counsels for the respondent and the subcommittee are present.

(e) If, at any time after the issuance of a Statement of Alleged Violation, the Committee or any subcommittee thereof determines that it intends to use evidence not provided to a respondent under paragraph (c) to prove the charges contained in the Statement of Alleged Violation (or any amendment thereof), such evidence shall be made immediately available to the respondent, and it may be used in any further proceeding under the Committee's rules.

(f) Evidence provided pursuant to paragraph (c) or (e) shall be made available to the respondent and respondent's counsel only after each agrees, in writing, that no document, information, or other materials obtained pursuant to that paragraph shall be made public until—

(1) such time as a Statement of Alleged Violation is made public by the Committee if the respondent has waived the adjudicatory hearing; or

(2) the commencement of an adjudicatory hearing if the respondent has not waived an adjudicatory hearing; but the failure of respondent and respondent's counsel to so agree in writing, and therefore not receive the evidence, shall not preclude the issuance of a Statement of Alleged Violation at the end of the period referenced in (c).

(g) A respondent shall receive written notice whenever—

(1) the Chair and Ranking Minority Member determine that information the Committee has received constitutes a complaint;

(2) a complaint or allegation is transmitted to an investigative subcommittee;

(3) that subcommittee votes to authorize its first subpoena or to take testimony under oath, whichever occurs first; or

(4) that subcommittee or the Committee votes to expand the scope of the inquiry of the investigative subcommittee.

(h) Whenever an investigative subcommittee adopts a Statement of Alleged Violation and a respondent enters into an agreement with that subcommittee to settle a complaint on which the Statement is based, that agreement, unless the respondent requests otherwise, shall be in writing and signed by the respondent and the respondent's counsel, the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the subcommittee, and outside counsel, if any.

(i) Statements or information derived solely from a respondent or respondent's counsel during any settlement discussions between the Committee or a subcommittee thereof and the respondent shall not be included in any report of the subcommittee or the Committee or otherwise publicly disclosed without the consent of the respondent.

(j) Whenever a motion to establish an investigative subcommittee does not prevail, the Committee shall promptly send a letter to the respondent informing the respondent of such vote.

(k) Witnesses shall be afforded a reasonable period of time, as determined by the Committee or subcommittee, to prepare for an appearance before an investigative subcommittee or for an adjudicatory hearing and to obtain counsel.

(l) Prior to their testimony, witnesses shall be furnished a printed copy of the Committee's Rules of Procedure and the provisions of the Rules of the House of Representatives applicable to the rights of witnesses.

(m) Witnesses may be accompanied by their own counsel for the purpose of advising them concerning their constitutional rights. The Chair may punish breaches of order and decorum, and of professional responsibility on the part of counsel, by censure and exclusion from the hearings; and the Committee may cite the offender to the House of Representatives for contempt.

(n) Each witness subpoenaed to provide testimony or other evidence shall be provided the same per diem rate as established, authorized, and regulated by the Committee on House Administration for Members, officers and employees of the House, and, as the Chair considers appropriate, actual expenses of travel to or from the place of examination. No compensation shall be authorized for attorney's fees or for a witness' lost earnings. Such per diem may not be paid if a witness had been summoned at the place of examination.

(o) With the approval of the Committee, a witness, upon request, may be provided with a transcript of the witness' own deposition or other testimony taken in executive session, or, with the approval of the Chair and Ranking Minority Member, may be permitted to examine such transcript in the office of the Committee. Any such request shall be in writing and shall include a statement that the witness, and counsel, agree to maintain the confidentiality of all executive session proceedings covered by such transcript.

RULE 27. FRIVOLOUS FILINGS

If a complaint or information offered as a complaint is deemed frivolous by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Committee, the Committee may take such action as it, by an affirmative vote of a majority, deems appropriate in the circumstances.

RULE 28. REFERRALS TO FEDERAL OR STATE AUTHORITIES

Referrals made under clause 3(a)(3) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives may be made by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the Committee.

SENATE ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to an enrolled joint resolution of the Senate of the following title:

S.J. Res. 34. Joint Resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Federal Communications Commission relating to ''Protecting the Privacy of Customers of Broadband and Other Telecommunications Services''.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, April 3, 2017, at noon for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

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

940. A letter from the Acting Secretary of the Army, Department of Defense, transmitting the Annual Report to Congress on the Activities of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation for 2016, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2166(i); Public Law 106-398, Sec. 1 (as amended by Public Law 107-314, Sec. 932(a)(1)); (116 Stat. 2625); to the Committee on Armed Services.

941. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department of Defense Chemical Demilitarization Program Semi-Annual Report to Congress for March 2017, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1521(j); Public Law 99-145, Sec. 1412 (as amended by Public Law 112-239, Sec. 1421(a)); (126 Stat. 204); to the Committee on Armed Services.

942. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter authorizing five officers to wear the insignia of the grade of brigadier general, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 777(b)(3)(B); Public Law 104-106, Sec. 503(a)(1) (as added by Public Law 108-136, Sec. 509(a)(3)); (117 Stat. 1458); to the Committee on Armed Services.

943. A letter from the Assistant Administrator, Diversion Control Division, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department's final rule — Schedules of Controlled Substances: Placement of Brivaracetam Into Schedule V [Docket No.: DEA-435] received March 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.

944. A letter from the Assistant Administrator, Diversion Control Division, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department's interim final rule — Schedules of Controlled Substances: Placement of FDA-Approved Products of Oral Solutions Containing Dronabinol [(—)-delta-9-transtetrahydrocannabinol (delta-9-THC)] in Schedule II [Docket No.: DEA-344] received March 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.

945. A letter from the Auditor, Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting a report entitled, ''DHCD Should Improve Management of the Housing Production Trust Fund to Better Meet Affordable Housing Goals'', pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 455(d); (87 Stat. 803); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

946. A letter from the Auditor, Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting a report entitled, ''Internal Control Weaknesses Found in the Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program'', pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 455(d); (87 Stat. 803); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

947. A letter from the Assistant Director for Legislative Affairs, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, transmitting the Bureau's FY 2016 No FEAR Act report, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 2301 note; Public Law 107-174, 203(a) (as amended by Public Law 109-435, Sec. 604(f)); (120 Stat. 3242); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

948. A letter from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Office of the General Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting a notification of designation of acting officer and a notification of 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.

949. A letter from the EEO Director, Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity, Social Security Administration, transmitting the Administration's FY 2016 No FEAR Act report, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 2301 note; Public Law 107-174, 203(a) (as amended by Public Law 109-435, Sec. 604(f)); (120 Stat. 3242); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

950. A letter from the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice, transmitting a report entitled, ''Debt Collection Recovery Activities of the Department of Justice for Civil Debts Referred for Collection Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2016'', pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3718(c); Public Law 97-452, Sec. 1(16)(A) (as amended by Public Law 99-578, Sec. 1(4)); (100 Stat. 3305); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

951. A letter from the Staff Director, United States Sentencing Commission, transmitting a report on the compliance of the federal district courts with documentation submission requirements of 28 U.S.C. 994(w)(1), pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 994(w)(3); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

952. A letter from the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting notification that the Department takes no position on enactment of H.R. 654, the Pacific Northwest Earthquake Preparedness Act of 2017; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

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

Mr. BRADY of Texas: Committee on Ways and Means. House Resolution 186. Resolution of inquiry directing the Secretary of the Treasury to provide to the House of Representatives the tax returns and other specified financial information of President Donald J. Trump; adversely (Rept. 115–73). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York (for herself, Mr. ROYCE of California, Ms. ADAMS, Ms. BASS, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. BERA, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. CLAY, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CRIST, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. DELANEY, Mrs. DEMINGS, Mr. DENT, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. FOSTER, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. HANABUSA, Mr. HECK, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Ms. KAPTUR, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. KIHUEN, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Ms. LEE, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MCEACHIN, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. MENG, Mr. NADLER, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. NORTON, Mr. O'ROURKE, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mr. PETERS, Mr. RICHMOND, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. SINEMA, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Ms. TITUS, Mr. TONKO, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California, Mr. WELCH, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. POLIS, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Ms. STEFANIK, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. HIMES, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. EVANS, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Ms. TSONGAS, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. REED, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. RASKIN, Ms. MOORE, Mr. MACARTHUR, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. BROWN of Maryland, Mr. COOPER, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. GUTIÉRREZ, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. TROTT, Mr. LANCE, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. KATKO, Mr. VALADAO, Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. PAULSEN, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, Mrs. LOVE, Mr. HURD, Mr. BACON, and Mr. BERGMAN):

H.R. 19. A bill to establish in the Smithsonian Institution a comprehensive women's history museum, and for other purposes; to the Committee on House Administration, and in addition to the Committees on Natural Resources, and Transportation and Infrastructure, 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. BISHOP of Utah:

H.R. 1800. A bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer certain Federal land to facilitate scientific research supporting Federal space and defense programs; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. TIPTON:

H.R. 1801. A bill to delay the effective date of the final rule of the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection titled ''Prepaid Accounts under the Electronic Fund Transfer Act (Regulation E) and the Truth In Lending Act (Regulation Z)''; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Ms. ESTY (for herself, Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, and Mrs. RADEWAGEN):

H.R. 1802. A bill to expand eligibility for the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers of the Department of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. DUNN:

H.R. 1803. A bill to establish the Constitutional Government Review Commission, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Rules, 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. BARR:

H.R. 1804. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a 3-year recovery period for all race horses; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. BARR:

H.R. 1805. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reduce the holding period used to determine whether horses are section 1231 assets to 12 months; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. BARR:

H.R. 1806. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the expensing of race horses; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. GOHMERT (for himself, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. WESTERMAN, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mr. RATCLIFFE, Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana, Mr. BABIN, and Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana):

H.R. 1807. A bill to exempt from the Lacey Act and the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 certain water transfers between any of the States of Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. GUTHRIE (for himself and Mr. COURTNEY):

H.R. 1808. A bill to amend and improve the Missing Children's Assistance Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. LEWIS of Minnesota (for himself, Ms. FOXX, Mr. ROKITA, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mrs. DAVIS of California, and Ms. WILSON of Florida):

H.R. 1809. A bill to reauthorize and improve the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. CURBELO of Florida (for himself and Mr. BLUMENAUER):

H.R. 1810. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow deductions and credits relating to expenditures in connection with marijuana sales conducted in compliance with State law; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. TAYLOR (for himself and Mr. CORREA):

H.R. 1811. A bill to amend the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to prohibit the use of funds appropriated to the Department of Homeland Security for the procurement of uniforms not manufactured in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security.

By Mr. SCHNEIDER (for himself, Mr. TONKO, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. CRIST, Mr. BEYER, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. DELANEY, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. HANABUSA, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. LEE, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mrs. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. NADLER, Mr. PETERS, Mr. POCAN, Mr. POLIS, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. SUOZZI, Ms. TSONGAS, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. CLAY, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. HASTINGS, and Mr. CARTWRIGHT):

H.R. 1812. A bill to provide that the Executive Order entitled ''Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth'' (March 28, 2017), shall have no force or effect, to prohibit the use of Federal funds to enforce the Executive Order, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Oversight and Government Reform, the Judiciary, and Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. ROGERS of Alabama (for himself, Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. GAETZ, Mr. BROOKS of Alabama, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. CULBERSON, Mr. KELLY of Mississippi, and Mr. CRAWFORD):

H.R. 1813. A bill to amend the Electronic Fund Transfer Act to impose a fee for remittance transfers to certain foreign countries, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, and the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. KINZINGER (for himself and Mr. LOEBSACK):

H.R. 1814. A bill to encourage spectrum licensees to make unused spectrum available for use by rural and smaller carriers in order to expand wireless coverage; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. ESPAILLAT (for himself, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. BEYER, Ms. MOORE, Mr. CORREA, Mr. EVANS, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Ms. NORTON, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. GALLEGO, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. WELCH, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. TED LIEU of California, and Mr. POLIS):

H.R. 1815. A bill to amend section 287 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to limit immigration enforcement actions at sensitive locations, to clarify the powers of immigration officers at sensitive locations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (for himself, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. GARAMENDI, and Mr. HUNTER):

H.R. 1816. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Navy to enter into a contract for the procurement of heavy icebreakers; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. DEFAZIO (for himself and Mr. BLUMENAUER):

H.R. 1817. A bill to prohibit the use of the poisons sodium fluoroacetate (known as ''Compound 1080'') and sodium cyanide for predator control; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. DENHAM (for himself, Mr. JONES, Mr. FARENTHOLD, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. GAETZ, Ms. TSONGAS, Mr. ROSS, and Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio):

H.R. 1818. A bill to amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to clarify provisions enacted by the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, to further the conservation of certain wildlife species, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. CARTWRIGHT (for himself, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Mr. CONNOLLY, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. BEYER, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Ms. LEE, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Ms. MATSUI, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. NORTON, Mr. POCAN, Mr. POLIS, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. TONKO, Ms. TSONGAS, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, and Mr. LOWENTHAL):

H.R. 1819. A bill to protect taxpayers from liability associated with the reclamation of surface coal mining operations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. BLUMENAUER (for himself, Mr. GARRETT, Mr. POLIS, Mr. AMASH, Ms. TITUS, and Mr. ROHRABACHER):

H.R. 1820. A bill to authorize Department of Veterans Affairs health care providers to provide recommendations and opinions to veterans regarding participation in State marijuana programs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BARTON (for himself and Mr. LEWIS of Georgia):

H.R. 1821. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the standard charitable mileage rate for delivery of meals to elderly, disabled, frail, and at risk individuals; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mrs. BLACKBURN:

H.R. 1822. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to limit the liability of health care professionals who volunteer to provide health care services in response to a disaster; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BLUMENAUER:

H.R. 1823. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the taxation and regulation of marijuana products, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. BLUMENAUER:

H.R. 1824. A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to reduce the gap between Federal and State marijuana policy, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, Financial Services, Natural Resources, Education and the Workforce, Veterans' Affairs, and Oversight and Government Reform, 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. COLLINS of New York (for himself, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. KIND, Mr. TIBERI, Mr. HARPER, Mr. KELLY of Mississippi, and Mr. MEEHAN):

H.R. 1825. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure more timely access to home health services for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, 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. CONNOLLY:

H.R. 1826. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to redistribute Federal funds that would otherwise be made available to States that do not provide for the Medicaid expansion in accordance with the Affordable Care Act to those States electing to provide those Medicaid benefits, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. DELANEY (for himself, Mr. JONES, Ms. PINGREE, Ms. SINEMA, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. MOORE, Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. BROWN of Maryland, Mr. RUSH, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. GARAMENDI, Ms. NORTON, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. KEATING, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. POCAN, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, and Mr. CARSON of Indiana):

H.R. 1827. A bill to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to provide a partial exemption to veterans from the eligibility requirements, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committees on Oversight and Government Reform, and House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. JENKINS of Kansas (for herself and Mr. KIND):

H.R. 1828. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for payments for certain rural health clinic and Federally qualified health center services furnished to hospice patients under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. KILMER (for himself and Mr. RUSSELL):

H.R. 1829. A bill to temporarily authorize recently retired members of the armed forces to be appointed to certain civil service positions, require the Secretary of Defense to issue certain notifications, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 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. LEWIS of Georgia:

H.R. 1830. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that a deduction equal to fair market value shall be allowed for charitable contributions of literary, musical, artistic, or scholarly compositions created by the donor; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. MACARTHUR (for himself, Mr. PASCRELL, and Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER):

H.R. 1831. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to permit hospitals in all-urban States to be considered Medicare dependent hospitals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York (for herself, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Ms. JAYAPAL, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. NADLER, Ms. LEE, Mr. COHEN, Mr. LYNCH, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Ms. ADAMS, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. BLUMENAUER, and Ms. TSONGAS):

H.R. 1832. A bill to authorize the appropriation of funds to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for conducting or supporting research on firearms safety or gun violence prevention; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York (for herself, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. NORTON, Mr. ELLISON, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. PLASKETT, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. EVANS, and Ms. ADAMS):

H.R. 1833. A bill to encourage initiatives for financial products and services that are appropriate and accessible for millions of American small businesses that do not have access to the financial mainstream; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS (for herself and Ms. SEWELL of Alabama):

H.R. 1834. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish a national Oncology Medical Home Demonstration Project under the Medicare program for the purpose of changing the Medicare payment for cancer care in order to enhance the quality of care and to improve cost efficiency, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia:

H.R. 1835. A bill to prohibit United States voluntary and assessed contributions to the United Nations if the United Nations imposes any tax or fee on any United States person or continues to develop or promote proposals for such a tax or fee; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. NADLER (for himself, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. ISSA, Mr. DEUTCH, and Mr. THOMAS J. ROONEY of Florida):

H.R. 1836. A bill to amend title 17, United States Code, to provide fair treatment of radio stations and artists for the use of sound recordings, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. NORCROSS (for himself and Mr. MCKINLEY):

H.R. 1837. A bill to require the Secretary of Energy to establish a pilot competitive grant program for the development of a skilled energy workforce, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. NUNES (for himself, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. STEWART, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. TIPTON, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. ROE of Tennessee, Mrs. WALORSKI, Mr. NORCROSS, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. BUCSHON, Mr. HENSARLING, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Mr. LANCE, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Ms. JENKINS of Kansas, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. PETERS, Mr. FARENTHOLD, and Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas):

H.R. 1838. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to modernize payments for ambulatory surgical centers under the Medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. O'ROURKE:

H.R. 1839. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to clarify the timing of deposits relating to the Civil Service Retirement System with respect to crediting military service, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. PAULSEN (for himself, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. WALZ, Mr. RUSH, and Mr. SHIMKUS):

H.R. 1840. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against tax for clinical testing expenses for qualified infectious disease drugs and rapid diagnostic tests; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. POLIS:

H.R. 1841. A bill to provide for the regulation of marijuana products, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, Natural Resources, and Agriculture, 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. RATCLIFFE:

H.R. 1842. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to include State crimes of violence as grounds for an enhanced penalty when sex offenders fail to register or report certain information as required by Federal law, to include prior military offenses for purposes of recidivist sentencing provisions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ROSKAM (for himself, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. HOLDING, Mr. REED, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. RENACCI, Mr. SMITH of Missouri, Mr. RICE of South Carolina, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, and Mr. HARRIS):

H.R. 1843. A bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from carrying out seizures relating to a structuring transaction unless the property to be seized derived from an illegal source or the funds were structured for the purpose of concealing the violation of another criminal law or regulation, to require notice and a post-seizure hearing for such seizures, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Financial Services, 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. RUIZ (for himself and Ms. STEFANIK):

H.R. 1844. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to use existing authorities to furnish health care at non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities to veterans who live more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest medical facility of the Department that furnishes the care sought by the veteran; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. SMUCKER:

H.R. 1845. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to facilitate the transition to Medicare for individuals enrolled in group health plans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ (for herself and Mr. SMITH of Texas):

H.R. 1846. A bill to reauthorize the National Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. YOHO (for himself, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. SCHRADER, Mr. MARINO, Mr. COHEN, Mr. COLLINS of New York, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. AGUILAR, Mr. AMODEI, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. BARLETTA, Ms. BASS, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. BERA, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. BONAMICI, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. BRAT, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. CLAY, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. COFFMAN, Mrs. COMSTOCK, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. COOK, Mr. CORREA, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania, Mr. CRIST, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. CURBELO of Florida, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. DELANEY, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. DELBENE, Mrs. DEMINGS, Mr. DENHAM, Mr. DENT, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. DONOVAN, Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of

Pennsylvania, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. EMMER, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Ms. ESTY, Mr. FASO, Mr. FARENTHOLD, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. FOSTER, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Ms. GABBARD, Mr. GALLAGHER, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas, Mr. GOSAR, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. GUTIÉRREZ, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. HECK, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. HIMES, Mr. HUFFMAN, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. JONES, Mr. JOYCE of Ohio, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. KEATING, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KHANNA, Mr. KIHUEN, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. KILMER, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHI, Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire, Mr. LANCE, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mr. LAWSON of Florida, Ms. LEE, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mrs. LOWEY, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. MACARTHUR, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. MARSHALL, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. BEYER, Mr. MCEACHIN, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MCHENRY, Mr. MCNERNEY, Ms. MCSALLY, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. MENG, Ms. MOORE, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. NADLER, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. NEAL, Mr. NOLAN, Mr. NORCROSS, Ms. NORTON, Mr. O'HALLERAN, Mr. O'ROURKE, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mr. PERRY, Mr. PETERS, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. POCAN, Mr. POLIS, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. RASKIN, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. PANETTA, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. ROSKAM, Mr. ROSS, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. ROYCE of California, Mr. RUIZ, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. RUSH, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. SABLAN, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. SCHNEIDER, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. SIRES, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. SOTO, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. TAKANO, Ms. TENNEY, Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Ms. TITUS, Mr. TONKO, Mrs. TORRES, Ms. TSONGAS, Mr. TURNER, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. VELA, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. WALKER, Mr. WALZ, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. WELCH, Mr. WILLIAMS, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. YODER, Mr. YOUNG of Iowa, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, and Mr. ZELDIN):

H.R. 1847. A bill to amend the Horse Protection Act to designate additional unlawful acts under the Act, strengthen penalties for violations of the Act, improve Department of Agriculture enforcement of the Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. WILSON of South Carolina:

H. Res. 234. A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the importance of effective education in civics and government in elementary and secondary schools throughout the Nation; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi:

H. Res. 235. A resolution directing the Secretary of Homeland Security to transmit certain documents to the House of Representatives relating to the Department of Homeland Security's research, integration, and analysis activities relating to Russian Government interference in the elections for Federal office held in 2016; to the Committee on Homeland Security.

By Mr. SMITH of Nebraska (for himself, Mr. YOHO, Mr. TIBERI, Ms. JENKINS of Kansas, Mr. BACON, Mr. BOST, Mr. GIBBS, Mr. KING of Iowa, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. PAULSEN, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, and Mrs. WAGNER):

H. Res. 236. A resolution recognizing the importance of the United States-Japan partnership and supporting the pursuit of closer trade ties between the United States and Japan; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. CÁRDENAS (for himself, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. CORREA, Mr. AGUILAR, Mr. RUIZ, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. SOTO, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Mr. VARGAS, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas, Mr. O'HALLERAN, Mr. CARBAJAL, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Mr. KIHUEN, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. VELA, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Ms. NORTON, Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico, Ms. MOORE, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. DOGGETT, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Mr. SIRES, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. COHEN, Mr. GUTIÉRREZ, Mr. SABLAN, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. TITUS, Ms. SPEIER, and Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas):

H. Res. 237. A resolution honoring the accomplishments and legacy of César Estrada Chávez; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. CARTER of Texas (for himself, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. JONES, Mr. WILLIAMS, Mr. BANKS of Indiana, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. JORDAN, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, and Mr. MARSHALL):

H. Res. 238. A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Secretary of the Army should report on the status of future Ground Combat Vehicles of the Army; to the Committee on Armed Services.

MEMORIALS

Under clause 3 of rule XII,

15. The SPEAKER presented a memorial of the Legislature of the State of North Dakota, relative to House Concurrent Resolution No. 3009, urging Congress to amend the 2014 farm bill to allow counties to use raw yield data from insurance companies to supplement the national agriculture statistics survey to calculate payments under the Agriculture Risk Coverage program when an insufficient number of surveys are returned to accurately calculate payments; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture.

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 Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York:

H.R. 19.

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

Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State.

By Mr. BISHOP of Utah:

H.R. 1800.

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

Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution provides Congress with the authority and responsibility to ''provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States,'' and to ''promote progress of Science.'' This measure will help ensure that public lands already in use for important scientific and defense-based research will remain available into the future to support those important public purposes.

By Mr. TIPTON:

H.R. 1801.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3: ''The Congress shall have power . . . To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes.''

By Ms. ESTY:

H.R. 1802.

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

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

By Mr. DUNN:

H.R. 1803.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18 of the Constitution of United States of America

By Mr. BARR:

H.R. 1804.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1

By Mr. BARR:

H.R. 1805.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1

By Mr. BARR:

H.R. 1806.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1

By Mr. GOHMERT:

H.R. 1807.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3, providing Congress the authority to regulate Commerce with Foreign Nations, and among the Several States, and with Indian Tribes

By Mr. GUTHRIE:

H.R. 1808.

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

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States

By Mr. LEWIS of Minnesota:

H.R. 1809.

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

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States

By Mr. CURBELO of Florida:
H.R. 1810.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1
By Mr. TAYLOR:
H.R. 1811.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8
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; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;
To borrow money on the credit of the United States;
To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes;
To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, and uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States;
To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures;
To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States;
To establish Post Offices and Post Roads;
To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries;
To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court; and Offenses against the Law of Nations;
To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water;
To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;
To provide and maintain a Navy;
To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;
To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions;
To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;
To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings; And
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. SCHNEIDER:
H.R. 1812.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8
By Mr. ROGERS of Alabama:
H.R. 1813.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8 gives Congress the express authority to regulate commerce with foreign nations and provide for the common defense.
By Mr. KINZINGER:
H.R. 1814.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution
By Mr. ESPAILLAT:
H.R. 1815.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article One of the United States Constitution, section 8, clause 18:
The Congress shall have Power—To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof
Or
Article One of the United States Constitution, Section 8, Clause 3:
The Congress shall have Power—To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian tribes;
By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska:
H.R. 1816.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8
By Mr. DEFAZIO:
H.R. 1817.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 (relating to the power to make all laws necessary and proper / for carrying out the powers vested in Congress)
By Mr. DENHAM:
H.R. 1818.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution: ''The Congress shall have the power . . . To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes;''
By Mr. CARTWRIGHT:
H.R. 1819.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 (relating to the power of Congress to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with Indian Tribes.) [Page H3967]
By Mr. BLUMENAUER:
H.R. 1820.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8
By Mr. BARTON:
H.R. 1821.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1 Section 8
By Mrs. BLACKBURN:
H.R. 1822.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18
By Mr. BLUMENAUER:
H.R. 1823.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8
By Mr. BLUMENAUER:
H.R. 1824.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8
By Mr. COLLINS of New York:
H.R. 1825.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution
By Mr. CONNOLLY:
H.R. 1826.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8
By Mr. DELANEY:
H.R. 1827.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution
By Ms. JENKINS of Kansas:
H.R. 1828.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8:
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.
Article I, Section 9:
No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law.
By Mr. KILMER:
H.R. 1829.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.
By Mr. LEWIS of Georgia:
H.R. 1830.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I of the United States Constitution and its subsequent amendments, and further clarified and interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States.
By Mr. MACARTHUR:
H.R. 1831.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution of the United States provides that:
''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 Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York:
H.R. 1832.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8
By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York:
H.R. 1833.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, clause 3
By Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS:
H.R. 1834.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
The Constitutional authority in which this bill rests is the power of the Congress to regulate Commerce as enumerated by Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 as applied to providing for the general welfare of the United States through the administration of the Medicare program under Title 18 if the Social Security Act.
By Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia:
H.R. 1835.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
This legislation is authorized by Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution: ''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.''

By Mr. NADLER:
H.R. 1836.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution; Article 1, Section 8, Clause 8 of the United States Constitution; and Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. NORCROSS:
H.R. 1837.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8

By Mr. NUNES:
H.R. 1838.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 1 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution of the United States.

By Mr. O'ROURKE:
H.R. 1839.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 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. PAULSEN:
H.R. 1840.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I Section VIII which provides Congress the authority to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States.

By Mr. POLIS:
H.R. 1841.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution (relating to the general welfare of the United States); and Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution (relating to the power to regulate interstate commerce).

By Mr. RATCLIFFE:
H.R. 1842.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clauses 1 and 3

By Mr. ROSKAM:
H.R. 1843.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 1 of Section 8 of Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution, providing, in relevant part, that ''[t]he Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States.''

By Mr. RUIZ:
H.R. 1844.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution

By Mr. SMUCKER:
H.R. 1845.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 3 Section 8 of Article I of the Constitution

By Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ:
H.R. 1846.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. YOHO:
H.R. 1847.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 3, Section 8 of Article 1 of the United States Constitution which reads: ''The Congress shall have Power To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.''

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

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

H.R. 51: Ms. SEWELL of Alabama.
H.R. 60: Mr. CRAWFORD, Mr. TROTT, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. ABRAHAM, and Mr. VELA.
H.R. 112: Mr. DEUTCH.
H.R. 179: Mr. NORCROSS.
H.R. 247: Mr. ROUZER and Mr. BACON.
H.R. 377: Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. PERRY, Mr. BRAT, Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia, Mr. GOSAR, and Mr. HARRIS.
H.R. 400: Mr. MCCAUL.
H.R. 490: Mrs. WAGNER.
H.R. 519: Mr. NEWHOUSE.
H.R. 545: Mr. PERRY, Mr. GRIFFITH, and Mr. MAST.
H.R. 548: Mr. MCKINLEY.
H.R. 662: Mr. MEEHAN.
H.R. 692: Mrs. HARTZLER.
H.R. 747: Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico and Mr. NUNES.
H.R. 804: Ms. BASS.
H.R. 807: Mr. SOTO, Mr. POE of Texas, and Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas.
H.R. 816: Mr. LOWENTHAL.
H.R. 845: Ms. ADAMS.
H.R. 849: Mr. PITTENGER, Mr. LAMALFA, Mr. HUIZENGA, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. POE of Texas, Ms. BARRAGÁN, and Mr. SMITH of Missouri.
H.R. 873: Mr. GROTHMAN.
H.R. 909: Mr. VARGAS.
H.R. 959: Mr. CAPUANO and Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD.
H.R. 986: Mr. YOUNG of Alaska.
H.R. 1017: Mr. RASKIN.
H.R. 1022: Mr. HUFFMAN.
H.R. 1148: Mr. SCHRADER and Mr. CÁRDENAS.
H.R. 1150: Mr. COOK.
H.R. 1158: Mr. POCAN and Mr. POLIQUIN.
H.R. 1232: Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1235: Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire, Ms. ESTY, and Mr. CICILLINE.
H.R. 1245: Mr. RASKIN.
H.R. 1268: Ms. DELAURO, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mrs. NOEM, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. YOUNG of Iowa, Mr. POCAN, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, and Mr. DEFAZIO.
H.R. 1314: Mr. BARR.
H.R. 1315: Mr. SMITH of Texas.
H.R. 1334: Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee.
H.R. 1337: Mr. HULTGREN.
H.R. 1358: Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania and Ms. SHEA-PORTER.
H.R. 1454: Mr. DUFFY.
H.R. 1498: Ms. DELBENE and Mr. GUTIÉRREZ.
H.R. 1501: Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER.
H.R. 1516: Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas.
H.R. 1525: Mr. NEWHOUSE.
H.R. 1542: Mr. HECK, Mr. OLSON, Mr. TIPTON, and Mr. COLE.
H.R. 1544: Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER and Ms. SLAUGHTER.
H.R. 1551: Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 1552: Mr. MESSER, Mr. COLE, Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida, and Mrs. WAGNER.
H.R. 1588: Mr. JONES.
H.R. 1612: Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. EVANS, and Mr. LARSON of Connecticut.
H.R. 1614: Mr. CÁRDENAS and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.
H.R. 1626: Mr. SOTO, Mr. KUSTOFF of Tennessee, and Mr. ABRAHAM.
H.R. 1629: Ms. LEE.
H.R. 1635: Mr. ROKITA and Mr. HUDSON.
H.R. 1639: Mr. BROOKS of Alabama and Mr. SOTO.
H.R. 1644: Mr. KEATING, Mr. SIRES, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. CHABOT, and Mr. POE of Texas.
H.R. 1665: Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana.
H.R. 1667: Mr. SCHNEIDER.
H.R. 1671: Mr. ROGERS of Alabama.
H.R. 1698: Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. MCKINLEY, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Ms. TENNEY, Mr. DUFFY, Mr. BOST, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. HARRIS, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, Mr. GRAVES of Missouri, Mr. SOTO, Mr. SARBANES, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. GROTHMAN, Mrs. LOVE, Mr. THOMAS J. ROONEY of Florida, Mr. BROOKS of Alabama, Mr. CURBELO of Florida, Mr. HUDSON, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. BERGMAN, Mr. TROTT, Mr. ROSS, and Mrs. BEATTY.
H.R. 1729: Mr. GOSAR, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. RASKIN.
H.R. 1731: Mr. SHUSTER.
H.R. 1762: Mr. MCGOVERN and Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York.
H.R. 1789: Mr. LOEBSACK.
H.R. 1795: Mr. GOODLATTE and Mr. COLLINS of Georgia.
H.J. Res. 59: Mr. FRANKS of Arizona.
H. Con. Res. 8: Mr. FORTENBERRY.
H. Con. Res. 10: Mr. HULTGREN, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. MEEHAN, and Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois.
H. Con. Res. 13: Ms. CHENEY, Mr. BUDD, and Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia.
H. Res. 92: Mr. SIRES and Mr. SUOZZI.
H. Res. 184: Mr. NEAL, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. TAKANO, and Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.
H. Res. 199: Mr. POE of Texas and Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS.
H. Res. 202: Mr. POE of Texas and Ms. JACKSON LEE.

PETITIONS, ETC.

Under clause 3 of rule XII,

32. The SPEAKER presented a petition of the City of Miami Beach, Florida, relative to Resolution No. 2017-29768, strongly opposing the letter issued by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education on February 22, 2017 which withdrew and rescinded prior policy guidance by the Obama Administration that required schools to allow transgender students access to sex-segregated facilities and activities based on their gender identity; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163 WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2017 *No. 56*

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DEAN HELLER, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, we sing of Your steadfast love and proclaim Your faithfulness to all generations. Make us one Nation, truly wise, with righteousness exalting us in due season.

Today, inspire our lawmakers to walk in the light of Your countenance. Abide with them so that Your wisdom will influence each decision they make as You restrain them from speaking in haste. Keep them from evil so that they will not be brought to grief, enabling them to avoid the pitfalls that lead to ruin. May they put country before self, people before politics, and patriotism before partisanship. Empower them to glorify You in all they say and do.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 30, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DEAN HELLER, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HELLER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

HONORING OFFICER NICK RODMAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to begin this morning by paying tribute to a fallen hero. Yesterday, Officer Nick Rodman of the Louisville Metro Police Department passed away after a crash in west Louisville on Tuesday night.

Officer Rodman had served in the department for 3 years, where he followed in a strong family tradition of law enforcement. In his life, he showed compassion and dedication, which are among the best virtues of public service.

According to LMPD Chief Steve Conrad, Officer Rodman is the second officer in the department's history to be killed in the line of duty.

