

brought here through no fault of their own, who are working in our factories and offices, who are going to our schools, and who are serving in our military. Right now, every morning they wake up with a pit of fear in their heart that they will be deported and separated from their families. There is a very strong urgency there, and we have to get the Dreamers taken care of as well as these other needs.

So our language, our proposal on this budget deal is to take care of the middle class in terms of pensions and opioids and veterans, take care of disaster relief, take care of the healthcare problems we face—we all know about CHIP, community health centers, and healthcare extenders—and take care of both the border and the Dreamers. We can do it all. We should do it all.

It is no secret that in each of these areas right now there are sticking points, but there are potential points of agreement. All five parties continue to have discussion groups on these four circles of areas—and to do them concurrently and come up with solutions quickly so we can meet that January 19 deadline because nobody wants sequestration to go into effect for the military or nonmilitary side of the budget. Our goal should be a global agreement on all these issues by January 19. That is the best way to resolve the issues we face.

I see my dear friend from Georgia waiting, and I yield the floor to him.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Walter David Counts III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA BULLDOGS FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the tradition of New Year's Day, the beginning of a new year, our great country, and many of its great traditions.

I am sorry the minority leader left so quickly because I wanted to brag about how great the New York City Police and law enforcement were on New Year's Eve. Millions of Americans gathered to watch the ball drop in New York City and the new year to start. We all enjoy doing that in the warmth

of our homes, particularly on days like today, but there is also the warmth of America.

There is a second great tradition that takes place on New Year's Day as well. It is called the college football season, which is capped off by the Rose Bowl, which is played in Pasadena, CA. This year, the Rose Bowl was played between the University of Georgia, my home State, and the University of Oklahoma. It was one of the greatest football games, I think anybody would admit, that has ever been played in that game before, and I am proud of both universities.

I am equally proud of the University of Alabama and Clemson University—the other two teams that played for the right to play in Atlanta, GA, on Monday night of next week, on January 8, to decide the collegiate national championship. My Bulldogs of Georgia will be one of those two teams. They defeated Oklahoma 54 to 48 in a great football game in California. Alabama made a decisive victory over Clemson in New Orleans, LA, in the Sugar Bowl. The two will meet this coming Monday night in the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, GA.

I don't know which is going to win. I know which one I am pulling for. I know which one I am on the floor bragging about tonight, but I am equally bragging about all of our collegiate athletics in this country and the great men and women who make it work—the coaches, athletic directors, and people who make it go.

In particular, with Georgia's victory, it prompts me to come to the floor and talk about Kirby Smart. Kirby is the head coach of the University of Georgia. For 9 years preceding his coming to Georgia, he was assistant to Nick Saban, coach for the University of Alabama. They will play against each other on Monday night for this year's national championship. It is ironic that the coach and his pupil will be the two coaches in that great game.

Kirby is a University of Georgia graduate. He was a great University of Georgia football player in his own right. He came to the University of Georgia with high hopes as an alumnus, hoping that he could be the person to take Georgia to new heights.

It took him only a year. The first season was 8 and 5. The second season was this year, 12 and 1—now 13 and 1—winning the Rose Bowl and playing for the national championship on Monday night.

Kirby Smart is not just smart because he knows football; he is smart because he knows how to be a leader. You saw an example of a man in the Rose Bowl who never took credit himself. He always gave it to his other coaches and to his other players. He never tried to be the winner. He always tried to be in the background. He put others ahead of himself, but deep down inside—and behind the great victory that was won that night—it was his spirit, his encouragement, his living

the dream that all the Georgia players followed.

I want to talk about a couple of them. Sony Michel was the offensive player of the game, one of the greatest running backs ever to come out of the University of Georgia, and we had some good ones—Frankie Sinkwich, Charlie Trippy, and Herschel Walker. On defense, Roquan Smith, the Dick Butkus Award winner, played a great defensive game. Then, with the combination of leadership they brought to the team on the field and the quiet leadership and confidence Kirby Smart brought to the team as its coach, they won that game 54 to 48 in a double-overtime elimination of the University of Oklahoma.

My congratulations go to Oklahoma and their quarterback Baker Mayfield, who was the Heisman Trophy winner, on playing a great game.

I wish Alabama a lot of luck on Monday night, but not enough to beat my Bulldogs. This is going to be our chance to win a national championship for the first time in 38 years of football. We are going to be in my home State of Georgia in our newest athletic facility, the Mercedes-Benz Stadium. I think it is an appropriate place for us to win, so I am going to say "Go Dawgs" from the floor of the Senate.

On Monday night, I hope Kirby Smart remembers the reason I am bragging about him today on the floor is that he is going to be our leader Monday night. He is going to carry us to victory one more time. I am counting on him, just like all the Georgia graduates all over the country who watched with joy on January 1, and we will be looking on Monday night with anticipation and, hopefully, satisfaction.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. President.

I have to add, coming from Arkansas, that I wish to congratulate the Southeast Conference for being the championship teams. It is going to be a great game.

FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS, BICENTENNIAL

Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the bicentennial of Fort Smith, AR.

On Christmas Day in 1817, Army troops established a western frontier military post on the confluence of the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers. MAJ Stephen Long named it Fort Smith, after GEN Thomas Smith, commander of the U.S. Army rifle regiment.

