

served as a naval flight officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. He began his career in private practice with Maynard, Cooper & Gale in Birmingham, before moving and joining the Nashville firm of Riley, Warnock & Jacobson. Today he is a partner at Frost Brown Todd in Nashville, where he chairs the competition law section of the business litigation practice group.

Tommy Parker received his undergraduate degree from the University of South Carolina before going to law school at Vanderbilt. Upon graduation, he joined the Memphis law firm of Waring Cox. In 1995, Mr. Parker left his position with the firm to serve as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Western District of Tennessee. Today he is a partner at Baker Donelson in Memphis.

I want to note that President Trump has also made two other nominations to fill the remaining vacancies in the Middle District—Eli Richardson—and in the Western District—State Senator Mark Norris—and I encourage the Senate to act quickly on their nominations. But today's votes are a good start.

Chip Campbell and Tommy Parker will be assets to the Federal bench, and Tennessee is fortunate to have such well-qualified nominees. These are men of good character and good temperament, and today I encourage my colleagues to support their nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PORTMAN). Under the previous order, all postcloture time is considered expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Campbell nomination?

Mr. ALEXANDER. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 3 Ex.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Cochran	Flake
Baldwin	Collins	Gardner
Barrasso	Coons	Gillibrand
Bennet	Corker	Graham
Blumenthal	Cornyn	Grassley
Blunt	Cortez Masto	Harris
Booker	Cotton	Hassan
Boozman	Crapo	Hatch
Brown	Daines	Heinrich
Burr	Donnelly	Heitkamp
Cantwell	Duckworth	Heller
Capito	Durbin	Hirono
Cardin	Enzi	Hoeven
Carper	Ernst	Inhofe
Casey	Feinstein	Johnson
Cassidy	Fischer	Jones

Kaine	Nelson	Smith
Kennedy	Paul	Stabenow
King	Perdue	Sullivan
Klobuchar	Peters	Tester
Lankford	Portman	Thune
Leahy	Reed	Tillis
Lee	Risch	Toomey
Manchin	Roberts	Udall
Markey	Rounds	Van Hollen
McCaskill	Rubio	Warner
McConnell	Sanders	Warren
Menendez	Sasse	Whitehouse
Merkley	Schatz	Wicker
Moran	Schumer	Wyden
Murkowski	Scott	Young
Murphy	Shaheen	
Murray	Shelby	

NOT VOTING—3

Cruz Isakson McCain

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Thomas Lee Robinson Parker, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee.

Mitch McConnell, Deb Fischer, John Barrasso, John Thune, Roger F. Wicker, James M. Inhofe, Johnny Isakson, Mike Crapo, Tom Cotton, Chuck Grassley, Thom Tillis, Mike Rounds, Michael B. Enzi, James Lankford, Lindsey Graham, Pat Roberts, Todd Young.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Thomas Lee Robinson Parker, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 96, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 4 Ex.]

YEAS—96

Alexander	Blunt	Cantwell
Baldwin	Booker	Capito
Barrasso	Boozman	Cardin
Bennet	Brown	Carper
Blumenthal	Burr	Casey

Cassidy	Heller	Reed
Cochran	Hoeven	Risch
Collins	Inhofe	Roberts
Coons	Johnson	Rounds
Corker	Jones	Rubio
Cornyn	Kaine	Sanders
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Sasse
Cotton	King	Schatz
Crapo	Klobuchar	Schumer
Daines	Lankford	Scott
Donnelly	Leahy	Shaheen
Duckworth	Lee	Shelby
Durbin	Manchin	Smith
Enzi	Markey	Stabenow
Ernst	McCaskill	Sullivan
Feinstein	McConnell	Tester
Fischer	Menendez	Thune
Flake	Merkley	Tillis
Gardner	Moran	Toomey
Gillibrand	Murkowski	Udall
Graham	Murphy	Van Hollen
Grassley	Murray	Warner
Harris	Nelson	Warren
Hassan	Paul	Whitehouse
Hatch	Perdue	Wicker
Heinrich	Peters	Wyden
Heitkamp	Portman	Young

NAYS—1

Hirono

NOT VOTING—3

Cruz Isakson McCain

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 96, the nays are 1.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Thomas Lee Robinson Parker, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

TRIBUTE TO CHRIS CAMPBELL

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a trio of excellent staffers, all of whom served with distinction on the Senate Finance Committee for a number of years and who recently left the committee to pursue other ventures.

First, Mr. President, I would like to say a few words about Chris Campbell, a longtime friend and trusted adviser, who until recently served as the Republican staff director on the committee. Last summer, he was nominated and confirmed to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Financial Institutions.

I have known Chris for more than 17 years, and I cannot overstate his importance and contributions to my years of work here in the Senate. Chris joined my campaign for President back in 2000, where I immediately recognized his talent and leadership abilities and appointed him to be my national field director, although he was relatively young and inexperienced at the time. Needless to say, I don't blame Chris for how that particular campaign turned out. In fact, that same year, I asked him to serve as director for my Senate reelection campaign, which thankfully met with much better results. After that, he came to Washington to serve on my staff on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I have long urged my staffers to get as much education as possible to enhance their understanding and gain new perspectives. I nagged Chris about this during my Presidential campaign. Eventually, after working on my staff for a few years, he wanted to upgrade his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California at Santa Barbara with an MBA from the Thunderbird School of Global Management.

A short time after receiving his MBA and a brief stint in the private sector, Chris desired to return to public service, and when he returned to Washington, I hired him back without hesitation and asked him to serve as my legislative director, a post he held until 2011 when I took over as the lead Republican on the Finance Committee and appointed him to be the staff director.

During his time on the committee staff, Chris quarterbacked every major effort we undertook. This includes successes like the approval of free-trade agreements, the bipartisan renewal of trade promotion authority and the modernization of U.S. trade laws, the repeal and replacement of the Medicare sustainable growth rate, and the long-term funding of the Federal highway trust fund, just to name a few.

Of course, his work on the long-term tax reform effort was invaluable. We began our work on tax reform right out of the gate in 2011 and worked with Chairman Baucus and others to drive it forward. Chris was a key part of all of the work we did over the years to advance tax reform. While his move to Treasury came just before the final stages of that effort, I was fortunately able to benefit from his continued advice and counsel as we moved closer to and eventually crossed the finish line.

Chris is a shrewd but effective negotiator and a brilliant legislative strategist. Congressional Quarterly named him one of the seven most influential non-elected people working in Congress, and Roll Call put him on its list of the 50 most influential staffers on Capitol Hill for 7 straight years. Clearly, I am not the only one who recognizes his abilities. I know the other members of the Finance Committee—on both sides of the aisle—have also acknowledged and benefited from his years of work.

Still, even with all of his accomplishments, what stands out most to me about Chris Campbell is his life story. He is a great example of how hard work and education can help a person become much more than what some statistician might predict. Chris grew up in Hemet, CA, as one of six children who struggled—and that is putting it lightly—to make ends meet. He didn't grow up with family connections or powerful benefactors, but thanks to his diligence and determination and no shortage of natural ability, he became one of the most effective and influential staffers on Capitol Hill, and he now serves in a key leadership role in the administration.

While it pained me to see him head off to Treasury, I have been comforted to know that the President knows how to pick the best people and that the Department of the Treasury is being well served.

I personally want to thank Chris for his years in working with me, for his candid and thoughtful advice, and for his commitment to public service. I wish him all the best in his future endeavors, which I am quite sure will be just as successful as his time here.

TRIBUTE TO BECKY SHIPP

Mr. President, I would like to say a few words about another former staffer, Becky Shipp, who also left the Finance Committee staff a few months ago to pursue another venture.

While I have known Becky for more years than either she or I would like to count, I can tell you that she served tirelessly on the Senate Finance Committee for more than 10 years. She saw chairmen come and go and was an institution here in her own right.

In my time on the Hill, I have come to know many different staffers, all of whom got involved in the government for all types of well-meaning and patriotic reasons. They each have some expertise, some interest, and some motivation that helps them get through the hard times that staff encounter with the stressful conditions and the below-market pay.

I have long said that Senators and staff take on sacred obligations when we come to work here, and I cannot think of many who have taken that sacred obligation to heart more than Becky Shipp. She spent her time in Congress working on welfare and human resource issues. Her dedication and zealousness in defending the less fortunate should serve as an example to all of us.

While issues surrounding child welfare, child and family services, and foster care programs are often overlooked, anyone in Washington who knows anything about these issues knows that Becky has played a singular role in the creation and preservation of the safety net we now have in place. Too often, welfare issues become bitterly partisan, but during Becky's time here, she always strove to find common ground no matter the personal sacrifice.

Her time on the Hill was extremely productive and impacted far more children and families than most any of us could probably ever count. Still, it was not without moments that, when looking back, seemed pretty lighthearted. One such moment came just a few years ago after many in Congress had become aware of the fact that welfare funds distributed through electronic bank transfers had been used by some to purchase alcohol, food, or other illicit items from strip clubs and other less than savory establishments. Becky quietly began developing a proposal to prevent this type of abuse. Eventually, her idea gained more traction than she thought it would initially.