Officer Rodman's tragic death reminds us of the tremendous debt of gratitude we owe to all of the courageous men and women like him who daily put themselves into harm's way to defend our communities. They deserve our utmost respect.

This morning, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to Officer Rodman's family, friends, and fellow officers. They will all be in our prayers.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, the Senate will soon act to prevent workers from being forced into risky government-run savings plans. Then we will turn our attention to an additional opportunity to protect the American people from Executive overreach with another resolution under the Congressional Review Act.

On its way out the door, the Obama administration issued a regulation that prohibited States from allocating certain health preventative-care funds in a way that best serves local communities. It substituted Washington's judgment for the needs of real people, controlling Americans' access to healthcare services while hurting the community health centers that so many Americans—especially women—depend upon. This regulation is an unnecessary restriction on States that know their residents' own needs a lot better than the Federal Government.

Fortunately, by sending the CRA resolution before us to the President's desk, we can once again return power back to the people, and we will do so without decreasing funding for women's healthcare by a single penny.

I would like to recognize my colleague, Senator JONI ERNST, who introduced the Senate companion to the House resolution we will vote on, for her leadership on this important issue. I look forward to supporting it later today.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, many Members came to the floor yesterday to debate the Gorsuch nomination. We will have all of next week to continue the debate. I encourage my colleagues to continue discussing this important nomination.

Two months ago today, before Neil Gorsuch had even been nominated, I spoke on the Senate floor about the rhetoric we could expect to hear from the other side after the President's nominee was announced.

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

I predicted then that we would see many on the left ''[try] to paint whomever is actually nominated in apocalyptic terms.'' It ''doesn't matter who this Republican President nominates,'' I said then. It ''doesn't matter who any Republican President nominates, really,'' I continued. No matter the nominee, I said back before we had the nominee, ''we can expect to hear a lot of end-times rhetoric from the left . . . [and] [i]n fact, we already have.''

I was alluding then to the fact that, sight unseen, we had already begun hearing from those on the far left who vowed to oppose anyone—anyone the President nominated. The Democratic leader even joined in, saying he would oppose anyone from the President's list of candidates and would ''fight it tooth-and-nail, as long as we have to'' in order to keep Justice Scalia's seat open, even for the entirety of the President's term.

Remember, that was before Judge Gorsuch was even selected, before we knew his credentials, before we had heard from the current and former colleagues of his, before we had examined his judicial record, and well before his hearing before the Judiciary Committee.

Our friends across the aisle made it clear then that their opposition to this nominee would have nothing to do with the nominee himself. In fact, I said we could expect to hear a number of convoluted excuses as to why they wouldn't support the President's yet-to-be named nominee—excuses that would amount to little more than their dissatisfaction with the outcome of the election.

Sure enough, that is just what we have seen over the past few weeks. They are opposing this well-qualified nominee despite his impressive credentials, bipartisan support, and excellent testimony before the committee.

Judge Neil Gorsuch is such an outstanding candidate, so noncontroversial, so well-esteemed by people across the political spectrum that Democrats have been forced to talk about pretty much anything: President Trump, think tanks, you name it—anything but the nominee himself.

Yesterday's comments by the Democratic leader are a good example. He gave a lengthy speech about why he wouldn't support Judge Gorsuch, but when you boil it down, his remarks had little to do with Judge Gorsuch at all.

Essentially, he concluded that because Judge Gorsuch had earned the praise of legal groups like the Federalist Society, Democrats should not support him. By the way, all current sitting Justices have participated in events with this same organization. Let me say that again: All current sitting Supreme Court Justices have participated in Federalist Society activities. That includes Justices who were nominated by Democratic Presidents, including President Clinton and President Obama.

So, yes, Judge Gorsuch has received high praise from a number of conservatives—he certainly has—just as he has earned the support of centrists and leftists as well.

As I have pointed out on several occasions, many long-time Democrats you might not expect have even complimented Judge Gorsuch—people like President Obama's former Acting Solicitor General Neal Katyal, President Obama's legal mentor, Professor Laurence Tribe, President Carter's district court appointee, Judge John Kane, President Clinton's appointee to the Tenth Circuit and former chief judge of that court, Judge Robert Henry, and liberal Harvard Law Professor Noah Feldman, and so many more.

Judge Gorsuch has such a proven record of judicial independence and impartiality that people from the left to the right and everywhere in between have voiced their confidence in his fitness to serve on the High Court. That would explain why the American Bar Association—which, according to the Democratic leader and former Democratic Judiciary chairman, is the ''gold standard'' for evaluating judges—gave Gorsuch its highest rating possible: unanimously ''well qualified.''

So let's be clear. The support for Judge Gorsuch is anything but one-sided.

The Democratic leader also noted his concerns yesterday about the process by which we arrived at this point. As we all know, this Supreme Court nominee process has been historically transparent. Here is what I mean. Months and months ago, then-Presidential Candidate Trump took the unprecedented action of compiling a list of potential nominees he would consider nominating to the Supreme Court. These potential nominees were made public for the American people, including every Senator, to review.

Before making his selection, now-President Trump's White House consulted on a bipartisan basis with each and every Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, as well as numerous other Senators. The President followed through with his pledge, selecting from that public list Judge Neil Gorsuch of Colorado, who we can all agree is well qualified to serve on the Supreme Court and whom the Senate confirmed to his current position without a single vote in opposition.

Since being nominated, Judge Gorsuch has continued this transparent process by meeting face-to-face with nearly 80 Senators—from both parties, obviously.

So you see, this process has been as straightforward and bipartisan as possible from the very beginning—before we even knew that the President would, indeed, be making this nomination.

Only in the upside-down world of my Democratic colleagues is telling the entire world months before one is even elected President the list of people he would choose from, if he became the President, a ''secret'' process. I can't think of anything less secret than putting out that list in the middle of a hotly contested Presidential election process.

So, look, it is time to move beyond this hollow rhetoric and get back to the serious business of governing. Confirming Judge Gorsuch would mark a significant step in that direction. He has proved himself a worthy successor to the Supreme Court. He has earned high acclaim along the way from various news publications and lawyers and judges and clerks who represent all walks of life and all political ideologies.

People like David Frederick, a longtime Democrat and board member of the left-leaning American Constitution Society, may have summed it up best in a recent Washington Post op-ed. Here is what he said: ''The Senate should confirm [Gorsuch] because there is no principled reason to vote no.''

No principled reason to oppose him, none.

As this American Constitution Society member says, there is not one single principled reason to oppose Judge Gorsuch, so it makes sense that Democrats can't come up with a single substantive reason to oppose him either.

I suggest the absence of a quorum

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as we prepare to consider the nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch for the Supreme Court, I would like to take a moment this morning to discuss the false choice Republicans are presenting about his confirmation.

The Republican majority wants everyone to believe that by the end of next week one of two things must happen: Either Judge Gorsuch will pass with 60 votes or they must exercise the nuclear option and change the rules of the Senate so that he can pass on a simple majority vote. As Republicans tell it, one inexorably follows from the other. They are talking about next week as if they have no choice but to go nuclear if Judge Gorsuch doesn't earn 60 votes.

It is absolutely false. It is complete hokum. This is not some inevitable showdown. The Republicans control this body. They can choose to go nuclear or not. The ball is entirely in

their court. In the past, when a President's nominee didn't get enough support for confirmation for whatever reason, the President just picked another nominee. If it comes to that, that is what this President should do. If Judge Gorsuch fails to garner 60 votes, the answer isn't to irrevocably change the rules of the Senate, the answer is to change the nominee. It is not Gorsuch or bust.

The Republicans are playing a game of unnecessary and dangerous brinksmanship. If it comes to a rules change—and I sincerely hope that it does not for the sake of the grand traditions of this body, for the sake of the advice and consent clause of the Constitution, but if it does—it will be squarely on the shoulders of the Republican Party and the Republican leader—a Republican Party that broke 230 years of precedent when it refused to even consider President Obama's nominee, Chief Judge Merrick Garland, with almost a year left in Obama's Presidency. There was no vote—not even a hearing—and Republicans accuse Democrats of the first partisan filibuster of a Supreme Court nominee? What Republicans did to Merrick Garland was worse than a filibuster. They didn't even grant him the basic courtesy of a filibuster. Merrick Garland actually was a consensus nominee with Republican buy-in for the Supreme Court.

Second, President Trump totally dispatched with the notion of ''advice and consent'' by pledging, before he was even elected, to nominate a Supreme Court Justice off of a preapproved list of hard-right, conservative judges put together by the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society. Contrast that with Bill Clinton, who sought and took the advice of the Republican Judiciary Chairman, ORRIN HATCH, in nominating Justices Ginsburg and Breyer. He did not pick his first choice, Bruce Babbitt, because ORRIN HATCH said that would be a bad idea and could not bring the kind of unity we needed. How about Democratic President Obama, who took, again, the advice of ORRIN HATCH when he picked Merrick Garland. There was bipartisan consultation. That is why the process worked. There is none now. The Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society are not simply mainstream organizations, as every Republican knows, but they are organizations on the hard-right of the Republican side who often threaten Republicans if they don't vote the right way—the far-right way. So we are not talking about ''advise and consent.'' We are talking about something that was done without any consultation and a political move by a President to shore up his base with the hard rightwing.

What President Trump did was worse than simply ignoring article II of the Constitution. President Trump actively sought the advice and consent of rightwing special interest groups instead of the Senate. That is another Supreme Court-related precedent that the Republicans discard. Because President Trump made that choice, now Republicans are saying they have no choice but to change the rules? It is illogical and self-serving. For all the handwringing of my friends on the other side of the aisle that they cannot imagine Democrats voting against Judge Gorsuch, I would like to remind them that only three of the current Senators on the Republican side voted for either of President Obama's confirmed nominees. Let me repeat that. Only three of the current Senators on the Republican side voted for either one of President Obama's confirmed nominees. Most voted for neither, and every single one of them lined up to conduct an ''audacious'' partisan blockade of Merrick Garland.

It is true the norms and precedents and traditions have been eroded by both sides. We changed the rules for lower court nominees in 2013 after years of unprecedented obstruction by Republicans on routine circuit and district court judges. Still, I am on the record as regretting that decision. But this is in an order of magnitude much greater than that. This is the Supreme Court. This is the Court that is the final arbiter of U.S. law and the Constitution. We Democrats have serious principled concerns about Judge Gorsuch, his record, his long history of ties to ultraconservative interests, and his almost instinctive tendency to side with special power interests over average citizens. We have principled concerns about how Judge Gorsuch was groomed by hard-right conservative billionaires, like Mr. Phillip Anschutz. We have principled concerns about how Judge Gorsuch was selected off a preapproved list of conservative judges made by organizations who spent three decades campaigning to move our judiciary far to the right.

Judge Gorsuch had a chance to answer these concerns in his hearings. We were all waiting and hoping, but our questions were met with practiced evasions. He couldn't even answer whether Brown v. Board was decided correctly.

Instead of considering the possibility of another nominee should Judge Gorsuch fail to reach 60 votes, our Republican friends are threatening to press the big red button for him.

Again, the Republicans are creating a false choice—Judge Gorsuch or the nuclear option—in an attempt to avoid the blame if they change the rules, and it just doesn't wash. The Republicans control this body. They are in the driver's seat, and they are the only reason that we are here today. They held this seat open for over 1 year so that this President could install someone handpicked by the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society—a lifetime appointment for this President, whose campaign is under investigation by the FBI for potential ties to Russia.

I just repeat to my Republican colleagues: You don't need to change the rules if Judge Gorsuch doesn't get 60 votes. You are not required to do so. You just need to change the nominee and do some bipartisan consultation as Presidents of both parties have done in the past.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on the ACA, Mr. President. The HHS Secretary appeared before the House appropriators yesterday and testified that, under his direction, the Department of Health and Human Services may try to undermine our Nation's healthcare system in several ways. Specifically, he hinted that he might make it easier for insurers to offer coverage without certain essential benefits and refused to say if he would continue certain programs that stabilize our healthcare markets. That is in line with steps this administration has already taken to undermine the healthcare law, such as when they discontinued the public advertising campaigns that encouraged people to sign up for insurance. All of these things harm our Nation's healthcare system, and they should be ceased immediately.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

DISAPPROVING A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.J. Res. 67, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 67) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, all time is expired.

The joint resolution was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Mr. RUBIO. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 99 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hoeven	Sasse
Cochran	Inhofe	Scott
Collins	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Strange
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Crapo	Lee	Thune
Cruz	McCain	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Toomey
Enzi	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—49

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Harris	Peters
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Sanders
Brown	Heitkamp	Schatz
Cantwell	Hirono	Schumer
Cardin	Kaine	Shaheen
Carper	King	Stabenow
Casey	Klobuchar	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Udall
Corker	Manchin	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Markey	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warren
Duckworth	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	
Franken	Murray	

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 67) was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE SUBMITTED BY SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to H.J. Res. 43.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 43, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 100 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hoeven	Sasse
Cochran	Inhofe	Scott
Corker	Isakson	Shelby
Cornyn	Johnson	Strange
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tillis
Daines	McCain	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—50

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murray
Bennet	Harris	Nelson
Blumenthal	Hassan	Peters
Booker	Heinrich	Reed
Brown	Heitkamp	Sanders
Cantwell	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Kaine	Schumer
Carper	King	Shaheen
Casey	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wyden
Franken	Murphy	

The VICE PRESIDENT. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 50. The Senate being equally divided, the Vice President votes in the affirmative, and the motion to proceed is agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE SUBMITTED BY SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I yield back all Republican time in relation to H.J. Res. 43.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The time is yielded back.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, this vote had to be held open in order to allow time for Vice President PENCE to come down and break a tie.

My colleagues and I came to the floor weeks ago to make clear that this harmful legislation should not come to the floor. Republicans didn't listen to us, and they didn't listen to women across the country who made it clear that restricting women's access to the full range of reproductive care is unacceptable. We are not going to give up. We are going to keep holding them accountable, and we are going to keep making sure that women's voices are heard.

I want to thank all of my colleagues who have already come and will continue to come to the floor today to stand against this shameful, dangerous resolution.

The march that was held after President Trump was inaugurated was one of the most inspiring events I have ever had the opportunity to be a part of. Millions of people—men and women—marched in Seattle in my home State, here in Washington, DC, and in cities and towns in between and all across the world. They carried signs, they chanted, and they made it absolutely clear that when it comes to women's rights and healthcare, people across the country do not want to go backward. Since then, millions of people have continued to speak up and stand up. And last Friday, by the way, was no different.

Republicans have been threatening for years now to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, but it took just a few weeks for families nationwide to stand up and fight back and shut down a deeply harmful plan that would have taken healthcare away from tens of millions of people, spiked our premiums, targeted seniors for higher costs, and cut off access to critical services at Planned Parenthood.

I was so inspired by the countless people who bravely shared their personal stories about their health and their loved ones in order to make clear just how damaging—and even deadly—TrumpCare would have been. I am proud to say that women led the way and made it known, in no uncertain terms, that Republicans would be held fully accountable for the disastrous TrumpCare legislation.

And try as they might, last week, Republicans couldn't ignore them. This was an absolute, undeniable victory for women and families in this country.

But while TrumpCare was dealt a significant blow last week, it is clear the terrible ideas that underpin it live on now, today, in this Republican Congress. It is unprecedented that we are here, with the Vice President breaking a tie vote on an attack on women's health across this country.

We are here today, once again, because President Trump and Republicans in Congress are not getting the message. Today, continuing on their extreme, anti-women agenda, Senate Republicans are rushing now to roll back a rule that protects family planning providers from being discriminated against and denied Federal funding.

Let me explain a little bit about what family planning providers mean to our communities. Those providers that are part of the title X program—which has, by the way, bipartisan history—deliver critical healthcare services nationwide, and they are especially needed in our rural and our frontier areas.

In 2015 alone, title X provided basic primary and preventive healthcare services—services like Pap tests and breast exams and birth control and HIV testing—to more than 4 million low-income women and men at nearly 4,000 health centers. In my home State of Washington, tens of thousands of patients are able to receive care at these centers each year, and they often have nowhere else to turn for their healthcare. In fact, 40 percent of women who receive care at health centers funded by title X consider it to be their only source of healthcare.

So taking resources away from these providers, which this resolution would do, would be cruel, and it would have the greatest impact on women and families who need it the most. It would undo a valuable effort by the Obama administration to ensure that healthcare providers are evaluated for Federal funding based on their ability to provide the services in question, not on ideology. In doing so, this resolution would make it even easier for States led by extreme politicians to deny family planning providers Federal dollars, not because of the quality of care that they get or provide or their value to the communities they serve, but based on whether the politicians in charge—the politicians in charge—agree that women should be able to exercise their constitutionally protected right to reproductive healthcare.

This is wrong. It is dangerous, and we cannot let this stand.

If Republicans think that millions of people who stood up last week have suddenly stopped paying attention, they are sorely mistaken. And if they think that Senate Democrats are not going to fight back, they have another thing coming. They can expect every single Democrat in the Senate—and I hope some Republicans who are concerned about losing healthcare providers in their States—to fight back against this resolution with everything they have.

This vote won by a tie vote, and the Vice President was the tie vote. It will take one Republican this afternoon on the final vote to say yes for the women in their State and States' rights to say no. That is all we are asking for the women of this country.

While I have the floor, I want to say we should all be aware there is more headed our way. In a matter of weeks, we all know that government funding is going to run out. Everybody understands this. I know that since they didn't get their way last week and they are pushing this resolution so hard today to the point where they bring the Vice President to break a tie, it is a safe bet that extreme Republicans are going to try to attach riders that try to take away Planned Parenthood funding in the spending bill for the rest of this year.

So I want to be very clear from the outset: That is a complete nonstarter. We have been here before. We have shown that we can win, and we are going to fight these efforts every step of the way.

So I urge people across the country to let their Senators know that this is not acceptable. Stand up for women and families and for their rights to take care of their own reproductive healthcare at the facility that provides for them in their own communities.

I urge my colleagues: Don't make the same mistake again. End the damaging political attacks on women, and stand with millions of women and men and families. They need us.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The clerk will report the joint resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 43) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients.

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

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today in a near empty Chamber. Indeed, there is no Republican colleague here today. Our Republican colleagues have yielded back all their time on this resolution, and the reason they have yielded back all their time is that they apparently have no interest in appearing here and talking about a resolution of disapproval of a rule that is vital to ensuring that women have access to the family planning provider of their choice. It is really that simple.

Defending Planned Parenthood is what we have done on this side. Defunding Planned Parenthood has been the interest on the other side of the aisle.

They have also taken an inordinate interest in reinstating gender ratings in health insurance and are now damaging title X networks through this resolution. They have demonstrated an unmitigated desire to cut women's access to healthcare in order, apparently, to win political points. But their actions today show that the politics of this issue and, most importantly, the people of America are not on their side.

Title X is a critical program delivering important family planning and preventive health services in underserved areas of our great Nation. In 2015 alone, title X programs provided basic primary and preventive healthcare services. We are talking about Pap tests, breast exams, birth control, and HIV testing for more than 4 million low-income women and men at nearly 4,000 health centers across the country. For 40 percent of women, their visit to a family planning health center is the only healthcare they receive annually. Think of that number for a moment. Forty percent of those women have no access elsewhere except at these healthcare centers.

By overriding this regulation, Republicans will allow States and title X grantees to pick and choose who provides these services based on arbitrary criteria that have nothing to do with the quality of services patients will receive. It is no wonder that none of them is here to talk about it. Now, if they were here—and they have said so in public—they might argue that they support this resolution because they oppose abortion. So let me be clear. This regulation is about access to family planning services, not about access to abortion.

I know many of my colleagues disagree with me that abortion should be safe and legal. They have shown that disagreement by their repeated attempts to undermine Roe v. Wade and make it harder for women to access constitutionally protected healthcare.

While they may disagree, it is still the law of the land. In any event, this regulation is not about access to abortion. This regulation is about ensuring that States cannot discriminate against qualified providers that are an essential part of a safety net that serves women who have no place else to go. Those providers are willing to provide necessary, culturally sensitive care to individuals who otherwise would simply be without access to that care.

Title X funding does not go to abortion services. It goes to provide much needed family planning services. There is so much that the title X program does that I believe my colleagues would agree is absolutely vital to the health of women. I know we agree on wanting to reduce teen and unintended pregnancies. Without the contraceptive care provided by title X sites, the teen pregnancy rate would be 30 percent higher and the unintended pregnancy rate would have been 33 percent higher. We should agree on that point.

We should also agree on wanting to find ways to save money in the healthcare system. In 2010, health services provided at title X centers resulted in net savings of $7 billion in Federal and State funds. Those savings are indicative of the fact that every dollar invested in publicly funded family planning saves taxpayers $7. That is a great deal for the taxpayers of our Nation. That is a humane and profoundly significant deal for the women whose lives are bettered. We should all agree that preventing disease and saving health and lives is not only about dollars and cents. It is about the future of our Nation.

Title X began as a bipartisan program to support family planning services over 40 years ago, an era that was less divisive and when this Chamber was less divided. I urge my colleagues to recognize the importance of ensuring these services. States cannot restrict an already overburdened network of safety net providers.

Family planning services are provided through State, county, and local health departments, as well as hospitals, family planning councils, Planned Parenthood, and federally qualified health centers. Providers that focus on reproductive health comprise 72 percent of all title X-supported sites, and they are critical to delivering high-quality family planning services.

They are particularly able to offer the full range of contraceptive methods and to help women start and effectively use the methods that will work best for them individually.

There is simply no excess capacity in that safety net system now. For Republicans to allow States to remove providers from the networks based on arbitrary criteria is simply unwise and, in fact, unconscionable. The foundation of the program's success is the longstanding intent that its provider network be designed by the communities it serves to help patients have access to trusted, highly qualified, family planning providers.

Just a few weeks ago, I met with some providers and volunteers from Planned Parenthood of North Hartford. I was deeply impressed with their dedication, their skill, and their humanity. In a high-need, low-income community like North Hartford, access to primary care is limited. Young men and women who come to this clinic have chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, depression, high blood pressure, and headaches. Left untreated, they have to be addressed at emergency rooms at much higher costs.

The clinicians recognized that there was an additional need for health services and for other providers in the community to meet them, but they were currently unable to do so. So they decided to initiate full-scope primary care services in Hartford, in addition to the comprehensive women's health services, so as to fully serve the men and women who choose to come to Planned Parenthood of North Hartford for their reproductive health and family planning care needs.

Patients there are seen for acute conditions and chronic problems, physicals, preventive vaccinations, as well as services to quit smoking. If there were ever a cost-effective program anywhere in the United States, then the North Hartford project is a sterling example.

Just to give one example, recently, a young woman came to this Planned Parenthood for birth control. She was found to have high blood pressure. So her provider started her on blood pressure medication and counseled her on dietary and lifestyle changes. She started exercising regularly and improved her diet, lost 30 pounds, and no longer needed the medication to control her blood pressure. Is that kind of treatment cost effective? The facts speak for themselves—the real facts—giving patients a choice, giving them a chance, giving them the counseling and care they need to save dollars and save lives.

Community healthcare centers like that in North Hartford simply cannot accommodate all the family planning patients who would lose coverage or funding if title X funds to Planned Parenthood affiliates, like Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, are eliminated. That is a lesson of this Planned Parenthood that is undeniable.

That may well be why our Republican colleagues have yielded back all of their time.

The real facts are undeniable. The real need is irrefutable. My colleagues and I are here today not because we are asking for more money or a change in how the funding program is used. We are standing up and speaking out against shortsighted efforts that would restrict access to family planning services for some of the most vulnerable patients—many of them voiceless in these halls; faceless, otherwise—in areas that are least able to absorb this cruel and inhumane change in the rules.

I ask my colleagues to oppose this resolution and to stand strong for women's and men's healthcare across the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, the Congressional Review Act, or CRA, resolution we are debating today is the latest attack in the unrelenting Republican crusade against funding—or defunding—Planned Parenthood. They have tried everything: passing standalone bills, attaching poison pills to must-pass bills, threatening a government shutdown, struggling and failing to pass TrumpCare.

Today, we are debating whether to repeal an administrative action that protects abortion providers, like Planned Parenthood, that receive title X funding. Just a little while ago, Vice President PENCE was here to break a tie because Republicans in Congress couldn't get enough men to tell women what to do with their bodies.

For nearly 50 years, title X funding has helped low-income Americans access vital health services like birth control and cervical and breast cancer screenings. Title X funding has been a healthcare lifeline for millions of women in all parts of the country. But if this Congressional Review Act resolution is passed, Planned Parenthood clinics across our country can be prohibited from receiving title X funding, even though it is currently illegal to use Federal dollars to fund abortion services. Let me repeat: No Federal dollars can be used to fund abortion services, period.

I understand the strong anti-abortion belief held by some of my colleagues, but I don't understand why this translates into relentless attacks on an organization that uses no Federal funds for abortion. Planned Parenthood uses Federal funds to provide vital healthcare services to millions of people, mainly women. Yes, I acknowledge there are men who go to Planned Parenthood also.

In 2014, Planned Parenthood provided over 600,000 cancer screenings and over 4 million tests and treatments for sexually transmitted infections. But this is a factual argument, and we have learned over the years that many of my Republican colleagues simply will not listen to facts when it comes to Planned Parenthood.

Let me share a few stories from my constituents about the transformational impact Planned Parenthood has had in their lives. Perhaps after hearing these stories, we will think twice about attacking the vital services Planned Parenthood provides all across our country.

Hawaii is home to a large military community. Taylor from Honolulu is a military spouse who wrote to me that she and other military dependents turn to Planned Parenthood because of long wait times and confidentiality concerns within the military healthcare system. Taylor wrote:

> My friend was experiencing severe cramping and pelvic pain to the point where she had to utilize a sick day. When she visited the medical services provider through the military, they scheduled her for an appointment for four days out. She was sent home with no pelvic exam or ultrasound. The pain was so severe that she went to Planned Parenthood because she could not wait to see her primary care physician. They immediately performed a pelvic exam, an ultrasound, and an STD screening. She was diagnosed with pelvic inflammatory disease. Annually, 100,000 women become infertile as a result of PID, so receiving quick treatment for this condition is critical.

Taylor continued:

> Defunding Planned Parenthood means that individuals who experience common reproductive healthcare issues like this would have lessened chances of receiving quick, necessary and comprehensive medical care. Had it not been for Planned Parenthood, she could have lost her ability to have children in the future.

Do my Republican colleagues want to deprive military spouses of vital healthcare services?

I also heard from Tiffany, a student at the University of Hawaii, who went to a Planned Parenthood clinic after a pregnancy scare. She wrote:

> I was afraid because I knew that having a child was beyond my means. I was just starting out my university years at 21; and I have extremely conservative parents who would have surely not approved of my actions. I knew how difficult having a child was for someone in my situation, especially while going to school, and risking sacrificing my future, my key to stepping out of poverty, was not an option. I was unemployed and had Medicaid at the time as well, and Planned Parenthood accommodated my financial situation.
>
> Thankfully, I discovered I was not pregnant, and Planned Parenthood took the extra time to sit me through my options without any judgment whatsoever. I was also prescribed birth control, offered an STD test, and was given Plan B in the event I ever missed my birth control. The sense of relief, reassurance, and care I felt walking out of the clinic left me with a very strong impression, especially after so many days of anxiety.

Do my Republican colleagues want to take away resources that help thousands of young women like Tiffany fulfill their full potential?

These stories aren't rhetoric. They aren't hyperbole. They aren't spin. They are powerful reminders that each day, women turn to Planned Parenthood in a time of need.

Some of my colleagues have argued that all these thousands of women who go to Planned Parenthood clinics can go to community health centers if Planned Parenthood clinics have to close because of defunding.

This morning, I met with over a dozen leaders from Hawaii's community health centers. So I asked them, could you take in all of Planned Parenthood's patients? Their answer was an unequivocal no. Our communities cannot afford to lose Planned Parenthood clinics.

A vote for this CRA is a vote to deprive women like Taylor and Tiffany and millions more throughout our country of these important healthcare services. Let's stop these attacks on women's healthcare. I urge my colleagues to vote no.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I come to the floor to join my colleagues in opposing this misguided measure, which would leave millions of women and families with fewer healthcare options, and it would drastically decrease women's access to basic primary and preventive health services, including lifesaving cancer screenings and HIV testing.

Make no mistake about it, as my colleagues have said, the primary target of this legislation is Planned Parenthood. For years now, we have seen Republican leaders in Congress attempt to defund this essential healthcare provider, which serves millions of women nationwide, including nearly 12,000 women in New Hampshire, most of them with incomes below or near the poverty line. The sad irony of these attacks is that study after study has shown that restricting access to birth control and other family planning methods actually increases the number of abortions.

The authoritative Guttmacher Institute estimates that in 2014 alone, contraceptive care provided under title X helped women avert more than 900,000 unintended pregnancies and 326,000 abortions. Without contraceptive care provided by title X funded centers, the U.S. rates of unintended pregnancy and preventable abortions would be an estimated 33 percent higher, and the teen pregnancy rate would be 30 percent higher.

At the end of the Obama administration, teen pregnancy in the United States was at its lowest point since we have been keeping track. As Senator HIRONO said, these services don't provide abortions. Federal law expressly forbids the use of Federal funds to pay for abortion, except to save the life of the mother.

So the real issue here is not about abortion. This is about ensuring that American women have access to the basic healthcare they need, where they want to receive it. This is just a mean-spirited effort to keep women from seeing the provider they want to see and getting care at rates they can afford. For 40 percent of women, their visit to a family planning center is the only care they receive annually.

In 2015 alone, title X provided basic primary and preventive healthcare services such as Pap tests, breast exams, birth control, and HIV testing to more than 4 million women and men at nearly 4,000 health centers. Planned Parenthood plays an essentially important role in delivering health services to low-income, uninsured, and vulnerable individuals, including in rural areas.

I am sure that every person in this Chamber has received letters and emails and phone calls from constituents on this issue. They are pleading with us: Don't take away our access to healthcare from Planned Parenthood.

I received a letter from Sandra Sonnichsen of Goshen, NH. She writes:

> Planned Parenthood was my only affordable source of gynecological healthcare for most of my life. I received good, wise, and thoughtful care. I think it is not extreme to say they saved my life. Abortions were not involved. They—

Meaning Planned Parenthood—

> remain very important, especially for poor or uninsured women. There are not enough alternate low cost women's clinics available. Not providing birth control services to women who want it is not a good economic or social solution. Don't let it be defunded.

In a follow-up call, Sandra said that without Planned Parenthood, she would not have had any healthcare at all. Because her mother died of breast cancer, Sandra is deeply grateful that she has been able to receive mammograms, thanks to Planned Parenthood.

I also heard from Meredith Murray of Exeter, NH. She says:

> Nine years ago I graduated from college and immediately began my journey to become a medical provider. . . . During this time in my life, I was surviving almost entirely on student loans. And I knew that during this time, especially, I needed to ensure that I was doing all I could to prevent pregnancy. . . . With my insurance—an IUD would have cost $900. That was not possible for me to afford. Then I remembered—Planned Parenthood. . . . I was informed, due to title X funding, my IUD would be completely covered. I continued to use Planned Parenthood services for the next 5 years for my routine screenings while in medical school. The care I received was phenomenal. As I proceeded through my medical training, I strived to be as kind, compassionate, and knowledgeable as those who work Planned Parenthood health centers. I am now a practicing medical provider, married, and still using an IUD because Planned Parenthood offered me that opportunity.

I received this letter from Samantha Fox of Bow, NH. She writes:

> In 2007, I was a 19-year-old just barely starting out when I was denied health insurance due to a preexisting condition. Had I been able to access affordable coverage, my preexisting condition, a reproductive system disorder, would have been easily manageable. . . . At that time, I was able to access care through Planned Parenthood, which likely preserved my ability to conceive in the future.

And finally, let me share this message from Robina Parise of Rye, NH. She says:

> I started utilizing the services at Planned Parenthood for birth control when I was about 17 years old. . . . Planned Parenthood made sure I was protected and healthy. They gave me access to vital protection and healthcare when I could not get it anywhere else. They regularly called me with reminders to have exams and to pick up my prescription. Planned Parenthood is the reason my husband and I were able to graduate from high school and college. . . . I'm not sure what our lives would be like now without their support.

I don't know. Do the people who are voting for this CRA believe it would be better to have allowed the people whom I just talked about—to prohibit their access to these healthcare services so that their lives would have been disrupted, so they might not have finished college, so we wouldn't have another doctor in the world, so they wouldn't be able to afford healthcare? I hope we will listen to our constituents who have been speaking out in passionate support of Planned Parenthood and other family planning clinics.

This is about respecting women's access to healthcare services, including millions of vulnerable women who have nowhere else to turn for essential care. This is also about respecting women's constitutionally protected right to make our own reproductive choices. We must not allow Congress to strip away investments in family planning clinics by allowing States to discriminate.

Finally, I want to point out that we haven't heard from any of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle who are voting for this measure about why they think it is so critical. I don't know. Maybe they are not willing to come to the floor and tell my constituents why they should be denied access to healthcare from the provider they want. Well, I am disappointed that we haven't heard from anyone who is willing to stand up and defend this vote. I hope they are going to have to defend it to the American people.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I want to thank my colleagues who are here speaking out against this shameful resolution that is before us today that goes after women's rights and their opportunity to make their own healthcare decisions with their own provider.

I, too, want to echo the comments that were just made. I find it amazing that the Republicans have yielded back all of their time. They are not going to come out here and defend their vote; they are just going to take the vote.

In fact, it seems clear to me that President Trump is clearly focused on attacking women's healthcare—so much so that he sent his women's health adviser, Vice President PENCE, here just moments ago to break a tie on this latest disgusting attack on women's healthcare. It is truly appalling.

Women and men across the country are watching what is happening here today, watching what Republicans are trying to do, and they are paying attention.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Madam President, I wish today's resolution was the only shameful attack on women's health to talk about, but sadly that is not the case. So I do want to take a few minutes at this time to talk about another one that is very critical to women and families—not just today, but actually for years and years to come it will be happening, and that is the Supreme Court.

Last week I announced I would be voting against Judge Neil Gorsuch's nomination to the Supreme Court, and I will oppose a cloture motion ending debate. I did not reach that conclusion lightly. I consider my decisions about whether to support a lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court to be among the most important and consequential choices I make as a Senator. But I made it in part because this is not a normal nomination.

This process really began about 12 months ago when Senate Republicans refused to even consider President Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court, Judge Merrick Garland. And because since President Trump entered office, he has shown complete disregard for the law, for our Constitution, for the well-being of families across the country, leaving me unable to trust that he is acting in our Nation's best interest, I am unable to support his choice for the Supreme Court.