To recognize the significant milestone, the community is organizing a year-long celebration that highlights its rich history, its citizens, and its future. While Fort Smith was abandoned by 1824, the community that sprung up around it continued to grow and played a unique role in westward expansion and the preservation of law and order in our developing Nation.

Judge Isaac Parker paved the way for bringing order to Indian Territory, and

great lawmen like Deputy U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves helped lay the foundation that shaped Fort Smith's role in the history of the U.S. Marshals Service. Reeves was one of the most well-respected lawmen of all time. To recognize his efforts, the Bass Reeves Legacy Initiative raised money to honor him with a monument in the community's downtown.

Reeves' career is well documented, as are the stories of Fort Smith during this period. In 1968, Charles Portis depicted Fort Smith's role in taming the West in his book "True Grit," which portrays a teenage girl's efforts to avenge her father's death with a U.S. Marshal by her side.

The bond between the community and the U.S. Marshals Service is strong and continues today, as Fort Smith will be the home of the future U.S. Marshals Museum scheduled to open in 2019. Part of its collection will include a gun and badge that belonged to Bass Reeves.

The national historic site and other organizations have done an exceptional job of keeping the community's history alive. Promoting its history in this way will also have positive benefits for the future. Fort Smith is a city with an incredible story to tell in its faith communities, its schools, its industries, its arts, and its culture.

The community is marking its bicentennial with events throughout the year that include an attempt to break the world record for a lip dub video at the Old Fort Days Rodeo Parade and the city's first fort building competition for kids.

I was pleased to contribute to the time capsule, and I am looking forward to seeing many old friends at our high school reunion. A lot has changed since my days at Northside High School as a Grizzly, but the steadfast resilience and spirit of the citizens of Fort Smith have remained.

I am proud to be a native of Fort Smith and look forward to the events during this year-long celebration. It is home to a growing university, new medical school, and vibrant new industries.

I know Fort Smith is starting the 21st century on a solid foundation. We have much to celebrate from the past, but even more to look forward to in the future. We are forever grateful to the men and women who have encouraged the community's progress and implemented their ideas to shape the city for the next generation.

Dr. Jerry Stewart is one such leader, who led a life dedicated to public service. He had a successful career as a pulmonologist and served as CEO of Cooper Clinic, leading the growth and development of one of the region's top medical care providers. After his retirement, he helped underserved patients at the Good Samaritan Clinic in River Valley Primary Care.

He was well respected in the medical community and admired for his influence beyond the walls of the clinic. His

influence was felt across the community as a leader in civic organizations and community boards, including serving on the Fort Smith Public School Board and as chairman of the board for the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce and the Fort Smith United Way. Truly, the list goes on and on.

Dr. Stewart passed away December 26, but his legacy will live on. I appreciated and valued his friendship and, like so many others, will greatly miss him.

Fort Smith was blessed with Dr. Stewart's leadership and his guidance. It continues to be fortunate to have talented leaders with a vision and dedication to make this great city even better.

Congratulations to the members of the 200th anniversary committee for all of their hard work in planning to celebrate 200 years of Fort Smith history. I am excited for the community as it comes together to recognize and commemorate this historic milestone and wish all the very best as the events take place throughout 2018.

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. BLUMENTHAL. 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.

The Senator from Connecticut.

PUERTO RICO RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here to talk about our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico. Even as the Northeast is gripped by a storm of impressive proportions, Puerto Rico is still recovering from the hurricane that hit that island 106 days ago.

I visited Puerto Rico with my friend and colleague, Senator MURPHY, yesterday and the day before, to bring back to my colleagues a fact-based report on how the recovery effort is going and how ample Federal support has been.

I come to the floor today furious and frustrated. The people of Puerto Rico have a right to be furious, as well, because they have been denied the basic help and relief that this great Nation—the greatest in the history of the world—owes to all Americans.

Let there be no doubt that the people of Puerto Rico are our fellow Americans. They have fought in our wars. They have come to the mainland and gone back, contributing to our communities, as well as theirs.

They are in our communities in Connecticut, which has the highest concentration of people from Puerto Rico and their descendants of any State in the country. We are proud of the Puerto Ricans in Connecticut and of the Puerto Rican families and people who are coming from the mainland in an exodus unmatched in recent history.

The reason for that out-migration is that Puerto Rico is in the midst of a

humanitarian and economic crisis. Let me repeat that. Puerto Rico is in a humanitarian and economic crisis 106 days after Hurricane Maria.

It is still in triage. Half of the population lacks reliable electricity. Almost half lacks drinkable, healthy water. The tourist industry—the lifeblood of its economy—is shrinking and struggling. About half the hotels still are not open, and the unemployment rate is well above 10 percent—double the rate of unemployment here on the mainland. Housing continues to be a major problem. Of the homes that need temporary relief, only half of them have been provided the blue tarps because they have not been delivered.

I want to pay tribute to the first responders, the Corps of Engineers, and FEMA workers, as well as the National Guard from Connecticut and elsewhere who are on the ground serving and sacrificing for their fellow American. They lack the support they need in resources and commitment from the administration and from this Congress. Resources and support have been denied them because of a lack of will, not a lack of money.