Once members of the Finance Committee and in the House began to realize the nature of this problem, her proposal caught on like wildfire. The problem was that the Social Security Act did not have a definition for these establishments. After quite a bit of wrangling and putting herself in the shoes of some of the more seedy clientele and business owners, Becky developed a definition, more or less, from scratch. Specifically, the bill, now a Federal statute, prohibited the distribution of Federal welfare funds at "any retail establishment which provides adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment." Now, many have chuckled at the specificity of that definition and at the fact that someone, somewhere had to come up with and write down that type of legal terminology, but Becky was not playing a joke or trying to be facetious; she was addressing a legitimate concern. That story, to me, epitomizes the type of person Becky Shipp is and the type of congressional staffer she was when she worked in the Senate.

I am quite certain that, even in her new endeavors, Becky will remain committed to promoting the same type of no-nonsense, proper governance, with an equal eye toward helping those in need to find meaningful work, care, and assistance. While Becky's work ethic, persistence, and friendliness have already been missed on the Finance Committee, I am quite certain that she will continue to do many great things and help many more people.

I personally thank Becky for her years of service and for all that she has done for me, for others in the Senate, and for those in our country who have been in need of a helping hand.

TRIBUTE TO PRESTON RUTLEDGE

Finally, Mr. President, I want to say a few words about Preston Rutledge, my former tax counsel who was recently nominated and confirmed to serve as Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Employee Benefits Security Administration.

Preston began his career in public service as a teenager when he worked in the national forests. Later, he served honorably as an officer in the U.S. Navy. After graduating from law school, he was a law clerk on the Fifth Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals and spent more than a decade working at the IRS, focusing on tax-exempt organizations and employee benefits.

He came to the Finance Committee about 7 years ago. During that time, he worked on a number of issues that many people, quite frankly, consider to be tedious or mundane, but Preston is an expert on these issues, and he has always taken great pleasure in the issues and work before him.

As a staffer, Preston was, more than anything, committed to advancing reforms to our Nation's pension and savings programs in order to ensure a stable and reliable retirement savings system. Toward that end, he was a lead

staffer in the drafting and passage of key pieces of pension and savings legislation, including the Retirement Enhancement and Savings Act, which provided a number of key reforms to our Nation's retirement savings system, and the ABLE Act, which provided savings enhancements for children with disabilities and their families.

Preston's knowledge of tax policy and ERISA issues is unsurpassed. I was not the only one to benefit from and rely upon his expertise. Indeed, the entire Finance Committee relied on Preston whenever these types of issues came up because, once again, there just aren't many people in Washington with that particular focus and expertise.

I wish Preston good luck in his new position at the Labor Department and thank him for the work he performed on the committee. I am confident his expertise, as well as his open-minded and inclusive approach, will help improve the situations of workers and families across the country. I can think of no one more capable to serve in this important capacity.

As you can see, I have been fortunate to have worked with some excellent staffers in recent years—well, really throughout my whole service in the Senate. That has been true of my entire time at the Senate.

Of course, I have many great staffers still working in the Senate, both in the Finance Committee and in my personal office. I am grateful for each of them as well. I am very fortunate to have them with me as we have some important work ahead of us.

The Finance Committee's current workload is, quite honestly, mind-boggling. There is much to do over the next several months. I will have more to say on that in the coming days. For now, I will simply say, I look forward to working with my colleagues and staff on the vitally important tasks that lie ahead.

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

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

DACA

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on behalf of nearly 800,000 Dreamers, young people who were brought to this country as children who today are living in fear and uncertainty. As a result of the Trump administration's decision to end the DACA Program, these young people are at risk of losing their legal status and, in fact, face deportation from the only home that most of them have ever known, and that home is the United States of America.

This is one of the great moral issues of our time, and it is an issue that

must be dealt with now as part of the budget negotiations. It cannot be kicked down the road any longer. We must pass the Dream Act now as part of the current budget negotiations.

In the last 6 years since the DACA Program was established, these young people—again, people who were brought to this country as infants, in many cases—were finally able to breathe a sigh of relief. For the first time in their lives, they could walk the streets of this country without fear, without worrying about being arrested, without worrying about being deported. Think about what it means to live in this country every single day knowing that, at any moment, you could be arrested or deported. What DACA finally did is to give these 800,000 young people a legal status and a protection so they could go out and work, so they could go to school, and so they could serve in the U.S. military without fear.

As we all know, tragically, on September 5, 2017, President Trump announced the end of the DACA Program through Executive order. President Obama had established it through Executive order, and President Trump ended it through Executive order. In his announcement, President Trump noted:

I look forward to working with Republicans and Democrats in Congress to finally address all of these issues. As I have said before, we will resolve the DACA issue with heart and compassion, but through the lawful democratic process. It is now time for Congress to act.

That is Donald Trump.

The President was right. It is time for Congress to act. It is time for Congress to not kick the can down the road.

Our Republican President, Mr. Trump, told the Republican-led Congress to get to work on a DACA fix, and I say today to the Republican leadership: Let's do it. Let's do it now. That is what President Trump asked you to do. Listen to him, and let's do it—not next month, not in March, but right now—as part of the budget agreement.

People are working on this issue now. We can come to a consensus. We can pass the Dream Act if there is a political will to do it.

Let us also be very clear. Despite what some have said, this is an urgent matter that must be addressed now. Since President Trump rescinded the DACA Program in September, more than 15,000 Dreamers have already lost their DACA status and are now subject to deportation. Each day the Congress does not act, 122 people lose their DACA protections, and 851 people each and every week. This is a matter of urgency, and we have to act accordingly.

But I want to assure my Republican colleagues that not only is this the right thing to do from a moral perspective and from an economic perspective, but it is also exactly what the American people want. Nobody here is asking anybody in the Senate to rise up

and to be extraordinarily brave and courageous. Why don't you just do what the American people want us to do? No profiles in courage are needed now. Poll after poll has shown that the overwhelming majority of the American people want to provide legal status to the Dreamers and to protect them from deportation. From a political perspective, this is not a difficult decision.

A Washington Post-ABC poll from September 2017, a few months ago, found that 86 percent of Americans support allowing Dreamers to stay in the United States. So 86 percent of the American people support providing legal status to Dreamers. This is not a tough political decision.

Another recent poll conducted by Quinnipiac found that 77 percent of voters and 65 percent of Republicans support legislation to protect Dreamers and provide them an opportunity to work, to go to school, and to pursue a pathway to citizenship.

Another poll conducted by CNN last month found that by an 83-percent to 13-percent margin, Americans support efforts to allow Dreamers to remain in the United States instead of facing potential deportation. Only 15 percent believed that Dreamers should be deported.

Passing the Dream Act is also in our national security interests. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently noted:

The United States faces extraordinary security challenges that are placing growing pressure on our Armed Forces. That is why we need legislation that will provide a pathway to citizenship for those immigrants who, among other attributes, are serving or have served in the military, whether they are in America legally or were brought here illegally as children.

That is former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

In addition, just last week three former Secretaries of Homeland Security wrote to House and Senate leadership expressing both their strong support for a DACA fix and for the urgency of acting now. Secretaries Chertoff, Napolitano, and Johnson warned of the need for Congress to act immediately and emphasized how the agency needs time to implement a new program. Without it, they caution that the delay will sow uncertainty in the business community and drive undocumented individuals further into the shadows, with immediate deportation looming for tens of thousands every single month.

Let us be very clear that when we talk about the DACA Program and when we talk about these young people receiving legal status, these young people are vetted, they pay a fee, and the vast majority of them are now at jobs important to our economy. They are in school or they are in the military. In order to get DACA status, they could not be convicted of a felony or a significant misdemeanor or pose a threat to national security or public safety. As almost everybody recognizes, these

are fine young people whom we should be very proud of and should not be talking about deporting them.

DACA gave these young people a shot at the American dream, and having been given that opportunity, they seized it and they are excelling and contributing to our country—to their country—in so many ways. With 91 percent of DACA recipients in the workforce, they play an important role in our economy. Many hundreds of Dreamers have taken up the call to serve in our Armed Forces. Can my colleagues imagine a young Dreamer now serving in the Armed Forces, putting his or her life on the line to defend this country, and then reading about Members of Congress who think we should deport them? How outrageous is that?

Furthermore, there are some 20,000 DACA recipients who are currently teaching in our schools. We desperately need good teachers, and 20,000 DACA recipients are doing just that.

Yet, because of President Trump's cruel decision to rescind the DACA Program, as well as the Republican-controlled Congress's failure to act, these young people's lives and livelihoods have been thrown into chaos and uncertainty.

It is our job to enact a legislative fix now. The President has called for a fix. The vast majority of the people of this country want to see a fix. A fix is important to our national security. It is the right thing to do. Let us do it.

I am, however, very concerned that President Trump is using the 800,000 Dreamers as a bargaining chip to force the taxpayers of this country to pay for an \$18 billion wall. Now, some may remember that during his campaign for President, Donald Trump told the American people that it was the Mexican Government that would be paying for the wall. Well, it turns out that it didn't quite work out that way, and now it is the taxpayers of this country who are supposed to pay for a wall.

Let me be as clear as I can be. We cannot and we must not hold the lives of 800,000 young Dreamers hostage in order to fund a wall that the vast majority of the American people oppose. We cannot and we must not allow Donald Trump to shut down the government to fund this wall, but that, it appears, may very well be—for whatever reason—what Donald Trump wants.