In addition to my deep concerns about this process and this administration, I also have strong concerns about this nominee specifically. Today, as Republicans appear to be rushing Judge Gorsuch's nomination through the Judiciary Committee as fast as they can, I want to lay out why putting Judge Gorsuch on the Supreme Court would be an attack on women's health, rights, and opportunity, one that has the potential to undo decades of progress we have made toward making sure women are equally able to participate in and contribute to our country.

The Trump administration has broken almost every one of its promises, but one it has certainly kept is its promise to do everything in its power to turn back the clock on women's health and women's rights. Extreme Republicans in Congress are doing the same and have more, apparently, in store. Right now, we are debating whether to undo a rule that prevents discrimination against family planning providers based on the kinds of services they provide to women. Congressional Republicans are already gearing up to attach riders to the coming budget bills in order to cut off access to critical services at Planned Parenthood for millions of patients in this country. There are similar attempts to undermine women's access to healthcare in cities and States nationwide.

More often than we would like, the Supreme Court is going to be the place of last resort for protecting women's hard-fought gains. The buck has to stop with the Supreme Court on women's health and rights.

I do not want Judge Neil Gorsuch anywhere near the bench. Time and again, Judge Gorsuch has sided with the extreme rightwing and against the tens of millions of women and men who believe that in this 21st century, women should be able to make their own choices about their own bodies.

Let me give a few examples. When the Tenth Circuit ruled in the case of Hobby Lobby v. Burwell that a women's boss—a woman's boss—could decide whether her insurance would include birth control, Judge Gorsuch didn't just agree, he thought the ruling should have gone further. That alone would be enough for me to oppose this nomination, but unfortunately there is more.

Judge Gorsuch has argued that birth control coverage included in the ACA as an essential part of a woman's healthcare—one that has now benefited 55 million women—is what he calls a ''clear burden'' on employers that would not long survive.

When it comes to Planned Parenthood, he has already weighed in on the side of defunding our Nation's largest provider of women's healthcare. What was his reasoning? Well, Judge Gorsuch thought that in light of completely discredited sting videos taken by extreme conservatives, women in the State of Utah should have a harder time accessing the care they need. Just this week, the makers of those false videos, by the way, got 15 felony charges. Women deserve independence and objectivity in a Supreme Court Justice, and that is clearly not it.

Attempts to control women's bodies aren't always about reproductive rights. Sure enough, Judge Gorsuch is on the wrong side here as well. He concurred in a ruling against a transgender woman who was denied regular access to hormone therapy while she was in prison. This ruling rejected the idea that under our Constitution, denying healthcare services is cruel and unusual punishment. Think about that. That is not the kind of judgment I want to see on the bench, and I think most families would agree.

I also want to be clear as well about what Judge Gorsuch's nomination could mean for a woman's constitutionally protected right to safe, legal abortion services under the historic ruling in Roe v. Wade, which was, by the way, reaffirmed just last summer by the Court. In his nomination hearings, Judge Gorsuch wouldn't give a clear answer on whether he would uphold this ruling which has meant so much to so many women and families over the last four decades.

Judge Gorsuch has donated repeatedly to politicians who are dead-set on interfering with women's constitutionally protected healthcare decisions, and he has even made deeply inaccurate comparisons between abortion and assisted suicide.

I remember the days before Roe v. Wade very clearly. I heard and saw firsthand the stories of women faced with truly impossible choices during those times. Women from all across the country have shared deeply personal experiences because they know what it would mean to go backward. I know that millions of women who have already done so much to lead the resistance against this administration and its damaging, divisive agenda are going to fight this nomination as hard as they can. They know the Trump Presidency will be damaging enough for 4 years, but Judge Gorsuch's nomination could roll back progress for women over a lifetime. I am proud to stand with them and do everything I can to make sure they are heard loud and clear here in the Senate, and I oppose Judge Gorsuch's nomination in light of everything it would mean for women now and for generations to come. Next week is when we will vote on that.

Today here in the Senate, we just saw a historic moment. The Senate Republicans put forth a resolution that would allow States to deny funding to providers in their States who provide healthcare services for women—funding that is desperately needed. They got only 50 votes, and those in opposition got 50 votes, so they brought over the Vice President of the United States, and he broke that tie in order for us to be here to debate this resolution now. This vote will now occur, under the order, later this afternoon, and he will be brought back once again to deny women the healthcare choices they deserve to have. It is a sad day for the Senate.

I want my friends, colleagues, and the women who have stood up and have spoken out since the day after the election, marched here in Washington, DC, and across the country, to know that I stand with them. My voice will not be silenced. I will continue to fight back.

I will say one more time that it will take one more Republican on the other side this afternoon—one—to stand up and let their voice be heard and say that women should get access equally in their States for the healthcare they deserve.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise to express my strong opposition to H.J. Res. 43, a resolution of disapproval with respect to the title X regulation—a resolution which effectively endorses discriminatory practices toward family planning and safety net providers.

Title X is the Nation's only Federal grant program that is dedicated solely to providing individuals with comprehensive family planning and related

preventive health services. Last year, title X funding made it possible for nearly 4,000 health centers to provide basic primary and preventive healthcare services to over 4 million low-income women and their families. I am talking about critical services, such as Pap tests, cervical cancer screenings, contraception, breast exams, and HIV testing.

In Maryland, there are 55 title X funded health centers that span the State. These include federally qualified health centers, local health departments, Planned Parenthood clinics, and school-based health centers. In fiscal year 2015, Maryland received over $3.8 million in title X funding and provided health services to over 64,000 patients. These are low-income, underinsured, and uninsured individuals who would otherwise lack access to such basic healthcare.

As many of my colleagues know, Planned Parenthood, a high-quality health provider, has been under constant attack by the Republicans, who want to eliminate the organization's Federal funding. Just last week, the Republicans' Affordable Care Act repeal-and-replace bill threatened to defund Planned Parenthood, which is a trusted healthcare provider, by eliminating clinics' Medicaid reimbursements. This week, Republicans want to roll back protections that were put in place for family planning clinics and allow for discrimination against our Nation's family planning providers.

What I find even more disappointing is that this is a major policy shift for our Nation, and we are using a procedure known as the Congressional Review Act to make that decision. Yet those who support this are not even taking to the floor to defend it. This is outrageous that one would use a procedure to repeal this type of funding and not even be on the floor to defend those actions.

In December of 2016, the Obama administration finalized the regulation before us today to protect family planning providers from such discrimination. The regulation was intended to protect access to care in States that have issued their own regulations and legislation that block family planning providers from receiving title X funds. By overriding this regulation, Republicans will empower States to pick and choose who provides these services, but it will be based on arbitrary criteria that will have nothing to do with the quality of services the patients will receive. Republicans are actively condoning discrimination against providers, which will, ultimately, deny women and their families access to family planning and preventive health services.

It is not just Democrats who are concerned. Multiple healthcare providers have come out against this resolution because discrimination against any healthcare provider is wrong. Let me name just a few of the groups that oppose this action: the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. They are all alarmed because they know low-income, underinsured, and uninsured patients will be unable to access needed health services if it passes.

In Maryland, for example, 84 percent of the 64,000-plus patients served with title X funds have incomes at or below 100 percent of the Federal poverty line. That means that they earn $11,770 a year or less—under $12,000 a year. How do you expect these families to be able to get their healthcare needs met if this resolution of disapproval is passed? Ninety-four percent of title X patients in Maryland earn less than $29,425 a year. Overturning this regulation will hurt our most vulnerable communities.

Let's be clear about this. This is not about abortion. There is no Federal funding for abortion. This is about low-income men and women not having access to pregnancy testing, contraceptive services, pelvic exams, high blood pressure and diabetes screenings, STD and HIV/AIDS screenings, infertility services, and health education. It is a war on the poor, and it is a war on access to preventive healthcare.

The American people deserve better from their elected officials. I am committed to fighting these reckless attempts to repeal a reasonable regulation that has been promulgated to prevent discriminatory practices that will harm thousands of low-income women and their families in Maryland and across our Nation.

I urge my colleagues to reject this procedural resolution, which will allow discrimination and deny adequate care to low-income families.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, since coming to Washington, I have observed something interesting about Republican politicians. Republicans talk a big game about respecting women, but when it comes time to vote on laws to help real, live, American women, a lot of Republicans turn their backs.

Take PAUL RYAN, Speaker of the House of Representatives. Just a few months ago, Speaker RYAN was adamant that American women deserve respect. ''Women,'' he said, ''are to be championed and revered.''

''Championed and revered''—so what exactly does championing and revering women mean to Speaker RYAN? Does it mean he will promote policies that make us healthier, that he will help us access basic medical services, that he thinks we can make our own decisions about our bodies without government interference? No.

Over the past few months, Speaker RYAN has worked overtime on the American Health Care Act—a bill that would make it harder for millions of women to access healthcare. That miserable bill even included a special provision singling out certain health clinics and stripping them of the funding they use to provide women's health services.

Last week, PAUL RYAN failed to get that bill out of the House, but Republicans are back to take another shot at cutting women's access to healthcare. This time the plan is to undermine the title X family planning program. This plan, just like their healthcare bill, is incredibly unpopular, even with Republicans who had to rush Vice President PENCE over from the White House this morning to cast a deciding vote to start this debate on attacking women's healthcare.

Title X is a bipartisan program started back in 1970. It is the only Federal grant program dedicated to providing Americans with high-quality, low-cost family planning services. Title X funded clinics provide birth control, cancer screening, STI testing, and counseling. Just so there is no confusion about this, title X dollars cannot be used to fund abortion services—none.

In 2015 alone, title X clinics helped 2.9 million women access birth control. They provided over 700,000 Pap smears, performed 1.1 million HIV tests, and gave over 1 million breast exams. And PAUL RYAN's way of making sure that women are ''championed and revered'' is to try to reduce their access to these lifesaving services.

Last December, the Department of Health and Human Services passed a very simple rule to keep States from pulling political shenanigans to shut down women's health centers. The rule prevents States from blocking a healthcare provider from the program ''for reasons other than its ability to provide Title X services.'' In other words, follow the law. If a provider is doing a bad job at delivering family planning services, by all means, kick them out of the program. But you don't get to kick someone out because you don't like the name of their organization or you don't like their politics or because of your politics or because of any other dumb reason that has nothing to do with their ability to deliver women's health services.

In February, House Republicans voted to overturn this rule. So PAUL RYAN's version of championing and revering women is to let States close down women's health centers. Now Senate Republicans plan to do the same thing. Sure, Republicans give a bunch of reasons, but American women are not stupid. We know pretext when we see it. So let's just call it like it is. Republicans want to weaken the title X program because they want to make

it harder for women to access reproductive health clinics, like Planned Parenthood, that also provide safe, legal abortion services.

Just so we are clear, there are over 3,900 title X funded health centers. Only 10 percent of those health centers are affiliated with Planned Parenthood. The vast majority of centers getting title X money have nothing to do with Planned Parenthood, and the vast majority of Planned Parenthood's activities have nothing to do with abortion. But women should be able to choose a reproductive health provider without the interference of Republican politicians, and millions of women choose Planned Parenthood every year. The Congress representing those women should stop demonizing Planned Parenthood and stand with Planned Parenthood.

Yes, as it stands, title X makes sure that if women's healthcare centers, including Planned Parenthood, offer first-rate care, then their work will be reimbursed. The Senate should reject any efforts to change that.

Women in this country work their tails off. They should be able to choose their own healthcare providers. They don't need a ''champion'' to choose for them. They don't need to be ''revered'' into passive silence. Women want the respect that they deserve and to be able to access medical care without Republican politicians getting in the way.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the title X CRA. It is just a continued abuse of power, something we have never seen in this body—one after another, after another, along party-line votes—to overturn rules and overturn decisions that this government has made. It is disgraceful that this body is debating yet another effort that will threaten a woman's right to healthcare.

Title X ensures that women across the country have access to affordable healthcare, including family planning at clinics that are convenient and affordable. These are a vital resource for preventive care and for primary care.

Overturning this rule will allow States to discriminate against providers, allow States to pick and choose and potentially put thousands of healthcare centers out of business. We know that because we have seen this kind of activity in some State legislatures. These clinics are often the only places women and men have to turn to for basic health services.

Why do this in the same week that the House, fortunately, failed to throw 20 million people off of health insurance and throw off 200,000 Ohioans who are getting opioid addiction treatment and who have insurance because of the Affordable Care Act? The House did not do that, but now the Senate wants to do this? Again, it compromises people's healthcare, as it takes away, in some cases, their insurance and, in other cases, their clinics and health services they cannot get elsewhere.

Some 6 in 10 women who turn to title X for visits to family planning health centers say it is their regular source of healthcare. Many of them have nowhere else to turn. They either cannot afford healthcare elsewhere or they live too far away from another health center for there to be meaningful access to basic healthcare.

Let's be clear. This is not about defunding abortion, clearly. The Federal Government does not provide funding for abortions. I will say that again. The Federal Government does not provide funding for abortions, period. I support a woman's right to make a personal, private healthcare decision for herself and with her doctor. No matter your personal feelings about abortion, whether you call yourself pro-choice or pro-life or something else, surely, we can agree that cancer screenings and programs that have helped bring down Ohio's teen pregnancy and STD rates are a good thing. Cutting these services will have a real and serious impact on women and families across Ohio.

If these actions by men—and it is, overwhelmingly, by men in Washington—whose healthcare is paid for by taxpayers continue to chip away at women's healthcare access, we will see more undiagnosed cancers, more untreated illnesses, and more unintended pregnancies.

I emphasize again that these are mostly men in this body, or men down the hall in the other body, who are voting—men with insurance that is paid for by taxpayers. Their insurance is subsidized by tax dollars. Last week, down the hall, they voted to take away healthcare—in this case, mostly for women but also for men—for people who are getting opioid treatment.

In case after case, privileged Members of this body, who get insurance paid for by taxpayers, take healthcare services away from, literally, millions of Americans. It is shameful. It is morally questionable. It is something we, simply, should not do.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the legislative situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is considering H.J. Res. 43.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to speak for just a few minutes about H.J. Res. 43. I see this as a misguided and unfortunate attack on healthcare for women. Certainly that is what I am hearing from women from the State of Vermont.

Three months into the 115th Congress, the Senate has yet to consider real legislation aimed at addressing the many challenges we Americans face today. Instead, the Senate, with simple-majority votes—permissible through the rarely used Congressional Review Act—is rolling back key protections for the American people that were put in place by the last administration. Never mind that the current administration has the power to address certain aspects of regulations that they wish to rewrite. No. They could address these. They could seek a rewriting of them. They could seek legislation. But, instead, Republicans in Congress are intent on using this blunt procedure to unravel years of very careful and deliberative work. These raw power plays are part of the Trump-Republican ''know-nothing, anti-science'' agenda, in which the winners are not the American people. They are not the women of my State. They are not the average person you might meet. Instead, they are typically the wealthy and powerful special interests and big polluters. They win, and the losers are real Americans.

Today, we are considering the 12th such resolution, one that rolls back protections under the Title X program. Title X of the Public Health Service Act is the only Federal grant program dedicated to providing those eligible with comprehensive family planning and preventive health services. In rural areas—and every single State has a rural area, but my State is especially rural—we know that Title X is crucial in making sure women have access to the basic healthcare they need. Unfortunately, in recent years, some States have made exceptions about which providers may deliver services under Title X, excluding family planning clinics.

Seeing the burden these rules would place on women seeking healthcare, the Obama administration finalized a regulation in December 2016 that protects these providers from this type of discrimination, and women from these hardships. The resolution we are considering today would undo this regulation, once again allowing States to discriminate against providers, thereby limiting access to healthcare services for millions—that is not hyperbole; it really is millions—of women and their families. Worse still, the resolution would prevent a similar rule or regulation from being implemented in the future.

In Vermont, our sole Title X provider is Planned Parenthood. Even in a State as rural as Vermont, no one has to drive longer than 45 minutes to reach a clinic. That is important to us. We consider 4 to 5 inches of snow a heavy dusting, but we often have 10 to 15 inches of snow. Nobody should have to drive farther than that to reach healthcare.

This type of access is critical for those who need these services. It is especially important because for 40 percent of women, their visit to a family planning health center is the only healthcare they receive during the year. Vermonters are lucky because our State recognizes that this issue isn't about abortion, it is about ensuring the best network of providers for the people of our State. But other States have already worked to undermine family planning clinics like Planned Parenthood.

The passage of this resolution will allow these discriminatory efforts to advance, especially discriminatory efforts against women. There is no question about it: A vote for this resolution is a vote against women. This resolution would not only affect the lives of millions of American women, but it would also affect the lives of men and young people who trust and depend on family planning clinics for their basic healthcare needs, including for annual health exams, cervical and breast cancer screenings, and HIV screenings.

Last year in Vermont—keep in mind that Vermont has a population of just over 600,000 people—Planned Parenthood centers provided vital primary and preventive services to more than 16,000 patients. In a small State like Vermont, this harmful impact cannot be overstated.

Those who support this resolution argue that the States should be able to determine who receives Title X grants, and that women under this program can simply find another clinic to go to. Well, that is simply not the case. In fact, that argument is false. It is a lie. Family planning clinics overwhelmingly serve populations in rural and medically underserved parts of the country where access to healthcare, especially for low-income individuals, is difficult.

It is easy—easy—for Senators to vote to cut off this healthcare for women and children and people in rural areas because each one of us, if we need healthcare, can walk 2 minutes down this hall and walk to the Capitol physician and say ''I am a U.S. Senator. I need healthcare,'' and we are going to get it. While that may be the reality for 100 people in this body, it is not the reality for millions and millions of people in every single State we represent.

What this partisan resolution would do is force women and families in States who depend on family planning clinics for their healthcare to find another doctor—and often very few are available—or what is more likely, go without care at all. So they don't get preventive care, they don't get checkups, and they don't find the first indication that they may be facing melanoma or some other serious health problem. That undermines all of our efforts, which we should be joining, to strengthen our Nation's healthcare system, to try to make our healthcare system at least as good as many other countries', and to ensure access to care for everyone.

This Republican resolution marks just the latest overreach and intrusion into women's healthcare.

We even voted for a resolution to allow people to spy on what you do on the internet, and then sell that information for their own profit, destroying your privacy, but making money doing it.

Until the House failed to even take it up, the Senate was scheduled to consider a reconciliation bill this week that would have defunded Planned Parenthood and would have allowed health insurers to deny coverage for maternity care, thus requiring women to pay more for health insurance.

In the last Congress, it was more of the same—deny coverage for maternity care, and then go out and say: We believe in the right to life. Clearly not so much for the mother when she needs maternity care.

Should we really walk back from the remarkable progress we have made as a nation in women's health? Of course not. But I am concerned that we will still see the same irresponsible attack surfacing again and again.

Look, it is 2016; it is not 1917. It is time for the mean-spirited and ideological assaults on women's healthcare to end. Women are not second-class citizens. My wife is not, my daughter is not, and my three granddaughters are not. They deserve the same access to care as men.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution that will degrade the healthcare and access to healthcare, of so many Americans.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to oppose the title X Congressional Review Act resolution of disapproval.

This resolution would permit discrimination against family planning healthcare providers that provide primary preventive and reproductive healthcare services to millions of women around the country. It will allow States to take away Federal funding from family planning clinics and make it much harder for millions of American women to meet with their healthcare providers and access basic care.

I am struggling to understand, amidst all these problems we are having to solve in this country and around the world, why this Congress seems to have such a singular fixation on controlling women's access to basic healthcare. This legislation is so far out of touch with the actual needs of our constituents. If we cut funding for women's health clinics, is that going to create more good-paying jobs? Is it going to open more factories in our upstate rural towns? I don't believe it will. It is certainly not going to make anyone healthier.

There are millions of American women, including thousands of women in my State of New York, who rely on title X health clinics for treatments, preventive care, and for family planning services. They need these health clinics because they provide contraception counseling, cancer screening, and medical expertise right there in their communities. Many of the women who use these services have nowhere else to go for access because title X clinics are often the only affordable option for them and may even be the only place within driving distance of their communities. Yet, once again, my colleagues are pushing legislation to limit women's options for accessing healthcare and making it harder for thousands of New York women to get the care and treatments they need. I continue to be amazed by how little empathy there seems to be for millions of women in our country who don't have the resources to travel to a major hospital outside of their communities and desperately need these local clinics to stay healthy.

Let's be very clear about who this legislation would hurt the most. This bill will hurt women in small towns and rural communities more than anyone else. It will cause lower income women to struggle even more. Every single one of my colleagues has many women in their States who rely on title X clinics and would suffer if these clinics had their Federal funding taken away.

So I urge my colleagues in this Chamber: When it is time to vote on this legislation, think about the women who live in your States. Think about the women who live in small towns and rural communities who are just trying to access basic women's healthcare services that they can afford. Think about the women who don't have big hospitals or big cities nearby. Think about the women who don't have enough money to travel. The bill is going to hurt them. It will make their lives harder, not easier.

We all have the responsibility to stand up for the women in our States, and that includes defending their access to healthcare and basic family planning services. I urge my colleagues to vote against this very discriminatory resolution.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to the Congressional Review Act measure, which would allow discrimination against title X family planning providers, which in turn could roll back access to family planning and preventive health services for women and their families in New Hampshire and across our country.

Throughout my time in public service, I have always fought to ensure

that women have meaningful access to the healthcare they need. I have fought to ensure that they can make their own healthcare decisions, and, in doing so, control their own destinies.

To compete economically on a level playing field, women must be able to make their own decisions about if—or when—to start a family. They should not have to pay more than men do for healthcare. They should be able to visit providers of their own choice who understand their healthcare needs. To fully participate not only in our economy but also in our democracy, women must be recognized for their capacity to make their own healthcare decisions, just as men are. They also must have full independence to make their own health decisions, just as men do.

During my time as Governor of New Hampshire, I restored family planning funds and pushed to restore State funding for Planned Parenthood, and I am going to continue fighting to ensure that women have the care they need, while standing firm against efforts here in Congress to roll back the progress that has been made.

Unfortunately, the vote we are taking today is a continuation of a partisan agenda that has been focused on restricting the care that women and their families can receive. The fact that Vice President MIKE PENCE was called in to cast the deciding vote to advance this measure shows just how far Republican leadership will go in order to undermine women's access to critical healthcare.

For more than 40 years, title X has provided women and their families with comprehensive family planning and preventive health services. When the legislation was originally passed in 1970, it was part of a bipartisan effort, with the support of prominent Republicans. In the years that have followed, title X has been essential in delivering important services to some of our Nation's most underserved communities. That is why, in New Hampshire, title X and Planned Parenthood still have broad support in our communities, even if they have been the subject of political gamesmanship here in Washington.

Title X has support from Granite Staters because they have seen the real difference it has made in their lives and in the lives of their neighbors. They know that in some parts of the State there are no other options or, if other options do exist, they don't provide women with the same expertise and commitment to reproductive health that title X providers do.

For those in rural communities, for low-income women and men, and for members of the LGBTQ community, title X supported health centers have been a major source of preventive care and reproductive health services, including cancer screenings, birth control, HIV and STI tests, and counseling services. And title X's important public health services translate into savings for taxpayers. In 2010, title X investments resulted in net savings for Federal and State governments of $7 billion.

The measure we are voting on today would undermine this progress and the safety net for countless citizens. This measure would allow States to discriminate against providers and take away investments in family planning clinics, ultimately taking away these key services for those who need them most.

Last year, more than 4 million women and men at over 4,000 health centers across our Nation received care through title X. This includes around 20,000 patients in New Hampshire, including roughly 11,000 patients receiving care through title X supported Planned Parenthood centers. Those services can't just be replaced by other providers, even community health centers that do great work. But two counties in New Hampshire don't have a community health center at all. Others don't have the capacity to replace this work or this specialized experience that can make a critical difference to a woman's health.

In New Hampshire and other States, Planned Parenthood and the community health centers are often partners, working in tandem to get patients the reproductive healthcare they need. But when I hear from community health centers around New Hampshire, they tell me they would not be able to pick up the slack if Planned Parenthood is defunded.

Make no mistake about it, this CRA, which would let States discriminate against providers in the title X program, combined with the consistent attempts to defund Planned Parenthood by some in Congress, would be a disaster for women in New Hampshire and all across the Nation. That is why a number of leading advocates have come out against these efforts to overturn title X regulations, including the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association, the Human Rights Campaign, and dozens more. I share their concerns and oppose the measure we will consider today, and I am going to continue to fight against these attempts to roll back access to reproductive health and preventive services.

It is critical that we have a healthcare system that ensures that all women and their families can get the care they need. What we cannot do is eliminate services and discriminate against providers who have been providing critical, cost-effective healthcare to millions of Americans for decades. I strongly oppose this effort to undermine the title X program, and I will vote against this measure today.

We need just one more vote, and I urge my colleagues to listen to the voices of their constituents and vote no today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, last week the Senate watched the House and the American people watched the House because the House was on the verge of taking away access to healthcare for 24 million Americans. Then last Thursday, a week ago from today, the House said: We are going to postpone that vote. We are not sure we have the votes to take healthcare away from 24 million Americans, but maybe we will vote tomorrow, Friday.

That was 6 days ago. Friday came, and the House said: No, we are not going to do that vote today because we don't have the votes.

Why didn't they have the votes? Because across the country, millions of Americans said that taking away healthcare is the wrong thing to do—to take away healthcare from Medicaid expansion, the Oregon Health Plan; to take away healthcare by restricting standard Medicaid as it existed before ACA; to take away the healthcare bill of rights that people so much appreciated; to undermine the ability of low-income working families to buy policies with significant subsidies on the exchange—all of that.

The House set it aside. I thought that was tremendous because this week, we are not going to have a diabolical bill destroying healthcare here on the floor of the Senate. But the majority party decided: No, we can't go a week without destroying healthcare, so we are going to put up this Congressional Review Act that would take healthcare away from 5 million mostly low-income women who gain access to healthcare through Planned Parenthood. We won't bring up on the floor the bill that failed in the House for 24 million Americans; no, we will just focus on 5 million mostly low-income women and take away their healthcare.

That is what this vote is about right now, later today. Clearly this attack on healthcare for women across America is wrong, just as it was wrong to try to destroy healthcare for 24 million Americans. It is an attack on women's right to choose what to do with their own bodies. It is an attack on the basic decency and compassion of the American people.

Since 1970, the title X family planning provider network has been dedicated to providing individuals with comprehensive family planning and critical health services, such as screenings for breast and prostate cancer and sexually transmitted diseases.

Just in 2015 alone, title X provided basic primary and preventive healthcare services, including Pap tests and breast exams and birth control and HIV testing, to more than 4 million low-income women and men at nearly 4,000 health centers across the country. That is a huge impact on the health of the individuals served through title X.

In 2010, title X services prevented 87,000 preterm or low birth weight births. I can tell you, when my wife Mary was carrying each of our two

children, I so much hoped that we would not have a complication that would result in a low birth weight birth or a preterm birth in which the child might not even survive. So failing to provide that care is really setting back not just the health of thousands of babies but maybe affecting whether they live or die.

Title X services prevented 2,000 cases of cervical cancer. That is a big deal, cervical cancer, and it is a good deed to have title X services preventing it.

For 40 percent of women in America, their visit to a title X family planning health center is the only healthcare they receive annually.

So let's be honest about what repealing this rule means. It means family planning providers can be discriminated against by States that want to withhold Federal funding from family planning providers for reasons other than their ability to offer family planning services. It means less access to quality care and less access to affordable care.

By overriding this regulation, Republicans empower States to pick and choose who provides services on a criteria that has nothing to do with the quality of care patients receive. States have done this in the past, and it resulted in dramatically fewer women accessing critical family planning and healthcare services.

We know what this is about. It is about any Federal funding for Planned Parenthood, an organization that provides care and resources to 5 million women every year. They have been doing it for 100 years. And they are the target. But what has been their mission? Their mission has been to provide easy and affordable access to address reproductive health and enable women to make their own decisions about their healthcare. But now, thanks to this Congressional Review Act proposal before us, that principle is under attack, that principle of easy and affordable access to women's healthcare and women's control over healthcare choices, to keep the politicians out of their choices. This resolution is about putting the politician in charge of the individual healthcare decisions of women in America, and that is just wrong.

I encourage my colleagues to take a close look at this. You were spared having to vote on eliminating healthcare for 24 million Americans, but now you are required today to vote on eliminating healthcare for 5 million women—mostly low-income women—in America. Are you going to attack the healthcare of those women? Are you going to injure the babies they are carrying? There will be more low birth weight and preterm babies. That is the wrong thing to do.

Vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, just yesterday, the White House held a forum on empowering women. Sean Spicer said the President made women's empowerment a priority throughout the campaign, but earlier today, Vice President PENCE traveled to the Capitol to cast a tie-breaking vote to move ahead on a resolution to undermine women's access to preventive healthcare. That doesn't sound like women's empowerment to me.

Title X was enacted in 1970. It passed the Senate unanimously at that time and was signed into law by a Republican President. Title X is the only Federal healthcare program dedicated solely to providing comprehensive family planning and other related preventive healthcare services so important to women, as well as preventive services for men.

Last year alone, 4 million women and men at 4,000 health centers all across our country got basic care because of title X funding—critical Pap tests to head off cases of cervical cancer, counseling to help women plan for a healthy pregnancy, contraception, breast exams, HIV testing, vaccinations. These services prevented 87,000 preterm or low birth weight babies and 2,000 cases of cervical cancer. These health services also save money. The taxpayer saves $7 for every $1 invested in preventive healthcare.

For more than 2 million people, the title X funded clinic is their only source of healthcare. This matters to small towns and rural communities all across Michigan, as well as all across the country. Title X funds clinics in three-fourths of all the counties in the United States. In Michigan, you can benefit from the services in the beautiful Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where I will be this weekend, where funds support the health department in Iron County, or the Planned Parenthood clinic in Marquette—at the opposite end of the State, down in the southeastern corner—where funds support the health department in Monroe County.

So what are we voting on today? Plain and simple, this is an effort to take away women's family planning and other healthcare services. Right now, title X funds are awarded solely based on the provider's ability to serve the patient, as it should be. Republicans want to discriminate against certain family planning services, certain providers, and reduce access to this care, frankly, based on politics or their own personal beliefs.

The vote this afternoon is very simple: It is about basic healthcare for women. A ''yes'' vote is a vote against women in Michigan and all across our country. A ''yes'' vote will take away healthcare. A ''yes'' vote will take away healthcare for millions of Americans.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote no.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, the majority is continuing its assault on women's reproductive healthcare rights, this time using the Congressional Review Act to reverse a rule and tear a hole in our safety net for access to family planning and preventative healthcare. The resolution before us would overturn the Department of Health and Human Services' rule, which reinforces regulations that prevent States from denying title X funds to health clinics like Planned Parenthood, even though none of these funds are used for abortions. Repealing this rule would limit access to healthcare, which would harm public health in communities that rely on this funding.

Congress created the Title X Family Planning Program with bipartisan support in 1970 to help provide comprehensive basic primary, family planning, and preventative services to uninsured and low-income people. It continues to be the only Federal grant dedicated to providing family planning and preventive service. Recipients of the grants use the program's funding to provide basic healthcare, such as cancer screenings, HIV testing, and family planning counseling to 4 million women and men. Both public and private entities run title X service sites. These sites broaden access to healthcare services in rural parts of our country. Often, they are the only option for the populations they serve. About 40 percent of women who use title X service sites say that they are their primary healthcare service provider.

Despite the benefits of the funding, States have taken actions that discriminate against family planning clinics. Texas, for example, slashed its family planning budget by 65 percent. As a result, Texas forced a quarter of its family planning providers to close their doors to patients in need.

To ensure that States do not discriminate against family planning providers, the Obama administration issued a rule that forbids States from withholding title X funding for family planning providers for any reason other than being unable to deliver effective services. This rule prevents States like Texas from attempting to defund needed providers like Planned Parenthood. This rule protects access to vital preventive services that provide a safety net for our country's most vulnerable patients.

All people should have a right to affordable, high-quality healthcare. Reversing this rule will deny critical healthcare services to women, men, and their families. I urge a ''no'' vote.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I have to say that this is a sad day for the Senate. I know many of us here today—certainly my Democratic colleagues—are truly appalled. Once

again, instead of working on the many pressing issues at hand, Republicans are continuing their tired, dangerous obsession with attacking women's health.

Once again, women's health is being used as a political football, with Republicans attempting to cut off access to vital healthcare services. Once again, millions of families across the country are watching Congress, wondering why there isn't just one more Republican who will stand up for them.

The Republicans just held a vote open for nearly an hour to force a vote that would allow politicians to discriminate against family planning providers. Of course, whenever they can't make a vote, when women's health is being attacked, whom do Senate Republicans call to break that tie in the Senate? Vice President MIKE PENCE.

We have actually seen this before. We all remember what happened in the nomination of Secretary DeVos, and we all know that enough is enough. This is shameful. This is wrong. It cannot stand.

Families have spoken time and again, and they have made it absolutely career that when it comes to women's rights and healthcare, they do not want to go backward. But today, thanks to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, thanks to Vice President PENCE, the Senate will hold a vote on whether critical healthcare services should be taken away from millions of women across the country.

Let's not forget, it hasn't even been a week since people nationwide completely rejected TrumpCare, that disastrous bill that would have undermined women's rights and healthcare in so many ways.

Now, here in the Senate today, we are about to vote on whether a young woman should be able to go to the provider that she trusts to get birth control; whether it is Pap tests, breast exams, birth control, or HIV testing, which should be more or less available to women across the country; whether healthcare providers are evaluated for Federal funding based on their ability to provide services or ideology; whether women are able to exercise their constitutionally protected rights to reproductive healthcare; and whether the Senate is going to turn back the clock today on women's health.

For me and for Democrats, and I know even for some Republicans, it is disappointing, deeply disappointing, that we are even having this vote today—a vote that was jammed through, with 48 Democrats and 2 Republicans voting no and Vice President PENCE coming down to break the tie.

Put simply, rolling back this rule today will put at risk women's lives, like a constituent of mine from Tacoma, WA. She wrote me a letter recently to tell me the many reasons this is so important to her.

When she was 20, she was uninsured. She had no other options. A family planning center was there for her. During a routine Pap test, her doctor discovered a precancerous condition in her cervix. That led to surgery, which saved her life and saved her fertility.

Without access to that provider, she would not have been able to get a regular Pap smear and checkup and most likely would have developed cervical cancer. She would not have been able to get pregnant, go on to have a daughter, become a community college counselor, and today, at the age of 65, be cancer-free.