Many of the schools there are shuttered, and students have been denied the privilege to continue their education. The healthcare system of the island is still in shambles. Primary care is struggling to recover because of the lack of electricity. A doctor's office simply cannot run without electricity, nor can manufacturing plants be operated without a reliable source of power.

In restoring power, the Corps of Engineers has provided generators in places where formerly there were plants actually producing power. Generators are a temporary source of power, not a reliable permanent source. Transmission is still down in many parts of the country.

To add insult to injury, Puerto Rico is stuck with a tax as a result of the action of this Congress and the administration—a tax imposed only on manufacturing in foreign countries. Puerto Rico is treated as a foreign country for purposes of the 12.5 percent tax on certain manufacturers. That is simply unconscionable. Manufacturing plants will soon be facing the decision of whether to stay or go, and many of them will go, adding to the unemployment situation there.

It is heartbreaking and gut-wrenching to visit this island and to walk in a neighborhood, as Senator MURPHY and I did on Wednesday night, and find darkness after the sun goes down—total darkness, except for a few isolated lights here and there. How can students study? How can parents care for children?

On that Tuesday night, we walked through a neighborhood in downtown San Juan that was dark because of the lack of electricity. There simply are not enough generators for every home to have one. Generators, themselves, are only a stopgap source of power.

The human faces and voices are gripping and riveting from the suffering

that people in Puerto Rico—our fellow Americans—still endure. The lack of Federal commitment and response is shameful and disgraceful.

There are steps that we must take immediately. In the short-term relief package that is coming to us from the House of Representatives, we must make sure that some of that aid—a significant proportion—is specifically targeted to Puerto Rico. The number requested by the Governor is \$94 billion. It is a number that is fully and amply supported by fact. The total package coming from the House is only \$81 billion, and it is supposed to cover expenses in Florida and Texas as well as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. So that number has to be vastly increased. Longer term, there must be a change in the Tax Code to eliminate that 12.5 or 13 percent tax that discriminates against Puerto Rico as if it were a foreign country and as if the residents in Puerto Rico were citizens of another country. They are Americans.

The Medicaid formula must be changed so that it is fair to Puerto Rico. The 20 percent commitment that now goes to Puerto Rico, unlike other States, must be increased so as to treat Puerto Rico, in fact, as if it were a State and so that it is given an adequate match.

These kinds of commonsense steps must be the beginning of more than just repair and more than just rebuilding. It must be a full recovery with a vision for the future.

I have proposed, with Senator SANDERS and others of our colleagues, a Marshall Plan for Puerto Rico. That is the kind of commitment that is necessary. The \$150 billion includes not only the \$94 billion that is necessary to repair and recover right away but a longer term plan to enable the island to be back on its feet financially, to recover from the near bankruptcy that it is enduring, to able its institutions to function fully, and to permit its healthcare system to rely on electricity from plants that are powered in an economic and environmentally friendly way.

There is, sadly, the hint also of potential corruption in the Whitefish contract that now has been withdrawn and in the Bronze Star contract for tarps that is under review. Investigations must be concluded quickly and thoroughly so that we are assured that Federal dollars are being used honestly and effectively.

We must make a commitment to use the island's natural advantages. Electricity is essential. It is not a luxury, not a convenience. It is vital. It is the lifeblood of that island economically and humanly. One of the island's great advantages is its sunlight. Solar has to be used more effectively and widely as a source of power.

My hope is that we can make this disaster relief program a Marshall Plan-like program for the island in the long term with bipartisan support.

There is nothing political about a neighborhood in darkness, about chil-

dren unable to go to school, about health facilities closed, electricity lacking, and water undrinkable. These are basic needs that we have an obligation to come together on both sides of the aisle and meet.

I hope that we will do so and that we will match the resilience and resolve that I saw in meeting with Governor Rosselló and all of his team. The island's residents and FEMA and other Federal workers were also there.

Governor Rosselló has provided the kind of courage and commitment that are necessary to lead his people in this time of challenge. We must match the courage and strength of the residents on the island with equal resolve here that we will meet the needs of our fellow Americans and that we will keep our commitment, as we do always in times of crisis, to rebuild and to recommit and make sure that we leave no one there behind.

I am proud that we are working with Governor Rosselló. After meeting with him yesterday and after meeting with him in the wake of the hurricane when I first visited—I had the privilege of flying over the island, and I saw the devastation, with whole villages destroyed, houses and community centers completely razed—progress has been made. Governor Rosselló is to be commended for his continuing perseverance, as well as the people of Puerto Rico in their resolve and resilience, but we must now do our part and match that resilience and resolve with a true commitment that we will leave no American behind and keep faith with the people of Puerto Rico.

I am proud that many in the Puerto Rican community in Connecticut have shared their stories with me, and I look forward to returning to them this weekend and sharing my stories with them of their families and their friends on that island.