Let me remind my colleagues what Donald Trump said last August at a rally in Arizona, the Presiding Officer's home State: "Believe me, if we have to close down our government, we're building that wall." August 22, 2017, Donald J. Trump.

Now, I do not know why Donald Trump may be pushing for a government shutdown. Maybe he thinks it will work well for him or work well for the Republican Party politically. I have no idea, but I do know that the idea of a government shutdown is a very bad idea. Maybe Republicans will gain from it, maybe Democrats will politically gain from it. I do not have a

clue. What I do know is, the American people will lose from a government shutdown, and, in a bipartisan manner, we must do everything we can to prevent that shutdown.

A shutdown would harm tens of millions of Americans who would be unable to access vital government services; it would disrupt the lives of hundreds of thousands, or more, Federal employees who depend upon a check to provide for their families; and, in fact, it would endanger members of the U.S. military who are putting their lives on the line to defend our country.

The U.S. Congress has a responsibility to the American people to prevent a government shutdown and to work in a bipartisan manner to reach a budget agreement that is fair and that addresses the very serious problems facing not only DACA recipients but the working people of our country.

So I say to my Republican colleagues, you control the White House, you control the U.S. House, and you control the U.S. Senate. You have a responsibility to govern.

For President Trump and the Republican leadership to allow DACA to expire without a new program in place is not only a failure to govern, it is an act of extraordinary cruelty.

We know President Trump wants to build a wall, I guess somewhat like the Great Wall of China. The problem is, building walls may have made sense in the 14th century, but I would inform the President that technology has somewhat changed since then, and our job is to provide strong border security in the most cost-effective way we can, and that way is not building a wall. Ironically, while the President wants to spend \$18 billion to build a wall, he is taking money away from other far more important and effective border security measures.

Let me quote from an article that appeared in today's New York Times:

The Trump administration would cut or delay funding for border surveillance, radar technology, patrol boats and customs agents in its upcoming spending plan to curb illegal immigration—all proven security measures that officials and experts have said are more effective than building a wall along the Mexican border.

The wall also has become a bargaining chip in negotiations with Congress as lawmakers seek to prevent nearly 800,000 young undocumented immigrants from being deported.

But security experts said the president's focus on a border wall ignores the constantly evolving nature of terrorism immigration and drug trafficking.

In other words, if we want strong border security, if we want to keep people out of this country who should not be coming into this country, if we want to keep drugs out of this country, building a wall is not the most cost-effective way. It may have been a great idea in the 14th century in China when they built their Great Wall, but it is not a great idea in 2018, in the United States of America.

So let me just conclude by saying, we are at a very important moment in his-

tory. If we do not do the right thing, if we do not do the moral thing, if we allow some 800,000 young people—people who have spent virtually their entire lives in this country, who know no other country, who see the United States of America as their home—if we betray them, if we take away their legal status, if we allow them to be deported, this will be a moral stain on this country that will never ever be wiped out.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, for the past decade, health policy, unfortunately, has proven to be one of the most bitterly partisan issues. It doesn't have to be this way.

I want to take a few minutes to discuss some health-related issues that Congress left unfinished before the holidays: providing relief from the medical device tax, reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program, funding for community health centers, and doing more to address the opioid crisis. Each has strong bipartisan support and could provide help to our constituents now.

First, many of us, on both sides of the aisle, agree on the need to provide relief from the medical device tax, which went back into effect on January 1. The medical device tax is one of these issues that leaves most Hoosiers scratching their heads. First adopted as part of the Affordable Care Act, the device tax was one of the few issues Republicans and Democrats agreed needed to be fixed, and in 2015, with bipartisan support, President Obama enacted a 2-year suspension of the tax.

The argument was really pretty simple. The medical device tax was making it harder for innovative companies to invest in the research and development of new technologies, and, in the process, we were stifling job creation. If there was a question as to whether this was the case, the last 2 years provided evidence. When we agreed to suspend the tax in 2016 and 2017, manufacturers used that additional money to hire new workers, invest in research and technologies, and continue producing innovative, lifesaving products in the United States.

For example, Zimmer Biomet, headquartered in Warsaw, IN, my home State, used the money from the device tax suspension to invest in new innovation to improve musculoskeletal health across the world. They were also able to upgrade their manufacturing equipment and facilities. Perhaps more importantly, these investments not only supported existing jobs, but they also helped to create new jobs—new, good-paying jobs.

Yet, despite this evidence, despite this strong bipartisan support for repeal, and despite a wide-ranging package of changes to the Tax Code becoming law in recent days, Congress has failed to address the medical device

tax, which went back into place on January 1.

As we again discuss the policy priorities that were left unaddressed in 2017, I strongly urge my colleagues to work with me to quickly and meaningfully address the medical device tax. This would allow these innovative companies to make the long-term investments that not only lead to life-changing technologies but support thousands of high-paying jobs across the country, including in my home State of Indiana.

Another issue that has garnered bipartisan support is a healthcare program that covers millions of our children. We must reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program—also known as CHIP—that expired in September.

I have long supported the CHIP program. It provides health coverage for millions of kids, including nearly 115,000 children from Indiana. I am not alone in my support for this program. The fact is, CHIP has had strong bipartisan support for the past 20 years, and Democrats and Republicans in both the Senate and the House have shown they support a 5-year reauthorization of the program. That gives States the certainty they need to plan their budgets and provide high-quality care to these children.

Despite this shared commitment for the program and agreement on the need for a long-term reauthorization, we were only able to fund the program through March before Congress departed for the holidays. This short-term extension bought some time, but according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services—CMS—some States will start running out of money after January 19. This means families and States will very soon face the harmful consequences of congressional inaction.

Just last week, the Congressional Budget Office said that funding the CHIP program for the next 5 years will cost significantly less than previous estimates. This program is vital to our families and vital to our children. We should reauthorize the CHIP program right away.

Like the CHIP program, community health centers have enjoyed long bipartisan support for the high-quality care they provide to our families. Also, like CHIP, the funding for community health centers expired on September 30, leaving many health centers across Indiana worried about if they will have the resources they need to continue to serve Hoosiers.

We have the ability to work together now to ensure that our community health centers can continue to provide cost-effective, high-quality healthcare to people all across the country.

Finally, we have demonstrated a common desire to address the needs of the opioid and drug abuse crisis. It is a scourge. It took the lives of 63,000 people just in 2016—63,000 of our brothers and sisters, our husbands and wives, our sons and daughters. It is a heart-

break that is crushing the entire country.

I welcomed President Trump's declaration of a public health emergency, and both Republican and Democratic Senators have highlighted the need for Congress to do even more to help those struggling with addiction.

Like many other States, the opioid epidemic has been particularly devastating in underserved areas in Indiana that lack adequate treatment providers.

Senator MURKOWSKI and I have partnered on a bipartisan bill that would encourage addiction treatment professionals to serve in underserved areas by making addiction treatment facilities eligible for National Health Service Corps student loan repayment and forgiveness.

We can show our commitment to increasing access to treatment by reauthorizing the National Health Service Corps program, which expired in September. We also must recognize that a meaningful response to the opioid crisis will require robust and meaningful funding to help our communities as soon as possible.

I have often said that most people think Congress can do something to help make life better—to provide working parents with the peace of mind that their children can grow up healthy and to instill confidence in our communities so that they will have the tools they need to respond to this heart-breaking crisis. At the very least, Congress should not make this situation worse.

By failing to take action in 2017, medical device companies are once again paying a counterproductive tax that inhibits growth in Indiana.

On all of these issues—medical device taxes, our families and our children and this opioid crisis, community health centers—we can work together as Democrats, as Republicans, but more than either of those, as Americans to make sure that our families can get decent healthcare, to make sure that no one else dies because of this terrible opioid scourge we are dealing with. These are critically important issues. These are issues that know no political party, that know no special agenda. What we do know is that we need this Congress, this Senate, to deal with them now.

Mr. President, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from North Dakota.

CONGRATULATING THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY BISON FOOTBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE FCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I will be submitting a resolution in the U.S. Senate honoring the North Dakota State University Bison football team, who just won their sixth national championship in 7 years.

Mr. President, I know you are a football fan, so you can truly appreciate what a fantastic achievement that is. What NDSU has accomplished over the

last 7 seasons is absolutely extraordinary. With our victory on Saturday, the Bison have now won six national football championship series division I national titles in 7 years. That ties them for the most of all time. Also, in each of the past 7 years, they have won or shared the top spot in the Missouri Valley Football Conference championship.

We also want to congratulate the James Madison University Dukes on an outstanding year. We had five championships in a row. The Dukes managed to beat us last year in a semifinal game, and we came back and avenged that loss in a thrilling championship game in Frisco, TX. It went down to the final play. It was a very, very exciting game.

Winning a national championship is not easy, and this success, reflected both on and off the field, is earned through hard work and dedication. We recognize and congratulate all of the incredible players and Coach Klieman and his tremendous coaching staff, who put in countless hours of practice and preparation.

We also recognize the importance of good leadership from athletic director Matt Larsen, NDSU president Dean Bresciani, and everyone at NDSU, all the coaches and the staff, team members, and really everybody who is part of Bison Nation. North Dakotans travel with our team. They show up in Bison Nation, and their cheering and supporting our great team is a huge part of our incredible victories.

