

been one of the most productive Senate years in a long time," he said. "The Republican Senate majority is making a real difference, particularly [for] 100,000 public schools, [for] 3.5 million teachers, and [for] 50 million children."

But perhaps the American people are wondering why. Perhaps they are wondering why the Senate is suddenly back to work this year. Perhaps they are wondering why some issues are suddenly passing now when they weren't passing previously. Let me turn back to the rest of what Senator ALEXANDER said, because I think the answer for a bill like ESSA is really quite simple. "We're doing it," he said, "by working in a bipartisan way with our colleagues, which is, I think, the way the American people want us to govern."

Here is the idea. Give Senators of both parties more of a say in the process, and Senators of both parties are likely to take more of a stake in the outcome. That is why, on this bill, we saw a more open process that started way back in the committee stage. Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY, the top Republican and the top Democrat on the education committee, understood that No Child Left Behind had to be fixed after years of inaction. So they worked together on a bipartisan basis, and the Senate passed the most significant K-12 education reform in years.

Take another example. Senator INHOFE and Senator BOXER, the top Republican and top Democrat on the public works committee, understood that crumbling roads and bridges had to be fixed after years of inaction. So they worked together on a bipartisan basis, and the Senate passed the first long-term transportation bill in a decade.

How about this one: Senator BARR and Senator FEINSTEIN, the top Republican and top Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, understood that Americans' online privacy and financial transactions deserved some protection after years of inaction. So they worked together on a bipartisan basis, and the Senate passed an important cyber security bill.

Across the new Congress, we saw several other stuck issues come unstuck too: a decisive end to Washington's annual doc fix drama, strong action to help knock down foreign trade barriers, and extending a hand of compassion to victims of modern slavery. All of it passed in the new Congress, and all of it passed on a bipartisan basis.

Now, let me be clear. No one is saying that all of the Senate's challenges have been ironed out. Of course we know that our work is ongoing. Of course we know there will always be bumps along the way.

But here is what we can say for sure. The new Senate has taken serious steps to foster a more open atmosphere on many issues. The new Senate has seen real progress made for our country, often on a bipartisan basis, and we are proud of that. We are proud of that. Whether we are Republican or Demo-

crat, I think that is something we can all take pride in as Americans.

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.

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

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

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

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

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today to highlight the positive change our new Republican majority has brought to the U.S. Senate in 2015.

As a first-year Senator—and I will remind everybody that I spent a lot of time on the other side of the Capitol observing the Senate—I came to the body looking to improve this institution that for far too long was not working for American families. Not only did the Senate fail to pass legislation that would help our seniors, students, and workers, it failed to even debate critical issues. Looking from the House side across the hall in the Capitol, we really couldn't understand that.

In 2014 the Senate only voted on 15 amendments. This year, under new leadership, we have taken hundreds of amendment votes and committees are hard at work. We debated issues, clearly stated our policy priorities, and broke the gridlock that defined the previous Congress.

Allowing Senators from both sides of the aisle to offer amendments, participate in the process, and take votes is the best way to achieve bipartisan legislation. It is common sense. Isn't that the way it is supposed to be? It is kind of how I thought it should be, and I am glad to know that this year, that is what we are doing. Working together is the only way to enact policies that will improve the lives of the American people.

The new Senate work has borne tremendous fruit, particularly in the past week. We passed the first major overhaul of elementary and secondary education in more than a decade, and the President is poised to sign this into law. Eighty-five Senators voted for it; that is a big bipartisan majority.

The Every Student Succeeds Act strikes the proper balance between flexibility and accountability. The bill ends education waivers and the Federal common core mandate that had turned Washington bureaucrats into basically a national school board. No one cares more about a student's success than a child's parents and their teachers, and those closest to our children should be the ones empowered to make those de-

isions. At the same time, accountability matters.

I have three children who went through the school system, and testing done properly is a good thing. A parent wants to know where their child stands. We want to know what their weaknesses and successes are, and we want to know where the school stands. But under this bill, States will have multiple measures of student achievement, not just testing. Test results will just be a part of that evaluation, and States will have broad discretion to measure other factors. High schools will now report on the rate of graduates going on to higher education. Whether graduates are prepared to continue education is, in my view, an important measure of success.

This bill also recognizes the importance of technology and education, not just in the classroom but also at home. It includes language that Senator KING and I introduced to study the homework gap. Students who lack access to fast and reliable broadband at home need to be able to continue learning outside the classroom.

If the teacher gives an assignment and students are given a device and they take it home, if they don't have the connectivity, they are behind. But if they do have the connectivity—the access—they can continue their education at home and be prepared the next day.

States will now have flexibility to use Federal resources to improve this access to technology. This is a significant step forward, I think, for the education system that is outdated and out of step with the needs of our students. It is particularly hard-hitting in rural communities.

Last week we passed and the President signed the first long-term highway bill in 17 years. Since 2009, Congress has lurched from one short-term patch to another, leaving officials across the country unable to plan future highway and transit projects.

The shameful inability to make a lasting investment in our infrastructure came to an end last week. The FAST Act invests \$2.5 billion in West Virginia's roads and bridges over 5 years. I can say after going home last weekend that the biggest issue raised to me in a congratulatory way was this: Thank you for passing the highway bill. With it, the completion of Route 35 in West Virginia and Corridor H will bring economic potential to our State. Key projects such as the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway will help isolated communities attract businesses and provide jobs. States will also now have more flexibility, which is exactly what they want and need, to spend Federal dollars.

New permitting reforms will help taxpayer dollars go farther and enable projects to be completed more quickly. Time is money, and if we can complete in a shorter time span and do the regulatory obligations at the same time—

concurrently—it can save States, the Federal Government, and localities money.