It is a beautiful island that has such great promise and so embodies the future of our Nation in its patriotism and its dedication to the ideals of America.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

TAX REFORM BILL AND HEALTHCARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, when we were debating the tax relief law—the tax reduction law, the tax cut law—Republicans predicted that it would be very good for the people of our country. Democrats like NANCY PELOSI predicted that it would be “Armageddon.” She said it would be the “end of the world.” Well, that was just last month, and it is already very clear to me that we have won the argument. People across the country are seeing the benefits. Thanks to this Republican tax relief law, NANCY PELOSI is seeing that hard-working Americans have actually won as a result of this law being passed.

Businesses around the country have begun turning those tax cuts into higher wages for many workers. Almost

every day there is another business announcement about bonuses of more than \$1,000 for workers. We are seeing it for hundreds of thousands of workers at businesses all across the country. They are raising wages and also investing millions of dollars back into the workers who make the companies so productive for our country.

Democrats are just wrong about tax reform. I am hearing it at home as I visit with people and stop in the drugstore and the grocery store around the State of Wyoming. They are saying: Look, anybody who does the math sees that it is a good deal for them. It doubled the standard deduction, lowered the rates, and raised the child tax credit. All of these things have been very, very helpful, certainly, to people in my State of Wyoming.

It is interesting listening to Democrats because they think they have great ideas, and they are just proven wrong about the facts. One of the ones I want to talk about today is something that the Senator from Vermont has been talking about with regard to healthcare. He has essentially wanted to scrap the U.S. healthcare system and replace it with a government-run system.

As he said, the current system under ObamaCare is the most bureaucratic, inefficient, and expensive system in the world. He often points to a single-payer system—sort of what they have right now in Great Britain. Of course, who would be paying for that? That would be the American taxpayers dealing with the incredible expenses of a program like that.

I want to point out what is actually happening today in Great Britain, in the system that the Senator from Vermont—the father of an American single-payer plan, one that a number of Democrats have signed on to—where the authorities in Great Britain just told hospitals to cancel 50,000 operations in January and to put them off until next month because they are just too busy doing other things. So scheduled operations were canceled. Now, these are surgeries for things like cataracts, knee replacements, and hip replacements.

Facilities are turning away all but the most urgent cases in need of care. They are closing outpatient clinics. Why? Because it is winter, and it is flu season, and the British healthcare system, based on a single-payer, taxpayer-run system, is not prepared to deal with the needs of the people of that country.

So hospitals across the country of Great Britain have canceled surgeries that have been planned and for which people had decided to take off time from work to have done according to their schedules. Forget it; they have been delayed.

One doctor in England actually said that they are seeing, in his words, “third-world conditions”—third world conditions, describing the British healthcare system today. This was an

Army doctor who did three tours at a field hospital in Afghanistan, somebody who knows what third-world conditions are truly like.

An article in the British newspaper the *Guardian*, out yesterday, said: "Hospitals are reporting growing chaos"—growing chaos—"with a spike in winter flu leaving frail patients facing 12-hour waits, and some units are running out of corridor space"—corridor space.

Now, that is what the situation is like in British hospitals right now, today. It turns out it happened before in Great Britain. Last winter, they had a similar problem with too many sick people and not enough options for care. Back then, the British Red Cross called the situation a "humanitarian crisis."

In today's *New York Times*—this morning's edition, page 9—talking about the British healthcare system and the problems with it, the chief executive of the National Health Service in England, Simon Stevens, in a speech to Parliament, recently said: "The N.H.S. waiting list will grow to five million people" coming down the line—grow to 5 million people. How would the American people like to be one of 5 million people waiting to get an appointment, waiting for an operation, in the waiting line? That is what Senator SANDERS and the Democrats who propose this government-run system are talking about for our country.

The scenes unfolding across hospitals in Britain—and I will describe one that is outline and written about today in the *New York Times*. It says:

Tuesday night, the emergency ward at Kingston Hospital in southwestern London looked more like an airport lounge than a hospital, with patients sprawled out in the waiting room.

"There's no real system or order; it's a jungle in here," said Nancy Harper, who had accompanied her 87-year-old grandmother, who was lying down and complaining of excruciating pain in her lower back.

"It's been more than five hours," Ms. Harper said. "We get to the front of the queue and then someone more ill comes in and we get pushed back. It's outrageous."

That is the healthcare system our Democratic colleagues are promoting for the United States—government-run, the government deciding, government rationing care.

The system in Great Britain is strained under normal conditions, even when it is not flu season. There is no margin for error. When something as routine as winter hits, the healthcare system goes completely off the rails. Is that the kind of chaos Democrats in Washington want for the United States of America? Do they want third-world conditions in hospitals; frail and elderly patients waiting 12 hours in a hallway just to get care; people getting a call telling them that the surgery they have been planning for—and maybe they have family members coming to take care of other things around the home or to take care of Grandmom—has to be put off, that they will have to wait until next month? Fifty thousand

people will be receiving that call in Britain this month.

When the government controls healthcare, it always ends up rationing care. When the bills start adding up, so do the delays. That is what happens everywhere in the world when they try a single-payer scheme. They get long lines of people waiting for care and care being denied.

