

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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business, with time reserved for the Democrats.

Ms. COLLINS. Thank you, 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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2577, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2577) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Collins amendment No. 3896, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Lee) amendment No. 3897 (to amendment No. 3896), to prohibit the use of funds to carry out a rule and notice of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

McConnell (for Nelson/Rubio) amendment No. 3898 (to amendment No. 3896), making supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 2016 to respond to Zika virus.

McConnell (for Cornyn) modified amendment No. 3899 (to amendment No. 3896), making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016.

McConnell (for Blunt) modified amendment No. 3900 (to amendment No. 3896), Zika response and preparedness.

Collins (for Blunt) amendment No. 3946 (to amendment No. 3900), to require the periodic submission of spending plan updates to the Committee on Appropriations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I thought it would be useful for our colleagues if I gave a brief update on

where we are. First of all, I think it is important to know that more than 70 Senators had input into the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development and Related Agencies funding bill. I am sure if you added the number of Senators who weighed in on the VA-Military Construction bill, the number is even higher.

We worked very hard in the subcommittee process and the full committee process to incorporate suggestions from many of our colleagues to produce a bipartisan bill. The ranking member, my friend and colleague Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island, has been a tremendous leader in this effort. We have worked in a very transparent and collaborative manner to bring us where we are today.

Since we started the debate on this bill, we have had 17 amendments that have been adopted by unanimous consent on the two divisions of the bill. That has required a great deal of work, but I think it shows the good faith of both of the managers of the bill and the sponsors of these amendments that we were able to work together, compromise, negotiate, and get them adopted in three separate packages.

We are continuing that process. More and more amendments have been filed, and we are continuing to see how we can best accommodate the concerns that have been raised by our colleagues while keeping the essential principles of this bill and the desire to make sure we keep on track with the appropriations process.

I believe it is a great credit to the Senate, to the leaders, and to Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, who has made as a goal that we would report all of the appropriations bills, bring them to the floor, one by one, for full and open debate, the way it should be, and that we get our work done so we avoid the situation of either having a series of continuing resolutions—which lock in last year's priorities and lead to wasteful spending, which is not a good solution and ends up costing us more because agencies can't plan, they can't do their contracting activity—or having the other unfortunate outcome of bundling all 12 of the appropriations bills into one huge omnibus bill that is thousands of pages long and is very difficult for Members to know exactly what is in the bill.

That is not a good way to legislate. It is not in keeping with our responsibilities. I am proud the Appropriations Committee in this Chamber is doing its job and that the Republican leader set as the goal that we are starting the appropriations process earlier than ever before. The Energy and Water appropriations bill was passed earlier than any appropriations bill in literally decades. I would note that would not be possible without the cooperation we have had from our Democratic colleagues on the committee. We have worked as teams. That is the way the process should work. I could not have a better partner in that regard than Senator JACK REED.

We also had a very vigorous debate yesterday on the funding that is necessary to combat the very serious threat posed by the Zika virus. We know this virus causes very severe birth defects, in some cases, and has been linked to Guillain-Barre syndrome, which can lead to paralysis and even death. So this is a serious public health threat.

A couple of weeks ago, Senator JOHN-
NY ISAKSON and I went to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA. We were briefed on the threat posed by Zika, which is carried by a mosquito that is known as the cockroach in the mosquito world because it is so difficult to get rid of. It can reproduce in water in a container that is size of a bottle cap. We know Zika has already become an epidemic in Puerto Rico and that there are confirmed cases in nearly every State in the Union. That is because, even if you live in a far Northern State where the type of mosquito that causes Zika is not present, such as the State represented by the Presiding Officer, Zika is still a threat. People travel. We know it can be transmitted through sexual contact. That is why we are seeing Zika showing up in virtually every State. We need to get ahead of this epidemic. That is why we had three different approaches offered yesterday on the Senate floor. Cloture was successfully invoked on a bipartisan proposal offered by Senators BLUNT and MURRAY that provides more than \$1 billion to counter effectively the threat of Zika.

The last thing we want is not to have acted against this serious public health threat and find that pregnant women, who are especially at risk, are going to be infected and, in some cases, have children who will have a lifetime of serious disabilities as a result of the impact of Zika. We are hearing more and more about the dangers of the Zika virus every day.

I have great confidence in the CDC, which is the major interface with our local and State public health agencies, to do an excellent job on prevention and education of providers and the public. They are also working on diagnostic tests so we can have a more rapid response to Zika. The National Institutes of Health is working on a vaccine which we hope will be available in another year, but in the meantime this truly is a public health emergency.

I believe the Senate deserves great credit for putting the Zika supplemental on our bill and providing adequate funding to do the job, to do the job that is necessary to counter this very serious threat.

We will have to proceed to a vote on the underlying Blunt-Murray amendment now that we have invoked cloture by 68 votes. I would note also that there is a 1 p.m. deadline today on filing first-degree amendments to the substitute bill. I also anticipate that this afternoon we will have a debate on Senator LEE's amendment, which has to do with a rule the Department of