We congratulate Easton Stick, the quarterback, for achieving MVP honors and leading a tremendous offensive effort by the Bison and also Nick DeLuca, middle linebacker, for leading an incredible defensive effort. These were two tremendous defenses—James Madison and North Dakota State Bison—fast, strong, and it was a thrilling game and fun to watch.

I want to compliment James Madison not only on their program but on all their fans and supporters—a real class act. I am very impressed with James Madison University—their students, their team, and all of their alumni, who also turned out in force for what was a tremendous game in Frisco, TX.

With that, I submit this resolution to the U.S. Senate honoring the North Dakota State Bison.

Mr. President, I have just one other thing to say: Go Bison.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION
CONVENTION AND NAFTA

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I was fortunate enough this week to attend the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention in Nashville, where I had the opportunity to headline a discussion of the farm bill, along with my colleague from Kansas on the

Senate Ag Committee and the gentleman from Texas, Congressman CON-AWAY, who is leading on the House Agriculture Committee, during the President's commodity meeting. The American Farm Bureau hosted other farm groups and commodity organizations from across the country to talk about the next farm bill and to try to bring consensus as to what agriculture is looking for in farm policy.

In my opportunity to visit with people at the Farm Bureau's annual meeting, in my remarks, I paid particular attention to the farm bill. It is a farm safety net. When we talk about a farm bill, I suppose we ought to highlight that only a small portion of the farm bill is actually related to farm programs. There are a number of titles to the farm bill, and most of the money in a farm bill is spent on nutrition programs and mostly SNAP, but there are other important components of a farm bill—rural development and conservation. In addition to that topic, which I have been on the Senate floor speaking about before, are food aid and support for those who are experiencing famine around the globe. My opportunity to be with farmers and ranchers from across the country gave me an opportunity to not only speak about my views as to what a farm bill should contain but, more importantly, for me to hear what they had to say that was important to them.

Farm Bureau members from across the country made it clear to me, first of all, that they would like to see Congress—Republicans and Democrats in the House and the Senate—and the administration work together in a bipartisan fashion to get a farm bill done and, prior to that, to get a disaster relief bill completed, which I hope we will do yet this month on the Senate floor—both the disaster bill that needs to get to the President's desk as soon as possible and also a farm bill that needs to be completed in a timely fashion. The current farm bill under which we are operating expires in 2018.

Of the things I want to highlight that I heard from Farm Bureau members while I was there is certainly the importance of crop insurance and the value it provides, particularly for those of us who live and farm and work in places where the weather is not often our friend, as well as just the challenges the current farm bill is creating in Kansas.

Particularly, the safety net programs PLC and ARC don't work as well as they should or could. Part of that has to do with timeliness, and part is the inability and the difficulty in farmers having to choose between two programs and to predict for a long period—the life of the farm bill—which makes the most sense to them economically. Whether they are going to have high prices, low prices, good weather, or bad weather is a hard thing to know in the life of a farm bill. Again, because of the issues we have with the current farm bill, timeliness

is important because those provisions that are less than satisfactory today will be extended if we aren't successful in completing a farm bill this year.

While the topic of conversation generally revolved around the farm bill, I want to indicate to my colleagues that so much of what I heard was about trade, particularly about NAFTA. The reality is, 98 to 99 percent of the mouths to feed are outside of the United States. Farmers and ranchers earn their livings by feeding a hungry world, and exports matter to us. There was a lot of concern expressed to me and among the farmers and ranchers who were gathered there about the potential of the withdrawal by the United States from NAFTA. Kansas is a good example. Our largest importer—the place to which we export the most agricultural commodities—is Mexico.

It is not just about commodities. In addition to the commodities, there are manufacturing jobs related to food and food products. There are 36,000 jobs that generate more than \$5.7 billion in economic activity, and approximately 14 percent of all jobs and 10 percent of all manufacturing jobs are tied to the food and agricultural sectors. So, when we talk about trade and exports, we are not just talking about shipping a ton of wheat or a carload of wheat to another country; we are also talking about all of the jobs here in the United States. It is not just in growing commodities and not just in raising cattle but all of the jobs that come from taking those commodities, turning them into food, and exporting the food to other countries as well.

I have had this conversation with people within the administration and with my colleagues in the U.S. Senate. I do believe the tax bill we passed will improve the economy and that farmers, lots of other business men and women, manufacturers, and others will experience greater economic opportunity as a result of the passage of the tax bill. I would highlight that the tax rates are a lot less important if we don't have income. If something would happen in which we would not be exporting—for example, if there would be a withdrawal from NAFTA—the outcome could be that the tax rates would become semi-irrelevant because the income levels of farmers and ranchers and those who would have jobs in the food sector would be significantly diminished. Less income means tax rates don't matter as much as they otherwise would.

Things are really difficult in agriculture today. Commodity prices are at low prices historically. The challenges are great. Weather, as I said earlier when speaking about crop insurance, is not always our friend. Across Kansas, the plea is for rain or snowfall or moisture. It is dry statewide. The challenges the producers in my State but really those across the country face are low commodity prices and weather, which are significant. What that means is, we need every additional market.

We cannot afford to lose any market to which we sell those commodities. More markets mean higher prices, and more demand means higher prices. Today, we need every penny we can gain on a bushel of corn or wheat or soybeans or grain sorghum. We need to make certain we don't lose markets but that we gain markets.

I commend the President for traveling to Nashville and speaking and meeting with the American Farm Bureau. I believe it has been 30-plus years since a President attended a Farm Bureau annual convention. I know, in my own experience both in the House and the Senate, reporters have often asked me to analyze what I have heard or haven't heard in a President's State of the Union Address. It has always been my practice to listen to a State of the Union Address and hear whether a President speaks about agriculture, about farmers, about ranchers, about rural America. Here we had a President who traveled to Nashville and spent time with those farmers and ranchers of America, and I am pleased the President did so.

I continue to encourage the administration to remain mindful of the role agricultural trade plays in our economy. I would indicate that our withdrawal from NAFTA is a high-risk strategy—a negotiating tactic, perhaps. It is true we have the highest quality of agriculture products available in the world, but other countries are very interested in taking our markets, and any indication that our markets are not going to continue gives countries like Argentina, Brazil, and others the opportunity to make the case that they will be stable suppliers. The things we raise in the United States they can sell and provide in those countries as well. My point is, we don't have a corner on the market, and any suggestion that we are not a stable supplier or that the trading relationship is going to diminish or disappear between two countries means that others are eagerly seeking to take those markets away from us.

Given the impact on our Nation's economy, I urge those conference attendees, those people I visited with in Nashville, to continue to convey to all of those policymakers the importance of trade and the importance of trade agreements.

The administration has a desire to develop bilateral as compared to multilateral trade agreements, and I encourage those negotiations to be ongoing today. We don't have any time to waste when it comes to finding new markets and trading relationships with other countries.

Again, I appreciate the President traveling to Nashville and spending time with farmers and ranchers, and I appreciate the agenda he outlined in regard to regulatory relief, as well as the issue of broadband, on which the President spent a significant amount of time, providing technology to a part of

the country that has, in many instances, been lacking or woefully inadequate.

But the bottom line is that rural America needs income. We can do lots of things to improve the quality of life in rural America, but in the absence of farmer success, in the absence of a farmer and rancher earning a living, the ability to attract our children or others to come back to the farm and the ability to retain our young people in the community to work on a farm diminishes greatly.

One of the questions I received was from a young lady studying in Texas, and this was her question: What are you doing to make certain that young people have a chance to be farmers? While my answer was less than perfect—it is a hard one to answer—it is an important question. The reality is that the chances of young people having the opportunity in agriculture to earn a living is totally dependent upon the economic success of those individuals in agriculture today and what the future holds. We can find a few programs that might encourage young people to be able to enter agriculture as a profession and as a career, but the reality is that it will only work when they are earning a good living, and that comes, once again, from the safety nets, including crop insurance, which will be included in a farm bill as it works its way through Congress this year, but also in the opportunity to see that every market around the globe is available to the U.S. farmer and rancher so that he and she will earn a living and so that they will increase the chances that their sons and daughters have the opportunity to work side by side with them into the future.

I especially want to thank a few people from the American Farm Bureau Federation for allowing me to attend and inviting me to attend and to speak—certainly, President Zippy Duvall, the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, from Georgia; Dale Moore, a Kansan who is at the American Farm Bureau Federation; and Mary Kay Thatcher, their long-time government affairs person. All of those individuals at the American Farm Bureau Federation do their job so well, but I especially want to acknowledge the friendship and support of those three individuals.

I am reminded that no matter where we go, farmers and ranchers have a lot in common. In addition to their economic importance to communities across Kansas and around rural America, it is farmers and ranchers that still today provide a sense of what is right in America—an understanding of right and wrong, an understanding of the value of life, integrity, character, and values. It is something that is important not just to rural America but to our entire United States of America. So thank you to the farmers who visited with me. Thank you to the farmers who gave me the opportunity to speak with them and listened to me.

Please know that I am happy and will continue to roll up my sleeves to work with my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats—the Senator from Kansas, the chairman of the Ag Committee; and the Senator from Michigan, the ranking member, Ms. STABENOW. Let's get a good farm bill done. Let's get it done on time, and let's all work together to make sure economic activity is alive and well and trade flourishes between the United States and the rest of the world.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I believe that my distinguished colleague and friend, Senator BLUMENTHAL, will be joining me on the floor. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business for such time as I may require and, at the conclusion of my remarks, that Senator BLUMENTHAL be recognized to make his remarks on the same subject.