Senator SANDERS put out the same plan a couple of years ago. It is interesting because one of the most liberal columnists at the *New York Times*—the newspaper that ran this story today about the British healthcare system—said that this single-payer plan would lead to rationing. Well, it does. The article went on to say that in order to keep the costs down, Washington would have to "say no to patients, telling them that they can't always have the treatment they want." That is the side of the story the Democrats will not talk about. The author of that editorial, the columnist at the *New York Times*, said that Senator SANDERS "isn't coming clean on that." The Democrats aren't coming clean on that. That is what happens in a single-payer system. Democrats who are pushing for a Washington takeover of Americans' healthcare are still not coming clean about the rationing of care that it would cause.

Republicans think patients and doctors should be the ones making those decisions, not government bureaucrats. Democrats who want to pass this new litmus test—and it is a litmus test for the liberal left—say Washington should make decisions for us. I disagree. They say that you are going to get what the government gives you. To me and to the American people, that is not what the American people want.

As a doctor who has taken care of patients for 25 years in Wyoming, patients want the care they need from a doctor they choose at lower costs. That is the goal—not single-payer, government-run healthcare. Parents need to be able to be involved with the doctor, hospital, and their child in terms of what is best for that child, not the government coming in and making the decisions. Seniors ought to be able to decide, along with their doctor, whether it is time for a new hip or a new knee, not the government saying: We are only going to pay this many this year and that is it. And if you are not done this year, get in line for next year. And when next year comes in January, 50,000 operations push them back another month.

It is unfortunate, what we see is happening with the British healthcare system for the patients there, the doctors, the nurses, the shortages, all of the issues they have there. The issue is, do we want that for our country? We do not.

I started this by talking about NANCY PELOSI calling the tax relief reduction bill Armageddon and the worst thing in the world. She was wrong on that. Senator SANDERS is wrong about his claims

that a one-size-fits-all, government-paid, national healthcare plan that all of the American people would be under, government control, no individual choice, no patient control, not working with their doctors in their communities—I believe that would be wrong for America, and I believe that the Democrats who are supporting that and proposing that have a different view of America than certainly the people of Wyoming.

I think what is happening in England is a mistake and would be a mistake for the United States. It is not something the American people want or will, I believe, ever tolerate.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING THOMAS S. MONSON

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I rise today to honor the selfless and dedicated life of Thomas S. Monson, the 16th president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

After nearly seven decades of church leadership and service, President Monson passed away on Tuesday evening. Millions of members of the LDS Church around the globe mourn his passing as we celebrate his life.

There is much that can be said about what President Monson taught us from the pulpit. There is much more to be learned about what he did when he wasn't speaking—the sick whom he visited, the weary he sustained, the jobless he aided, and the homeless he sheltered.

A reoccurring theme throughout his life and his ministry was "the rescue." He spoke movingly of a painting he had seen in a gallery in England that featured, as he described it, "heavy-laden black clouds and the fury of a turbulent sea portending danger and death. A life from a stranded vessel gleaming far off. In the foreground, tossed high by incoming waves of foaming water, a large lifeboat, men pulling mightily on the oars plunging into the tempest. On the shore stands a wife and two children, wet with rain and whipped by wind. They gaze anxiously seaward."

"In my mind," President Monson said, "I abbreviated the name of the painting. To me, it became "To the Rescue."

Throughout his life, President Monson went to the rescue of those in need. He possessed a genuine love for those who were sad, downtrodden, and less fortunate.

He was quoted as saying:

I firmly believe that the sweetest experience in mortality is to know that our Heavenly Father has worked through us to accomplish an objective in the life of another person.

This, he took to heart. In his early years of church service, President Monson presided over a congregation with 85 widows. Although he was their appointed church leader for just a few short years, the love he felt for those widows was evident. He continued to visit each widow throughout her remaining life and was present at the funeral for each of his dear friends.

He encouraged all of us to “extend the hand that helps and the heart that knows compassion.” My colleagues here would be interested to know that President Monson often quoted Abraham Lincoln saying: “If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend.”

President Monson’s example of service and rescue was recognized by many world leaders. In an effort to promote America’s spirit of generosity, President Ronald Reagan appointed him to his Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives. President Monson met with religious leaders of all faiths to talk about the welfare program of the church, which has been recognized as being highly successful in its scope and in its mission.

In closing, President Monson’s daughter, Ann Monson Dibb, observed how her father embodied the Scripture in James that reads: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” There is no better description of the life and legacy of Thomas S. Monson. May we do the same by rushing to the rescue of those in need.

I yield the floor.

Madam 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. GARDNER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RESCINDING THE COLE MEMORANDUM

Mr. GARDNER. Madam President, up until about 8:58 this morning, we believed in Colorado that States rights would be protected. Up until about 8:58, maybe 8:55—until Twitter told us otherwise—we believed the will of Colorado voters would be respected. Why did we believe that? Because of conversations I had with then-Senator Jeff Sessions prior to his confirmation as Attorney General about what would happen with Colorado’s marijuana policy.

At the time, prior to his confirmation, then-Senator Sessions told me there were no plans to reverse the Cole memorandum. Then-Senator Sessions told me marijuana simply wasn’t going to be on President Trump’s agenda; that it was something they weren’t going to deal with; it was something President Trump simply wasn’t going to focus on.