I hope that some of my Republican colleagues are listening and that they think of women just like this, whose lives are healthier and have been saved because of the services of so many family planning centers. That is who I will be thinking about. That is what has always kept me going.

I urge people across the country right now to let Senators know that this vote today, this rule is not OK. It is not acceptable. Make phone calls. Go on Facebook. Tweet about it. Everything helps. Tell your Senator today that in about an hour, with their vote, to stand up for you, for your family, and for women across the country.

We need only one more Republican—one more—to join us. This vote that we are about to have in about an hour is dead even, on the razor's edge. Fifty Senators—48 Democrats and 2 Republicans—will vote to reject this harmful, disgusting resolution. We just need one more Republican to join us, to stand on the side of women and men and families, and put an end to this damaging political attack on women.

I am sure people will hear about this. I am going to be here on the floor. Many of my colleagues are going to be out here talking about it. People nationwide will have the opportunity to know exactly where every Republican stands on this.

I urge our Republican colleagues: Stop to think about what you are doing, taking away the ability of women in communities across our country to go to the provider they trust for the care that is most important to them, their families, and our country's future. I urge them to make the right choice.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, most Americans agree—and I think last week's vote in the House indicated—that there is something special about healthcare. This just isn't the right of every American to own an SUV; it is the right of every American to have access to healthcare. That is really at the heart of our healthcare debate.

There are some who believe that health insurance ought to be another product on the shelf, and if you have enough money, you can buy it. But there are others, like me, who believe it is more fundamental.

Healthcare in America, as far as I am concerned, should be a right—not a privilege, a right—so that it doesn't go just to wealthy people. Everyone should have that peace of mind.

I have told the story many times on the floor of the Senate—and many of us are products of our own life experience. My wife and I got married when I was a student in law school here at Georgetown, in Washington. God sent us a beautiful little girl right away, but she had some medical problems—serious ones—and I didn't have any health insurance. I was a law student, had no real income, a wife, and a baby with a medical problem.

I ended up sitting in the charity ward of the local children's hospital with a number in my hand, waiting to see who would come through the door to provide me with healthcare for my little girl. I had never felt worse in my life as a father, as a husband, to think that I had reached this point where I didn't have health insurance, and I wasn't sure that I was bringing the very best medical care to my little girl.

Well, I never forgot that experience in the many years since, and I never will. I don't believe anybody should be sitting in that chair, worried because they don't have health insurance—whether they have the kind of healthcare that their family needs.

I think that is at the heart of this debate on our healthcare system in America and its future. What we are talking about today is part of it, as well, because we had decided 40 years ago—maybe more—that we were going to make sure, if you were poor in America, as a woman, you would still have access to basic healthcare. Poverty would not exclude you from healthcare. So we created this title X program to provide healthcare primarily for low-income families but for women and children. The services that are provided are basic life-and-death services—everything from breast and cervical care screening, high blood pressure screening, anemia, diabetes testing, and so on.

There is not much debate as to whether we should provide those services, but you know what this is all about. It is not about what I just read. It is about family planning, and it is about abortion. That is what this is really all about.

The Republicans who are voting to deny women access to healthcare are saying: We are doing this to reduce the incidence of abortion.

There is something they should admit: You cannot spend one penny of Federal money for abortion services, except in cases of rape, incest, or where the life of the mother is in danger. Not here in the United States, not overseas.

What they say instead is: Well, we don't want to provide any money to any place that might use their own funds for abortion services, like Planned Parenthood. So we have this amendment before us.

For thousands of women and families in my State of Illinois, as Senator MURRAY has explained, it means the Republicans—who were all for choice in

healthcare—don't want women of limited means to have their ultimate choice of Planned Parenthood for their services. So the Republicans have brought in the Vice President of the United States to vote in the Senate Chamber.

For those who are following the Senate, that doesn't happen very often. It has to be a big deal. And it must be a big deal to the Vice President and to the Republican Party to bring back one of our colleagues, who has been on the mend from medical care, and to bring in the Vice President to make that difference.

Their argument is: Well, we are just trying to reduce the number of abortions.

Well, if you have taken anything beyond Birds and Bees 101, there are some things that you might know. We had a study in St. Louis that was reported in 2012 that tells many people who are at least aware of the basics of how children are born something that we knew already and knew intuitively. Here is what it found:

The abortion rate in the St. Louis area declined by more than 20 percent from 2008 to 2010, coinciding with a research study that gave free birth control to thousands of area women.

Although the drop in abortions in St. Louis cannot be attributed solely to the project, the abortion rate for the rest of Missouri—

Not in the study—

remained constant.

Contraception is key to reducing unintended pregnancies and abortions, said Dr. Jeff Peipert. ''We need to remove cost barriers,'' Peipert said. ''I think all women should have equal access.''

Teenage participants—

In this study—

experienced a birth rate of 6.3 babies per 1,000 girls, compared with the national rate of 34.3, according to the study published . . . in the journal Obstetrics and Gynecology.

There were an average of six abortions a year for every 1,000 women in the project, compared with the national rate of 20.

Coincidence? I don't think so.

When you make family planning accessible to potential mothers and to the families, people are educated and make informed choices. There are fewer unplanned pregnancies. There are fewer teenage pregnancies. There are fewer abortions.

So the Republicans, by reducing the access of women to clinics and agencies that are providing family planning, reduce the likelihood they will get the information they need and the likelihood that abortions will increase—exactly the opposite of what they say they are trying to do.

Common sense dictates that—whatever your position is on abortion and choice—if you believe that an uninformed and uneducated young mother is the right person to make this decision as to whether they are going to have a family, I think you understand what all of us do: Information, assistance, and quality healthcare is critically important for women to make the right choice for themselves and their families and to avoid unplanned pregnancies.

We are now experiencing the lowest rates of unplanned pregnancies in the United States in the last 30 years and the lowest incidence of teenage pregnancies in the last 30 years, and the abortion rate is going down. It works. It is connecting.

This vote that the Republicans are forcing us to take—which the President, I am afraid, would sign, if it were sent to his desk—really gets at the heart of the issue. If you want to reduce the number of abortions in America, if you want to make them safe, legal, and rare, as they say, for goodness' sake, provide basic family planning information and services to women who otherwise might not have it.

This is a war against Planned Parenthood and a few other facilities that is mindless. It really is stopping information from people who desperately need it. Without that information, there will be bad results—bad results that often lead to abortions.

So I would just say flat out that we don't talk a lot about the A-word, ''abortion,'' on the floor, but that is really what is driving this debate. That is what is really behind it.

I hope that one more Republican colleague will decide that if you are truly against abortion, you should be in favor of family planning and giving basic information and counseling to young women who need it. That was proven in St. Louis. It is proven by our human experience. I hope my colleagues will join me in opposing this effort.

I thank the Senator from Washington for leading this debate on the floor.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. 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. 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.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon on the pending business of the CRA that would allow States to discriminate against women's healthcare providers.

Before I begin, I want to recognize the members of the HELP Committee. Senator MURRAY, who understands this issue as well as anyone in our caucus and speaks powerfully about it, has been such a great leader on these issues, even in these difficult times when we are in the minority. I think our entire caucus is grateful to her and all of the members of the HELP Committee. It is an outstanding group of people.

As my colleagues have explained, this CRA would empower States to discriminate against healthcare providers, specifically title X family planning providers. The practical result of this measure is that State legislatures would pass laws to deny certain providers the funding they need to operate, which would prevent access to family planning and preventive care for millions of American women.

This CRA is just another example of the Republican war on women. It would let States treat women as second-class citizens who do not deserve the same access to healthcare as men. Some States say this is about abortion, but let me be clear. This is not about abortions. In fact, title X funding cannot be used to pay for abortion services. Some of our Republicans who are sort of tied in a knot on abortion say they are for other kinds of health services, contraception and things like that, but this would take that away. Our Republican friends could not get TrumpCare through, which sought to shut down Planned Parenthood for a year. Now they have moved on to this measure. It is just bad policy.

Title X clinics are a critical resource for women, especially in rural areas. This bill would hurt those areas most. Many of my Republican friends represent rural areas. I would like to remind them that in many of these places—and I have several in Upstate New York—these clinics are the only family planning and preventive care services that are available. Sometimes they are the only healthcare services available at all. I am sure that is why two of my Republican colleagues, with a great deal of courage—the Senators from Maine and Alaska—voted against moving to debate on this measure. They know that it would hurt women and hurt families in their States, particularly in the rural areas, and, of course, Maine and Alaska are both rural States.

For the second time this year, the Republicans had to beckon Vice President PENCE down from the White House to break a tie here in the Senate on a measure that has bipartisan opposition.

President Trump, who once said, ''No one has more respect for women than I do,'' sent Vice President PENCE down here to the Senate to break a tie on a bill that would allow States to discriminate against women's health providers. The next time the President says, ''No one has more respect for women than I do,'' I would ask the women of America to not look at his words but his actions because this is just another example in which the President has said one thing, but his policies have done exactly another.

I urge my Republican friends, particularly those in rural States, where this could really hurt, to please think about it and vote against this CRA. We only need one more vote to stop this resolution that would allow States to dramatically reduce the access for women to essential healthcare services. I urge each of my Republican friends to consult their conscience before they vote in the next hour.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise to express my opposition to the resolution of disapproval that is currently before the Senate, which would decimate Federal title X funding for healthcare providers across our Nation who provide vital preventive care and family planning services.

Let me put it in simpler terms. Republicans in Congress are once again rushing to advance legislation that will make it harder for Michiganians to get the healthcare they need. Just last week, we saw Speaker RYAN and President Trump in their efforts to take away healthcare from 24 million Americans and to defund Planned Parenthood, but this is a new week, and we are seeing a new assault on healthcare.

Today's resolution is just the latest in a long series of attacks against Planned Parenthood. A vote for this legislation is a vote to make it harder for millions of Americans to access birth control, cancer screenings, and testing for sexually transmitted infections.

''Title X funding'' sounds arcane, but it is actually pretty straightforward. It is a bipartisan program which was established more than 40 years ago and which provides individuals with family planning and preventive health services. Not one penny covers abortion. Let me say that again. Not one penny covers abortion—not one. This is established Federal law, and anyone who says otherwise is simply lying to you or has no idea of what he is talking about.

We should take a step back and ask, what can we agree on here? I think every Senator would agree that we want to reduce unintended pregnancies and teen pregnancies and save money and prevent cancer. Today, unfortunately, we are voting to do the opposite.

Right now, we have the lowest rate of teen pregnancies in our Nation's history, and we are getting ready to heavily restrict a successful program that saves $7 for every public dollar invested. Preventive screenings are quick, affordable, and save lives. Cancer devastates families, ends lives, and is expensive to treat. Historically, low teen pregnancy rates have not happened in a vacuum; they have happened because of concerted efforts to promote education and prevention and give women a say in their own health.

The pain inflicted today will not be felt uniformly; it will disproportionately hurt people in rural and underserved areas in which these clinics are more often than not the primary sources of healthcare. Michigan has 19 Planned Parenthood clinics, and half are located in areas that are federally designated as ''rural and medically underserved.'' As a direct result of title X funds, Michigan family planning clinics prevent over 18,000 unintended pregnancies and over 1,000 cases of sexually transmitted diseases and cervical cancer each and every year.

Every woman has a fundamental right to make her decisions about her reproductive health. The government has absolutely no right to stand in her way. I strongly oppose this resolution and implore just one more of my Republican colleagues to join me in stopping this misguided effort.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues in speaking about the harmful effects of this resolution of disapproval.

I thank the Senator from Michigan for his words and for the very important point that we are seeing the lowest number of teen pregnancies that we have seen for a long, long time. Why would you want to mess with something that is finally reducing the number of teen pregnancies?

I thank Senator MURRAY, who has been here diligently leading in this effort, because rolling this rule back will result in something very simple: It will result in less access to care for women and families.

Title X funding supports vital family planning and related preventive care for low-income, uninsured, and young people across this country. Every year, more than 4 million people, including many who are living in rural and medically underserved areas, go to the over 4,000 health centers that rely on this funding. This includes 41 service sites in Minnesota that provide access to cancer screenings, birth control, and testing for sexually transmitted infections. In fact, 40 percent of women who receive care at title X clinics consider it to be their only source of healthcare—40 percent—which is incredibly important in rural areas.

One thinks of, just recently, in the last few years, the Zika scare. People wanted to go and get birth control. They wanted to know what they could do to prevent themselves from getting Zika in order to save the lives of their babies. This is true, and this is what will be happening if they make these cuts.

The regulation we are voting on today should be common sense. It simply makes clear that funds will be awarded solely based on a provider's ability to serve a patient, and it guarantees that women have access to the care they are entitled to under Federal law.

We should be strengthening our efforts to provide better and more affordable care that best serves patients. Instead, repealing this rule will take essential services away from women when they need them most. By overriding this regulation, States will now pick and choose who provides these services, which will be based on arbitrary criteria that has nothing to do with the quality of services patients will receive. That should be our benchmark—the quality of services.

When States have done this in the past, it has blocked access to critical family planning and healthcare services for many women, including those in rural areas who rely on the health centers that need these funds.

As Senator MURRAY said this morning, women across the country have made it clear that restricting women's access to the full range of reproductive care is unacceptable.

We have a situation in which this existing rule has yielded the lowest number of teen pregnancies in years. We have a situation in which two of our Republican colleagues have joined us in opposition to this repeal. We have a situation in which the Vice President of the United States had to come in and break a tie.

Do you know what I would say? I would say that this resolution should be disapproved of, that rolling this rule back will result in less access to care for women and families, and that this rule should stay in place.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, just as I have many times before, to stop another rightwing attack on title X funding and to defend access to healthcare for millions of women.

Not even a week has passed since the American people successfully beat back Republican efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and give insurance companies permission to charge women higher premiums simply because of their gender. Yet apparently less than a week is not too soon for Republicans to launch yet another attack on women's access to healthcare. This morning, my Republican colleagues needed the Vice President of the United States to come to Capitol Hill and cast a vote to overturn protections for 4 million patients served by title X funded health centers every year.

For many low-income women, title X funding is the lifeline that ensures their access to birth control, testing for sexually transmitted infections, cancer screenings, and other basic health services. In fact, 85 percent of the people served by family planning centers like Planned Parenthood have incomes below 200 percent of the Federal poverty level. Approximately 20 percent of these patients identify as Latina, and approximately 14 percent identify as Black.

In 2015 alone, title X funded nearly 800,000 Pap tests, breast exams to 1 million women, nearly 5 million tests for STIs, and 1 million HIV tests. Title X did not pay for a single abortion. Indeed, no Federal funding goes to abortion-related care. And indeed, for every dollar that title X funding spent, we saved about $4 and prevented nearly 2 million unintended pregnancies per year.

Family planning services at New Jersey's title X funded health centers

helped prevent 20,500 unintended pregnancies in 2014, which would have likely resulted in 10,000 unintended births and 7,400 abortions. Without publicly funded family planning, the number of unintended pregnancies in New Jersey would be 21 percent higher. Title X funded services produce significant cost savings to the Federal and State governments. Services provided at title X supported sites in New Jersey accounted for nearly $232.9 million in such savings in 2010 alone.

I hope President Trump knows that when my Republican colleagues vote to defund Planned Parenthood, they aren't voting to stop a single abortion; they are voting to defund the family planning care that helps avoid unwanted pregnancies and reduce the need for abortion.

A vote to defund title X is a vote to defund breast cancer exams. A vote to defund title X is a vote to defund cervical cancer screenings. A vote to defund title X is a vote to defund testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

The American people—those who voted for President Trump—voted for more affordable healthcare, certainly not less. Not one of my Republican colleagues has come to the floor to make the case in favor of repealing title X—not one. But if my Republican colleagues prevail in this cynical vote, they will jeopardize access to affordable family planning services; they will force many health centers to stop providing care to patients; and they will leave doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers working on the frontlines to abandon those who need them the most.

I, for one, refuse to allow the GOP to pander to the extreme elements of their party and in doing so limit a woman's access to affordable, accessible healthcare. This vote is about every one of our sisters, our daughters, our grandchildren. This vote is about women across this country, and I don't understand how we can take away their access to the healthcare they so critically need.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I see my colleague from Illinois is here. While she is setting up, I just want everybody to realize what is happening here. We are debating a rule that, should the Republicans—with the Vice President voting to break the tie this afternoon—put it in place, will allow the discrimination of healthcare providers for women across the country.

I have many Democratic colleagues here making the case for those women, mostly low income, who have no other access, particularly in our rural and urban regions. I just want to note that there are no Republicans out here saying why this rule needs to be passed. They just want it done, over with; the Vice President to break the tie, and it is out of here. We are noticing. Women are noticing. People are noticing.

I thank all of my Democratic colleagues and a few brave Republicans who are with us for their support to get this done. We need one more Republican to be able to defeat this.

I yield to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, this vote to allow States to defund Planned Parenthood and other title X funded health programs is simply shameful and dangerous, and millions of Americans across this country, including tens of thousands of women and men in Illinois, are going to suffer as a result.

This vote is particularly devastating to the 2.7 million Americans who depend on Planned Parenthood for their basic preventive healthcare each year. I personally understand what is at stake with this vote because I have been there. When I was working my way through college as a waitress, with the help of Pell grants and student loans and student work-study, I relied on Planned Parenthood for my basic healthcare, for services that are just as simple as a simple physical that I needed to get that waitressing job. I went to Planned Parenthood because that is all I could afford on a student's budget, and I needed to get that second job.

While I can relate to the obvious good that Planned Parenthood does, many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, unfortunately, simply cannot. They don't understand what is at stake.

Let's take a look at my home State of Illinois. In Illinois alone, Planned Parenthood serves 64,000 patients annually. Of those, 34,000 seek testing for sexually transmitted diseases, and nearly 7,000 are seeking out cancer screenings. So by defunding this organization, what they are really doing is stripping thousands of Illinoisans and Americans all across this country from access to essential healthcare. That is simply unacceptable.

We can't play politics with women's healthcare. Planned Parenthood should be able to do its job and continue providing quality care and services without fear of partisan or discriminatory attacks.

The bottom line is that Planned Parenthood is one of the Nation's largest women's healthcare providers, and it is essential to the health of our families and our country.

This vote makes taking away not just Planned Parenthood's funding but funding from any organization that receives title X easier, turning women around the country into second-class citizens and harming millions of Americans in the process. Why would we make it easier to take away a health center that helps our women's public health system and serves as a lifeline for affordable, preventive services like physicals, disease testing, and cancer screenings? Women and men all over the country need these services. Our States and our local communities need these services because they meet a need that would otherwise not be met.

I want the men and women across this country to know that I am not going to give up. Democrats are not going to give up. I will continue to fight to protect title X funding and the patients who depend on it. It is just too important.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. 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.

Ms. CANTWELL. 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. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues here on the Senate floor, and I thank the Senator from Washington for her leadership on this issue. I rise to join my colleagues in voicing strong opposition and deep concern on H.J. Res. 43, a resolution of disapproval we are considering today in the U.S. Senate.

This resolution will threaten access to healthcare for thousands of women and families in the State of Washington and millions of people across the Nation.

H.J. Res. 43 would make it easier for States to discriminate against healthcare providers who serve low-income and vulnerable patients under title X of the Public Health Services Act.

Title X is the only Federal funding program dedicated to supporting the family planning safety net, and it was widely supported by the public when it was enacted with strong bipartisan support. So despite what my colleagues say on the other side of the aisle, this issue is something where all my colleagues should make sure we are not taking away access to healthcare.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle in the House—and I know my colleague, the senior Senator from Washington, can testify to this, have on many occasions tried to de-fund Planned Parenthood. They have used Planned Parenthood as a bargaining chip in a litany of high-stakes legislative negotiations. They even tried to shut down the Federal Government because they didn't want to fund Planned Parenthood. Moreover, during the 114th Congress, Republicans voted 22 times to undermine women's health. Today, they are continuing the same thing.

These health centers are an essential part of communities' delivery systems. They provide preventive services. They help prevent deadly disease. They save taxpayers money. They help families with their healthcare. Time and again, constituents in our States tell us how access to these high quality care centers translates into economic empowerment, independence, and the ability to thrive in their lives and careers. In short, these health centers don't just

provide good healthcare for America. They provide a good economic strategy for America.

In our State, 34 Planned Parenthood centers provide contraceptive care, breast cancer screening, and STD and HIV screening and treatment, and they have prevented thousands of unintended pregnancies thanks to their efforts and outreach. In the very isolated communities of Pullman, Moses Lake, and Shelton, and many more, they are oftentimes the only family provider that will furnish care to low-income individuals. Major medical organizations—representing obstetricians, gynecologists, family physicians, and pediatricians—have also made it clear that this resolution is divorced from medical science and will hurt patients.

I urge my colleagues to resist continuing their senseless political crusade. I hope they will be smart enough to understand that a healthcare strategy is an economic strategy. I hope they will defeat this resolution.

GONZAGA BULLDOGS

Mr. President, what a great moment—my colleague from Washington is here, and my colleague from Nevada is here as well. I just want to clarify something. We definitely want to cheer on the Gonzaga Bulldogs in Saturday's game. But so many people say: Where is Gonzaga? It is in Spokane, WA, and we are very proud of Spokane. It is a city that hosts Hoopfest, a three-on-three basketball game that many people attend, and an enormous Bloomsday race that so many people come to from across the country right on the first of May. I think somewhere around 60,000 people are in that race. But we are also so proud that we also have a Gonzaga School of Law graduate here on the Senate floor—the Senator from Nevada. Gonzaga also produces great academic minds.

So for everybody from Spokane, congratulations and good luck on Saturday's big game.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I say to my colleague from the great State of Washington, I do know where Gonzaga is, and I am with you. As a graduate from the Gonzaga School of Law, we are going to the final four, and this time we are going to win. I am very excited.

Congratulations to the players, the coach, and to everyone at the school.

Mr. President, I take the floor today to urge my colleagues across the aisle to stand up for their constituents and vote against the measure on the floor, which will restrict access to safe, affordable, basic healthcare to millions of Americans across this country. This measure will allow States to discriminate against title X family planning clinics for no other reason than petty partisan politics that degrade women's access to healthcare and turn it into a Republican talking point.

These clinics provide essential family planning and health services to millions of American women, men, and families—many of whom are poor and low-income and in rural areas. This measure will cause these families to suffer by limiting their access to healthcare.

In my home State of Nevada, there are 23 clinics that risk losing funds as a result of this measure. These clinics are in Nevada's major cities and in our rural areas, like Hawthorne, Lovelock, Pahrump, Tonopah, Ely, Winnemucca, and Fallon. For many families in our rural areas, these clinics are the only healthcare facilities where they can access family planning services, as well as basic primary and preventive healthcare services.

The votes today empower States to discriminate against providers and, in turn, threaten the health and safety of the men, women, and families who rely on these clinics for basic and, at times, lifesaving services. We should be promoting access to healthcare, especially for our vulnerable communities. We should be expanding access to care, especially for Americans living in rural areas.

Republicans' actions today are an affront to American women and families. Their political agenda and shortsighted approach will do nothing but cause harm to Americans. It is time for Republicans to stop playing politics with women's health and actually put Americans' health and safety first.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, instead of focusing on bipartisan reforms to improve access to healthcare for the American people, Republicans are again pursuing divisive policies that jeopardize women's health and put politics, politicians, and the government between a woman and her doctor. This measure that we are debating this afternoon attacks a critical healthcare program known as the Title X Family Planning Program.

The Title X Family Planning Program provides basic healthcare, like cancer screenings, contraception, and HIV testing to more than 4 million women and men. This politically motivated provision that we have before us today would allow States to discriminate against trusted health providers like Planned Parenthood. In eight counties in Wisconsin, Planned Parenthood is the only health clinic that provides the full range of publicly funded contraceptive services.

I met with Laurie from Bristol, WI, who told me that as a young teacher, she went to Planned Parenthood and they discovered that she had cysts and tumors in her ovaries. The providers immediately helped her get the care she needed. She had quick surgery and was able to recover, which allowed her to eventually have a family.

Republicans are playing doctor and telling women they can't access basic primary and preventive healthcare services at the health center of their choice. This would cut off access to care for millions of men and women, prohibiting access to high-quality, preventive services just because of the sign on the door. They would prevent women like Laurie from accessing lifesaving services when they need it the most.

We have already seen too many States enact record numbers of laws and regulations that restrict a woman's access to reproductive health services and the freedom to make her own healthcare decisions. In my home State of Wisconsin, our Republican Governor has signed a number of laws that target healthcare providers and simply have left far too many Wisconsin women out in the cold. He signed a law that forces women to undergo unnecessary and invasive medical procedures, and he has imposed unreasonable requirements on the doctors that deliver care to women. He has worked to close health clinics, including several Planned Parenthood clinics. But he hasn't stopped there. He also signed two laws that would effectively defund Wisconsin Planned Parenthood, which could leave thousands of Wisconsinites without access to critical health services.

The threat in Wisconsin and in States across the country—and right here in Congress—is clear: Politicians across the country are playing doctor, and this is a dangerous game for women and their families. The millions of Americans who rely on title X for primary care and their trusted providers are being held hostage. They are being used as a political punching bag by congressional Republicans. Their agenda is to attack women's health.

Women's access to comprehensive healthcare—the healthcare they need and deserve—should never depend upon their ZIP Code. So I urge my colleagues to oppose this dangerous measure and to protect title X programs for all of our families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, we are here today because Republicans' discrimination against women knows no boundaries. They think a woman's right to choose is still up for discussion. It is not.

Let me be clear. A woman's right to choose is a discussion for a woman and her doctor. That is it. A healthcare provider receiving Federal funds should be judged on their ability to serve a patient. That is it.

Today, Republicans are voting on a measure that would allow States to discriminate against family planning providers simply because they do not like the populations they treat or the services they provide. It would embolden a State to restrict Federal funding for only health centers that serve primarily minority populations or patients who identify as LGBTQ, and it would allow a State to strip away Federal investments in family planning

clinics that serve women's reproductive health needs.

These are not hypothetical concerns. Women's reproductive care is under attack by extreme rightwing Republicans across this country. State politicians introduced more than 500 bills restricting access to reproductive healthcare in 2016, enacting more than 60 new abortion restrictions last year.

Let's be clear. The result of today's vote means that there will be less access to care for women and families across this country. Health centers receiving title X funding provide basic primary and preventive healthcare services, such as HIV testing and contraception, to more than 4 million women and men at nearly 4,000 healthcare centers nationwide. It is because of the work done at these centers that we are now at a 30-year low in unintended pregnancies, a historic low in teen pregnancies, and we have the lowest rate of abortions since the Supreme Court ruled that abortion was legal in 1973. We are a healthier Nation because of family planning clinics that receive title X funding.

Now, more than ever, we need to stand and raise our voice against the Republican Party's agenda of discrimination. It is about fighting for the freedom to make decisions in our personal lives without the fear of interference from our own government. It is about the access to opportunity that comes from quality, affordable healthcare and making sure that access is never restricted, no matter what gender you are. But with Donald Trump as President and both Chambers of Congress now controlled by the GOP, national Republicans are in the best position in decades to enact a radical agenda that rolls back women's rights. Today is just one step in their massive plan to take women's rights right back to the 19th century.

I know they will not back down from enacting their radical agenda, but I also know that we who want to protect women's rights will not back down from this fight. It is a historic battle. This vote is a historic vote.

I urge all Members to vote no.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I am pleased to be here with the Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the ranking member of the HELP Committee to address this important issue.

You would think that after the healthcare debacle last week, the other side would have gotten the message, which is that the American people didn't send us to Washington to take away their healthcare.

When I think about healthcare in Colorado, I think about sort of a circle that contains healthcare that people in my State are either getting or not getting, and some part of that is ObamaCare, that is for sure, but a lot of it has nothing to do with that. They are unhappy with the way our healthcare system works. They want more access than they have. The House bill went at this in exactly the wrong direction from where they are interested in going.

I would like to work with Republicans and Democrats to solve that, but this afternoon we are here once again because the resolution before us would risk funding for vital primary care, preventive and family planning services for more than 4 million Americans across our country, especially women and those who live in rural communities of my State and other States.

Since 1970, this body has supported title X funding to expand access to affordable healthcare for low-income men and women. We did that because we understood that it wasn't just the right thing to do, we recognized that it was a good investment. Each dollar invested in publicly funded family planning programs saves the government over $7 in Medicaid-related costs.

The other side rails against Medicaid spending. In fact, last week, they had a bill that cut it by about $850 billion. But if they succeed on this vote today, Medicaid spending will almost certainly rise as a result of what they are trying to do.

We supported title X funding with both Republican majorities and Democratic majorities in the Senate. Now a narrow majority is trying to ram this measure through.

This isn't supported by a consensus of Americans, and you know it is not when Vice President PENCE has to drive over here from the White House to cast a tie-breaking vote. Just yesterday, the Vice President was at a White House forum on women's empowerment. It begs the question: Did he learn anything at the forum?

It is easy for Senators, apparently, to vote against healthcare for struggling Americans. I wonder sometimes whether the reason for that is that we are not affected by this vote. That is doubly true when 50 Senators—overwhelmingly men—vote to cut healthcare for millions of low-income women.

The vote today has real consequences for Colorado. If this measure passes, it will threaten to cut funding for title X health centers serving over 52,000 men, women, and teens each year. It will also risk funding for the over 20 Planned Parenthood clinics throughout Colorado that provide healthcare services to more than 86,000 men, women, and teens. Planned Parenthood is a critical part of Colorado's healthcare system, providing essential services in a quarter of the State's counties. This support is especially vital for our rural areas. Two weeks ago, I visited Alamosa and Durango, CO, where these health centers are some of the only places women can turn to for preventive care and family planning services.

We should not do this. Pediatricians are against it. Family physicians are against it. Nurses are against it. But on the other side, we have a narrow majority voting to strip funding for vital primary and preventive care, including breast cancer screenings and HIV testing.

I would invite anyone voting against this measure, including the Vice President, to come to Alamosa and Durango and see what these health centers are doing in our communities. I invite them to come and meet the people they help, the lives they change.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this measure. It will hurt many of our fellow Americans. It will hurt women in my State and particularly working people, and it should not pass.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I hear colleagues from the other side of the aisle talk again and again about how they want patient-centered healthcare. That is the refrain—patient-centered healthcare. Make no mistake about what this resolution is all about. It turns that phrase on its head because what it says to certainly women who are patients: You are not free to go get the healthcare you want.

It seems like this never ends—another day, another effort to deny women the opportunity to have the kinds of healthcare choices and the healthcare services that they feel strongly about.

I am not going to take long; I know colleagues are in a hurry. I just want to say that the next time you hear this lofty rhetoric—particularly from the majority—about how everything they are going to do in American healthcare is going to put the patients at the center of healthcare, give people more choices, and protect the freedom that they talk about in healthcare—understand, if you vote for this resolution, you are repudiating all of those speeches. I have heard Senator MURRAY talk about it. She says it very eloquently.

The bottom line is that this resolution not only doesn't support that lofty rhetoric about patients being at the center of healthcare, this resolution deprives women of choices and access to healthcare services they want.

I hope my colleagues will join Senator MURRAY and understand the dangerous consequences of what is at stake. Oppose this resolution and save the Vice President the trip to the Hill.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I want Senate Republicans who are about to take this vote—and Vice President PENCE—to be very clear on what they are about to do. As a direct result of their choices today, extreme politicians in States across the country will have greater power to take away women's choices.

I think it speaks volumes that the vote to uphold this rule—which simply says family planning centers, where women can exercise their constitutionally protected rights, should not be

discriminated against—is bipartisan. But do you know what I think is most striking about this vote? The deafening silence from the group of almost entirely male Republican Senators who are voting today to make it harder for women to get the healthcare they need. Not one spoke today to justify this vote. Where are those Republican Senators? Why did they feel so entitled not just to interfere with women's healthcare decisions but to do so without explaining themselves? If they are ashamed of their votes, which they should be, they had ample opportunity to reconsider.

I came to the floor with my Democratic colleagues weeks ago to urge Republicans not to bring this damaging legislation to the floor. We asked for just one Republican vote today to prevent this attack on women's health. And women across the country, in Republican and Democratic States, called, emailed, tweeted, and organized to say that these restrictions on women's access to healthcare have no place in our country or in the 21st century. But what have these 50 Senate Republicans done? They refused to listen, and they refused to answer for their actions.

Frankly, women deserve better. The thing is, women know it. So today, as a woman, I am angry. As a mother and a grandmother, I am furious about what attacks like this mean for our daughters and our granddaughters, especially those who are struggling and disproportionately rely on family planning centers. But as a Senator, I am more confident than ever that Republicans who fail to listen to the women of this country do so at their own peril. I have had the chance to see how much impact women have when they call and march and organize and make their voices heard.

The fact that Vice President PENCE had to come and break this tie today, that Senate Republican leaders could not twist enough arms to pass this bill on their own, is clear evidence. So is the failure of House Republicans' abysmal TrumpCare bill, which would have cut off access to critical services at Planned Parenthood.

I know without a doubt that Republican Senators who vote against women and with their extreme base today and who rely on this anti-women administration to jam this resolution through will be held accountable both by women across the country and women right here in the Senate. We will keep making our voices heard. We will fight back against these attacks on our rights and our own self-determination, and ultimately, you can be sure, we will win.

I yield the floor.

I yield back the time on this side.

The joint resolution was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 101 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hoeven	Sasse
Cochran	Inhofe	Scott
Corker	Isakson	Shelby
Cornyn	Johnson	Strange
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tillis
Daines	McCain	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—50

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murray
Bennet	Harris	Nelson
Blumenthal	Hassan	Peters
Booker	Heinrich	Reed
Brown	Heitkamp	Sanders
Cantwell	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Kaine	Schumer
Carper	King	Shaheen
Casey	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wyden
Franken	Murphy	

The VICE PRESIDENT. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 50. The Senate being equally divided, the Vice President votes in the affirmative, and the joint resolution, H.J. Res. 43, is passed.

The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks on Monday, April 3, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 18, S. 89, with the time until 5:30 p.m. equally divided in the usual form, and that following the use or yielding back of time, the bill be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage with no intervening action or debate. I further ask that following the vote on passage, the Senate proceed to executive session for consideration of Calendar No. 24, the nomination of Elaine Duke to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security. I further ask that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, with the concurrence of the Democratic leader, on Tuesday, April 4, the Senate vote on confirmation of the 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 (Mr. CASSIDY). Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTION

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise to thank my colleagues for their support of my legislation to overturn President Obama's eleventh hour rule that revokes States' rights to determine the best eligible subgrantees for title X family planning funding. It should be the right of our States to allocate subgrants under the title X program in the way that best fits the needs of the people living there. Unfortunately, like many other rules that were issued during the Obama administration, this rule attempted to empower Federal bureaucrats in Washington and silence our States.