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

SAFEGUARDING OUR ELECTIONS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, 2018 is going to be an election year. In just 10 months, Americans will go to the polls to exercise their franchise, believing in the integrity of our democratic process. I am here today to discuss a threat to the integrity of that process, which is getting little attention here in Congress—nothing near what it deserves. We really ought to be acting with some expedition to safeguard our elections this November. Yet, instead, the effort is one of chasing down partisan investigative rabbit holes.

What ought to be our job? Well, national security, intelligence, election, and law enforcement officials, many of them testifying before us here in Congress, have made what our job is very clear. We must counter Russia's well-established election interference playbook. Russia will hack. Russia will bully. Russia will propagandize. Perhaps more insidiously, Russia will seek to corrupt, particularly by exploiting cracks in our incorporation and campaign finance laws. We are warned: Russia will seek to interfere in 2018's election.

I ask unanimous consent that an article entitled "CIA's Pompeo says Russia and others trying to undermine U.S. elections" be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

To quote the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Heather Conley, testifying before Congress last spring, corruption is the "lubricant" for Mos-

cow's election interference, so "the battle of Western democracies to defeat corruption" must be seen as "a matter of national security."

Testifying before our Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee, former Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, agreed, saying of Russia's 2016 election meddling:

I believe [the Russians] are now emboldened to continue such activities in the future, both here and around world, and to do so even more intensely. If there has ever been a clarion call for vigilance and action against a threat to the very foundation of our democratic political system, this episode is it. I hope the American people recognize the severity of this threat and that we collectively counter it before it further erodes the fabric of our democracy.

How to counter it? Well, there are two important solutions that witnesses have identified in recent testimony before the Judiciary and other committees here in the Senate.

First, guard against the use of phony shell corporations as facilitators of corruption. Ms. Conley, as I said, wrote that corruption is the "lubricant" with which the Russians operate their interference schemes. She and her colleagues warn that to fight the corruption that gives Russia this channel of influence—and I quote her here—"enhancing transparency and the effectiveness of the Western democratic tools, instruments, and institutions is critical." One central way to cut off this channel of improper influence would be to require companies to disclose who their real owner is so that Russian influence can no longer hide behind anonymous American shell companies.

Another would be to crack down on the dark money that is flooding into American elections. It is illegal for foreign nationals to spend money or participate at all in American elections. Yet, post-Citizens United, the same dark money avenues that allow domestic election interference—for instance, that the Koch brothers use to manipulate American elections—are right out there to be used by Vladimir Putin. If they can hide their identity behind 501(c)(4)s and other dark money channels, so can operatives for the Russians.

Instead of taking up these important measures or even ensuring a thorough investigation into the 2016 election meddling, we are—to paraphrase the legendary Senator Sam Ervin of Watergate fame—chasing rabbits when we should be on a bear hunt.

Let's look at a few rabbits that have distracted us from the task at hand. Remember, when Michael Flynn, the President's former National Security Adviser, illicitly communicated with the Russian Ambassador about sanctions during the transition. Then in the White House, he lied to the FBI about it, which concerned the Justice Department so badly that the Acting Attorney General warned the White House Counsel personally, after which she was fired, but the President then

waited 18 days until all of this had become public in the media to ask for Michael Flynn's resignation. Out of all of that, the topic for many Republicans was the alleged leaks of classified information that allowed the story to come to light—not the story itself of problems at the highest level of our national security establishment. Off people went after the “leaks” rabbit.

Republicans then pivoted to talking about the “unmasking”—remember that word; we heard a lot of it around here—of identities in intelligence reporting and the purported misconduct of Obama administration officials. Trump even publicly suggested that former National Security Adviser Susan Rice may have committed a crime. So off people went after the “unmasking” rabbit.

Next, the President accused President Obama of wiretapping Trump Tower, an allegation so outrageous that even congressional Republicans have refused to stand by it, but my, what a bright and shiny rabbit it was for the weeks that it was still a distraction.

By the spring and summer, Republicans were railing against purported conflicts of interest by FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, a distinguished career public servant.

I ask unanimous consent that this article, “FBI ruled McCabe had no conflict of interest in Clinton probe,” be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

So off everybody went after the “McCabe's wife” rabbit.

After President Trump fired FBI Director James Comey to impede the Russia investigation and then told the Russian Foreign Minister and NBC that was why he had done it, the President launched another leak rabbit: a coordinated effort with his lawyers, congressional Republicans, and the rightwing media to suggest that Comey had leaked classified information by sharing with a friend his own contemporaneous notes of conversations with Trump.

Just last week, the President again suggested on Twitter that Comey should be charged with a crime—another bite at the “leaks” rabbit.

In early July, we learned of the June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower between Russian lawyer and operative Natalia Veselnitskaya and senior Trump campaign leaders seeking dirt on Hillary Clinton. Republicans tried to distract attention from that mess by suggesting that Veselnitskaya was in the country on a visa issued by Obama administration officials, with some rightwing media—aided by some congressional Republicans—even whipping on the “visa” rabbit by suggesting there was a setup orchestrated by the Obama administration against the Trump campaign.

Then came the “Fusion” rabbit. Because Fusion GPS had worked on separate projects—one with Christopher Steele and a separate one with Natalia

Veselnitskaya—some Republicans began suggesting either that Russia had been Fusion's client for the Steele dossier or that Steele was the unwitting victim of a Russian disinformation campaign.

Then there is the “Uranium One” rabbit, which began when a rightwing author suggested, without evidence, that Hillary Clinton may have been responsible for a Russian state company acquiring uranium mines in the United States. This rabbit remains a topic of investigation in Congress and in rightwing media.

Then there are the attacks on Bob Mueller, which, like rabbits, multiply by the hour. As the special counsel's investigation started heating up over the late summer and fall, the rightwing began investigating the investigation—alleged conflicts of interest, history of campaign donations, inappropriate text messages, questions about spouses' employment. But the big one was that the FBI was corruptly involved in the procurement of the Steele dossier and that this had launched the “witch hunt.” This, of course, is a very shiny rabbit.

However, a week ago, reporting by the New York Times confirmed that the FBI did not begin its investigation into Donald Trump's connections to Russia because of the so-called Steele dossier. This should not come as a surprise. We have already been told that U.S. allies warned American national security officials about Russian interference in our 2016 elections.

In response to a question from Ranking Member FEINSTEIN at our Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee hearing on May 8, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper confirmed that “Britain's intelligence service”—Britain's intelligence service—“first became aware in late 2015 of suspicious interactions between Trump advisers and Russian intelligence agents,” and the Brits passed that information on to U.S. intelligence agencies. Clapper confirmed that in “the spring of 2016, multiple European allies passed on additional information to the United States about contacts between the Trump campaign and Russians.” Clapper said that these reports were accurate and that “the specifics are quite sensitive.”

Now we have learned that Trump campaign foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos, who pled guilty last year to lying to the FBI, apparently told a senior Australian official in the spring of 2016 that Russia had dirt on Hillary Clinton. This is something he said he had been told by an intermediary for the Russians. When hacked emails started showing up that summer, Australia's Government became sufficiently concerned to let U.S. officials know about what they had learned from Papadopoulos.

So you have the British intelligence community warnings, the European intelligence community warnings, the Australian warnings, and Carter Page's travels to Russia. You have the attri-

bution of the DNC hack, the intrusion into those emails, to Russian hackers. You have the leaking of the stolen emails. You have abundant evidence out of all of that for the FBI that the Trump campaign's links to Russia required further investigation. It would have been a complete failure of their duty to not have looked further based on all of that evidence.

That is not to say that Christopher Steele and his work are not taken seriously by U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials. U.S. security agencies have relied on Steele's analysis long before any dossier appeared. Steele is a leading Russia expert. Beginning in 1990, as an undercover officer in Moscow, he watched the Soviet Union unravel. He observed Russia's current leaders ascend through the Russian security services during the 1990s and 2000s. He rose to a senior position on MI6's Russia desk in London. Since leaving MI6, his reports on Russia and Ukraine have been shared widely within the U.S. Government as credible reporting. A U.S. official told the Guardian that Steele's reports were “consistently reliable, meticulous, and well-informed.”

But you would never know this from listening to congressional Republicans. They have been repeating, in chorus with the White House and conservative media, the disproven claim that the Russians somehow commissioned the Steele dossier or that Steele somehow got suckered by the Russians or that some deep-state FBI set up the whole thing to pressure Trump. They have pushed to discredit Steele. They have pushed to discredit Fusion.

As one example, rewind to the Judiciary Committee's hearing on the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA, last July. On the morning of the second day of that hearing, the President tweeted: “One of the things that has been lost in the politics of this situation is that the Russians collected and spread negative information about then candidate Trump.” This is Trump tweeting about himself. His tweet came shortly after a segment on FOX News centered on the same question. Other rightwing outlets parroted the same message.

That same day, Republicans in Congress spun out the same premise that Russians paid for the dossier and that the dossier was, to use their word, the “genesis” of the FBI's inquiry. I hope we have made it clear that this was not the genesis.