That was back in the spring of 2016, and up until 8:58 this morning, that was the policy. One tweet later, one policy later—a complete reversal of what many of us on the Hill were told before the confirmation and what we had continued to believe the last year. Then, without any notification, conversation, or dialogue with Congress, completely reversed.

Now, perhaps the Department of Justice didn’t think this would be a big deal. I understand Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ opposition to the legalization of marijuana. I opposed the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, but this is about a decision by the State of Colorado. We were told that States rights would be protected and not just by the Attorney General, then the nominee to be Attorney General, we were told that by then-Candidate Donald Trump.

In Colorado, in July of 2016, then-Candidate Trump was asked if he would use Federal authority to shut down sales of recreational marijuana in States like Colorado. Then-Candidate Donald Trump said: “I wouldn’t do that.”

When then-Candidate Trump was asked if he thought Colorado should be allowed to do what it is doing, he said: “It’s up to the States. Absolutely.”

That was then-Candidate Trump’s position. I would like to know from the Attorney General what has changed. What has changed President Trump’s mind that the Cole memorandum would be reversed and rescinded? What has changed the President’s mind? Why is Donald Trump thinking differently today about what he promised the people of Colorado in 2016 to reverse course today? What changed? I would like to know that. I think the people of Colorado deserve to have that answer.

Without the Cole memorandum, legal businesses, operating in accordance with States rights and laws, are now operating under a cloud of uncertainty. Thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue are at risk, and certainly the question of constitutional States rights is very much at the core of this discussion. I believe what happened today was a trampling of Colorado’s rights and its voters. Sure, this was a heavily debated issue, something I have already said I opposed, but the people of Colorado spoke, and they spoke loudly, and I believe that if the same question were asked today, they would even have more support for the decision they made several years ago.

I agree with President Trump that this decision should be left up to the people of Colorado and other States, and I call on Attorney General Jeff Sessions to explain to me why President Trump was wrong in 2016, what changed their minds, and that they reverse their decision to withdraw and rescind the Cole memorandum and that they reimplement and reinstate the Cole memorandum. Until that happens, I think I am obligated to the people of Colorado to take all steps necessary to

protect the State of Colorado and their rights.

That is why today I will be putting a hold on every single nomination from the Department of Justice until Attorney General Jeff Sessions lives up to the commitment he made to me in my preconfirmation meeting with him—the conversation we had that was specifically about this issue of States rights in Colorado. Until he lives up to that commitment, I will be holding all nominations to the Department of Justice.

The people of Colorado deserve answers. The people of Colorado deserve their will to be respected.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. 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. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for as much time as I need to complete my remarks.

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

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, despite Donald Trump’s assertion last May that “our country needs a good shutdown,” the truth is, shutting down the government is a serious and dangerous action that we must do everything possible to prevent.

Shutting down the government would impact tens of millions of our fellow Americans who would be unable to access government services. It would severely impact Federal employees who would not get the paychecks they expected. It would also have a very significant impact on our Armed Forces. In other words, we must do everything we can to prevent a government shutdown, which is exactly what will happen if a budget agreement is not reached by January 19, when the short-term continuing resolution expires.

I am very disappointed, therefore, that the Republican Party, which controls the White House, the U.S. House, and the U.S. Senate, is pushing us closer and closer to a very dangerous government shutdown. The Republican leadership in Congress and the White House must not allow this shutdown to take place. They have to compromise. They cannot get it all.

As everyone knows, in 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act. The centerpiece of that bipartisan legislation was that there would be parity in defense and nondefense spending. That agreement continued in the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015. All of these bills provided equal amounts of funding for defense and nondefense purposes. Any future effort to increase the Budget Control Act caps must continue to

adhere to this principle of parity. In other words, we have had a bipartisan agreement now for 6 years that has continued on four separate budgets. But now, threatening us with a government shutdown, the Republicans want to break that agreement.

I was very disturbed to hear Senate Majority Leader MCCONNELL on the floor yesterday say:

Since fiscal year 2013, defense cuts have outpaced domestic spending cuts by \$85 billion. To fix this, we need to set aside the arbitrary notion that defense spending be matched equally by new nondefense spending. There is no reason why funding for our national security and our servicemembers should be limited by an arbitrary political formula that bears no relationship to actual need.

That was Senator MCCONNELL on the floor yesterday.

Unfortunately, what Senator MCCONNELL said was inaccurate and misleading. His statement conveniently ignored the fact that mandatory spending on domestic programs like Medicare have been severely cut over this time period. He also ignored the fact that during this period, the Defense Department has also received tens and tens of billions of dollars in funding through the Overseas Contingency Operations funding, which is not capped at all.

If you include the Overseas Contingency Operations funding, the reality is that overall defense spending has gone up, not down, over this time period, while nondefense discretionary spending has been severely cut.

Further, Senator MCCONNELL ignores a very, very important reality; that is, nondefense discretionary spending as a percentage of GDP is now at a 40-year low. This longstanding agreement regarding parity for defense and non-defense spending is not some kind of inside-the-beltway, esoteric issue. It is an issue that will impact tens of millions of working families in this country who, today, are struggling to keep their heads above water.