As we all know, States are closer to and more familiar with the healthcare providers and patients within their borders and should be able to make their own decisions about the best eligible title X subgrantees, be they hospitals, federally qualified community health centers, or other types of providers. A number of States have acted in recent years to prioritize title X subgrants to more comprehensive providers, where women can receive greater preventive and primary care than they can with providers like Planned Parenthood.

The Obama administration's rule attempted to claim that providers like Planned Parenthood can ''accomplish title X programmatic objectives more effectively.'' This rhetoric does not match the reality. In fact, after Representative DIANE BLACK and I led more than 100 of our colleagues in pointing that out to the Obama administration, HHS acknowledged the challenge of measuring effectiveness across all types of title X recipients and subrecipients and therefore removed the word ''effectively'' from the final rule.

So why was this rule implemented in the first place? It is because the Obama administration wanted to do everything it could to secure Federal funding streams for Planned Parenthood before they turned over the keys to the Trump administration. With our vote today, we prevented that from happening.

But let me be clear. Although it is no secret that I do not believe Planned Parenthood—the Nation's single largest provider of abortion services—is deserving of Federal taxpayer dollars, this legislation does not prevent Planned Parenthood or any other specific entity from receiving title X funds. If States like Washington or Massachusetts want to distribute title X subgrants to Planned Parenthood, this legislation to overturn the Obama administration's rule will not prevent them from doing so, nor does overturning the rule reduce overall funding levels for the Title X Family Planning Program.

In fact, this legislation does not in any way decrease women's healthcare

funding. Rather, overturning the rule merely empowers States over a Washington-knows-best mentality and assures that States have the ability to identify the best eligible title X subgrantees. It restores local control and ensures that States aren't forced by the Federal Government to provide abortion providers like Planned Parenthood with taxpayer dollars.

I appreciate my colleagues' support of this legislation, and I look forward to President Trump signing it and scrapping the Obama administration's overreaching eleventh-hour rule.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, on January 18, 2017, two days before President Obama left office, he finalized a rule and put it in place to require States—regardless of their decisions in their State—to have to use Planned Parenthood, removing the decision making from each State.

In the past, it had been very straightforward. States were allowed the opportunity to be able to examine who was the best decision maker to be able to help and the best provider of care in their community for title X funding. For that family planning funding, when it occurs and when it goes through the process, the States made the decision, looked at the providers, found out who the most comprehensive provider was, who could provide the best healthcare, and they made that final decision.

President Obama, two days before he left office, finalized a rule to remove that right from States and to compel each State to be able to use Planned Parenthood.

States like mine and many other States said: We want to do family planning in our State. We want to have comprehensive healthcare in our State, but we do not want to provide Federal funds to the single largest provider of abortion in the country. That was a reasonable decision that our State lawmakers could make to be able to protect the lives of women in our State and to protect the lives of children for the future. That reasonable, commonsense method was removed two days before President Obama left office.

I am proud to say that the House of Representatives and the Senate today voted to strike that rule from the last two days of President Obama's term to compel States to be able to use Planned Parenthood in their States, to be able to give the option back to the States again.

I look forward to President Trump signing it. I would remind the President of this one simple thing, though. This does not strike funding away from women's care. This doesn't take funding away from any of the family planning. This doesn't even force States to not use Planned Parenthood. It is a simple statement of where we used to be: States could choose to have Planned Parenthood as a part of their title X funding, or not. It is their choice. If some States want to do that, they may continue to do that. Other States should not be compelled to do that with taxpayer funds, though.

That is the new status quo as soon as President Trump signs it—to be able to return to a basic doctrine: States should not be compelled to have taxpayer funds used toward Planned Parenthood title X funding.

I am proud that this Senate just passed this resolution. It is a reasonable act for us to be able to do, and I look forward to the President's signature.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, when his nomination comes to the floor next week, I will vote to confirm Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court. This is my first time voting on a Supreme Court nominee, and I don't take the decision lightly. It is a lifetime appointment, after all, and the Court's rulings have shaped our country's history—for good and for ill—and will continue to shape our future. But after reading Judge Gorsuch's writings, meeting with him in person, and listening to his testimony, I can say with confidence that it is not a hard call. I believe Judge Gorsuch will be a fine addition to the Supreme Court.

There is no denying Judge Gorsuch's distinctive qualifications. We all know his credentials: Columbia, Harvard law, and an Oxford doctorate to boot. He clerked for an appellate judge and two Supreme Court Justices. He had many years of experience in both private practice and in public service and, of course, over 10 years as an appellate judge. He possesses fine judicial temperament: highly erudite, highly accomplished, and highly regarded by those who know him best. It is no surprise, then, that the American Bar Association, in a unanimous vote, declared him ''well qualified'' for the job.

While I wouldn't outsource our responsibilities to any advocacy organization, I would note that the minority leader himself once said the ABA rating is ''the gold standard by which judicial candidates are judged.''

But, of course, Judge Gorsuch is not just filling any seat, but the seat once held by the late Justice Antonin Scalia. Justice Scalia was a giant of American jurisprudence. Most Justices earn their place in history by writing opinions, giving voice to their colleagues, and speaking for the Court as a whole. Justice Scalia did that many times throughout his career, of course, but he did something more. He changed the way judges—both conservative and liberal—think about the law and defend their decisions. He reminded us all that a judge's job is to apply the law—including the Constitution, our most fundamental law—as written, to the case before him, not to rewrite it all together.

Adhering to the law, even when the judge doesn't like the result, is the greatest public service that a judge can render, because to respect the rule of law is ultimately to respect the rule of the people.

This is what Justice Scalia taught and what he inspired a whole generation of judges and lawyers to understand. As we prepare to fill his seat on the Supreme Court, let us also acknowledge that no man can fill his shoes. We honor the memory of Justice Scalia and we thank his wife, Maureen, and his whole family for sharing this great man with our country for so long.

Judge Gorsuch is a child of the Scalia generation. He has long advocated for and followed the originalist judicial craft—one rooted in the text, structure, and history of our Constitution, which is to say that he respects the rule of law and he respects the people. Whether defending the religious liberty of the Little Sisters of the Poor or the Fourth Amendment rights of a regular household, he has shown a profound respect for the Constitution. I also think he has demonstrated throughout his career a firm independence of thought. He has had his influences and his mentors, his promoters and his critics, but I believe he will be his own man—as he should be.

So I am pleased to announce my support for the next Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Judge Neil Gorsuch. I look forward to his confirmation next week.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I wish to initially speak about the bipartisan Veterans Choice Program Improvement Act, but first 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. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, distance or delays should never be the reason that veterans don't get the healthcare they need, but that is exactly what is happening to veterans across the country. That is why the Veterans Choice

Program was started—so that thousands of veterans and their families can get the care they deserve when and where they need it. Instead of traveling long distances or waiting months on a list, veterans can use the Choice Program to get the healthcare they need in their own communities.

As the ranking member of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, I want to give a little perspective on what would happen to our veterans if we don't pass the bipartisan Veterans Choice Program Improvement Act.

Now, I know that the Choice Program is not funded through my subcommittee, but what we do today has an impact on the VA as a whole. If the Veterans Choice Program Improvement Act does not pass, the funding we appropriated to the VA will expire before it has all been used. It is not a small amount of funding. It is $1 billion, and the VA does not have $1 billion elsewhere in the budget to make up for this loss.

In other words, if we don't pass this bill, it is going to be a disaster for veterans because all of the veterans who use this program for their healthcare are going to have to go back to the VA. That means the wait times that everybody was complaining about over the last couple of years will grow longer and longer and longer, and especially in rural America, where access to care is such a challenge, it will get worse and worse.

To manage the increase in patient load, the VA will have to scramble to find funding that can take away from other VA programs, including hospital maintenance and medical equipment. That is what is going to happen if we don't pass this bill. This is an urgent matter for veterans across the country. Whether you are a participant in the VA Choice Program or you go to a traditional VA clinic or hospital, one way or another, this is going to impact you.

Now, I know the Choice Program isn't perfect, but this temporary extension, coupled with the improvements in the system contained in the bill, gives Congress the time we need to develop a long-term, comprehensive solution. And while we are working on a solution, let's not punish veterans by cutting off $1 billion toward a program that is designed to improve services for people who have served our country.

So I hope we can come together to find a way to pass this bill. Our veterans are counting on us.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA AND TRUMP CAMPAIGN INVESTIGATION

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I know several Members are ready to come here and talk on a veterans issue, and they will let me know when they are ready to start. I thought there might be a good chance to get this in.

Our democracy is under attack. U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that the Russian Government interfered in the U.S. Presidential election and intervened to help Candidate Trump. Around the same time, Candidate Trump began making flattering statements about Russian President Putin and proposing pro-Russia policy changes while criticizing longstanding U.S. allies, including in Europe.

President Trump continues to defend Putin and offend Western allies. Now we have come to learn that there are unexplained ties between the President, his campaign staff, his associates, and Russia; that many close to the President had meetings and telephone calls with Russian officials during the campaign and the transition; most critically, that the FBI and the Department of Justice are investigating whether the President and his associates coordinated or conspired with the Russian Government to interfere with the Presidential election—an investigation that began last July and is likely to continue for months.

The President and his associates keep giving the American people reason for worry—inaccurate denials, evasive answers, explosive attacks they can't back up, scheming with the chair of the House Intelligence Committee on the committee's investigation of the White House. New, very disturbing information comes to light every day.

A recent CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll showed that two thirds of Americans believe a special prosecutor should be appointed. The American people want answers. What was the scope of the interference? Who knew what, and when? How can we protect ourselves and our allies, who are facing similar cyber attacks? What is the appropriate government response to such an attack?

I appreciate the work the Senate Intelligence Committee is doing. I believe that is the first step, but I believe we must go further. That is why I am again calling for an independent, bipartisan national commission modeled on the 9/11 Commission to fully investigate Russia's interference with our election and our election processes and to investigate the ties between the President, his family businesses, and his close associates and Russia that may threaten our national security. I am also again calling on the Department of Justice to appoint a special counsel to investigate potential criminal conduct that may jeopardize our security.

Questions about the President's ties to Russia will divide the country, undermine his Presidency, and distract Congress, unless we take these steps. The American people are right to be concerned. The President's stance on Russia is perplexing, starting when he first denounced the role of NATO last spring, calling it ''obsolete,'' suggesting that it would be OK if NATO broke up. Then, he publicly asked Russia to hack Hillary Clinton's emails.

Then, Mr. Trump's campaign manager, Paul Manafort, was forced to resign because of his close political and financial ties to Ukraine's former pro-Russian President. He became the subject of a multi-agency investigation. We don't have the full story, but we do know that he failed to register as a foreign agent while he lobbied for pro-Russian Ukrainian interests in the United States. It appears that Manafort has a $10 million contract with a Russian oligarch who is very close to Putin that would ''greatly benefit the Putin Government'' and that he had at least 15 offshore bank accounts in Cyprus that even Cypriot bank officials thought were suspicious. Once those bank officials began asking about money laundering activities, Manafort closed the accounts rather than answer questions.

During his campaign, Mr. Trump stated that he would ''be looking at'' whether to recognize Crimea as Russian and to lift sanctions. President Trump and his team apparently took little or no interest in the debate over the party platform in the Republican National Convention, except for one thing—Ukraine. They intervened with delegates to get more Russia-friendly language in the Republican Party platform. Candidate Trump's national security policy staffer J.D. Gordon told CNN: ''This was the language Donald Trump himself wanted . . . and advocated for . . . back in March.'' Now Gordon is reportedly under investigation for his ties to Russia.

We have all heard the President compliment President Putin, calling him a strong leader. Why is the President so enamored, when Putin's actions are authoritarian, violent, and anti-democratic? Putin seeks to weaken NATO and the European Council. He annexed Crimea in violation of international law and treaties. He interfered with our national election. Putin has crushed free press in the Russian Federation, placing restriction upon restriction on the press, quashing independent news organizations, and harassing and jailing journalists. The President's outspoken admiration is inexplicable.

So we are still left with a President who has expressed policy views toward Russia that run counter to U.S. ideals and treaty obligations, as well as global norms of international affairs. While we don't know the full extent of the President's financial, personal, and political ties to Russia and Putin, we have plenty of reason to seek an impartial investigation. The President still has not released his tax returns, unlike any previous modern President. His son Donald Junior volunteered, as far as

back as 2008, that ''Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets. . . . We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia.''

In 2013, Mr. Trump said on a talk show: ''Well, I've done a lot of business with the Russians.''

Due to his history of bankruptcies, no major U.S. bank would loan to Donald Trump in recent years. So he has needed new sources of capital for his real estate projects. There is growing reason to believe that Russia—or at least wealthy Russians—have financial interests in the Trump organization. Recent reports link the President and his companies to ten wealthy former Soviet businessmen with alleged ties to criminal organizations or money laundering. The extent of corruption and criminal ties among the oligarchs of Russia are well known, and to stay wealthy oligarchs, they must stay friendly with the Putin regime.

Is the Trump organization reliant on Russian capital or loans from Russian banks? What relationships are there between Russian oligarchs that are tied to the Russian Government and the Trump organization and between those former Soviet businessmen and Trump's properties? We need to get to the bottom of this, with a credible, deliberate, nonpartisan investigation.

Mr. Trump has surrounded himself with associates with close Russian ties—not just Mr. Manafort. Michael Flynn headed to Russia within 18 months after his retirement as the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Russian Government's media outlet RT. Secretary John Kerry called RT a ''propaganda bullhorn'' for Putin. Mr. Flynn was paid for that trip by RT, a potential violation of the emoluments clause of the Constitution, and appeared regularly on RT. Flynn, of course, had to resign as National Security Advisor after 24 days in office. But the President knew of Flynn's misrepresentations weeks before he was fired and did nothing until it became public. We now know that Russia's payments to Flynn were generous. In 2015, Russian entities paid him $65,000. We know he worked for pay as a foreign agent for Turkey during the campaign and during the transition, but he failed to register as an agent at the time, as required by law.

Other Trump associates and campaign staff—Roger Stone, Carter Page, and Mr. Gordon—all are reportedly under investigation for intercepted communications and financial transactions with Russia. Stone admitted at least 16 contacts with Gufficer 2.0, the Twitter handle covering for Russian intelligence that released the Democratic National Committee hacked emails.

Page, who has strong financial ties with Russia, admitted to meeting with the Russian Ambassador during the Republican Convention and traveling to Russia during the campaign.

The President's Attorney General was forced to recuse himself from any Department of Justice investigation into Trump and Russia because he did not disclose to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he met with the Russian Ambassador during the campaign.

Now the President's son-in-law and senior adviser is set to testify before the Senate's Intelligence Committee. He will talk about his contacts with the Russian ambassador, a close Putin ally who is head of a Russian-owned bank.

Where does it stop, folks? Where does it stop?

These contacts give us enough reason for pause. Combined with Mr. Trump's positions on NATO, sanctions relief, and Russia's human rights violations, they raise serious security questions for the United States and NATO. As I said, we need an independent prosecutor at the helm to ensure that the whole of the investigation is not compromised—one who is not subject to White House pressure and not in a position of investigating his or her boss—and a bipartisan commission along the lines of the 9/11 Commission that is independent of politics.

The chair of the House Intelligence Committee is compromised and damaged beyond repair. He has coordinated with the subjects of his committee's investigation, and he has completely lost credibility. I compliment my Senate colleagues who are working together on an investigation. But the Senate committee does not have the resources to fully investigate this, and the ranking Democrat on the committee agrees we need an independent investigation that could go further, that could be public, and could be transparent.

A former Acting Director of the CIA called the Russian interference in our election one of the most successful covert operations in history. Former Vice President Cheney has said that what they did could be ''considered an act of war.'' By covert interference in a U.S. election, Russia pursued a policy to install its favorite candidate as President of the United States. Yet the President has dismissed the National Security Agency findings, accused our national security agencies of acting like Nazi Germany, and leveled fake charges at the former President.

The American people are not fooled, and they want Congress to get to the bottom of this. We in Congress have a solemn duty to the American people to do just that.

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

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

VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the bipartisan Veterans Choice Program Improvement Act. I will start my remarks by saying that Chairman ISAKSON was here earlier, and he had a meeting he had to get to. Johnny has been through a tough surgery, and it is good to have Johnny back. But the fact of the matter is he supports this bill. He is an original cosponsor of this bill. The same could be said of Senator BLUMENTHAL, who also had a meeting and wanted to be here, once again. We heard from Senator SCHATZ earlier. This bill truly has bipartisan support, not only in the VA Committee but also in this body.

The reason people support this piece of legislation is because it brings much needed reforms to the Choice Program while ensuring that veterans can access care in their communities. It is a good bill.

A few years back, the Choice Program was established with the very best of intentions. In my home State of Montana, it is a fact that veterans were waiting far too long for an appointment at the VA and oftentimes had to drive over 100 miles for the appointment. The Choice Program was supposed to allow these veterans to access care closer to home. Unfortunately, it has not been working out the way it should, and veterans have been inundated with redtape and a government contractor that struggles to schedule appointments and pay providers on time. That is why we all worked together—Democrats and Republicans and even Independents—on this bill to put forth these much needed reforms.

The Veterans Choice Program Improvement Act cuts redtape so veterans can access care more quickly. In fact, I made it clear from the get-go that I would not vote to extend the Choice Program until Congress and the VA have addressed some of the biggest concerns I have been hearing from Montana veterans and community providers.

Once we get the bill passed, this program reimburses community providers more quickly for the care they provide to our veterans. It reduces out-of-pocket costs for veterans receiving care through the Choice Program. It improves the sharing of medical records between the VA and the community providers to better ensure seamless care for veterans, whether they are seeing a VA doctor or a doctor in their community. It allows the VA to access all the funding initially appropriated for this program to ensure that veterans' access to care is not disrupted.

This bill is not going to fix everything, but it is certainly a step in the right direction. With this legislation, combined with assurances that I have received from VA Montana, VA folks within the State will be allowed to schedule appointments for Montana's veterans directly instead of going through an inept government contract.

It is my hope that we can make the Choice Program work the way it was

intended when we first set it up, with the goal of serving those who have served our country.

I again express my appreciation for taking this bill up on the floor, this Veterans Choice Program Improvement Act, and I think it is a prime example of how this body needs to work together to solve problems—in this case, for our veterans community. We should push this bill out as soon as possible.

I yield the floor to Senator MORAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks, as well as the working together with the Senator from Montana as we tried to make certain that a program that is so valuable to veterans across the country—in my case particularly, veterans who live in rural America, in Kansas—to make certain that veterans can attain the care they have earned and the care they deserve.

We had a scandal at the VA in which many tragic things happened, and Congress came together at that time and passed the Choice Act. What that law basically has given our veterans is, if they live more than 40 miles from a VA facility—in other words, if they live a long distance from access to care—they can, at their choice, have that care at home: hometown hospital, hometown physician, pharmacy, physical therapy. They can see a provider in their hometown.

In so many instances in Kansas—in fact, I have mentioned this before on the Senate floor. The House district I represented as a Congressman is larger than the State of Illinois, and there is no VA hospital in that congressional district. So veterans not having to travel 2, 3, 4, 5 hours to Denver or to Wichita or to Amarillo is of such value to our veterans, particularly those who have a disability or are aging. What we did in the passage of Choice was so useful to so many veterans.

The other part of that was that if you couldn't get the care you needed within 30 days at the VA, you could then attain your care at home. Again, with the backlog that was occurring at the VA, the lack of providers, this became important to another set of veterans who, because of their health condition, couldn't afford to wait that long to see a physician, to have surgery.

This is important legislation. If you are somebody who cares about veterans, you need to be in favor of this Choice Act. If you are someone who cares about particularly rural or veterans who need timely care, you especially ought to be supportive of Choice.

The challenge we have is that the Choice Act is expiring. It expires August 7, and it needs to be extended. There are dollars available in the program. Mandatory spending is available to pay for the services to a later date.

As the Senator from Montana indicated, there are a number of provisions that haven't worked very well in Choice because of the bureaucratic nature of the program, the way the program has been established. One of those that are most important is that you have veterans on one side who need the care and choose Choice, but you also need a willing provider. The local hospital, the local physician needs to be willing to provide that care. I have never known a provider who was not honored to provide care to a veteran, but the challenge in many instances becomes whether that provider, that doctor or hospital gets reimbursed, gets paid.

This legislation has a number of reforms, but in my view, one of the most critical and most important is to make the VA the payer, to make the VA be the entity that writes out the check to pay the hospital bill, to pay the physician for the services provided.

So this is another reform that improves really on both sides. It eliminates some of the bureaucracy that a veteran goes through and the number of times a veteran may receive a notice that he or she owes money that should be paid by the Choice Program, and it also encourages—by paying them—the physician or the hospital to provide the service. These are important reforms, important changes in the Choice Act that are worthy of our support.

What is transpiring here are a couple of reforms to the Choice Program and its extension to a later date, until the money expires, so the Choice Program can continue, and Congress can now take that time to determine what we want to do with the Choice Program into the future after that point in time. I appreciate the way in which this legislation has worked.

Often I get asked whether there is any hope that Congress can work together, that Republicans and Democrats can solve problems. This is an example of where that is taking place today, by the care and concern we all have for our veterans and the good will that exists by those who serve in Congress to make sure that good things happen for our military men and women who are now veterans.

I regret that the chairman of the Veterans' Committee, the Senator from Georgia, Mr. ISAKSON, is unable to be with us, but, as the Senator from Montana indicated, he is fully supportive of this legislation. In fact, he is an original sponsor of the legislation.

I add my voice and ask my colleagues to agree to the unanimous consent resolution, that this legislation be passed. It will be another step in solving problems and caring for those who served our Nation.

Yesterday, I was at the Arlington National Cemetery—a reminder of the debt we owe to so many people. Those are veterans who are now deceased. Those are military men and women who have now died. Those who are living deserve the care and treatment that our VA can provide and the opportunities that our providers in our hometowns can assist in providing.

We want to make sure that good things continue to happen. We want to improve the quality of service, get the problems out of the Choice Program, and make sure those who are so deserving of quality care actually receive it.

I yield back to the Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I would like to thank the good Senator from Kansas for his comments and his leadership not only on the VA Committee on which we both serve but also as chairman of the Appropriations MILCON-VA Subcommittee, the subcommittee that really sees how the money is going to be utilized within the VA. I think Senator MORAN has covered just about all of it. I just want to go back and say one thing.

We are going to have a unanimous consent. I am told there will be an objection to it. That is truly unfortunate because this has been a bipartisan effort. It has cleared everyone in the Senate except one person, to my knowledge, and I think that is unfortunate.

One of the complaints I hear is that the primary payer provision of this bill is the problem. The primary payer provision of this bill requires the VA to be exactly that—the primary payer of the bills. My question would be, Why is this a bad thing? Right now veterans are being hamstrung and delayed, and the folks who provide the benefits, the providers, are not getting the dollars in a timely manner. I would just ask, if the VA is not going to be the primary payer, who is?

These folks have put it on the line for this country, and they come back in different shape than when they left, after they bore the battles of war. Some of the injuries are seen; some of the injuries are unseen. And we are not going to say ''You know what. Don't worry about it. We are going to make sure you get the care, and we are going to make sure it is paid for''? It is part of the cost of war. So when we send our young men and women off to war, we ought to be thinking about this stuff. And we have a solution. We have a solution to part of the problems with the Choice Program.

If we get this bill passed, it will give us the opportunity to work together to get a long-term bill passed before the first of the year to really address the needs of our veterans so that there are wraparound services at the VA that veterans can count on.

I would just say that this is supposed to be a very deliberative body, and for the most part, it is pretty deliberative. But when you have a situation of a program that we put into effect—that Congress passed and the Senate had a big part of writing—and it is not working, we ought to fix it, and this bill fixes it in good part. We have some more to do, as I said, but this bill is a step in the right direction in cutting redtape and making it easier for veterans to find care and get care, whether it is in the VA or outside the VA. It

is also something that the Veterans Administration sorely needs to move it forward.

I just want to say that we come in here and we have good arguments and good discussions, and sometimes politics comes into the discussion. In this particular case, folks have come to the table—whether it is Senator ISAKSON or Senator MCCAIN or Senator MORAN or me or any of the others on the Veterans' Affairs Committee—and we have come up with a solution that 99 percent of the people in this body agree with, but we can't get it across the finish line. And we wonder why our popularity is in the single digits in this country.

I am just going to close by saying I want to thank everybody from both sides of the aisle who worked together to get this bill crafted and get this bill to this point. I hope that at some point in time, people will take a look at this bill for what it does and realize that there aren't bogeymen in this bill, that our veterans deserve us to work together to find solutions to move the ball forward so they can get the healthcare they were promised when they signed on the dotted line to protect this country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, it is my understanding that one of my colleagues is en route to speak and perhaps object to this motion that is to be made. I would ask my colleague from Montana if he would mind holding for a few moments until that Senator arrives.

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

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

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I was going to ask for unanimous consent that S. 544, the bill we have been talking about, be discharged for immediate consideration, and then someone would have to object to that unanimous consent request—otherwise it would move forward.

I am going to do this on Monday. I hope the Senator who is truly going to object to this will have the opportunity to talk to Secretary Shulkin and Chairman ISAKSON, and he will find out that both those people are in support of this bill.

Hopefully we can come in and do a unanimous consent and get this bill passed on Monday. This is a bill that is good for America's veterans. I think it is good for our community providers, and I think it is very good for the VA. We will hold off today and take care of this after the weekend.

I would like to once again thank all the folks who worked on this bill. A special thank-you to Senator MORAN for his statements today.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MERRICK GARLAND AND FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today to lend my voice in support of perhaps one of the most qualified individuals ever nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court. I am referring, of course, to Chief Judge Merrick Garland.

Over 1 year ago, on March 16, 2016, a President who was twice elected by significant margins in both the popular vote and the electoral college nominated Judge Garland to fill the vacancy left by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. President Obama upheld his constitutional duty by submitting a name to the Senate to fill this vacancy.

By submitting the name of Merrick Garland, he gave the Senate a man who has spent his career working to build consensus and to find principled compromises. His impeccable credentials speak for themselves: Harvard undergrad, top of his class; Harvard Law, top of his class; law clerk to Judge Friendly on the Second Circuit and Justice Brennan on the Supreme Court. He served in the Justice Department after a time in private practice.

When tragedy befell Oklahoma City in April of 1995, Merrick Garland led the investigation that brought justice to the perpetrators of that unthinkable act of terrorism. Judge Gorsuch called this work ''The most important thing I have ever done in my life.''

His career was far from over at that point. In 1997, Republicans and Democrats joined together to confirm Judge Garland to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, which is often called the ''second highest court in the land.''

Here is what Senator ORRIN HATCH, former chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and currently the President pro tempore of the Senate, said of him at the time:

> Merrick B. Garland is highly qualified to sit on the DC Circuit. His intelligence and his scholarship cannot be questioned. . . . His legal experience is equally impressive. . . . Accordingly, I believe Mr. Garland is a fine nominee. I know him personally, I know of his integrity, I know of his legal ability, I know of his honesty, I know of his acumen, and he belongs on the court.

Those are not my words. Those are the words of Senator ORRIN HATCH, a good friend and colleague.

Over the past two decades on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, Judge Garland established a reputation as a thoughtful judge, a fair judge, a man of high integrity, a judicial moderate, and a consensus builder in a day and age when we need consensus builders—not here but on the Supreme Court and other courts.

Even those who may disagree with him tend to find themselves thinking a little harder about their own views after hearing his.

During his 2005 confirmation hearing to serve as Chief Justice, John Roberts, who served with Judge Garland on the DC Circuit, stated these words: ''Any time Judge Garland disagrees, you know you're in a difficult area.''

Thank you, Chief Justice Roberts.

In 2013, Judge Garland was promoted to chief judge on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, the second highest court in the land—the chief judge, presiding over that court.

When President Obama nominated him to the Supreme Court over 1 year ago, Judge Garland brought with him more Federal judicial experience than any nominee in the history of the United States.

When I met with Judge Garland last year, I got to know him beyond just his resume. Ironically, he had actually performed the marriage ceremony for my former chief of staff and his bride several years ago.

I was struck by Judge Garland's humility and by his personal character, his personal traits. Even as a nominee for the Supreme Court, he continued to serve his community as a mentor to elementary school students right here in Washington, DC. Imagine that. A chief judge of the DC Circuit Court of Appeals taking time every week to mentor some kid who needs another good role model in his or her life. That is something that Judge Garland has done for about two decades.

Over 1 year later, as I stand here today, a seat on the Supreme Court—what should be, in my view, Judge Garland's seat—remains vacant. Our Republican colleagues, in an unprecedented display of what I think is obstructionism and partisanship, denied Judge Garland a hearing and a vote. Many of our Republican colleagues refused to even meet with him. He was denied both a hearing in the Judiciary Committee and a cloture vote in the full Senate.

Well, since the Senate Judiciary Committee began holding public hearings on Supreme Court nominees 101 years ago, in 1916, no Supreme Court nominee had ever been denied a hearing and a vote.

I will say that again. No Supreme Court nominee had ever been denied a hearing and a vote—well, until Judge Garland.

According to the highly respected website, SCOTUSblog, we read these words:

> The historical record does not reveal any instances since at least 1900 of the president failing to nominate and/or the Senate failing to confirm a nominee in a presidential election year because of the impending election.

That is right off the blog.

Judge Garland was denied a hearing and a vote. In fact, during the 1988 Presidential election year, Justice Anthony Kennedy was confirmed by the Senate 97 to 0—not 51 to 49, not 60 to 40, but 97 to 0. But Judge Garland was denied a hearing and a vote.

Our Constitution, the one that every Member of this great deliberative body has sworn an oath to uphold, standing right over there, requires the Senate to provide its advice and consent to Supreme Court nominees.

Over the years, there have been a lot of questions as to what advice and consent entails. Judge Garland was denied a hearing and a vote. A good man—I think an extraordinary man—was treated badly, as was our Constitution.

I believe the unprecedented obstruction our Republican colleagues mounted last year against Judge Garland was a shameful chapter for the U.S. Senate. Mr. Garland, a consensus builder, one of the most qualified judges in our country, waited 293 days for a hearing and a vote that ultimately never came. I am still deeply troubled by those 293 wasted days, and I am still deeply troubled by the way Judge Garland was treated. I believe Judge Garland still deserves a hearing and still deserves a vote.

While I do not believe that two wrongs make a right, I believe this may be our only opportunity to right a wrong and erase the enormous black mark that the Senate's failure to consider Judge Garland leaves on this chapter of American history. I think it is unacceptable to put partisan politics over fidelity to our U.S. Constitution. Confirming anyone for this vacancy other than Judge Garland would be a stamp of approval for playing politics with Supreme Court nominees.

From where I sit, upholding our oath to protect the Constitution means finding agreement on moving Judge Garland's nomination forward at the same time as that of Judge Neil Gorsuch, President Trump's nominee. When President Trump lost the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes last year and narrowly won the electoral college, he promised to be a President for all Americans. I think a fair question is, Has he upheld that promise?

Well, let's decide—an unconstitutional Muslim ban, an unnecessary and overpriced wall on the southern border, a failed healthcare bill that would have provided less coverage for more money, a rollback of environmental protections for all of us who don't want to drink dirty water and don't want to breathe dirty air. If you ask me, the President has broken the promise to be a President for all Americans. Now I realize that others may differ and disagree, but his nomination of Judge Gorsuch represents what I believe is another broken promise.

I have heard from middle-class folks, from workers up and down my State, from special education teachers, from immigrant communities, from women who depend on access to healthcare, and my guess is my colleagues have as well. Many of them fear that Judge Gorsuch is not on their side. Despite his impressive resume, I share those same concerns.

At this time, I believe it is appropriate to hit the pause button until an agreement can be reached that provides justice for Judge Garland while restoring credibility to the U.S. Senate. I believe that is only bolstered by the cloud that lingers over President Trump's campaign.

As FBI Director Comey testified last week, there is an ongoing investigation to determine the links between Russia and the Trump campaign and whether there was any coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia to interfere in the 2016 election. It has also been widely reported in the media that officials from the upper echelon of the Trump campaign have close ties to Vladimir Putin's interests in weakening democratic governments throughout the West. There are many Americans who believe that Judge Gorsuch has been nominated for a stolen Supreme Court seat. There are also a number of Americans who believe that he has been nominated by a man whose campaign may have coordinated with foreign adversaries on stealing a Presidential election.

Let me be clear. At the moment, no evidence has been made public to indicate that this is the case, but there are few nominations that any President will make that will have more of an impact on our Constitution and on the lives of everyday Americans than the U.S. Supreme Court. To hastily move forward with Judge Gorsuch, who is 49 years old and can serve on the Supreme Court well into the middle of this century, without first getting to the bottom of the suspicious and irregular actions of the Trump campaign officials, I believe, would be a mistake.

The American people need to know that the President's campaign was above reproach before we decide whether Judge Gorsuch merits approval for a lifetime appointment.

I will close my remarks by offering a word of caution to my colleagues. We have maintained and preserved a 60-vote threshold for Supreme Court nominees to prevent Democrats and Republicans from choosing political expediency over bipartisan consensus. If Judge Gorsuch fails to obtain 60 votes on the cloture vote next week, I think it could signal one of three things. First, that Judge Gorsuch's views are outside the judicial mainstream; second, that we still have an opportunity to rectify the injustice done to Judge Garland and to our Constitution; or third, that we still do not know the nature of the relationship between the Trump campaign and Russia—a country whose leadership has ordered an attack on our election and our democracy, as well as a whole lot of other countries around the world.

If Judge Gorsuch fails to achieve 60 votes on the first try or the next try, it does not mean that his nomination will not move forward at some point in the future. It means we have hit the pause button. It may very well be that while we pause, another vacancy on the Court could emerge. Who knows when another vacancy might occur? But if you ask me, another vacancy might present the Senate with an opportunity to right what I believe is a historic wrong, and we should see if the other objections that have been raised about Judge Gorsuch could be addressed before we change the rules of the Senate in favor of the party in power.

In closing, I will say again that Judge Garland waited 293 days for a hearing and a vote that never came. Judge Gorsuch waited 48 days for a hearing, and we will be voting on his nomination next week. Talk about a rush to judgment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. CARPER. I would ask the Presiding Officer for 15 seconds, please.

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

Mr. CARPER. Talk about a rush to judgment. We have time. The American people are watching us, and history will judge us. Let's make sure we get this right.