While the FARA hearing was still going on, that same day, the gop.gov website published this post:

[W]e now know a Russian backed, Democrat connected research firm, with a history of smearing individuals and pitching fake information to reporters, was hired by opponents of President Trump to compile a “dossier” of supposed Trump ties to Russia.

The information that was compiled was taken seriously by the highest level of our intelligence community along with our media, despite obvious signs that the firm behind it was tied to Russia.

As a reminder, this phony “dossier” helped spark the investigation now led by Special Counsel Mueller.

That is the rabbit we are chasing now.

The uniformity of the rightwing message that day with the White House was telling, but the message—the content of it—is simply not true. In fact, at that hearing, the witness denied any knowledge of any link between Russians and the clients of the Steele dossier.

In the months that followed, Fusion GPS’s founder, Glenn Simpson, spent over 20 hours speaking with congressional investigators, including investigators from the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I ask unanimous consent that his op-ed be printed in the RECORD as a third and final item at the conclusion of my remarks.

During these interviews, he specifically told Democratic and Republican staff alike that the dossier was taken seriously by the FBI because it corroborated reports the Bureau had already received from other sources—remember the British, the European, the Australian we have talked about—and a source inside the Trump campaign. From the Time’s recent reporting, we can conclude that that source was George Papadopoulos. This has all been known for months, but the narrative about Fusion GPS and the FBI grinds on, unhinged from fact.

The revelation about George Papadopoulos and the Australian Government should serve as a clarifying moment about the rightwing effort to undermine Bob Mueller’s investigation of the ties of the Trump campaign and his Presidency to Russia. The FBI investigation did not begin because of opposition research. It did not begin because researchers or journalists or American national security officials fell victim to Russian disinformation. It did not begin because of fake news or because Democrats needed an explanation for losing an election. It began when multiple allies, friends of the United States, warned us that the Russian Government was interfering in our democratic process—something many of them knew about from Russia’s interference in their own democratic process.

We still do not know to what extent that interference may have been facilitated or even simply known to members of the Trump campaign or other Trump associates. We still have done nothing to prevent further interference in our elections in 2018. The special counsel’s investigation and the investigations going on in Congress must be allowed to continue until all of the facts are known.

Here in the Senate, we should stop looking for new distractions, stop chasing rabbits, and start thinking about how we are going to protect our future elections—our 2018 election—against a repeat performance, which we have been warned about, by the Russians or

another foreign adversary, for that matter.

As the Center for Strategic and International Studies warns in its report, “The Kremlin Playbook,” we must fight the avenues for corruption that give Russia influence. We must “enhanc[e] transparency” in government and build “resilience against Russian influence” in our elections and elsewhere in American society.

I will conclude by saying that the best measure of our success in Congress will be an America defended against foreign election interference in time to protect our 2018 elections. If we have not achieved that, we have failed at our duty. I do not see us presently on a path to meet that goal. We are less than a year out from election day. We have work to do. Enough with the rabbits.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CIA’S POMPEO SAYS RUSSIA AND OTHERS
TRYING TO UNDERMINE U.S. ELECTIONS
(By Susan Cornwell)

WASHINGTON (REUTERS).—The head of the Central Intelligence Agency said on Sunday that Russia and others are trying to undermine elections in the United States, the next major one being in November when Republicans will try to keep control of Congress.

U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election to try to help President Donald Trump win, in part by hacking and releasing emails embarrassing to Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, and spreading social media propaganda.

CIA Director Mike Pompeo told CBS that the Russian interference is longstanding, and continues. Asked on “Face the Nation” if Moscow is currently trying to undermine U.S. elections, Pompeo responded: “Yes sir, have been for decades.”

“Yes, I continue to be concerned, not only about the Russians, but about others’ efforts as well,” Pompeo said, without giving details. “We have many foes who want to undermine Western democracy.”

Moscow denies any meddling in the 2016 elections to help Republican Trump win. U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller is investigating whether any crimes were committed. Two Trump associates, former national security adviser Michael Flynn and campaign aide George Papadopoulos have pleaded guilty to lying to FBI agents in the probe. Trump denies any campaign collusion with Russia.

Trump has at times suggested that he accepts the U.S. intelligence agencies’ assessment that Russia sought to interfere in the election but at other times has said he accepts Russian President Vladimir Putin’s denials that Moscow meddled.

Trump has frequently spoken of wanting to improve relations with Putin, even though Russia has frustrated U.S. policy in Syria and Ukraine and done little to help Washington in its standoff with North Korea.

Pompeo told CBS that the CIA had an important function as a part of the national security team to keep U.S. elections secure and democratic. “We are working diligently to do that. So we’re going to work against the Russians or any others who threaten that very outcome,” he said.

Trump said on Saturday that he planned an active year on the campaign trail on behalf of Republican candidates running in the mid-term elections, in which all of the House

of Representatives and one-third of the Senate will be up for election. Republicans hold majorities in both.

[From The Hill, Jan. 5, 2018]

FBI RULED MCCABE HAD NO CONFLICT OF
INTEREST IN CLINTON PROBE: DOCS
(By Julia Manchester)

The FBI said in documents released Friday that Deputy Director Andrew McCabe did not have any role in the probe into Hillary Clinton’s private email server while his wife ran as a Democrat for state office in Virginia.

The documents note that Jill McCabe announced her candidacy for state Senate in Virginia in March 2015, while Andrew McCabe’s role as deputy director started in February 2016, three months after his wife lost her electoral bid.

Andrew McCabe had asked ethics officials if his wife’s candidacy would lead to a potential conflict of interest while he was working as an assistant director at the FBI Field Office in Washington, D.C., the documents show.

“From the first contemplation that his wife would run for office in Virginia, [McCabe] sought out and consulted with ethics officers, which included briefings on the Hatch Act,” the records state.

A “system of recusal” was also put in place to prevent any potential conflicts of interests, according to the documents.

The release of the documents comes after President Trump and other Republicans have claimed McCabe had a conflict of interest due to his wife’s electoral bid, noting that her campaign was supported by a super-PAC associated to Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D), a Clinton ally.

“How can FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, the man in charge, along with leakin’ James Comey, of the Phony Hillary Clinton investigation (including her 33,000 illegally deleted emails) be given \$700,000 for wife’s campaign by Clinton Puppets during investigation?” Trump tweeted last month:

“How can FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, the man in charge, along with leakin’ James Comey of the Phony Hillary Clinton investigation (including her 33,000 illegally deleted emails) be given \$700,000 for wife’s campaign by Clinton Puppets during investigation?” 3:27 PM—Dec. 23, 2017

Trump’s tweet and others he sent targeting the No. 2 FBI official amid the federal Russia probe came after it was revealed McCabe would be retiring from his post in the coming months.

Trump interviewed McCabe to be FBI director in May after he fired James Comey from the top post. The president ultimately tapped Christopher Wray for the bureau’s top spot.

[From the New York Times, Jan. 2, 2018]
THE REPUBLICANS’ FAKE INVESTIGATIONS
(By Glenn R. Simpson and Peter Fritsch)

A generation ago, Republicans sought to protect President Richard Nixon by urging the Senate Watergate committee to look at supposed wrongdoing by Democrats in previous elections. The committee chairman, Sam Ervin, a Democrat, said that would be “as foolish as the man who went bear hunting and stopped to chase rabbits.”

Today, amid a growing criminal inquiry into Russian meddling in the 2016 election, congressional Republicans are again chasing rabbits. We know because we’re their favorite quarry.

In the year since the publication of the so-called Steele dossier—the collection of intelligence reports we commissioned about Donald Trump’s ties to Russia—the president

has repeatedly attacked us on Twitter. His allies in Congress have dug through our bank records and sought to tarnish our firm to punish us for highlighting his links to Russia. Conservative news outlets and even our former employer, *The Wall Street Journal*, have spun a succession of mendacious conspiracy theories about our motives and backers.

We are happy to correct the record. In fact, we already have.

Three congressional committees have heard over 21 hours of testimony from our firm, Fusion GPS. In those sessions, we toppled the far right's conspiracy theories and explained how *The Washington Free Beacon* and the Clinton campaign—the Republican and Democratic funders of our Trump research—separately came to hire us in the first place.

We walked investigators through our year-long effort to decipher Mr. Trump's complex business past, of which the Steele dossier is but one chapter. And we handed over our relevant bank records—while drawing the line at a fishing expedition for the records of companies we work for that have nothing to do with the Trump case.

Republicans have refused to release full transcripts of our firm's testimony, even as they selectively leak details to media outlets on the far right. It's time to share what our company told investigators.

We don't believe the Steele dossier was the trigger for the F.B.I.'s investigation into Russian meddling. As we told the Senate Judiciary Committee in August, our sources said the dossier was taken so seriously because it corroborated reports the bureau had received from other sources, including one inside the Trump camp.

The intelligence committees have known for months that credible allegations of collusion between the Trump camp and Russia were pouring in from independent sources during the campaign. Yet lawmakers in the thrall of the president continue to wage a cynical campaign to portray us as the unwitting victims of Kremlin disinformation.

We suggested investigators look into the bank records of Deutsche Bank and others that were funding Mr. Trump's businesses. Congress appears uninterested in that tip: Reportedly, ours are the only bank records the House Intelligence Committee has subpoenaed.