Over the last 40 years, while the middle class of our country has been shrinking, the people on top—the top 1 percent—have been doing phenomenally well. The actions of the Republican Congress in the last year have only made a bad situation, an unfair situation, even worse. In the United States today, some 28 million Americans have no health insurance. Yet, over the last year, the Republicans have attempted to throw an additional 32 million people off of the healthcare they have, including proposed cuts for Medicaid by up to \$1 trillion over a 10-year period.

Tragically, the United States has the highest rate of childhood poverty of nearly any major country in the industrialized world. Instead of doing all that we can to end childhood poverty in this country, the Republicans have proposed to once again make a horrific situation even worse by cutting nutrition programs for children, cutting the WIC Program for low-income pregnant

women, cutting the Head Start Program, after-school programs, and funding for public education.

There are millions of senior citizens in this country who can barely make it, and I sometimes wonder how in God's Name they do make it on \$12,000, \$13,000, \$14,000 a year in Social Security. How do you keep your house warm, how do you buy the food you need, how do you buy the prescription drugs you need to stay alive on \$13,000 or \$14,000 a year? There are millions of senior citizens in this country in that position. Yet, despite that reality, over the last year we have had to fight off one Republican effort after another to cut Social Security COLAs, to raise the retirement age, or to even privatize this life-or-death program.

Further, the Republicans have proposed massive cuts to LIHEAP, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which is keeping people warm in Vermont today when the weather goes below zero. All over this country, millions of people, often senior citizens, depend on this program. Yet President Trump, in his budget, proposes to wipe it out completely. Republican leaders are also proposing cuts to the Meals on Wheels program, senior housing programs, and Medicare.

Today, in a highly competitive global economy, when we need to have the best educated workforce in the world, when the new jobs that are being created require a higher education, hundreds of thousands of bright young students desperately want to get a college education, but they are unable to do so because their families lack the income. But Republicans, incredibly, want to make that situation even worse by proposing massive cuts in the budget they recently passed to Pell grants—the major source of funding to help low-income young people get a college education—and other financial assistance programs for college. In my view, we should be making public colleges and universities tuition-free. Republicans today are proposing to make it harder for our young people to get the higher education they need.

During this budget process, when the Republicans want to expand military spending by some \$100 billion—\$100 billion—over the next 2 years, by far the largest increase in military spending in American history, we will not turn our backs on working families, the elderly, the children, the sick, and the poor. The U.S. Government must do more than greatly expand military spending and give tax breaks to billionaires. Our job is to protect the working families of this country, and that is what the new budget must do. That means we must have parity between defense and nondefense spending. That is why this budget—the proposed budget—that we are working on now must address the many crises facing the working families of the United States. That is what the American people want, and that is what we must deliver. Among many

other things that must be included in the new budget that we are working on is full funding for community health centers, which provides primary healthcare, dental care, mental health counseling, and low-cost prescription drugs to some 27 million Americans in every State in our country. It has been more than 3 months since funding for community health centers has lapsed. Our Nation's 1,400 community health centers in roughly 10,000 communities throughout this country are deeply worried right now as to when they will get the funding they need.

I just spoke to the leadership of community health centers in Vermont the other day. They have had a long-standing problem—as have community health centers all across this country—in retention and attracting new doctors and nurses into their programs. What we are seeing now is a situation where many people who might want to work at a community health center are saying: Why would I want to go there when the Republicans are delaying funding for this vitally important program?

If we do not act soon, 70 percent of the funding for community health centers will be cut and 2,800 health centers will close their doors. Community health centers must be funded at the levels contained in the bipartisan legislation introduced earlier this year. I congratulate Senator BLUNT and Senator STABENOW for their bipartisan work on this issue, and there are a number of other Republicans who are cosponsoring that legislation. We could pass it tomorrow if it were on the floor of the Senate. Let us do that.

The offsets to the prevention program of the Affordable Care Act that were included in the December 21 agreement are unacceptable, and they must not be repeated. The Blunt-Stabenow bill has nine Republican cosponsors. This bill represents a modest 5-percent increase in funding at a cost of just \$2 billion over 5 years—the very least we can do to address the major crisis of primary healthcare in America, especially in rural America.

As you know, Federal funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program expired on September 30, 2017. If the CHIP program is not reauthorized, 9 million children in working families will lose their health insurance. Can you imagine that we have a Congress prepared and acting to give tax breaks to the richest people in this country, but somehow or another they have not gotten around to reauthorize and refund the Children's Health Insurance Program? That must be done immediately and, once again, without regressive offsets which take money from other health insurance programs.

We must keep our promises on pensions. If Congress does not act soon, the earned pension benefits of more than 1.5 million workers and retirees in multi-employer pension plans could be cut by up to 60 percent. We must not rescind the promise we made to 1.5 million workers.

We must expand Social Security services for seniors. Since 2010, Congress has cut Social Security's operating budget by 16 percent, and Republicans want to cut it another 4 percent this year. These budget cuts have resulted in the loss of more than 10,000 employees, the closing of 64 field offices, and reduced hours in many others. In Vermont, one field office has seen its staffing cut by 30 percent. According to a recent Washington Post article, 10,000 people died in the past year while they waited for decisions on Social Security disability benefits. We need to increase the funding for these vital services by at least \$1.4 billion just to bring staffing back up to where it was in 2010.