This highway bill is truly a jobs bill not only for the workers who will build and repair America's roads and bridges, but these investments will also bring broader economic benefits to our communities.

Another good thing this bill does that will help further job growth in West Virginia is it reauthorizes the Appalachian Regional Commission. This reauthorization includes bipartisan language to establish a high-speed broadband development initiative for underserved areas in Appalachia.

Just this Sunday, the Charleston Gazette-Mail wrote about how the lack of broadband was hindering efforts to provide telemedicine in small West Virginia towns. The ARC reauthorization is a tangible step towards getting this region connected. Broadband access can power these communities.

So passage of the education and highway bills are tremendous recent achievements, and they follow earlier bipartisan accomplishments this year.

With our entitlement programs hurdling towards bankruptcy, it was important for Congress to act. In April, we permanently eliminated Medicare's sustainable growth rate, or SGR, putting an end to the long series of temporary patches that had vexed our Nation's seniors and doctors. These reforms will encourage competition, save taxpayer dollars, and provide a more reliable system for our seniors. We know there is more to do, but this marks a good first step to preserve Medicare for future generations.

This same legislation extended funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program—a program I have been intimately involved with in West Virginia since my early days as a member of the house of delegates.

We passed legislation to help veterans heal from the unseen wounds of war and to support victims of human trafficking.

We renewed trade promotion authority to facilitate new trade agreements that can expand American jobs. And we did all of this by working together to find common ground on behalf of the people we serve.

Even when consensus cannot be achieved or the President chooses to go it alone, the Senate should debate the tough issues and show the American people where we stand. We say where we stand when we are running for election. We should be saying where we stand now that we are elected. We shouldn't be shying away from that.

The President's relentless environmental campaign to expand Washington bureaucracy at the expense of our economy is an issue I have been deeply concerned about. Energy-producing States have been hit the hardest. My State of West Virginia now has the largest and highest unemployment rate after enduring thousands of layoffs and WARN notices. Nationwide,

coal mining employment has dropped by 30 percent since 2011. When I was a Member of the House of Representatives, I took action to rein in the President's regulatory agenda, but often legislation that passed the House could not garner enough support here in the Senate.

So as a newly elected Senator, I committed to change that and to lead the legislative response to protect affordable, reliable energy. Just last month, we succeeded. The Senate passed two resolutions to avoid the Clean Power Plan that are now headed to the President's desk, including the one that I led. Under new leadership, the Senate strongly opposed policies that are devastating our energy economy and have negligible environmental benefit.

ObamaCare is another costly disaster that has placed great burdens on the American people. The new Republican-led Senate recently delivered on its promise to pass legislation that repeals the broken law. Basically, ObamaCare is failing. Americans are facing skyrocketing premiums and deductibles. Countless people have lost access to the doctor and health care plan of their choice. Even insurance companies are threatening to pull out of the system, and the Nation's largest one is one of those.

President Obama and the Democrats are fighting to use taxpayers' dollars to bail out the big insurance companies in a misguided attempt to save their failed health care policy.

The repeal legislation we passed last week would reduce taxes by more than \$1 trillion, strengthen Medicare, and provide significant resources for a problem plaguing our country—substance abuse and mental health treatment. We know the President will veto the bill, but new leadership in the Senate has put a repeal bill on his desk for the first time. And this legislation will serve as a model for efforts to repeal and replace ObamaCare in the next Congress.

This year, we have addressed the concerns of many Americans and the serious challenges that we face. We have solved problems and delivered real results. And under Leader MCCONNELL's management, we have been able to debate critical issues on behalf of the Americans we serve, offer new reforms and ideas through the amendment process, and enact important bipartisan legislation.

But this is just the beginning. While much has been accomplished, our work is far from done, and I look forward to building on this record of bipartisan achievement in the year ahead.

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.

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

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

MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an opportunity we have in the midst of all the negotiations going on to do something incredibly meaningful, that has bipartisan support, and literally will address a group of diseases that affect one out of four people every year—one out of four people who work here, one out of four people in our families. A set of diseases right now for which less than 40 percent of those with the disease get the treatment they need, but when they do, it is manageable and they can go on and lead productive lives. What I am talking about is mental illness. One out of four people every year has some kind of mental illness which is treatable and with medications and with treatment—just like any other disease—can allow someone to go on and live their life.

We have started the process in public policy of doing what we call mental health parity by saying now that insurance can't discriminate whether it is a behavioral disease, mental health, substance abuse or physical health, but we don't yet have the services in the community. So what happens is we pay dearly. Not only do individuals pay with their lives, their livelihoods, their families, and communities pay, but we pay as taxpayers.

It was interesting to me, speaking at a conference a couple of days ago here in DC with law enforcement and mental health professionals coming together, to hear about the Cook County Jail in Chicago, a huge facility. The sheriff there now has appointed a psychiatrist as the director of the jail. Why? Because one-third of the people housed in the jail have psychiatric problems. They shouldn't be in the jail. They may have committed some minor infraction because they didn't have a job or maybe they were on the street. Maybe they were hearing voices in their head and didn't hear the police officer and didn't respond in a way—or where it was considered belligerent. We now know from papers today in Michigan that studies show that people who are mentally ill are 16 times more likely to be killed in a year by a police officer. I am not suggesting that it is at all on purpose but it is because of the nature of the behavioral problems and what ends up happening in the real world when people aren't getting the treatments they need. We know what happens in terms of violence and people committing crimes, although someone who has a mental health disease is much more likely to be a victim than a perpetrator.

We have people in the emergency rooms of our hospitals. I have talked to hospital administrators and doctors who say what we need is to make sure we have a 24-hour emergency psychiatric facility, a place where someone can go or family members can call or the police can use if they find someone who needs help, not the hospital emergency room and certainly not the jail.