Let's make sure we get this right.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as we approach the end of another week in the Senate with a 2-week recess on the horizon, I think it is a good time to reflect on where we are on various high-profile efforts and to talk about the pathways forward.

As is generally the case when any new administration comes into office, the Republican majorities in both the House and Senate began 2017 with an ambitious agenda in order to make good on the promises we have made to the American people over the last several years. Many of the key items on the agenda fall squarely in the jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee, which I chair. That being the case, my colleagues on the committee and I have been hard at work, trying to find the right solutions on things like healthcare, tax reform, and trade policy.

I don't think I am going to surprise anyone when I say it hasn't been easy. Honestly, I think that might be the biggest understatement of the year.

Things have been difficult for a number of reasons. One reason is that we are coming off of a bitter election year, one that shocked a number of our colleagues. After a hotly contested campaign, it can sometimes take a while for things to return to normal. However, I don't think that excuses the tactics and rhetoric we have seen from our friends on the other side of the aisle.

In any of these big-ticket policy efforts, whether we are talking about repealing and replacing ObamaCare, fixing the Tax Code, or updating America's trade policy, cooperation between the legislative and the executive branches is key. My Democratic colleagues know this, which, I suppose, is probably the reason they appeared to be bound and determined to prevent any meaningful cooperation from happening.

Now don't get me wrong; I don't expect my friends to change their views and back policies that they find disagreeable. However, you would think, at the very least, that they would allow the new President to get his team in place, a courtesy that has typically been extended to past Presidents, regardless of party. Yet over the last few months, we have seen a systematic effort from our Democratic colleagues to smear, attack, and undermine the vast majority of executive branch nominees. In many cases, after the baseless attacks have failed to gain traction, they have used every procedural tool at their disposal, including surprise boycotts of committee markups, in order to slow down the confirmation process.

This level of obstruction with regard to nominees is unprecedented. And I think it is safe to say that it has slowed our efforts down somewhat, which, I suppose, is the exact reason our colleagues have taken this path. Still, despite these childish tactics, the teams are coming together, and we are moving forward in a number of key areas. As I said, it still hasn't been easy, but to paraphrase a number of important figures, nothing worth doing is ever easy.

For example, on healthcare, I think it is safe to say that the ongoing effort to repeal and replace ObamaCare took a hit last week, but I don't think that has weakened anyone's resolve. ObamaCare is a disaster, and one way or another, it has to go away. The American people are demanding that we take action, and I expect that the volume of those demands is only going to go up.

I commend Speaker RYAN for his efforts thus far, and I commend all my colleagues in the House and Senate for their commitment to repealing and replacing the so-called Affordable Care Act. I remain hopeful that in the near future we can find a workable path forward, and that includes my Democratic colleagues as well.

On tax reform we have some indications that the Trump administration intends to be more actively engaged in finding and developing a path forward. I have said for years that if we are going to be successful in tax reform—a goal shared by Members of both parties—it is going to take Presidential leadership and cooperation by both parties. While President Obama was generally unwilling to meaningfully engage on tax reform, President Trump and his team appear to be anxious to drive the process, and I welcome that.

As with healthcare reform, there are some differences of opinion with regard to tax reform. Still, I think there is a remarkable amount of agreement, at least among Republicans, on the major issues we need to deal with to fix our broken Tax Code.

Overall, I would say that the Republicans in the Senate, the House, and the White House agree on about 80 percent of the major tax reform issues, and a number of key and fundamental questions are answered in that 80 percent. For example, we all generally agree on the need for comprehensive reform. We agree on the need to bring down tax rates for businesses and job creators. We agree that we need a simplified rate structure on the individual side. We agree on the need to fix the international tax rules to level the playing field for American companies and encourage more investment in the United States, and we generally agree on key process issues, including the appropriate revenue baselines and the use of macroeconomic analysis in budget scoring.

Still, that 20 percent of issues where we don't necessarily agree is not insignificant. We will need to find a consensus path forward on those issues as well. One area where we have yet to reach a consensus—and the one getting the most attention—is on the proposed border adjustment tax. People have a number of opinions about this, and I have had numerous people in my office on both sides of the issue. As I said, there are a number of opinions on this proposal, and they have been more than willing to express them publicly. As for myself, I am anxious to see what it looks like once our friends in the House put it all together.

It is too early for me to express a definitive position now. So at this point, all I will say is that I have some basic questions about the proposal.

For example, who will ultimately bear the tax? To what extent will it be borne by consumers, workers, shareholders, and, of course, foreigners?

Another question: Is the proposal consistent with our international trade obligations?

Finally, since border adjustability will likely be a significant shift in business tax policy, would it require us to make adjustments to ensure that we don't unduly increase the tax burden on specific industries? If so, what adjustments would be necessary, and how would they be structured?

I look forward to receiving more details on this proposal. However, here in the Senate, we also have some work to do, and I have been actively working with the members of the Finance Committee to find various solutions to our Nation's tax problems.

At the end of the day, I don't think it will surprise anyone to hear me say that I believe we are going to need to have a robust and substantive tax reform process in the Senate. In my view, it is not realistic to think that the Senate will simply take up and pass a House bill without our Members having a significant input on the substance of the bill. That is how the Congress is supposed to operate, and I think that is what will produce the best result in the end.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in the House on tax reform. I also appreciate the willingness of the new Treasury Secretary and the President's National Economic Council to lead on this effort, and I look forward to continuing to work with them as well.

I will also say this: My hope is that both parties can find a way to work together on tax reform. While we have procedural tools at our disposal to get tax reform legislation through Congress with strictly Republican votes, I personally believe that it would be better to find a bipartisan path forward. A bipartisan bill would allow us to put in place more lasting reforms and give the overall effort additional credibility.

I am sure there are some who think it is impossible for Republicans and Democrats to work together on something of this magnitude, but I have been in the Senate for a long time, and I think my record for bipartisanship speaks for itself. I believe we can and should work together, and I am willing to talk and work with anyone who is willing to set politics aside and engage in good faith on these matters.

I have been banging a drum on tax reform for 6 years now, and throughout that time, I have invited my Democratic colleagues to join in this effort. I will do so again today. Hopefully, some of our colleagues on the other side will take me up on this offer.

Finally, I want to say a few words about U.S. trade policy. Trade is another area in which President Trump has some ambitious plans and in which, up to now, progress has been hindered. Before I delve into that, let me reiterate a key point.

In 2015, Congress outlined its trade priorities with our legislation to renew the trade promotion authority, which was signed into law by President Obama. The TPA statute gives clear guidance as to what a trade agreement should look like if it is going to win Congress's approval.

President Trump was fortunate to come into office with TPA already in effect, and I am committed to working with him to enact trade agreements that meet those standards established by the TPA law. When it comes to new trade agreements or revisions to modernize existing trade agreements, that is my top priority as chairman of the Senate committee with jurisdiction over trade policy. Our trade laws are designed to give Congress a voice in both the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements.

In addition to priorities and objectives outlined under TPA, there is the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, which is intended to be the chief intermediary between Congress and, of course, the administration on trade

policy matters. In other words, in order for the two branches to effectively work together on trade, the Office of the USTR needs to be fully functional and fully staffed.

Unfortunately, up to now, some on the other side have been making unreasonable and wholly unrelated demands in relation to the confirmation of President Trump's nominee to be USTR even though he has support from Members of both parties. This is unfortunate. However, I am working with my colleagues to remove any remaining roadblocks, and I am hoping we can make progress on this very soon.

As one can see, we have quite a bit of work to do here in Congress, and I am only talking about a handful of the major issues before us. I am very concerned. There are, of course, many other priorities we need to address and matters we need to resolve. I am hoping that in the coming weeks and months, as we put more distance between us and the 2016 election, more of our colleagues on both sides will be amenable to working together to address these kinds of issues even if it means allowing President Trump to claim some successes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ACT

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise to talk about a path forward on healthcare.

Last week, Republicans in the House failed to pass the American Health Care Act—a deeply flawed policy that amounted to little more than a massive tax break for the wealthy at the expense of working people. The failure of that bill means that, as Speaker RYAN put it, the ACA is the law of the land for the foreseeable future. So today I would like to invite my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to leave repeal efforts behind and instead roll up their sleeves and work with me and other Democrats to improve the system we already have, which is the law of the land for the foreseeable future. It is time to pass commonsense reforms that build on the successes of the ACA and lower healthcare costs.

In a recent HELP Committee hearing, Chairman ALEXANDER said that he wanted to work on a bipartisan basis to stabilize the individual market. Great. Let's do that. We should reinstate and strengthen programs that help insurance companies stay in the marketplace and continue to serve even the sickest patients. We should pass a public option to make sure there is competition in every market. We should provide more tax credits to more people.

While we work on those things, there is something else we should do, something that, together with a group of my colleagues, I introduced a bill about yesterday. It is time to bring down healthcare costs for everyone by reducing the price of prescription drugs. It is time to pass the Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act.

I think all of us would agree that no one should have to choose between affording a lifesaving drug and putting food on the table for one's family, but right now that is happening. Companies are setting prices that are beyond the reach of consumers and that are driving up costs for insurers and taxpayers.

One in five Americans says he has not filled a prescription simply because he could not afford it. Others are rationing care due to high prices. A study published just last month found that about 10 percent of cancer patients skipped their medication and about 13 percent delayed filling their prescriptions. We have all been shocked by the stories of EpiPen's prices shooting up nearly 500 percent. The price of insulin has more than doubled in the last 5 years.

Drug companies can essentially set whatever prices they want. As a result, in recent years, drug companies have secured some of the highest profit margins of any industry.

Drug prices are too high. That is why my colleagues and I are introducing comprehensive legislation to tackle prescription drug prices. We want to make sure companies cannot exploit the sick and dying to make a profit. The bill includes 17 policy changes that will improve transparency, promote affordability, spur innovation, and enhance competition. Today, I would like to highlight just three of those provisions.

First, transparency. This legislation requires drug companies to disclose how much they spend on research, manufacturing, and marketing, as well as research grants from the Federal Government, to help all of us understand why prices for lifesaving drugs are so high. It is especially galling that so many drugs that are developed with taxpayer dollars are unaffordable for so many Americans. Getting this information would help all of us hold drug companies accountable, and that can be an important step toward bringing prices down.

Second—something that President Trump called for on the campaign trail—the bill will allow Medicare to negotiate lower prices for prescription drugs. It is just common sense that the biggest buyer of pharmaceutical products in America should be able to use its negotiating clout to bring prices down.

Third, the bill would end the practice of so-called pay-for-delay. Right now, drug companies that make the expensive brand-name drugs will pay other companies that make generic alternatives to keep their products off the market. This is called pay-for-delay. It is outrageous, and it is increasingly common. This bill will stop these agreements once and for all.

There is a lot more that this bill does. It penalizes companies that price-gouge for lifesaving medicine, and I think we can all agree on that. It puts a cap on out-of-pocket drug costs in insurance plans. It speeds up generic competition. It funds new innovation and includes a number of other provisions.

Tackling the high cost of prescription drugs is an issue many of my colleagues care deeply about. This bill reflects many of their ideas and proposals, and I am grateful for their work with me. Moreover, it is obvious that the public is ready for action on this issue. Overwhelming majorities of Americans in both parties support government action to curb out-of-control drug prices.

I am eager to hear from colleagues on both sides of the aisle and from the administration about how we can work together to pass the reforms into law. This is an area of health policy that Democrats are eager to work on, and we hope the President will stand by his promise to stand up to drug companies and reduce costs for American families. It is morally wrong that some people are denied access to lifesaving drugs because they cannot afford them, and it is something we can fix.

I am in the Senate so that I can fight for policies that improve people's lives. That is why I am here. With this bill, I am trying to do exactly that. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in helping to bring down the cost of prescription drugs.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, for 7 years, Republicans in Congress have promised to ''repeal and replace ObamaCare,'' but not once during those 7 years did they actually put together a piece of legislation to make good on that promise.

Not once during those 7 years did Republican leaders actually convene serious hearings and meetings with patients, hospitals, insurers, and medical groups to discuss how best to reform our healthcare system, instead preferring to just rail against the law.

Not once during those 7 years did congressional Republicans actually try to sit down with Democrats and work on a bipartisan basis to improve upon the law.

But here is what they did do: They did everything possible to gum up the works, with many Republican Governors even refusing to expand Medicaid, denying millions of their constituents access to healthcare.

They went on TV, did interviews, and held campaign rallies about how all of

the challenges facing our healthcare system, challenges that we faced even before we passed the ACA, was the fault of ObamaCare and made empty promises about ''repeal and replace.''

Congressional Republicans voted over 60 times to repeal the Affordable Care Act when they knew President Obama was in office and he would veto repeal—60 times.

Now, with Republicans controlling the House, the Senate, the White House, you know what they are doing? Nothing—they cancelled their vote last Friday to repeal the law.

Why? As evidenced last week, they are incapable of developing a proposal that garners the support of their own Republican Caucus. They are incapable of bringing a piece of legislation to the House Floor for a vote, despite having a large Republican majority in the House.

Now, after 17 legislative days of trying to ram through a bill that would have thrown at least 24 million people off their health insurance, reduced protections for 178 million people who have employer-based coverage, increased costs for seniors and rural communities, and given a huge tax break to drug companies and the wealthiest Americans, Republicans are giving up.

Time to move on, they say; time to tackle tax reform, they say.

Well, I, along with the majority of Americans who have benefited from this law, am relieved.

The Affordable Care Act is not perfect—no law is.

It made sure 20 million more Americans could get health insurance, including 1 million Illinoisans. As a result, our uninsured rate is at its lowest level in our Nation's history.

Young people are staying on their parents' plans till age 26, and seniors are seeing big savings on their prescription drugs.

Women can no longer be charged more than men for the same coverage, and people with preexisting conditions can no longer be discriminated against.

Annual and lifetime caps on benefits are a thing of the past, and people now have access to maternity and newborn care, as well as mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Now that Republicans have acknowledged that the Affordable Care Act is, as Speaker RYAN stated, ''the law of the land . . . for the foreseeable future,'' it is time to start building off of it.

Like Medicare and Social Security before it, it is time to make some bipartisan modifications that can help improve the law.

We need to increase insurer competition because, in too many of our communities, there are not enough options.

We need to address individual market premium increases because, for too many of our constituents, an affordable health plan is still out of reach.

I, along with many of my Democratic colleagues, have put forth ideas to deal with some of these issues.

I support the creation of a ''public plan,'' which would both increase competition in areas that are lacking and drive down premiums since, as Medicare has demonstrated time and again, the Federal Government can be more efficient than private for-profit companies.

I support legislation to bring down the high cast of prescription drugs, which are driving up premiums for families nationwide.

BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois now pays more for prescription drugs than they do on inpatient hospital costs, and they readily admit that drug costs are contributing to premium hikes.

We need to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices. We need to end ''pay for delay'' agreements and get cheaper drugs on the market quicker. We need to prohibit direct-to-consumer advertising. We need more transparency into how drug prices are set, and we need penalties on drug companies that gouge the American public.

I also support enforcing portions of the law that Republicans have sabotaged and undermined since its inception. We need to allow the ''risk corridor'' program to operate unimpeded. We need to expand Medicaid in all States, especially since we know that premiums are highest and competition lowest in nonexpansion States, and we need to enforce the law—which is why the very first order of business going forward must be for President Trump to rescind the Executive order he issued on January 20.

The President's order directed the heads of all Federal agencies responsible for implementing and enforcing the Affordable Care Act to stand down, to not implement the law, to not enforce the law.

Now that the page has hopefully been turned on the ugly ''repeal'' chapter of this saga, it is time for the President and his administration to faithfully implement, enforce, and help improve this law.

I am calling on the President and congressional Republicans: Now is the time to stop undermining the law that is enjoying record support from Americans.

Now is not time to throw sand in the law's eyes, put a spoke in its wheel, and then turn around, gloat, and blame Democrats when it does not function properly.

The Affordable Care Act while championed by Democrats and President Obama, included over 100 Republican amendments and, for better or worse, borrowed heavily from Republican ideas for the marketplace.

Let's end these partisan games.

This law—the good and the shortcomings—is on all of us to improve.

Democrats have ideas, but we cannot do it alone. Remember, the Republican Party controls the House, the Senate, and the White House.

They are in charge. If improvements are going to be made, Republicans are going to have to get serious.

Now that the half-baked repeal effort has collapsed, my hope is that Republicans will finally be willing to sit down and work with Democrats. I know I am ready to pull up a chair.

RUSSIA AND TRUMP CAMPAIGN INVESTIGATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week in testimony to the House Intelligence Committee, FBI Director Comey confirmed what many of us have been urging for months: the need for an independent commission to look into the Russian act of cyber war on our election and any possible collusion with members of the Trump campaign.

Comey confirmed that the FBI was ''investigating the nature of any links between individuals associated with the Trump campaign and the Russian government, and whether there was any coordination between the campaign and Russian efforts.''

He continued that FBI agents would pursue the investigation ''no matter how long that takes.''

This is incredible. I am not surprised, but it is incredible. Our Nation's top law enforcement agency is investigating possible links between those involved in President Trump's campaign and a foreign adversary known to have conducted an aggressive intelligence operation to help him get elected, and all the while, this President continues to deny any such attack, praise the dictator who launched the attack, and pursue policies that mirror those of the attacker, including the weakening of the Western security alliance.

Yet what has been the priority of the majority party amid this mounting and serious breach, one we already knew about 5 months ago?

Has it been to set up an independent commission to look into this unprecedented threat to our Nation and democracy? No.

Has it been to work with the White House to disclose all information in an open and transparent manner to clear up any concerns or suspicions? No, in fact the opposite—we still haven't even seen the President's tax returns to get answers on Russian money in his businesses.

Has it been to pass sanctions on Russia for its attack on our Nation? No.

Has it been to pass meaningful cyber security legislation, legislation blocked by the majority in the last Congress to make sure our next elections in less than 2 years are secure from attack? No.

So what has been the priority instead? Well, last week, the majority voted to make it easier to kill baby bears and their mothers in their dens. The majority also reversed internet privacy protections for consumers. A few weeks ago, the majority voted to reverse a law to help mitigate corruption in some of the world's most impoverished nations.

Of course, the majority failed to advance TrumpCare, which would have

stripped 24 million Americans of healthcare, a cruel bill that would have disproportionately hurt those who voted for President Trump.

This is a dereliction of our responsibility here in the Congress. Not one of these issues is more important than getting to the bottom of possible collusion with the Russians or of the possibility that some in the White House have been compromised by a foreign government.

I want to praise the few on the majority side who have spoken out on the need for an investigation, including Senator GRAHAM and Senator MCCAIN. They noted early on the need for an independent investigation.

Today a majority of Americans also want an independent commission. I am again calling for the same. We need an independent commission, one led by American statesmen or women of unquestioned reputation, say Sandra Day O'Connor or Colin Powell.

We did this after the attack of September 11, and this attack and its unanswered questions demand nothing less again today.

JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week I spoke about the importance of the rule of law in Guatemala and praised the work of Attorney General Thelma Aldana and the commissioner of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, Ivan Velasquez. These two individuals have helped to create hope among the Guatemalan people in the possibility of justice in a country where the justice system has too often been used to perpetuate corruption, impunity, and inequality.

The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, or CICIG, has been strongly supported by the United States. I commended President Morales when, shortly after taking office last January, he extended CICIG's mandate. He has affirmed that he supports CICIG's mandate through September 2019, for which, again, I commend him.

Last week, I expressed a concern that had been conveyed to me by several individuals that President Morales might recommend against renewal of Mr. Velasquez as commissioner beyond September 2017, when Mr. Velasquez's current term expires. In response, according to press reports, President Morales denied this and said he supports Mr. Velasquez for as long as Mr. Velasquez does the job he is supposed to do.

Ivan Velasquez is a respected former judge from Colombia who has carried out his responsibilities as the commissioner of CICIG with professionalism. He and Attorney General Aldana have collaborated on sensitive, complex cases, which until recently would never have been prosecuted in Guatemala, given its history of impunity. It is important that their collaboration continue for as long as possible.

I welcome President Morales's public statement of support for CICIG and for Mr. Velasquez, particularly at a time when the U.S. Congress is again being asked to provide hundreds of millions of dollars to support the Alliance for Prosperity Plan. That plan, which is in its early stages, has the potential to make progress in combating the poverty, lack of opportunity, inequality, violence, and impunity that are among the key contributors to migration from Central America to the United States. These are deeply rooted problems that the Central American countries and the United States have a strong interest in working together to address.

For the Alliance for Prosperity Plan to succeed, each of the Central American governments needs to take steps that their predecessors were unwilling or unable to take. Those steps include ensuring that senior government officials and their advisers are people of integrity; redefining the antagonistic relationship between government and civil society, to one of mutual respect for each other's legitimate role; fully supporting efforts to combat corruption by CICIG and by the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras—El Salvador should also recognize the important role these entities are playing and support the establishment of a similar commission to combat corruption and impunity in that country—increasing the budget of the Office of the Attorney General, so they have the necessary personnel, training, equipment, and protection to carry out their responsibilities throughout the country, especially in areas where they have never had the resources to operate; supporting the independence of the judiciary, including the selection of judges based on their qualifications and the principle of equal access to justice; and building transparent and accountable institutions of democracy that can withstand attempts to subvert the rights of the people, including demilitarizing law enforcement and building professional, civilian police forces.

It is the responsibility of the Central American governments to take these steps and, by doing so, create the conditions for building more prosperous, equitable, and just societies. If they do that and they meet the other conditions in U.S. law, the United States should support them.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to express my disappointment in today's vote on H.J. Res. 67 and my strong opposition to H.J. Res. 66. These resolutions overturn rules issued by the Department of Labor that are essential to providing increased access to retirement savings programs at the city and State levels.

Among all working families in America ages 32 to 61, the median family in America had only $5,000 saved in 2013. This indicates to me that we are clearly facing a retirement savings crisis.

In California, 7.5 million workers don't have access to a retirement savings plan through their jobs, including 3.4 million women. Of those without a workplace retirement savings plan, almost 5 million are individuals of Color, and over 3.5 million are Latino.

The good news is that, when a person has access to a retirement savings program through their workplace, they are 15 times more likely to save for retirement.

In California, legislators have been working for more than 4 years to create the Secure Choice program as a way of addressing the retirement crisis we face. This program allows workers to easily save for retirement through a deduction made directly from their paycheck.

Those who need access to a workplace retirement program the most, individuals with lower incomes, are far less likely to have that access. These are the people who stand to gain the most from the Secure Choice program and lose the most by Congress halting its progress.

Let me share some examples of the people who would be impacted. Most eligible employees work for small businesses that might not be able to offer retirement savings plans on their own, and nearly half of eligible workers work in the retail, hospitality, healthcare, and manufacturing industries.

This program supports lower- and middle-class workers by providing access to the tools they need to control their financial future. The average wage of workers eligible for this program is $35,000, and 80 percent of eligible workers earn less than $50,000.

We are facing a time of deep income inequality and must stand up for programs that support the middle class, like Secure Choice. Nationwide, the bottom 90 percent of households have seen their income drop compared to what it was in 1970. Meanwhile, the top 1 percent has seen their household income triple.

As workers struggle to make ends meet, it is appalling to me that Congress would actively take away a key resource for financial planning.

Californians want to ensure that all employees have access to a retirement savings program. The Department of Labor's State rule clears the way for California to set up programs like Secure Choice by clarifying employers' obligations to the accounts.

This rule would also help small businesses compete for qualified workers who expect and deserve access to a workplace retirement savings program. Small Business California supports the Department of Labor's rule paving the way for these programs and opposes this resolution.

Finally, in California, our State chapter of the Chamber of Commerce specifically asked for an opinion from

the Department of Labor on employer obligations. Once the Department of Labor's rule was issued, CalChamber no longer opposed the California bill.

In fact, the legislation that passed in California requires the State board to report a finalized rule from the Department of Labor. Overturning the Department of Labor's rule completely ignores the effort and care taken in California to craft a program that works for both employees and employers.

Nationally, almost half of working-age households do not have retirement savings accounts, and 55 million people don't have access to a workplace retirement plan. This is shocking.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the median retirement account savings for families ages 56 to 61 was only $17,000 in 2013. This is only slightly higher than the 2016 poverty threshold for a household of two people aged 65 and older. It is inconceivable that a family could afford to finance their retirement with only $17,000 in savings.

Supporting retirement savings is not a partisan issue. In fact a bipartisan group of State treasurers oppose this resolution, as does the National Conference of State Legislatures.

We are facing a retirement savings crisis in our country, and the Department of Labor's rule is a simple, commonsense guideline that make it easier for individuals to save for retirement.

While today's vote is a disappointing development for city programs, I will keep fighting to support California's Secure Choice program. I strongly urge my colleagues to stand up for American workers and support their access to retirement savings programs by opposing H.J. Res. 66, should it come up for a vote on the Senate floor.

Thank you.

DISCHARGE PETITION—S.J. RES. 19

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, hereby direct that the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 19, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to prepaid accounts under the Electronic Fund Transfer Act and the Truth in Lending Act.

David Perdue, Mike Crapo, Rob Portman, Steve Daines, Lamar Alexander, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, Mitch McConnell, Roger Wicker, Ted Cruz, Patrick Toomey, Ron Johnson, Mike Lee, Shelley Moore Capito, John Hoeven, James Lankford, Thom Tillis, John Kennedy, James M. Inhofe, John Boozman, John Thune, Michael B. Enzi, Johnny Isakson, James E. Risch, Tom Cotton, Thad Cochran, Jeff Flake, Luther Strange, Richard Shelby, Pat Roberts, John Barrasso.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO GARY PETERSEN

• Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a dear friend, honorable servicemember, and dedicated public servant. On March 3, Gary Petersen retired from over a half-century career of private and public service supporting scientific achievement and advocacy for the people of my home State of Washington. Gary has worked tirelessly to support the Hanford cleanup and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, PNNL, and has undoubtedly bolstered our Nation's security during the 52 years that he has lived and worked in the Tri-Cities.

Gary and I have collaborated closely many times over the years on many projects. Most recently, he played a key role in organizing the energy workforce roundtable held at PNNL with Department of Energy Secretary Moniz in August of last year. Gary has been a steadfast advocate for cleaning up the Hanford site, funding for the world-class research and development at PNNL, and for the continued growth of the Volpentest HAMMER Training Center at the Hanford site. I am confident that Washington State, and especially the Tri-Cities, would not be as well positioned to tackle our Nation's future energy challenges if not for over 50 years of Gary Petersen's tireless work.

Originally from Omak, a small city located in Okanogan County, Gary joined the Army and was stationed in the Tri-Cities in January 1960. After a duty station transfer to Korea, Gary returned and graduated with a communications degree from Washington State University. Shortly after graduation, Gary started with Battelle, a company that had a contract for a research and development lab located at Hanford. That lab provided crucial services during the Cold War and is now known as PNNL. Gary went on to work for Westinghouse on the Fast Flux Test Facility, the Washington Public Power Supply System, and spent time with the International Nuclear Safety Program, a cooperative nuclear energy safety effort between the U.S. and Soviet Union. After retiring from Battelle in 2002, Gary served on the Tri-City Development Council, TRIDEC, an organization dedicated to improving the economic health of the Tri-Cities area.

During his 14 years at TRIDEC, Gary has been a relentless supporter for DOE's missions at Hanford and PNNL and a champion for the larger Tri-City community and our State by ensuring important projects received needed Federal resources. Gary is the type of constituent every member hopes to have in their communities back home—a very involved citizen. He has been a strong advocate for the issues that matter to the people of Washington while also understanding the importance of communicating with his political representatives. My relationship with Gary has been invaluable, and he has been instrumental in many of my proudest career accomplishments.

Gary shares my vision for why establishing the Manhattan Project National Historical Park was so important. We worked together for many years to champion and ultimately see the creation of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. The legislation I authored preserved the central landmark of the Hanford site and the park, the B Reactor, the first full-scale plutonium production nuclear reactor ever built and a tremendous technological achievement for its time. The park also includes the Bruggemann Agricultural Warehouse, the White Bluffs Bank, the historic Hanford High School, and the Hanford Irrigation District's Allard Pump House. Visitors from 70 countries have already visited the B Reactor, demonstrating the uniqueness of the park and the curiosity people have about this chapter of American and world history. We all owe Gary a debt of gratitude for the establishment of this park.

Today the Tri-Cities is home to a vibrant agricultural industry, some of the best healthcare available, two colleges that are training workers to meet the varied needs of the region's businesses, increasing wine tourism, and a newly expanded airport. Gary has touched all of these projects and many more.

I am incredibly proud to have worked with Gary and to call him a friend. Gary, thank you for all of your years of advocacy for the Tri-Cities. I join Washingtonians in thanking him for his longstanding service and wish him and his wife, Margaret, all the best in the future.•

TRIBUTE TO JENNY GENGER

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing Jenny Genger of Jefferson County for her selfless commitment to others in her local community. Jenny is a wonderful example of a local leader who is always willing to take on additional responsibility and devote her time and talent to others.

Jenny graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in sociology. At her graduation in Missoula, one of the soldiers in the honor guard escorting the national flag caught her attention. With that chance encounter as the spark, the two were married about a year later. The young couple settled near Helena, in Montana City, where today they are raising their four children. In Helena, Jenny became very active in the Mothers of Preschoolers, also known as MOPS, by serving initially as the director of hospitality, and then after a period of rapid growth, she graciously took on additional duties as the president of a newly formed MOPS group. Jenny served in this capacity for nearly 8 years.

A few years ago, Jenny passed on her MOPS leadership baton and began serving as the chairperson for the education program in her church. As chairperson, Jenny spurred a program to have educational activities available during parent-teacher conferences in order to help parents attend the conferences. Jenny also volunteers each week at the local pregnancy resource center and coordinates the center's annual banquet. Not only does Jenny excel at serving her community, she has done so even while her husband, Noah, a Montana Army National Guard pilot, was gone for nearly a year conducting missions in southwest Asia.

Montana is a State with many unsung heroes, and people like Jenny are the community glue that make Montana a great place to raise a family. For her efforts to serve, educate, and inspire those around her, Montana is sincerely thankful. Thank you, Jenny.●

REMEMBERING COLONEL EDWIN DON STRICKFADEN

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, my colleague Senator MIKE CRAPO joins me today in honoring the life of Colonel Edwin Don Strickfaden, who dedicated 35 years to protecting the citizens of Idaho through his service in Idaho law enforcement.

Colonel Strickfaden led the Idaho State Police, ISP, with distinction, serving as director when two Idaho law enforcement agencies were combined to form one ISP and leading the force to accomplish many law enforcement successes furthering the security of our communities. Current Idaho State Police director Colonel Ralph Powell recognized Colonel Strickfaden as a ''champion for all law enforcement throughout the state,'' and a ''charismatic leader'' who ''worked tirelessly to keep us safe.'' Colonel Strickfaden—Ed to most of us—joined Idaho law enforcement in 1967 after serving 4 years in the U.S. Air Force. A native Idahoan, Ed was born on August 3, 1945, to Don and Ruth Strickfaden in Nez Perce, ID, and served many communities throughout Idaho before retiring in 2002 making a home with his wife, Barbara, in Salmon, ID. Barbara has worked for my Gubernatorial and U.S. Senate offices, which has given us more opportunities to interact with this remarkable Idahoan.

Colonel Strickfaden was known for his thoughtful, reasoned, and inspiring leadership. Although this example of his bravery and devotion to helping others was already highlighted in a 2003 CONGRESSIONAL RECORD statement, it is worthy of repeating as it is emblematic of how he served. Colonel Strickfaden was honored by then-Governor Cecil Andrus for diving into the icy December waters of the Clearwater River to rescue a woman from a submerged vehicle. His sense of duty and clear empathy for the people he served was an outstanding example to many.

Colonel Strickfaden made an extraordinary difference in the lives of Idahoans he served and the many who knew him. We thank him for his outstanding service as we join his family, including Barbara and their beloved children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild and many friends in mourning his passing and honoring his loving legacy.●

TRIBUTE TO HOT SHOTS INC.

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, known for its diverse natural resources and awe-inspiring landscapes, Idaho is a place of countless possibilities, where citizens with determination and ambition can lay the foundation for their own success. I am particularly proud of my home State's entrepreneurs who continue to pioneer new enterprises that bring our communities together and inspire a creative spirit in Idahoans across the State. These traits are well represented in this month's Small Business of the Month. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I am pleased to honor Hot Shots Inc. delivery service as the Senate Small Business of the Month for March 2017.

Founded by Lance and Mary Curtis, Hot Shots Inc. is a family-owned and operated small business headquartered in Boise, ID. The innovative vision of the company is driven by a management team with over 50 years of combined experience in courier services. Hot Shots Inc. has provided delivery services in the Boise area since 1998. Their offerings are distinct in that they are capable of delivering anything from small parcels to large freight throughout the Treasure Valley, Sun Valley, Magic Valley, and Twin Falls, all with a same-day guarantee. Over the years, this company has earned and maintained a high level of trust in the Boise area, as is evident through their special delivery service which allows them to access a number of secure locations such as corporate, banking, medical, government, and military sites. Part of what makes Hot Shots Inc. a successful enterprise is its use of modern technology, specifically its utilization of an online ordering system, a GPS package tracking system, and an email notification system. The company has adapted with technological advances, making all of these changes to support mobile transactions. All of these advances help instill confidence in every customer that his or her package, parcel, or shipment will arrive on time. This commitment to customer service has helped the company excel in its field and allowed Hot Shots Inc. to enter new markets such as warehousing.

Hot Shots Inc. has been a pillar of the community since they first opened their doors. This family-run business has displayed its commitment to the Boise community in a variety of ways, whether by delivering diapers for the Idaho Diaper Bank or through their support of the Idaho Foodbank Backpack Program, among other community service activities. I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to Lance and Mary Curtis and the employees of Hot Shots Inc. for being chosen as the March 2017 Small Business of the Month. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to watching your continued growth and success.●

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PURCHASE OF ALASKA

● Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, today, March 30, marks that 150th anniversary of the date when President Andrew Johnson signed the treaty with Russia for the purchase of Alaska. It is a big day for my State, and for the past few months, I have been diving into the archives and doing some research about the treaty and about the first few years of challenges following the signing. As you can imagine, building a State out of a frontier, particularly one so far away from the rest of the country and in such an extreme climate, was challenging, to say the least. It demanded, and still does, a certain kind of person with a certain kind of toughness, vision, and a determination to work for the good of all. Let me give you an example of what it has required.