We need to keep our promises to our veterans, the men and women who put their lives on the line to defend our country. Right now, we have tens of thousands of vacancies in the VA. Those vacancies must be filled. Veterans must be able to get high-quality, timely healthcare.

We must fight the opioid and heroin epidemic that is sweeping this country. All over America, we are seeing tens of thousands of people, often young people, overdosing on opioids and heroin. States and communities all over this country need the resources for prevention and treatment. That is an issue that cannot be delayed. It has to be dealt with now.

Everybody knows that in the last several months, we have seen disastrous hurricanes impact Texas and Florida and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. In Puerto Rico today, there continue to be many people who still do not have electricity. We must pass disaster relief right now that is adequate and that treats Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands just as we will treat Texas and Florida. We cannot continue to delay given the enormous suffering that is existing in Puerto Rico and in the Virgin Islands.

Very briefly, let me touch on another issue of enormous consequence which simply cannot be ignored. On September 5, 2017, President Trump announced that he would be rescinding President Obama's Executive order on DACA. That decision means that some 800,000 young people who have known the United States of America as their only home—this is where they grew up; this is where they went to school—are on the verge of losing their legal status in terms of education, in terms of employment, and in terms of serving in the military if that program is not re-established. Without the legal protections afforded by the DACA Program, these young people live in a constant fear of being deported. Since the President's announcement in September, more than 11,000 people have lost the protections under DACA, with there being approximately 22,000 set to lose their legal protections by the March 5, 2018, deadline.

Any spending agreement must address the fear and uncertainty that has

been unnecessarily caused by the administration's reckless actions, and a clean Dream Act must be signed into law as part of the budget negotiations. Protecting the Dreamers and moving these young people toward citizenship is not some kind of wild and radical idea; it is precisely what the American people want. A recent Quinnipiac poll showed that 77 percent of the American people support providing legal protections to the Dreamers. This is an issue that must be dealt with, and it must be dealt with now.

When history looks back on this period, I do not want it to see a U.S. Congress that worked overtime to protect billionaires and large corporations and a Congress that turned its back on working families and the children and the sick and the poor. I do not want history to look back on this period and say that Members of Congress thought it appropriate to spend \$100 billion more on the military but were not concerned about veterans who did not get the healthcare they needed or some 800,000 young people who are now frightened that they will lose their legal status.

As the U.S. Senate, we must get our priorities right, and we need a budget that deals not only with military spending but with the needs of the middle class and working families of this country.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:52 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. LEE).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

IRAN

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today as brave citizens in Iran are taking to the streets to exercise their fundamental right to freely express their opinions and protest against their government.

As a democracy founded on core values, including the freedom of speech, equal rights under the law, and basic human dignity, the United States must always stand up for those peacefully advocating for these principles. For decades America has championed these principles, not only because they are right but because they promote our interests. We know that nations whose governments respect human rights and freedom of expression, that uphold the rule of law, and that protect the civil rights and liberties of their people serve as America's most reliable allies, most strategic security relationships, and most prosperous economic partners. Our enduring belief in democratic

values compels all of us to stand up, not as Democrats or Republicans but as Americans, and to support citizens around the world courageously protesting the regimes that oppress them.

We stand with those who speak out, and even risk their own lives, to make their voices heard in the struggle against oppression, inequality, and injustice. The fact that today's protests in Iran are against a regime that engages in activity that directly threatens our Nation, our allies, and our security interests is a separate matter.

Iran's leaders may try to blame the protests on outside forces, but in reality this unrest is homegrown. The Iranians marching in Tehran know exactly who is to blame for the hardship, inequality, and oppression they face in their daily lives. It is the regime itself. For those who have closely followed the developments in Iran for years, it is no surprise to learn that the regime continues to disregard the basic rights of its citizens. The regime has proven that it has no moral qualms with forcing the innocent to suffer. Already security forces are responsible for the deaths of more than 20 Iranian protesters. They have detained and imprisoned hundreds of people who are simply speaking their minds.

Of course, these abuses are just one example of the consistently odious behavior we have witnessed from Iran in recent years. This is a regime that has proven that it is more interested in building ballistic missiles than building bridges, that believes money is better spent on terrorist networks in Lebanon and Syria than on schools and hospitals for the Iranian people, that any revenue generated by Iran's international energy deals go directly into the pockets of those fomenting discord in the region and not into the hands of Iranian citizens trying to feed their families, and that will continue to engage in malign activity that isolates it from the community of nations, directly at the expense of the Iranian people. For these reasons and many more, I sincerely hope that the international community lives up to its responsibility to support all those who are protesting this repressive regime.

However, words go only so far. The United States must continue to lead international efforts to counter the Iranian regime's destabilizing behavior overseas. Unfortunately, this administration has yet to take the lead. We hear plenty of bluster from this President, but threatening tweets do not constitute policy nor can they hold Iran culpable. Putting a nation "on notice" means nothing if there are no policies put in place. We need a real strategy that addresses Iran's destabilizing activities in the Middle East, whether it is the regime's continued support for terrorist networks, illegal ballistic missile development, or human rights abuses and political interference in other countries.

These threats are what compelled me to work with my colleagues across the