We told Congress that from Manhattan to Sunny Isles Beach, Fla., and from Toronto to Panama, we found widespread evidence that Mr. Trump and his organization had worked with a wide array of dubious Russians in arrangements that often raised questions about money laundering. Likewise, those deals don't seem to interest Congress.

We explained how, from our past journalistic work in Europe, we were deeply familiar with the political operative Paul Manafort's coziness with Moscow and his financial ties to Russian oligarchs close to Vladimir Putin.

Finally, we debunked the biggest canard being pushed by the president's men—the notion that we somehow knew of the June 9, 2016, meeting in Trump Tower between some Russians and the Trump brain trust. We first learned of that meeting from news reports last year—and the committees know it. They also know that these Russians were unaware of the former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele's work for us and were not sources for his reports.

Yes, we hired Mr. Steele, a highly respected Russia expert. But we did so without informing him whom we were working for and gave him no specific marching orders beyond this basic question: Why did Mr. Trump repeatedly seek to do deals in a notoriously corrupt police state that most serious investors shun?

What came back shocked us. Mr. Steele's sources in Russia (who were not paid) reported on an extensive—and now confirmed—effort by the Kremlin to help elect Mr. Trump president. Mr. Steele saw this as a crime in progress and decided he needed to report it to the F.B.I.

We did not discuss that decision with our clients, or anyone else. Instead, we deferred to Mr. Steele, a trusted friend and intelligence professional with a long history of working with law enforcement. We did not speak to the F.B.I. and haven't since.

After the election, Mr. Steele decided to share his intelligence with Senator John McCain via an emissary. We helped him do that. The goal was to alert the United States national security community to an attack on our country by a hostile foreign power. We did not, however, share the dossier with BuzzFeed, which to our dismay published it last January.

We're extremely proud of our work to highlight Mr. Trump's Russia ties. To have done so is our right under the First Amendment.

In is time to stop chasing rabbits. The public still has much to learn about a man with the most troubling business past of any United States president. Congress should release transcripts of our firm's testimony, so that the American people can learn the truth about our work and most important, what happened to our democracy.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I now yield, per the pending agreement, to my distinguished friend from Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. President.

I thank my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE for his very erudite and insightful summary of the bright, shiny toys and rabbits and rabbit holes that a number of our colleagues have attempted to use to distract the Judiciary Committee and this body from what should be its quest for the truth; that is, the truth about the Russian attack on our democracy during the last election and potential collusion in that attack—specifically, collusion by the Trump campaign—and obstruction of justice. Indeed, obstruction of justice is within the direct purview of the Judiciary Committee.

I want to thank my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE for joining me in a letter that we wrote to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator GRASSLEY, asking that he very simply make public the transcript of the interview with Glenn Simpson conducted by our staff. Senator GRASSLEY declined. But, earlier today, Senator FEINSTEIN released the interview, advancing the American people's right and need to know the full truth.

I want to applaud Senator FEINSTEIN's leadership in using her proper authority as the ranking member to serve this vital public interest. I am grateful to her for her courage and strength in moving forward and disclosing the transcript to prevent its use as a dangerous distraction from the critical work of our committee. I want to thank at least one of our colleagues across the aisle, Senator CORNYN, for apparently supporting that step.

The toys and rabbits and rabbit holes are hardly new to efforts by defenders

of an administration against an investigation, and perhaps for some amusement as well as enlightenment, I want to cite a satiric column done by Art Buchwald in 1973.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the column be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

HERE ARE HANDY EXCUSES FOR NIXON BACKERS

(By Art Buchwald)

WASHINGTON.—These are difficult times for people who are defending the Nixon administration. No matter where they go they are attacked by pseudo-liberals, McGovern lovers, heterosexual constitutionalists and paranoid John Dean believers.

As a public service, I am printing instant responses for loyal Nixonites when they are attacked at a party. Please cut it out and carry it in your pocket.

- 1—Everyone does it.
- 2—What about Chappaquiddick?
- 3—A President can't keep track of everything his staff does.
- 4—The press is blowing the whole thing up.
- 5—Whatever Nixon did was for national security.
- 6—The Democrats are sore because they lost the election.
- 7—Are you going to believe a rat like John Dean or the President of the United States?
- 8—Wait till all the facts come out.
- 9—What about Chappaquiddick?
- 10—If you impeach Nixon, you get Agnew.
- 11—The only thing wrong with Watergate is they got caught.
- 12—What about Daniel Ellsberg stealing the Pentagon Papers?
- 13—It happens in Europe all the time.
- 14—People would be against Nixon no matter what he did.
- 15—I'd rather have a crook in the White House than a fool.
- 16—L.B.J. used to read FBI reports every night.
- 17—What's the big deal about finding out what your opposition is up to?
- 18—The President was too busy running the country to know what was going on.
- 19—What about Chappaquiddick?
- 20—People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.
- 21—McGovern would have lost anyway.
- 22—Maybe the Committee for the Re-Election of the President went a little too far, but they were just a bunch of eager kids.
- 23—I'm not for breaking the law, but sometimes you have to do it to save the country.
- 24—Nixon made a mistake. He's only human.
- 25—Do you realize what Watergate is doing to the dollar abroad?
- 26—What about Harry Truman and the deep freeze scandal?
- 27—Franklin D. Roosevelt did a lot worse things.
- 28—I'm sick and tired of hearing about Watergate and so is everybody else.
- 29—This thing should be tried in the courts and not on television.
- 30—When Nixon gives his explanation of what happened there are going to be a lot of people in this country with egg on their faces.
- 31—My country right or wrong.
- 32—What about Chappaquiddick?
- 33—I think the people who make all this fuss about Watergate should be shot.
- 34—If the Democrats had the money they would have done the same thing.
- 35—I never trusted Haldeman and Ehrlichman to start with.

36—If you say one more word about Watergate I'll punch you in the nose.

A—If the person is bigger than you: "If you say one more word about Watergate I'm leaving this house."

B—If it's your own house and the person is bigger than you: "What about Chappaquiddick?"

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Buchwald wrote a satirical list of tactics Republicans were using to keep Americans from focusing on the Watergate scandal. The list is eerily familiar. The tactics being employed by the Trump supporters today ring of those same tactics used in Watergate. Buchwald suggests focusing on accusations made against prominent Democrats or individuals who had accused Richard Nixon of wrongdoing. He suggests attacking the media. He suggests saying: "The Democrats are sore because they lost." He suggests deflecting blame to a "bunch of eager kids"—perhaps sounding like the reference to "coffee boys" today—and saying that this investigation is "bad for the dollar," much like bad for America abroad.

I am very confident—and I want to emphasize this point very emphatically—that the special counsel will be in no way distracted from his investigation and his team will be undeterred by these tactics. But the American people should not be distracted or deterred either and, equally important, the Judiciary Committee, the U.S. Senate, and the Congress as a whole has a duty here that is, in fact, vulnerable to that same distraction. We must persevere.

What our Republican colleagues are doing at this point is indicated by a recent New York Times article. The article describes President Trump's efforts to persuade congressional allies to drop their investigations, and it says:

Another Republican Senator said Mr. Trump had not urged him to help bring the Russia inquiry to a halt. Instead, the Senator said, the President nudged him to begin an investigation into Hillary Clinton's connection with the intelligence-gathering firm Fusion GPS, which produced a dossier of allegations about Mr. Trump's ties to Moscow.

The goal was to stop the investigation of Russian meddling, but the implication in the article is that the President knew he could achieve that goal as effectively, or at least more practically, by distracting from those investigations, diverting resources to other issues, and muddying the waters for the American people. That is the playbook from 1973 that is referenced by Art Buchwald in his 1973 column.

Here is the danger: Distractions are dangerous, and efforts to discredit law enforcement are equally perilous. Those efforts have included not only the urging for an investigation of Uranium One and Fusion GPS but also attacks on the integrity of some members of the FBI and the FBI as a whole and attacks on individual members of the special counsel's team, on the team as a whole, and on Robert Mueller himself. The effort plainly is to discredit the investigation before it reaches a

potentially incriminating conclusion and to stop the investigation, but if not stop it, at least to demean its credibility before charges are brought.

It is standard operating procedure. We know as prosecutors. The distinguished Senator from Rhode Island and I served as U.S. attorneys and then attorneys general for our States. We know going into the courtroom that we can expect to be attacked and that our teams can be expected to be attacked. That is what defense lawyers do. That is what they do because they hope to demean and discredit and dismantle the credibility of prosecutors before the jury in the courtroom. Here, the courtroom is not a court of law but the court of public opinion. Our Republican friends have launched that preemptive strike, methodically and meticulously, just as the special counsel is engaging in his investigation methodically and meticulously.

Now, I referred to Republican colleagues, and I believe strongly and passionately that many, if not most, of our Republican colleagues share our zeal for the rule of law and for a just outcome to this investigation. The reason is very simple. The Russian attack on our democracy imperils not just this administration and not just one election. It imperils our democracy as a whole. The meddling in our elections was perhaps done to advance the Trump candidacy in 2016, but it can be used against the Trump candidacy in 2020. It can be used against another Republican candidate in that year. It could be used in 2018 against other candidates for Congress or for State election.