Some members of the first territorial legislature in 1913—46 years after the purchase—who lived in far flung places faced a challenge. Specifically how to get to Juneau to begin to hash out creating the rules of a new territory.

Of course, there were no commercial airlines in those days—no snow machines, so four members from Nome—lawyers, miners, and businessmen—hitched up their dog teams, headed to Valdez, and took a steamship to Juneau. It took them nearly 2 months to get there. When they did arrive, the first order of business was this: granting women the right to vote, 7 years before Congress ratified the 19th Amendment.

That is the heritage of every one in Alaska, and that is the same spirit, of traveling far against the odds, to do what is right, that still animates my great State. It animates people who haven't even been to Alaska. My State is more than a place with set geographic boundaries. My State is also an idea, a dream; it goes beyond borders and represents so much about America that we hold dear: beauty, freedom, self-sufficiency. It has been this way even before Alaska became a territory—when a group of people, led by former Secretary of State William Seward, pushed the country to buy Alaska from Russia for $7.2 million. As has been proven, that was a good deal.

Every week, I have been coming down to recognize an Alaskan of the Week, a special person who gives their time, energy, and talents to making our State the best in the country.

Today I want to speak about someone who I will call an honorary Alaskan. Today I would like to name Senator Charles Sumner our posthumous Alaskan of the Week. Senator Sumner

never set foot in my State, but he knew Alaska well. We are a State because of him, and others, including Secretary of State William Seward, who had vision and tenacity.

Senator Sumner was born on January 6, 1811, in Boston, MA. He was a lawyer, a professor, and then a politician. He was a man of purpose, principle, and many, many words and opinions. In fact, he was nearly caned to death while working in the Senate Chambers, by one of his colleagues—a congressman from the South—for expressing his opinions on the horrors of slavery. It was a deplorable act, and it cast a pall of shame over this body for years. Senator Sumner never really recovered, but after a long convalescence, he set his sights on the Alaska Purchase.

He was skeptical, at first, until Secretary of State Seward got his ear, and he immersed himself into the accounts of the promise of this new territory, which turned him into an ardent supporter. On April, 8, 1867, Senator Sumner, using only notecards, gave a 3-hour speech on the Senate floor about our State.

He spoke of Alaska's abundant resources. He saw the Pacific as the ocean of the future and argued that Alaska is the key to that future. He spoke of the treasures—the gold in our land, the veins of coal, our huge mineral deposits, and the treasures below the Arctic Ocean. He talked about the ''multitudes of fish,'' the thousands of acres of timber, and the opening of new trade routes.

He and others saw in Alaska the ''Eden of the North''—a future which would entail up to 1 million self-sufficient Americans supported by the resources of the land. Owning Alaska would give us greater control of the next ''great theater of action'' in the Arctic and Asia-Pacific, for both national security and economic reason.

In the new territory of Alaska, ''Commerce will find new arms; the country new defenders, the national flag new hands to bear it aloft,'' Senator Sumner argued. A ''boundless and glorious future,'' awaits, he and other supporters argued.

Senator Sumner ended his epic 1867 speech by arguing that the whole territory, not just the peninsula, should be given the name by the people who lived here. ''It should be indigenous, original, coming from the soil,'' he said. ''Alaska,'' he concluded, ''the great land.''

The day after Sumner's Senate speech, the once-skeptical U.S. Senate approved the purchase by a vote of 37 to 2. One hundred and fifty years later, Alaska has made good on that early promise. We have contributed enormous resources to our country. We are vital to our country's national defense, our national pride, and our economic growth. We still have the vision of Secretary of State Seward and Senator Sumner driving us toward a brighter future. Thanks to Senator Sumner and to the people of Massachusetts who gave us such a brave leader—our honorary Alaskan of the Week.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 9:35 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. 1430. An act to prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency from proposing, finalizing, or disseminating regulations or assessments based upon science that is not transparent or reproducible.

ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION SIGNED

The message further announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled joint resolution:

S.J. Res. 34. Joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Federal Communications Commission relating to ''Protecting the Privacy of Customers of Broadband and Other Telecommunications Services''.

The enrolled joint resolution was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

At 1:00 p.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. 1431. An act to amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 to provide for Scientific Advisory Board member qualifications, public participation, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1430. An act to prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency from proposing, finalizing, or disseminating regulations or assessments based upon science that is not transparent or reproducible; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

H.R. 1431. An act to amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 to provide for Scientific Advisory Board member qualifications, public participation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

MEASURES DISCHARGED

The following joint resolution was discharged by petition, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 802(c), and placed on the calendar:

S.J. Res. 19. Joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to prepaid accounts under the Electronic Fund Transfer Act and the Truth in Lending Act.

ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, March 30, 2017, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled joint resolution:

S.J. Res 34. Joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Federal Communications Commission relating to ''Protecting the Privacy of Customers of Broadband and Other Telecommunications Services''.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, without amendment:

S. 110. A bill to require the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to establish a constituent-driven program to provide a digital information platform capable of efficiently integrating coastal data with decision-support tools, training, and best practices and to support collection of priority coastal geospatial data to inform and improve local, State, regional, and Federal capacities to manage the coastal region, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115–14).

S. 129. A bill to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115–15).

S. 168. A bill to amend and enhance certain maritime programs of the Department of Transportation (Rept. No. 115–16).

By Mr. ISAKSON, from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

Special Report entitled ''Legislative and Oversight Activities During the 114th Congress by the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs'' (Rept. No. 115–17).

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation:

Special Report entitled ''Report on the Legislative Activities of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation During the 114th Congress'' (Rept. No. 115–18).

By Mr. GRASSLEY, from the Committee on the Judiciary:

Special Report entitled ''Report on the Activities of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary During the 114th Congress'' (Rept. No. 115–19).

By Mr. SHELBY, from the Committee on Rules and Administration:

Special Report entitled ''Review of Legislative Activity During the 114th Congress'' (Rept. No. 115–20).

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 141. A bill to improve understanding and forecasting of space weather events, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115–21).

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations:

Special Report entitled ''Legislative Activities Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourteenth Congress'' (Rept. No. 115–22).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. ROBERTS for the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

*Sonny Perdue, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Agriculture.

By Mr. ALEXANDER for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

*R. Alexander Acosta, of Florida, to be Secretary of Labor.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. HATCH:

S. 775. A bill to streamline the R–1 religious worker visa petition process; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 776. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the taxation and regulation of marijuana products, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. PAUL, Mr. BENNET, and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 777. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow deductions and credits relating to expenditures in connection with marijuana sales conducted in compliance with State law; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MANCHIN, and Mr. KING):

S. 778. A bill to require the use of prescription drug monitoring programs and to facilitate information sharing among States; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Ms. HEITKAMP, and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 779. A bill to enhance civil penalties under the Federal securities laws, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 780. A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to reduce the gap between Federal and State marijuana policy, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. KING, and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 781. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to limit the liability of health care professionals who volunteer to provide health care services in response to a disaster; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. HELLER, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 782. A bill to reauthorize the National Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 783. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to distribute maternity care health professionals to health professional shortage areas identified as in need of maternity care health services; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. ISAKSON (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. MORAN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. HELLER, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 784. A bill to provide for an increase, effective December 1, 2017 , in the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 785. A bill to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to provide for equitable allotment of land to Alaska Native veterans; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN:

S. 786. A bill to establish a grant program relating to the prevention of student and student athlete opioid misuse; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. GARDNER (for himself and Mr. PETERS):

S. 787. A bill to require the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to test the effect of including telehealth services in Medicare health care delivery reform models; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MCCAIN:

S. 788. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct an independent review of the deaths of certain veterans by suicide, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. 789. A bill to exempt from the Lacey Act and the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 certain water transfers between any of the States of Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself and Mr. BENNET):

S. 790. A bill to amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 to encourage innovation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself and Mr. RISCH):

S. 791. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to expand intellectual property education and training for small businesses, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself, Mr. KING, Mr. THUNE, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. BLUNT):

S. 792. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to establish an H–2B temporary non-agricultural work visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. WICKER, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. PORTMAN, and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 793. A bill to prohibit sale of shark fins, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. ISAKSON (for himself, Mr. CARPER, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Ms. STABENOW):

S. 794. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act in order to improve the process whereby Medicare administrative contractors issue local coverage determinations under the Medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BENNET (for himself and Mr. HATCH):

S. 795. A bill to amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 regarding dual or concurrent enrollment and early college high schools; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. WARNER (for himself, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. KING):

S. 796. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the exclusion for employer-provided education assistance to employer payments of student loans; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself and Mr. HELLER):

S. 797. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance matching grant program; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. BROWN, and Mr. TILLIS):

S. 798. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program to apply to individuals pursuing programs of education while on active duty, to recipients of the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry scholarship, and to programs of education pursued on half-time basis or less, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. RUBIO):

S. 799. A bill to simplify and improve the Federal student loan program through income-contingent repayment to provide stronger protections for borrowers, encourage responsible borrowing, and save money for taxpayers; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 800. A bill to protect taxpayers from liability associated with the reclamation of surface coal mining operations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. DONNELLY (for himself, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. TESTER, and Mr. MANCHIN):

S.J. Res. 39. A joint resolution proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BENNET, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. UDALL, and Ms. WARREN):

S. Res. 104. A resolution honoring the accomplishments and legacy of Cesar Estrada Chavez; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. Res. 105. A resolution recognizing 2017 as the 100th anniversary of the creation of the 41st Division; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. CARDIN):

S. Res. 106. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate to support the territorial integrity of Georgia; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mrs. CAPITO (for herself and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. Res. 107. A resolution congratulating the rifle team of West Virginia University on winning the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Rifle Championship; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 96

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 96, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to ensure the integrity of voice communications and to prevent unjust or unreasonable discrimination among areas of the United States in the delivery of such communications.

S. 129

At the request of Mr. NELSON, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 129, a bill to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes.

S. 130

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 130, a bill to require enforcement against misbranded milk alternatives.

S. 200

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 200, a bill to prohibit the conduct of a first-use nuclear strike absent a declaration of war by Congress.

S. 253

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 253, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps.

S. 382

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 382, a bill to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a voluntary registry to collect data on cancer incidence among firefighters.

S. 407

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL) were added as cosponsors of S. 407, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend the railroad track maintenance credit.

S. 431

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 431, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand the use of telehealth for individuals with stroke.

S. 464

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) were added as cosponsors of S. 464, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for a permanent Independence at Home medical practice program under the Medicare program.

S. 512

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 512, a bill to modernize the regulation of nuclear energy.

S. 693

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the names of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) were added as cosponsors of S. 693, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to increase the number of permanent faculty in palliative care at accredited allopathic and osteopathic medical schools, nursing schools, social work schools, and other programs, including physician assistant education programs, to promote education and research in palliative care and hospice, and to support the development of faculty careers in academic palliative medicine.

S. 720

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the names of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 720, a bill to amend the Export Administration Act of 1979 to include in the prohibitions on boycotts against allies of the United States boycotts fostered by international governmental organizations against Israel and to direct the Export-Import Bank of the United States to oppose boycotts against Israel, and for other purposes.

S. 722

At the request of Mr. CORKER, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

S. 733

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. STRANGE) were added as cosponsors of S. 733, a bill to protect and enhance opportunities for recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 2

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 2, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to limiting the number of terms that a Member of Congress may serve.

S. RES. 92

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 92, a resolution expressing concern over the disappearance of David Sneddon, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 100

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 100, a resolution condemning illegal Russian aggression in Ukraine on the three year anniversary of the annexation of Crimea.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Ms. HEITKAMP, and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 779. A bill to enhance civil penalties under the Federal securities laws, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, the Stronger Enforcement of Civil Penalties Act, which I reintroduce today with Senator GRASSLEY, Senator HEITKAMP, and Senator LEAHY, will enhance the ability of securities regulators to protect investors and demand greater accountability from market players. Even after the financial crisis that crippled the economy, we continue to see calculated wrongdoing by some on Wall Street, and without the consequence of meaningful penalties to serve as an effective deterrent, I fear this disturbing culture of misconduct will persist.

Today, the amount of penalties the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC can fine an institution or individual is limited by statute. During hearings I held in 2011 in the Securities, Insurance, and Investment Banking Subcommittee, I learned how this limitation significantly interferes with the SEC's ability to perform its enforcement duties. At that time, the agency had been criticized by a Federal judge for not obtaining a larger settlement against Citigroup, a major player in the financial crisis that settled with the SEC in an amount that was a fraction of the cost the bank had inflicted on investors. The SEC explained that the reason for the low settlement amount was a statutory prohibition against levying a larger penalty. Indeed, then SEC Chairman Mary L. Schapiro in 2011 also explained that ''the Commission's statutory authority to obtain civil monetary penalties with appropriate deterrent effect is limited in many circumstances.''

The bipartisan bill Senator GRASSLEY and I are reintroducing finally updates the SEC's civil penalties statute. This bill strives to make potential and current offenders think twice before engaging in misconduct by increasing the maximum civil monetary penalties permitted by statute, directly linking the size of the maximum penalties to the amount of losses suffered by victims of a violation and substantially raising the financial stakes for repeat offenders of our Nation's securities laws.

Specifically, our bill would give the SEC more options to tailor penalties to the specific circumstances of a given violation. In addition to raising the per violation caps for severe, or ''tier

three,'' violations to $1 million per offense for individuals and $10 million per offense for entities, the legislation would also give the SEC additional options to obtain greater penalties based on the ill-gotten gains of the violator or on the financial harm to investors.

Our bill also addresses the disturbing trend of repeat offenders on Wall Street through two provisions. The first would allow the SEC to triple the penalty cap applicable to recidivists who have been held either criminally or civilly liable for securities fraud within the previous 5 years. The second would allow the SEC to seek a civil penalty against those that violate existing Federal court or SEC orders, an approach that would be more efficient, effective, and flexible than the current civil contempt remedy. Both of these changes would substantially improve the ability of the SEC's enforcement program to ratchet up penalties for recidivists.

Slightly more than half of all U.S. households are invested in the stock market. They deserve a strong cop on the beat that has the tools it needs to go after fraudsters and pursue the difficult cases arising from our increasingly complex financial markets. The Stronger Enforcement of Civil Penalties Act will give the SEC more tools to demand meaningful accountability from Wall Street, which in turn will increase transparency and confidence in our financial system. I urge our colleagues to support this important bipartisan legislation to enhance the SEC's ability to protect investors and to deter and crack down on fraud.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. HELLER, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 782. A bill to reauthorize the National Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

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. 782

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 ''Providing Resources, Officers, and Technology To Eradicate Cyber Threats to Our Children Act of 2017'' or the ''PROTECT Our Children Act of 2017''.

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE NATIONAL INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN TASK FORCE PROGRAM.

Title I of the PROTECT Our Children Act of 2008 (42 U.S.C. 17601 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in section 105(h) (42 U.S.C. 17615(h)), by striking ''2016'' and inserting ''2022''; and

(2) in section 107(a)(10) (42 U.S.C. 17617(a)(10)), by striking ''fiscal year 2018'' and inserting ''each of fiscal years 2018 through 2022''.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 104—HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LEGACY OF CESAR ESTRADA CHAVEZ

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BENNET, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. UDALL, and Ms. WARREN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 104

Whereas César Estrada Chávez was born on March 31, 1927, near Yuma, Arizona;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez spent his early years on a family farm;

Whereas, at the age of 10, César Estrada Chávez joined the thousands of migrant farm workers laboring in fields and vineyards throughout the Southwest after a bank foreclosure resulted in the loss of the family farm;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez, after attending more than 30 elementary and middle schools and achieving an eighth grade education, left school to work full-time as a farm worker to help support his family;

Whereas, at the age of 17, César Estrada Chávez entered the United States Navy and served the United States with distinction for 2 years;

Whereas, in 1948, César Estrada Chávez returned from military service to marry Helen Fabela, whom he had met while working in the vineyards of central California;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez and Helen Fabela had 8 children;

Whereas, as early as 1949, César Estrada Chávez was committed to organizing farm workers to campaign for safe and fair working conditions, reasonable wages, livable housing, and the outlawing of child labor;

Whereas, in 1952, César Estrada Chávez joined the Community Service Organization, a prominent Latino civil rights group, and worked with the organization to coordinate voter registration drives and conduct campaigns against discrimination in east Los Angeles;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez served as the national director of the Community Service Organization;

Whereas, in 1962, César Estrada Chávez left the Community Service Organization to found the National Farm Workers Association, which eventually became the United Farm Workers of America;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez was a strong believer in the principles of nonviolence practiced by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez effectively used peaceful tactics, including fasting for 25 days in 1968, 25 days in 1972, and 38 days in 1988, to call attention to the terrible working and living conditions of farm workers in the United States;

Whereas, under the leadership of César Estrada Chávez, the United Farm Workers of America organized thousands of migrant farm workers to fight for fair wages, health care coverage, pension benefits, livable housing, and respect;

Whereas, through his commitment to nonviolence, César Estrada Chávez brought dignity and respect to the organized farm workers and became an inspiration to and a resource for individuals engaged in human rights struggles throughout the world;

Whereas the influence of César Estrada Chávez extends far beyond agriculture and provides inspiration for individuals working to better human rights, empower workers, and advance the American Dream, which includes all inhabitants of the United States;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez died on April 23, 1993, at the age of 66 in San Luis, Arizona, only miles from his birthplace;

Whereas more than 50,000 individuals attended the funeral services of César Estrada Chávez in Delano, California;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez was laid to rest at the headquarters of the United Farm Workers of America, known as ''Nuestra Señora de La Paz'', located in the Tehachapi Mountains in Keene, California;

Whereas, since the death of César Estrada Chávez, schools, parks, streets, libraries, and other public facilities, as well as awards and scholarships, have been named in his honor;

Whereas 10 States and dozens of communities across the United States honor the life and legacy of César Estrada Chávez each year on March 31;

Whereas, during his lifetime, César Estrada Chávez was a recipient of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Prize;

Whereas, on August 8, 1994, César Estrada Chávez was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom;

Whereas President Barack Obama honored the life of service of César Estrada Chávez by proclaiming March 31, 2012, to be ''César Chávez Day'';

Whereas, on October 8, 2012, President Barack Obama authorized the Secretary of the Interior to establish a César Estrada Chávez National Monument in Keene, California; and

Whereas the United States should continue the efforts of César Estrada Chávez to ensure equality, justice, and dignity for all people of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the accomplishments and example of a great hero of the United States, César Estrada Chávez;

(2) pledges to promote the legacy of César Estrada Chávez; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to commemorate the legacy of César Estrada Chávez and to always remember his great rallying cry, ''¡Sí, se puede!'', which is Spanish for ''Yes, we can!''.

SENATE RESOLUTION 105—RECOGNIZING 2017 AS THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CREATION OF THE 41ST DIVISION

Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

S. RES. 105

Whereas the War Department issued General Order No. 95 on July 18, 1917, which formally established the 41st Division within the Army;

Whereas the 41st Division was organized on September 18, 1917, at Camp Greene in North Carolina;

Whereas the 41st Division was originally comprised of National Guard citizen-soldiers from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming and also had members from Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Mexico, and the District of Columbia;

Whereas, during World War I, the 41st Division deployed to the Western Front, providing valuable support both as a training and replacement division;

Whereas the 41st Division demobilized at Camp Dix in New Jersey on February 22,

1919, following the armistice of November 1918;

Whereas the 41st Division was reorganized and Federally recognized on January 3, 1930, with the headquarters of the 41st Division located at Portland, Oregon;

Whereas the 41st Division participated in a set of training exercises in 1937 where Oregon soldiers forded the Nisqually River in western Washington in a daring night crossing;

Whereas, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the 41st Division set up defensive positions along the coastline of the United States from the Canadian border to Camp Clatsop in Oregon;

Whereas the 41st Division was reorganized as the 41st Infantry Division on February 17, 1942, and, by the following May, was one of the first divisions of the Armed Forces to deploy overseas to Australia for jungle and amphibious warfare training;

Whereas the 41st Infantry Division participated in the campaigns in New Guinea and the Philippines, enduring some of the most vicious jungle warfare of any allied force during the war;

Whereas the bloodiest engagement of the 41st Infantry Division occurred on the island of Biak against more than 10,000 determined Japanese troops;

Whereas members of the 41st Infantry Division had been known as ''Sunsetters'' after their unit's setting sun insignia but earned a second nickname, ''the Jungleers'', in recognition of their experience and expertise in jungle warfare following the service of the unit in Biak and across the Pacific Theater;

Whereas the 41st Division was inactivated on December 31, 1945, on the island of Honshu in Japan;

Whereas, in 1968, the Oregonian element of the 41st Infantry Division was reorganized and redesignated as the 41st Infantry Brigade within the Oregon National Guard, transferring the colors and honors of its division predecessor;

Whereas elements of the 41st Infantry Brigade—

(1) deployed to—

(A) Saudi Arabia in 1999 as part of Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia;

(B) the Sinai Peninsula in 2001 in support of the Multinational Force and Observers and Operation Enduring Freedom;

(C) Iraq in 2003 and 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; and

(D) Afghanistan in 2006 in support of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix; and

(2) were activated in 2005 to help provide disaster relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita in Louisiana and Texas, respectively;

Whereas the 41st Infantry Brigade was reorganized and redesignated as the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team on September 1, 2008;

Whereas the entire 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team deployed to Iraq in 2009, marking the first full deployment for the unit since World War II, to provide base and convoy security in support of Operation Noble Eagle and Operation Iraqi Freedom;

Whereas elements of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team deployed to Afghanistan in 2014 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, and the Resolute Support mission led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization;

Whereas the citizen-soldiers of the 41st Division, the 41st Infantry Division, and the 41st Infantry Brigade—

(1) came from a diverse set of backgrounds;

(2) were employed in a wide range of civilian professions;

(3) brought their civilian experience to bear in fulfilling their military duties;

(4) served the United States selflessly; and

(5) fought with bravery and honor across many generations; and

Whereas the citizen-soldiers of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team continue to uphold this tradition, protecting Oregon and serving the United States both at home and abroad through their courage and dedication: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes—

(A) 2017 as the 100th anniversary of the formation of the 41st Division; and

(B) the century of service to the United States by the 41st Division;

(2) expresses gratitude to the many Oregonians and others who served in the 41st Division, the 41st Infantry Division, the 41st Infantry Brigade, and the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team;

(3) honors the memory of the members of the 41st Division, the 41st Infantry Division, the 41st Infantry Brigade, and the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team who have fallen in the line of duty; and

(4) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit an enrolled copy of this resolution to—

(A) General Michael E. Stencel, the Adjutant General of Oregon; and

(B) Lieutenant Colonel Eric Riley, commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

SENATE RESOLUTION 106—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE TO SUPPORT THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF GEORGIA

Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 106

Whereas principle IV of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 states, ''The participating States will respect the territorial integrity of each of the participating States. Accordingly, they will refrain from any action inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations against the territorial integrity, political independence or the unity of any participating State, and in particular from any such action constituting a threat or use of force. . . and participating States will likewise refrain from making each other's territory the object of military occupation.'';

Whereas the Charter of the United Nations states, ''All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.'';

Whereas, since 1993, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia have been reaffirmed by the international community in all United Nations Security Council resolutions on Georgia;

Whereas the Government of Georgia has pursued a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Russia over Georgia's territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia;

Whereas the recognition by the Government of the Russian Federation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia on August 26, 2008, was in violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and contradicting principles of Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the Charter of the United Nations, and the August 12, 2008, Ceasefire Agreement;

Whereas the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, signed on January 9, 2009, underscores that ''support for each other's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders constitutes the foundation of our bilateral relations.'';

Whereas, according to the Government of Georgia's ''State Strategy on Occupied Territories'', the Government of Georgia has committed itself to a policy of peaceful engagement, the protection of economic and human rights, freedom of movement, and the preservation of cultural heritage, language, and identity for the people of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia;

Whereas the August 2008 war between the Russian Federation and Georgia resulted in civilian and military casualties, the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and large numbers of internally displaced persons;

Whereas the annual United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the ''Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia'' recognizes that the right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees and their descendants, regardless of ethnicity, as well as their property rights, remains unfulfilled;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation is building barbed wire fences and installing, so-called ''border signs'' and other artificial barriers along the occupation line and depriving the people residing within the occupied regions and in the adjacent areas of their fundamental rights and freedoms, including, the freedom of movement, family life, education in their native language, and other civil and economic rights;

Whereas the August 12, 2008, Ceasefire Agreement, agreed to by the Governments of the Russian Federation and Georgia—

(1) provides that all troops of the Russian Federation shall be withdrawn to pre-war positions;

(2) provides that free access shall be granted to organizations providing humanitarian assistance in regions affected by the violence in August 2008; and

(3) launched the Geneva International Discussions between Georgia and the Russian Federation;

Whereas, on November 23, 2010, President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili declared before the European Parliament that ''Georgia will never use force to restore its territorial integrity and sovereignty'';

Whereas, on March 7, 2013, the bipartisan Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on Basic Directions of Georgia's Foreign Policy confirmed ''Georgia's commitment for the non-use of force, pledged by the President of Georgia in his address to the international community from the European Parliament in Strasburg on November 23, 2010'';

Whereas, on June 27, 2014, in the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union, Georgia reaffirmed its commitment ''to restore its territorial integrity in pursuit of a peaceful and lasting conflict resolution, of pursuing the full implementation of'' the August 12, 2008, ceasefire agreement;

Whereas, despite the unilateral legally binding commitment to the non-use of force pledged by the Government of Georgia, the Government of the Russian Federation still refuses to reciprocate with its own legally binding non-use of force pledge;

Whereas the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) is still denied access to the occupied regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, despite the fact that its mandate covers the whole territory of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation continues to enhance its military

bases illegally stationed in occupied regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia without the consent of the Government of Georgia or a mandate from the United Nations or other multilateral organizations;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation continues the process of aggression carried out against Georgia since the early 1990s and occupation of Georgia's territories following the August 2008 Russia-Georgia War;

Whereas the March 5, 2017, closure of two crossing points on the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with Abkhazia in the villages of Nabakevi and Otobaia violated fundamental rights to freedom of movement, privacy, and family life, as well as access to education and health care for the local population, contravening commitments to work towards enhanced security and improved living conditions for the conflict-affected population;

Whereas President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin has ordered his government to conclude an agreement to effectively incorporate the military of Georgia's South Ossetia region into the Russian armed forces' command structure, thereby impeding the peace process;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation's policy vis-à-vis Georgia and the alarming developments in the region illustrate that the Government of the Russian Federation does not accept the independent choice of sovereign states and strives for the restoration of zones of influence in the region, including through the use of force, occupation, factual annexation, and other aggressive acts; and

Whereas the United States applied the doctrine of non-recognition in 1940 to the countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and every Presidential administration of the United States honored this doctrine until independence was restored to those countries in 1991: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the policy, popularly known as the ''Stimson Doctrine'', of the United States to not recognize territorial changes effected by force, and affirms that this policy should continue to guide the foreign policy of the United States;

(2) condemns the military intervention and occupation of Georgia by the Russian Federation and its continuous illegal activities along the occupation line in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia;

(3) calls upon the Government of the Russian Federation to withdraw its recognition of Georgia's territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia as independent countries, to refrain from acts and policies that undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and to take steps to fulfill all the terms and conditions of the August 12, 2008, Ceasefire Agreement between Georgia and the Russian Federation;

(4) stresses the necessity of progress on core issues within the Geneva International Discussions, including a legally binding pledge from the Government of the Russian Federation on the non-use of force, the establishment of international security arrangements in the occupied regions of Georgia, and the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their origin;

(5) urges the United States Government to declare unequivocally that the United States will not under any circumstances recognize the de jure or de facto sovereignty of the Russian Federation over any part of Georgia, its airspace, or its territorial waters, including Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia;

(6) urges the President to deepen cooperation with the Government of Georgia in all areas of the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, including Georgia's advancement towards Euro-Atlantic integration;

(7) urges the President to place emphasis on enhancing Georgia's security through joint military training and providing self-defensive capabilities in order to enhance Georgia's independent statehood and national sovereignty; and

(8) affirms that a free, united, democratic, and sovereign Georgia is in the long-term interest of the United States as it promotes peace and stability in the region.

SENATE RESOLUTION 107—CONGRATULATING THE RIFLE TEAM OF WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY ON WINNING THE 2017 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION RIFLE CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. CAPITO (for herself and Mr. MANCHIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 107

Whereas, in 2017, the West Virginia University Mountaineers rifle team (referred to in this preamble as the ''Mountaineers'') completed an undefeated regular season with a record of 12 wins and no losses and won the Great America Rifle Conference championship for the eighth consecutive year;

Whereas, on March 11, 2017, the Mountaineers won the National Collegiate Athletic Association (referred to in this preamble as the ''NCAA'') Rifle Championship;

Whereas the 2017 NCAA Rifle Championship is the fifth consecutive title for the Mountaineers;

Whereas the Mountaineers have now won 19 national championships, securing team NCAA titles in 1983, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017;

Whereas the Mountaineers have won more national championships than any other rifle program in the United States;

Whereas the Mountaineers shot a championship-record 4723 aggregate score at the 2017 NCAA Rifle Championship;

Whereas freshman Milica Babic won the 2017 NCAA air rifle championship;

Whereas freshman Morgan Phillips won the NCAA smallbore title and earned the Top Performer Award of the NCAA Rifle Championship;

Whereas the Mountaineers swept the NCAA individual titles in 2017, the fifth time that shooters from the Mountaineers have swept the individual championships; and

Whereas Head Coach Jon Hammond and all members of the Mountaineers, including Jack Anderson, Will Anti, Milica Babic, Noah Barker, Elizabeth Gratz, Jean-Pierre Lucas, Morgan Phillips, and Ginny Thrasher, completed a record performance to claim the 2017 national title: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate congratulates the West Virginia University rifle team on winning the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Rifle Championship.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I have 7 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 AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 30, 2017, in the President's room, S–216 in the Capitol, in order to vote on the nomination of George ''Sonny'' Perdue, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Agriculture.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 30, 2017, at 9:30 a.m., in open session to consider the nomination of Honorable Heather A. Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 30, 2017, beginning at 9:30 a.m. in Room 366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate in order to hold a hearing on Thursday, March 30, 2017, beginning at 2:30 p.m. in Room 366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

COMMITTEES ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 30, 2017 at 10 a.m., to hold a hearing entitled The Road Ahead: U.S. Interests, Values, and the American People.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet in executive session during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 30, in between votes in S–216, to consider the following: Nomination of Alexander Acosta to serve as Secretary of Labor.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the 115th Congress of the U.S. Senate on Thursday, March 30, 2017 from 10 a.m. for Panel I, and from 2 p.m. for Panel II, in room SD–106 of the Senate Dirksen Office Building to hold open hearings entitled Disinformation: A Primer in Russian Active Measures and Influence Campaigns.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Melissa Rubenstein, a fellow in my office, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of this Congress.

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

CONGRATULATING THE RIFLE TEAM OF WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY ON WINNING THE 2017 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION RIFLE CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 107, submitted earlier today.

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

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 107) congratulating the rifle team of West Virginia University on winning the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Rifle Championship.

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 107) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m. on Monday, April 3; 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.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, APRIL 3, 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 6:17 p.m., adjourned until Monday, April 3, 2017, at 3 p.m.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN HONOR OF THE 2016 NATIONAL DAY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA

HON. PAUL A. GOSAR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to rise today in recognition of the 38th anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). Signed by President Carter on April 10, 1979, the TRA had strong support from Congress and that support remains strong to this day.

One of the most important aspects of our friendship with Taiwan is trade. In 2016, trade between the United States and Taiwan accounted for an estimated $86.9 billion. In addition, Taiwan remains our 10th largest trading partner in the world. Because of this important relationship, an updated U.S.-Taiwan bilateral trade agreement would be an asset to our trade balance, our economic strength, and our strategic partnership with our ally Taiwan. We have had a great relationship with Taiwan over the years and it is my hope, and my expectation, that we will build on our partnership to create even more prosperity for America and Taiwan. I will work with both my colleagues in Congress and the President to move such an agreement to fruition.

There has been—and remains—a unique balance for the United States in dealing with Taiwan, the Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China. We value our relationship with each as major trading partners and key allies in the war on terrorism and violent religious extremism. When Chinese President Xi visits the United States, our nation will welcome him and further our friendship, but we will not waiver in our friendship and strategic support of Taiwan.

The Taiwan Relations Act is a cornerstone of our foreign relations in Asia and we will continue our long-term strategy of defending our allies, making new allies in the region, and promoting peace and prosperity through trade and defense policies.

Mr. Speaker, it's an honor to recognize the anniversary of the TRA and the entrepreneurial spirit of the people of Taiwan.

IN RECOGNITION OF KATHY REDMAN

HON. RON DeSANTIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to honor Ms. Kathy Redman's almost 39 years of distinguished federal service.

On April 1, 2017, Ms. Redman will retire as the Southeast Regional Director for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In her current role, she leads USCIS operations in nine states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands and manages nearly 1,000 employees.

From her humble beginnings as an inspector at JFK airport in New York City, Ms. Redman has become a trusted USCIS employee who has served in posts from New Delhi to Detroit. Over the course of her career, she has naturalized more than 40,000 new Americans.

Ms. Redman's expertise and knowledge of our nation's immigration laws have been an invaluable resource to my office. Ms. Redman and her staff have assisted countless constituents by expediting appointments in time of crisis and resolving complicated applications.

On one memorable occasion, Ms. Redman helped our office expedite a Naturalization ceremony for the spouse of a deploying Air Force officer. It is always a treasured moment when a new American takes the oath of allegiance to support and defend our Constitution.

I wish Ms. Redman all the best as she begins her retirement in our beautiful state of Florida.

CONGRATULATING LETTERKENNY ARMY DEPOT ON ITS 10TH SHINGO MEDALLION AND ITS COMMITMENT TO OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Letterkenny Army Depot in my district on receiving its 10th Shingo Medallion for Operational Excellence.

Shingo Prizes are awarded to organizations that not only provide great results, but also go above and beyond to cultivate a culture of enablers and streamliners in the workplace. The high bar set to achieve the award led Businessweek to dub Shingo Awards the "Nobel Prize of Manufacturing." Letterkenny made history in 2005 when it became the first Army Depot to win a Shingo Institute prize, when the depot was awarded the Silver Medallion.

Eleven years later, Letterkenny Army Depot was just awarded this year's Bronze Medallion for its Patriot launcher new-build program—its 10th medallion in 13 years. This is the first time an Army depot built a new Patriot air and missile defense system major end item, and to have it result in a Shingo Medallion exemplifies Letterkenny Army Depot's deep commitment to manufacturing excellence. With more than 20 years of experience in working with the Patriot missile system, and now 10 Shingo Medallions in the last 13 years, it is clear that Letterkenny is delivering outstanding results and support to our national defense.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to congratulate Letterkenny Army Depot on its 10th Shingo Medallion. This is an outstanding achievement, and I encourage all of my colleagues to celebrate Letterkenny's success as a crucial installation to central Pennsylvania and to the security of our nation.

GUN VIOLENCE RESEARCH LEGISLATION

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to reintroduce legislation to authorize the use of federal funds for long overdue research on firearm safety and gun violence.

For too long, Congress has failed to address the public health crisis caused by gun violence. On average, there are 32,000 deaths and 76,000 injuries from gun violence each year in the United States. Gun deaths now outpace traffic fatalities in our country. It is time to address the epidemic of gun violence and prevent future incidents. Public health research will help identify effective solutions we can implement in order to save lives.

The bill I introduce today, with companion legislation introduced by Sen. ED MARKEY, would authorize $10 million in annual funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through Fiscal Year 2023. This funding will allow the CDC to implement the research agenda outlined in a 2013 report issued by the Institutes of Medicine that identified areas in need of study to better understand the underlying causes of gun violence and develop strategies for prevention.

We have more gun-related deaths than any other developed country, yet we have put prohibitions in place that prevent us from obtaining comprehensive, scientific information about the causes and characteristics of gun violence. This public health crisis cannot be ignored any longer. This legislation addresses the epidemic of gun violence and identifies the best strategies to prevent future incidents.

I'm proud this bill has gained the support of leading groups on gun violence prevention, like Everytown for Gun Safety, and the public health community—including the American Medical Association (AMA). The AMA said "gun violence in the United States is a public health crisis requiring a comprehensive public health response and solution." I could not agree more.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this important legislation that can save lives.

CONGRATULATIONS MINNETONKA BOYS ALPINE TEAM

HON. ERIK PAULSEN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to congratulate the Minnetonka High School Boys Alpine Skiing Team on recently winning the Minnesota High School State Championship.

Led by seniors Sergi Piguillem and Marshall Quist, who finished with combined times of 1:17:98 and 1:21:39, respectively, the Skippers were able to defeat rival Edina 166–151.

This is Minnetonka High School's fifth alpine skiing title in their program's history, which illustrates these athletes' dedication to the pursuit of excellence on the slopes and in the classroom. Their state championship title is a testament to their passion and love for the sport, and commitment in putting their best effort forward in all that they do.

Congratulations to head coach Dave Gartner, the parents, and every member of the Minnetonka Alpine Skiing Team on your impressive victory. Our community is proud of you for being tremendous student athletes. Go Skippers.

RECOGNITION OF GOLDEN APPLE AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. FRANCIS ROONEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank our outstanding teachers of Collier County, Florida, and to recognize their hard work and dedication to our community.

Teaching may be the most challenging, yet most important, profession in our country. Teachers inspire, mentor, and motivate our children to succeed. Every one of us undoubtedly has had a teacher in our life that shaped us into who we are today. We are deeply thankful for our dedicated teachers who so greatly impact our young people and the future of our communities.

I want to congratulate the following teachers who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, and who will be recognized at the annual Golden Apple Celebration of Teachers Dinner tomorrow night. Myra Janco Daniels will be awarded the Heart of the Apple for her devotion to education. Joanna Campanile, Anne Fredette, Ashley Lynn Heirls, Maria LaRocco, Janell Matos, Amanda McCoy and Stacy Smith are recipients of the Golden Apple. Tara Barr, Staci Haralson Barretta, Steven Becker, Brandon Carter, Kristin Downs, Susan Ellard, Staci Fisher, Sabrina Kovacs, John Krupp, Veronica Mamone, Kyle Manders, Kristin Merrill, Joseph Merrill, Dawn Peck, Lindsey Sebela, Christina Svec, Aaron Thayer, Marisa Vessella and Amity Wyss were named Teachers of Distinction.

These teachers truly make a difference in their students' lives and I am thankful for the positive impact they have on our community.

HONORING THE LIFE OF BELOVED SHELBY ANN CARTER

HON. DARIN LaHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. LAHOOD Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Shelby Ann Carter, a loving mother, daughter, fiancée, and friend.

In Wyoming, Illinois, our community sadly experienced a tragic loss of a young woman's life on January 30, 2017. Shelby Ann Carter passed away from smoke inhalation during a fire which consumed her home. Shelby's final moments were spent in a successful effort to save the life of her baby girl.

In the midst of the fire, Shelby had the strength to save the life of her newly born daughter, Keana. Shelby acted heroically by strapping Keana into a car seat and dropping her out of the second story window, an act which ultimately saved her child's life. Strapped in the car seat, Keana safely landed in a pile of debris, where the emergency response teams found her. Keana was then rushed to the hospital and released with only a small burn, but otherwise unharmed.

Shelby graduated from Stark County High School in 2014. She was a bright student, who spent her time after school playing basketball. Shelby's classmates characterized her as a smart and friendly young woman who loved spending time with children. Her proudest moment was when she became a mother to Keana.

Shelby will always be in the hearts and minds of her community and friends throughout Central Illinois. I would like to commend her courageous actions and send my condolences to her friends and family. May God bless her in heaven.

RECOGNITION OF GRANDVIEW HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Grandview High School Girls-Basketball team, from Grandview High School in Aurora, Colorado. The Wolves triumphed in their 61–32 victory over Lakewood High School in the Colorado 5A state championship game.

Grandview finished the season with an impressive 27–1 record, and celebrated the culmination of their season with the first girls-basketball state championship win for their school.

Senior Michaela Onyenwere walked off the court with the game-high 25 points and eight rebounds.

During their performances in the state championship game, the Grandview Wolves proved that with hard work, dedication, and perseverance anything is possible. The team was led to the championship title through the committed leadership of their coach, Josh Ulitzky, and his commendable staff.

Again, congratulations to the Grandview High School Girls-Basketball Team on their continued success, and for their victory in the Colorado's 5A State Championship.

OKAWVILLE HIGH SCHOOL 2016–17 BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the Okawville High School boys' basketball team upon finishing second in the 2016–2017 Illinois State Class 1A Basketball Tournament. This is a remarkable achievement for the Okawville coaches, teammates, and community as a whole.

The Okawville Rockets had an impressive year and an exciting tournament performance. The Rockets finished the regular season with a win-loss record of 32–4. By the end of the year, senior Noah Frederking led Okawville with the most rebounds in school history. Mr. Frederking also scored over 2800 points over the course of his high school career, making him the leading all-time scorer for Okawville and the entire Metro East area. The Rockets went on to win their regional games against Lebanon High School and Marissa High School. The Rockets followed that win by hosting two victories over New Berlin 'High School and Carrollton High School in their sectional games.

In their state super-sectional game, the Rockets faced off against Menden Unity High School. After falling behind by 8 points before halftime, the Rockets looked to their defense to carry their comeback. The Rockets did not allow Menden Unity to score a single basket from the floor throughout the entire second half of the game, and rallied for an incredible win to take them to the championship game.

Led by Head Coach Jon Kraus and Assistant Coaches Ryan Heck, Mike Frederking, and Jackie Smith, team members were Payten Harre, Josh Madrid, Caleb Frederking, Will Aubel, Logan Riechmann, Wyatt Krohne, Luke Hensler, Shane Ganz, Drew Frederking, Noah Frederking, Tyler Roesener, Payton Riechmann, Lane Schilling, and Kirklen Meier. Managers Max Aubel and Jarad Barnes also assisted the team throughout its season and playoff run.

I look forward to watching their future successes in both their academic and athletic pursuits and wish them all the best in these endeavors.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Okawville Rockets on an impressive season, and I commend them for making the 15th district of Illinois proud.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE DOWNRIVER COMMUNITY CONFERENCE ON THE DATE OF ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Downriver Community Conference on the date of its 40th Anniversary. The DCC has provided workforce training and job resources to Downriver for decades and has been instrumental in improving the quality of life for the area's residents.

Founded in 1977, the Downriver Community Conference is an organization dedicated to promoting enhanced economic growth and well-being through its workforce training, economic development and additional community services available to southern Wayne County and its residents. The DCC has been key to helping increase the quality of life while working to preserve jobs and attract a skilled workforce through its efforts. In 2003, the DCC successfully supported a proposed takeover of

Great Lakes Steel operations in Ecorse and River Rouge, a move that saved hundreds of jobs in the community. The DCC also coordinates emergency services across member communities, and has supported cleanup efforts at the Detroit International Wildlife Refuge. These multifaceted operations undertaken by the DCC have been critical to attracting a talented workforce to the area while making southern Wayne County a desirable place to live.

The DCC has proven to be an effective advocate on behalf of Downriver, and its work has produced tangible results that make a real difference in the lives of individuals in participating communities. Through its affiliation with Michigan Works!, the organization has been critical to helping provide individuals with the skills they need to succeed in trades and other in-demand fields. Additionally, the organization's coordinated approach makes it eligible for federal and state grants that would normally be unavailable to individual communities. The DCC's ability to leverage the unique strengths of the Downriver community has made it a model in effective and sustainable workforce and community development efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the Downriver Community Conference and date of its 40th Anniversary Dinner. The organization has played an integral role in the growth and development of southern Wayne County and the surrounding areas.

FIRST RESPONDER APPRECIATION DAY

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the inaugural First Responder Appreciation Day on April 1, 2017, in Ripon, California.

Policemen, firefighters, and emergency medical servicemen play a crucial role in our local communities. In Ripon, they work diligently to serve the city and surrounding areas, improving the lives of those they have vowed to protect. Their job is not always easy and often not safe, but it is one they selflessly perform nonetheless. For this reason, First Responders deserve our unwavering recognition.

The Ripon City Council acknowledged this on November 8, 2016, when they passed a resolution to establish the first Saturday in April of each year as First Responders Appreciation Day. Dedicated to honoring all First Responders, past and present, this annual celebration serves as a reminder that we must not forget those who keep us safe.

I applaud the City of Ripon for honoring our local heroes and their incredible service. This Saturday is the first of many celebrations that will focus on the daily sacrifices performed by these brave men and women.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring all First Responders and commending the city of Ripon for implementing First Responders Appreciation Day.

SMITHSONIAN WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM ACT

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, as we conclude Women's History Month, I am pleased to introduce the Smithsonian Women's History Museum Act along with Rep. ED ROYCE and 128 bipartisan cosponsors.

In November 2016, a bipartisan commission that was created through a bill I authored submitted its recommendations to Congress about establishing a women's history museum in our nation's capital. The Commission unanimously said in its report that the U.S. needs and deserves such a museum to properly tell our whole history. In fact, in the entire country, there is no comprehensive museum solely devoted to women's history. Women make up half the population, but are only depicted in about 10 percent of history book material, about 5 percent of national monuments and a fraction of the hundreds of statues on Capitol grounds. By not telling or preserving the stories of women who shaped our country, we are in danger of losing them completely. And that would be a great loss to us all.

This bill has been decades in the making and it is based on the excellent American Museum of Women's History Congressional Commission final report, which was the result of 18 months of thorough study. The bill would establish a Smithsonian museum dedicated to women's history prominently located on the National Mall. It calls for the Smithsonian Board of Regents to designate a site for the museum within six months of enactment, and the cost of construction would be raised privately. The museum will be governed by a 25-member Advisory Council appointed by the Board of Regents.

I am honored that so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have joined me in this historic effort because honoring women's history should not be a partisan issue. All Americans—men and women of all ages—deserve to learn and be inspired by the stories of the women who contributed to our country's history.

I am always struck by the story of Sybil Ludington. Everyone has heard of Paul Revere's ride, but few know that Ludington, the daughter of a colonel in the Continental Army, was just a 16 year old girl when she rode through the night an even greater distance than Revere to warn her father's troops about the approaching British forces.

I have worked on this issue for many years and believe that establishing a women's history museum on the National Mall is long overdue. I hope that all of my colleagues will join me in this important effort to create an enduring tribute to women's history for generations to come.

HONORING FRANK BARBARO

HON. J. LUIS CORREA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take a few moments today to honor one my constituents, Mr. Frank Barbaro, for his decades of incredible service to Orange County.

Mr. Barbaro was born in Detroit, Michigan and arrived in California in 1954. From a young age, it was clear that Mr. Barbaro was bound to be successful. By the time he was a teenager, Frank hosted his own radio show which aimed to find employment opportunities for young people.

After graduating from Garden Grove High School, Mr. Barbaro went on to graduate magna cum laude from the University of Southern California and then earn his law degree, also from USC.

As a lawyer, Mr. Barbaro distinguished himself among his peers in several noteworthy cases. Mr. Barbaro won 11 multimillion dollar verdicts for his clients.

Mr. Barbaro began his career in politics in 1977 as Chair of the Democratic Party of California. In 2001, Mr. Barbaro was asked by his colleagues to serve as chair once again which he did until his resignation in 2013. Mr. Barbaro also served as the chair for the Orange County campaigns of President Carter and President Obama.

During his time as party chair and successful attorney, Frank's colleagues praised his ability to inspire and work with others. Above all, Mr. Barbaro sought to be inclusive and bring people together despite their differences.

Mr. Barbaro also made helping others a personal goal, such as when he organized the ''Front Line Defense Fund'' which delivered food to the United Food and Commercial workers during their strike.

Mr. Speaker, Frank Barbaro is an example to all of us of the tremendous importance of hard work and dedication in service to others. I am honored to recognize the accomplishments of Mr. Barbaro and the positive impact he has made on Orange County.

CONGRATULATING ANDERS BJORK ON BEING NAMED A FINALIST FOR THE HOCKEY HUMANITARIAN AWARD

HON. JACKIE WALORSKI

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Anders Bjork, a junior at the University of Notre Dame, on being named one of five finalists for the 2017 Hockey Humanitarian Award.

Each year, the Hockey Humanitarian Award recognizes college hockey's ''finest citizen.'' Recipients of this award are individuals who have made significant, long-lasting contributions to their communities in a true, humanitarian spirit.

Anders has been a member of the Fighting Irish Men's Hockey team since his freshman year at Notre Dame. But for Anders, his life here in South Bend is about more than being a student athlete. He is part of this community and plays an integral role in making it better. His dedication is especially clear in his experience working with children in need at a local elementary school.

Shortly before last season started, Anders began volunteering in a third grade class at Perley Fine Arts Academy after his coach encouraged the team to meet new community

service goals. Anders' weekly trips to the elementary school quickly became much more than a way to fulfill a coach's request. He built deep relationships with the students and became a regular fixture in the classroom. He even has his own desk.

The bond forged between the young kids and Anders was not hard to see. Anders found a way to fit in not only with the classroom dynamic but also with the individual students. For the Perley students Anders is a mentor, a role model, and a friend. Through Anders' uplifting spirit and kind heart, these third graders are able to open up to and really learn from him.

His incredible commitment of time and talent and his positive impact on these kids is an inspiration to us all. I am so proud of Anders for this much deserved recognition as a finalist for the Hockey Humanitarian Award.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Indiana's 2nd District, I want to thank Anders Bjork for providing the wonderful support and encouragement I'm sure will stay with these children for years to come. He has truly left a mark on the South Bend community, and I look forward to the great things that lie ahead in his future.

TRIBUTE TO PAT HENSLEY

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Pat Hensley of Council Bluffs, Iowa, on his retirement from Hy-Vee food store after 38 dedicated years of service.

Pat has worked for Hy-Vee since 1979, when he began a part-time job at a local store. Early on, Hy-Vee recognized his leadership skills, and over the years trusted him in a number of positions, from managing stores, overseeing the company's western district, helping to lead the government relations department, and finishing his career serving as senior vice president, non-foods. Over his 38–year career Pat's goal was to ensure, as the commercials said, that there was a helpful smile in every aisle, and that Hy-Vee was an enjoyable environment for customers and employees alike. Pat is leaving behind a legacy of dedication and hard work after decades of service to one of Iowa's premier companies.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Pat today for his outstanding career at Hy-Vee. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Pat on this momentous occasion and in wishing him and his family nothing but the best in his retirement.

CONGRATS MINNETONKA BOYS SWIMMING TEAM

HON. ERIK PAULSEN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Minnetonka Boys High School Swimming Team on winning the Minnesota Swim and Dive High School State Championship.

After finishing second in the state the past two years, the Skippers were determined to claim the top spot this year. Led by senior Sam Schilling, Minnetonka dominated the competition by winning many of the events and breaking multiple state records along the way too. They even set the National Public High School 200–yard medley relay record, coming in at 1:29:20, a few tenths faster than the previous record set in Indiana earlier this season.

The championship victory earned by the boys on the Minnetonka High School swim team is a testament to their unwavering commitment to hard work and excellence.

Mr. Speaker, Your families, friends, and our entire community are very proud of each and every one of these outstanding student athletes. Congratulations.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ''INVESTING IN AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESSES ACT OF 2017''

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, this week is National Small Business Week, a time each year for our nation to recognize and celebrate the critical contributions of America's entrepreneurs and small business owners.

I am pleased to support our nation's small businesses by introducing the Investing in America's Small Businesses Act of 2017. This important legislation allows Community Development Financial Institutions, known as CDFIs, to extend affordable credit to more small businesses in underserved communities through microloans. These small loans, under $50,000, give businesses working capital, help them invest in new equipment or supplies, and have no pre-payment penalties.

I'm proud that the Investing in America's Small Businesses Act has gained the endorsements of the CDFI Coalition, the Opportunity Finance Network and the National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions, the national voices for these community-based institutions.

The bill provides grants for CDFIs to establish loan-loss reserve funds for microloans, which will help CDFIs leverage private investment to expand small business lending in underserved communities.

Small businesses are critical engines of economic development and job creation. In underserved communities, however, small businesses with low-income and minority owners often have limited access to affordable credit they need to meet everyday demands or expand their operations. According to a study commissioned by the U.S. Small Business Administration in 2013, ''the major constraint limiting the growth, expansion, and wealth creation of small firms—especially women- and minority-owned businesses—is inadequate capital.''

Community Development Financial Institutions serve exactly these communities—with great success and economic benefit. In fact, a 2014 report by the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia found that despite serving predominately low-income markets, CDFI banks and credit unions had virtually the same level of performance as mainstream financial institutions. Despite this demonstrated success, CDFIs often lack the capital to meet the needs of many promising small businesses.

In FY 2016 the total funding from applications to the CDFI Fund was four times greater than the resources available. Private sector investments are not enough to address the significant need for small business credit in underserved communities. CDFIs need access to capital now more than ever. Research shows that minority and low income-owned businesses typically encounter higher borrowing costs, receive smaller loans and see their loan applications rejected more often. The CDFI Fund is well-placed to provide struggling small businesses and entrepreneurs in underserved communities access to affordable credit through microloans.

Let's give small businesses in underserved areas the tools they need to create jobs and develop their communities. I am pleased to introduce this bill, and urge my colleagues to join in support.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S2119–S2157

Measures Introduced: Twenty-six bills and five resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 775–800, S.J. Res. 39, and S. Res. 104–107. **Page S2152**

Measures Reported:

Special Report entitled ''Legislative and Oversight Activities During the 114th Congress by the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs''. (S. Rept. No. 115–17)

Special Report entitled ''Report on the Legislative Activities of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation During the 114th Congress''. (S. Rept. No. 115–18)

Special Report entitled ''Report on the Activities of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary During the 114th Congress''. (S. Rept. No. 115–19)

Special Report entitled ''Review of Legislative Activity During the 114th Congress''. (S. Rept. No. 115–20)

Special Report entitled ''Legislative Activities Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourteenth Congress''. (S. Rept. No. 115–22)

S. 110, to require the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to establish a constituent-driven program to provide a digital information platform capable of efficiently integrating coastal data with decision-support tools, training, and best practices and to support collection of priority coastal geospatial data to inform and improve local, State, regional, and Federal capacities to manage the coastal region. (S. Rept. No. 115–14)

S. 129, to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act. (S. Rept. No. 115–15)

S. 168, to amend and enhance certain maritime programs of the Department of Transportation. (S. Rept. No. 115–16)

S. 141, to improve understanding and forecasting of space weather events, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. (S. Rept. No. 115–21)

Page S2151

Measures Passed:

***Savings Arrangements Established by Qualified State Political Subdivisions for Non-Governmental Employees Rule*:** By 50 yeas to 49 nays (Vote No. 99), Senate passed H.J. Res. 67, disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees. **Pages S2121–22**

Health and Human Services Relating to Compliance with Title X Requirements Rule: By 51 yeas to 50 nays, Vice President voting yea (Vote No. 101), Senate passed H.J. Res. 43, providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients. **Pages S2122–38**

During consideration of this measure today, Senate also took the following action:

By 51 yeas to 50 nays, Vice President voting yea (Vote No. 100), Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to consideration of the joint resolution.

Page S2122

National Collegiate Athletic Association Rifle Championship: Senate agreed to S. Res. 107, congratulating the rifle team of West Virginia University on winning the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Rifle Championship. **Page S2157**

Delta Queen—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that following Leader remarks on Monday, April 3, 2017, Senate begin consideration of S. 89, to amend title 46, United States Code, to exempt old vessels that only operate within inland waterways from the fire-retardant materials requirement if the owners of such vessels make annual structural alterations to at least 10 percent of the areas of the vessels that are not constructed of fire-retardant materials, with the time until 5:30 p.m. equally divided in the usual form, and that following the use or yielding back of time, Senate vote on passage, with no intervening action or debate. **Page S2138**

Duke Nomination—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that following the vote on passage of S. 89, to amend title 46, United States Code, to exempt old vessels that only operate within inland waterways from the fire-retardant materials requirement if the owners of such vessels make annual structural alterations to at least 10 percent of the areas of the vessels that are not constructed of fire-retardant materials, Senate begin consideration of the nomination of Elaine C. Duke, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security; and that at a time to be determined by the Majority Leader, with concurrence of the Democratic Leader, on Tuesday, April 4, 2017, Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination. **Page S2138**

Messages from the House: **Page S2151**

Measures Referred: **Page S2151**

Enrolled Bills Presented: **Page S2151**

Executive Reports of Committees: **Pages S2151–52**

Additional Cosponsors: **Page S2153**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S2153–56**

Additional Statements: **Pages S2149–51**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Page S2156**

Privileges of the Floor: **Pages S2156–57**

Record Votes: Three record votes were taken today. (Total—101) **Pages S2122, S2138**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 9:30 a.m. and adjourned at 6:17 p.m., until 3 p.m. on Monday, April 3, 2017. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S2157.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry: Committee ordered favorably reported the nomination of Sonny Perdue, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Agriculture.

NOMINATION

Committee on Armed Services: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nomination of Heather Wilson, of South Dakota, to be Secretary of the Air Force, Department of Defense, after the nominee, who was introduced by Senators Thune and Rounds, testified and answered questions in her own behalf.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Committee ordered favorably reported the following business items:

S. 35, to transfer administrative jurisdiction over certain Bureau of Land Management land from the Secretary of the Interior to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for inclusion in the Black Hills National Cemetery, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 55/H.R. 46, bills to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Ontario in the State of New York, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 97, to enable civilian research and development of advanced nuclear energy technologies by private and public institutions, to expand theoretical and practical knowledge of nuclear physics, chemistry, and materials science;

S. 99, to require the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the President James K. Polk Home in Columbia, Tennessee, as a unit of the National Park System;

S. 117, to designate a mountain peak in the State of Montana as "Alex Diekmann Peak", with an amendment;

S. 131, to provide for the exchange of certain National Forest System land and non-Federal land in the State of Alaska, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 167, to designate a National Memorial to Fallen Educators at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, Kansas, with an amendment;

S. 189, to modify the boundary of the Fort Scott National Historic Site in the State of Kansas, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 190, to provide for consideration of the extension under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act of nonapplication of No-Load Mode energy efficiency standards to certain security or life safety alarms or surveillance systems;

S. 199, to authorize the use of the active capacity of the Fontenelle Reservoir;

S. 213, to designate the wilderness within the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in the State of Alaska as the Jay S. Hammond Wilderness Area;

S. 214, to authorize the expansion of an existing hydroelectric project;

S. 215, to authorize the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to issue an order continuing a stay of a hydroelectric license for the Mahoney Lake hydroelectric project in the State of Alaska;

S. 216, to require the Secretary of the Interior to submit to Congress a report on the efforts of the Bureau of Reclamation to manage its infrastructure assets;

S. 217, to amend the Denali National Park Improvement Act to clarify certain provisions relating to the natural gas pipeline authorized in the Denali National Park and Preserve;

S. 225/H.R. 699, bills to amend the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 to modify provisions relating to certain land exchanges in the Mt. Hood Wilderness in the State of Oregon;

S. 226, to exclude power supply circuits, drivers, and devices to be connected to, and power, light-emitting diodes or organic light-emitting diodes providing illumination or ceiling fans using direct current motors from energy conservation standards for external power supplies;

S. 239, to amend the National Energy Conservation Policy Act to encourage the increased use of performance contracting in Federal facilities;

S. 267, to provide for the correction of a survey of certain land in the State of Alaska;

S. 280/H.R. 618, bills to authorize, direct, expedite, and facilitate a land exchange in El Paso and Teller Counties, Colorado;

S. 285/H.R. 689, bills to ensure adequate use and access to the existing Bolts Ditch headgate and ditch segment within the Holy Cross Wilderness in Eagle County, Colorado;

S. 286/H.R. 698, bills to require a land conveyance involving the Elkhorn Ranch and the White River National Forest in the State of Colorado;

S. 287, to update the map of, and modify the maximum acreage available for inclusion in, the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument;

S. 289/H.R. 688, bills to adjust the boundary of the Arapaho National Forest, Colorado;

S. 331, to remove the use restrictions on certain land transferred to Rockingham County, Virginia;

S. 346, to provide for the establishment of the National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring System, with an amendment;

S. 363, to revise the authorized route of the North Country National Scenic Trail in northeastern Minnesota and to extend the trail into Vermont to connect with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail;

S. 385, to promote energy savings in residential buildings and industry;

S. 392, to establish the 400 years of African-American History Commission;

S. 432, to designate the Cerro del Yuta and Rio San Antonio Wilderness Areas in the State of New Mexico;

S. 466, to clarify the description of certain Federal land under the Northern Arizona Land Exchange and Verde River Basin Partnership Act of 2005 to include additional land in the Kaibab National Forest;

S. 490, to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving the Gibson Dam, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 491, to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Clark Canyon Dam, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 501, 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;

S. 502, to modify the boundary of Voyageurs National Park in the State of Minnesota;

S. 508, to provide for the conveyance of certain Federal land in the State of Oregon;

S. 513, to designate the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area in the State of Oregon;

S. 566, to withdraw certain land in Okanogan County, Washington, to protect the land;

S. 590, to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to maintain or replace certain facilities and structures for commercial recreation services at Smith Gulch in Idaho;

S. 617, to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain segments of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook in the State of Connecticut as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;

S. 644, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Medgar Evers House, located in Jackson, Mississippi, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 703, to extend the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to carry out the Equus Beds Division of the Wichita Project;

S. 710, to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Jennings Randolph Dam, with an amendment;

S. 713, to establish the Mountains to Sound Greenway National Heritage Area in the State of Washington, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 714, to amend Public Law 103–434 to authorize Phase III of the Yakima River Basin Water Basin Water Enhancement Project for the purposes of improving water management in the Yakima River basin;

S. 723, to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project, with an amendment;

S. 724, to amend the Federal Power Act to modernize authorizations for necessary hydropower approvals;

S. 729, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire approximately 44 acres of land in Martinez, California, for inclusion in the John Muir National Historic Site;

S. 730, to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of certain hydroelectric projects;

S. 733, to protect and enhance opportunities for recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting;

S. 734, to extend a project of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission involving the Cannonsville Dam, with an amendment;

H.R. 88, to modify the boundary of the Shiloh National Military Park located in Tennessee and Mississippi, to establish Parker's Crossroads Battlefield as an affiliated area of the National Park System, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

H.R. 267, to redesignate the Martin Luther King, Junior, National Historic Site in the State of Georgia;

H.R. 381, to designate a mountain in the John Muir Wilderness of the Sierra National Forest as "Sky Point";

H.R. 494, to expand the boundary of Fort Frederica National Monument in the State of Georgia, with an amendment;

H.R. 538, to redesignate Ocmulgee National Monument in the State of Georgia and revise its boundary, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

H.R. 558, to adjust the boundary of the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park to include the Wallis House and Harriston Hill, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

H.R. 560, to amend the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Improvement Act to provide access to certain vehicles serving residents of municipalities adjacent to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area; and

H.R. 863, to facilitate the addition of park administration at the Coltsville National Historical Park.

Also, committee announced the following subcommittee assignments:

Subcommittee on Energy: Senators Gardner (Chair), Risch, Flake, Daines, Alexander, Hoeven, Cassidy, Portman, Strange, Manchin, Wyden, Sanders, Franken, Heinrich, King, Duckworth, and Cortez Masto.

Subcommittee on National Parks: Senators Daines (Chair), Barrasso, Lee, Gardner, Alexander, Hoeven, Portman, Hirono, Sanders, Stabenow, Heinrich, King, and Duckworth.

Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining: Senators Lee (Chair), Barrasso, Risch, Flake, Daines, Gardner, Alexander, Hoeven, Cassidy, Strange, Wyden, Stabenow, Franken, Manchin, Heinrich, Hirono, and Cortez Masto.

Subcommittee on Water and Power: Senators Flake (Chair), Barrasso, Risch, Lee, Cassidy, Portman, Strange, King, Wyden, Sanders, Franken, Manchin, and Duckworth.

Senators Murkowski and Cantwell are ex officio members of each subcommittee.

ALASKAN INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND JOB CREATION

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the potential for infrastructure improvements to create jobs and reduce the cost of living through all-of-the-above energy and mineral production in Alaska, after receiving testimony from Steven Masterman, Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys State Geologist and Director, Fairbanks; Deputy Mayor Robert Potrzuski, Sitka, Alaska; Joy Baker, Port of Nome, Nome, Alaska; Kara Moriarty, Alaska Oil and Gas Association, and Chris Rose, Renewable Energy Alaska Project, both of Anchorage; and Della Trumble, King Cove Village Corporation, King Cove, Alaska.

U.S. INTERESTS, VALUES, AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee concluded a hearing to examine United States interests, values, and the American people, after receiving testimony from Madeleine K. Albright, former Secretary of State, and Stephen J. Hadley, former U.S. National Security Advisor, both of Washington, D.C.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee ordered favorably reported the nomination of R. Alexander Acosta, of Florida, to be Secretary of Labor.

RUSSIAN ACTIVE MEASURES AND INFLUENCE CAMPAIGNS

Select Committee on Intelligence: Committee concluded a hearing to examine disinformation, focusing on a primer in Russian active measures and influence campaigns, after receiving testimony from Roy Godson, Georgetown University; Eugene Rumer, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Russia and Eurasia Program; Clint Watts, Foreign Policy Research Institute Program on National Security; Kevin Mandia, FireEye, Inc.; General Keith Alexander (Ret.), former Director, National Security Agency, and Chief, Central Security Service, IronNet Cybersecurity; and Thomas Rid, King's College London Department of War Studies.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 49 public bills, H.R. 19, 1800–1847; and 5 resolutions, H. Res. 234–238, were introduced. **Pages H2596–99**

Additional Cosponsors: **Page H2601**

Reports Filed: Reports were filed today as follows:

H.R. 732, to limit donations made pursuant to settlement agreements to which the United States is a party, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 115–72); and

H. Res. 186, resolution of inquiry directing the Secretary of the Treasury to provide to the House of Representatives the tax returns and other specified financial information of President Donald J. Trump; adversely (H. Rept. 115–73). **Page H2596**

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Foxx to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H2563**

EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017: The House passed H.R. 1431, to amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 to provide for Scientific Advisory Board member qualifications and public participation, by a recorded vote of 229 ayes to 193 noes, Roll No. 208. **Pages H2564–76**

Rejected the Foster motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with amendments, by a yea-and-nay vote of 189 yeas to 233 nays, Roll No. 207. **Pages H2573–75**

H. Res. 233, the rule providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1431) was agreed to yesterday, March 29th.

Meeting Hour: Agreed by unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12 noon on Monday, April 3rd for Morning Hour debate. **Page H2577**

Senate Message: Message received from the Senate today appears on page H2585.

Quorum Calls—Votes: One yea-and-nay vote and one recorded vote developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H2574–75, H2575–76. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 9 a.m. and adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Committee Meetings

THE CURRENT STATE OF U.S. TRANSPORTATION COMMAND

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Readiness; and Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces held a joint hearing entitled "The Current State of U.S. Transportation Command". Testimony was heard from General Darren W. McDew, Commander, Transportation Command, U.S. Air Force.

CONSEQUENCES AND CONTEXT FOR RUSSIA'S VIOLATIONS OF THE INF TREATY

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Strategic Forces; and Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade of the Committee on Foreign Affairs held a joint hearing entitled "Consequences and Context for Russia's Violations of the INF Treaty". Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

LEGISLATIVE MEASURE

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice held a hearing on H.R. 1689, the "Private Property Rights Protection Act". Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

SBA'S ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: RESOURCES TO ASSIST SMALL BUSINESSES

Committee on Small Business: Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce held a hearing entitled "SBA's Entrepreneurial Development Programs: Resources to Assist Small Businesses". Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

NEW PUBLIC LAWS

(For last listing of Public Laws, see DAILY DIGEST, *p. D355)*

S. 305, to amend title 4, United States Code, to encourage the display of the flag of the United States on National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Signed on March 28, 2017. (Public Law 115–15)

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on the Judiciary: business meeting to consider the nominations of Neil M. Gorsuch, of Colorado, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and Rod J. Rosenstein, of Maryland, to be Deputy Attorney General, and Rachel L. Brand, of Iowa, to be Associate Attorney General, both of the Department of Justice, 10 a.m., SH–216.

House

No hearings are scheduled.

Next Meeting of the **SENATE**

3 p.m., Monday, April 3

Senate Chamber

Program for Monday: Senate will begin consideration of S. 89, Delta Queen, and vote on passage of the bill at approximately 5:30 p.m.

Following disposition of S. 89, Senate will begin consideration of the nomination of Elaine C. Duke, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

Next Meeting of the **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

12 p.m., Monday, April 3

House Chamber

Program for Monday: To be announced.

Extensions of Remarks, as inserted in this issue

HOUSE

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