My Republican colleagues have been as eloquent as any of us in defining that threat because there is no doubt in the intelligence community that it is a threat, that the Russians did interfere, and that they sought to advance the Trump candidacy. Whether there was an impact and what the impact was may never be known, but the effort is clear. It involved a massive campaign of disinformation, propaganda, cyber attack, and other means. That is what the FBI learned was happening, not as a result of Christopher Steele but from sources within the Trump campaign, including George Papadopoulos, and from other intelligence sources, and that is what we must make sure is known to the American public. We must make sure that anyone who aided the Russians pays a price and that the Russians themselves pay a price, because if there is no price, it will be done with impunity again.

So there should be—and I believe there is—bipartisan apprehension about that threat to our Nation's security. That is the reason that the Judiciary Committee's investigation, along with the special counsel, is so important, because our purview includes obstruction of justice and the integrity of the Department of Justice. Any interference politically with the FBI's investigation into Russian meddling

must be prevented in the future as well. Only the Judiciary Committee can frame and craft legislation that will help to protect the FBI.

Senator WHITEHOUSE and I, and Senator FEINSTEIN and others on the committee, will be proposing such legislation based on what we know so far. It is legislation that essentially protects the rule of law against such efforts to obstruct justice and politically interfere.

The intelligence community's conclusions about Russian meddling did not rely on the credibility of Glenn Simpson or Christopher Steele. The two guilty pleas and convictions that the special counsel has already secured do not rely on the credibility of Simpson or Steele. Without fear of contradiction, I can predict that additional convictions and indictments will be based on fact and law, not on the credibility of Simpson and Steele. The conclusions reached by Simpson, Steele, or anybody else are relevant only insofar as they are supported and backed and proved by facts and consistent with relevant law.

Now, in fact, as we know, Christopher Steele tried to blow the whistle on the Russians. He brought to the FBI's attention information that he thought was relevant to protecting the United States of America against Russian interference. As my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE has outlined in detail, the FBI already knew of it and courteously heard from Christopher Steele and later interviewed him.

The effort to undermine the credibility of the FBI by pointing to Christopher Steele completely misses the mark. In fact, I am deeply disappointed that the first major action by our Republican colleagues on the Judiciary Committee was aimed at someone who reported wrongdoing, not committed it, and it was done without any cooperation or even consultation with Democratic colleagues. It is really a betrayal of the spirit that I think should characterize this very serious investigation, because it should be bipartisan.

My hope is that these distractions, dangerous as they are, will, in fact, not divert either our committee or the special counsel. The pace of our committee's investigation—again, to be very blunt—has been shamefully slow. I hope that its pace will quicken and that it will intensify and that there will be hearings in public with witnesses under oath and subpoenas of documents. I have said it repeatedly. I hope we will use those tools because only by relying on our powers to investigate effectively and comprehensively will we protect the goals of upholding integrity and justice.

As for the special counsel and our law enforcement community, I think they should know that we support them and that we will protect the special counsel against political interference. That is why there is legislation I have proposed, along with my

colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE and others. It is bipartisan legislation. I thank Senators TILLIS and GRAHAM, as well as Senators COONS and BOOKER, for joining in this legislation. That legislation has already had a hearing. It should be voted to the floor and passed by the Congress so that there is no question that the special counsel will be protected against interference or firing.

As that investigation moves closer to the Oval Office, as it tightens its grip on members of the administration, there will be increasing threats and efforts to intimidate. The FBI and the Department of Justice, as well as the special counsel, have a well-earned reputation for integrity and zeal. It is part of our rule of law that a law is enforced. Enforcement of a law depends on thorough and independent investigations that are pursued without fear or favor, without efforts to distract or demean. This body, the U.S. Congress, has an obligation to support those kinds of values. They are uniquely American values. They are the underpinning of all of our laws, all that we hold dear, and all that we celebrate in this body and in this country.

My hope is that we will be part of the effort to avoid politicizing the pursuit of justice. Politicization of the pursuit of justice diverts energy and attention away from credible criminal investigations. It sends a message to this President and future Presidents—and everybody who occupies any office—that there are no repercussions for diverting and distracting and for the ploys and rabbit holes that may be used to squander resources or undermine credibility.

Republicans and Democrats alike should join in the effort to preserve the rule of law. My hope is that we will and will do so without delay because every day that passes when these kinds of false, baseless, and biased innuendos and rumors are raised and given credence is a day that undermines those values that we hold dear.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank Senators WHITEHOUSE and BLUMENTHAL for their remarks.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. President, it has been 100 days since this Congress allowed the Children's Health Insurance Program to expire. Congress did nothing in September, October, November, and December, and now we are more than a week into January—100 days of anxiety for parents, 100 days of wondering if their kids will be kicked off their coverage, 100 days of worrying if they will be able to afford their child's prescriptions or worrying whether they can take them to the doctor if they get the flu.

Members of Congress—new Members, such as Senators SMITH and JONES, Members like Senator HATCH, who has been here for 40 years, and all of us—have healthcare paid for by taxpayers.

We remember the discussion of the tax bill written down the hall in the office of Majority Leader MCCONNELL. The Senate found plenty of time in December to pass a massive handout for corporations. The Presiding Officer, the Senator from Florida, has since questioned whether too much of this bill went to corporate interests. More than 80 percent of the tax cut bill went to the richest 1 percent.

In addition, we know it was a massive handout for corporations that sent jobs overseas. We are going to see more companies shut down in Mansfield, Lima, Zanesville, Chillicothe, Portsmouth, and in big cities like Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati. We are going to see more plants close and move overseas because this Senate and the House passed a tax bill that encourages more corporations to ship jobs overseas. All the while, this body couldn't be bothered to give families more than a short-term funding Band-Aid for CHIP, which experts have said will not even last the last 3 months they promised.

I applaud the Presiding Officer, the Senator from Florida, for his efforts to enlarge at least some of the tax bill to put more money into the pockets of working families, particularly low-income working families. It was not enough, but at least some effort was made.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are reporting that some States will run out of money by January 19, next week. In my State of Ohio, 209,000 children rely on CHIP. Who are these kids? These are sons and daughters of Ohioans, who are working, in most cases, making \$8, \$10, or \$12 an hour. They are the sons and daughters of parents who don't have insurance not because they aren't working as hard or harder than we do, but they don't have insurance simply because their parents happen to work at a job where they are not provided insurance.

There are 209,000 Ohio children who rely on CHIP, a program that has been bipartisan for 20 years. It was without controversy in the past. Families in some States already got letters last year and early this year warning them that their children could lose their healthcare.

Think about these families. The parents of some of these millions of children around the country come home from work, working in a \$10-an-hour job, not making a lot of money. They are working every bit as hard as we do. They go to the mailbox and see a letter from their State government. I will read one of these letters, a copy of which went to tens of thousands of parents: Because Congress has not acted yet, we need to let you know there is a chance that the CHIP Program may have to be shut down. In other words, there is a chance that your children's health insurance will be cut off.

Remember, this is because of the inaction in this body. This is because Senators, who have insurance paid for

by taxpayers, would rather vote for tax cuts, would rather do whatever we do all day instead of renewing the Children's Health Insurance Program.

This letter goes on: If Congress does not renew Federal funds for CHIP in time, you will get another letter in January telling you your benefits will end.

So first, it is a warning. Some parents got this warning right around Christmastime. They are already struggling financially. They are not giving their children nearly as much as they want for Christmas because they are making \$8, \$10, or \$12 an hour. They are just trying to stay above water. They are just trying to raise their kids. They get a letter like this at Christmastime saying: If Congress doesn't act, there is really bad news; your kids are going to lose their insurance. Then the same letter says: If Congress doesn't act, in January you will get another letter saying your insurance is cut off.

It is already an expensive time of year. There is record cold in Ohio. Several of our grandchildren live in Columbus, one of them in St. Croix, and two in Providence, RI. When a number of our grandchildren were around, it was too cold to go outside. It was that kind of winter in Ohio. The day after Christmas, temperatures dropped to single digits for 5, 6, or 7 days running. Families are paying more for their heating bill. At Christmastime, of course, it is more expensive. Now their government adds to this list of worries.

How do they plan their budget for this year if they don't know whether or not they will have to shell out thousands of dollars more for care for their kids? Remember, 9 million children are at risk because of Republican inaction.

Senator PORTMAN, my Republican colleague from Ohio, and I and almost every other Senator on the Finance Committee voted to move forward on CHIP, to renew it for these 9 million children for 5 years. That was a good thing. It passed out of committee, but Senator MCCONNELL, for whatever reason, didn't think this was important enough to actually put it on the floor, move on it, and get it to the President.

I have no idea if the President will sign it. I don't think he knows much about the Children's Health Insurance Program, but I assume his advisers will say that it is probably a good idea to sign it. But he hasn't had a chance to sign it because the majority leader doesn't think this bill is important enough—that these 9 million children are important enough—that Congress should take action.

These are often families with two working parents. They might make \$8, \$10, or \$12 an hour, but they are working in jobs where they are not lucky enough to have health insurance. They work for companies or many for small businesses that, for whatever reason, can't afford it. Whatever the reason, they are working for companies that don't offer health insurance coverage

for their families, or they are families with children with special needs.

I have introduced to my colleagues before Crystal Lett. This is Crystal's son Noble, a first-grader in Dublin, OH, a small, prosperous suburb west and northwest of Columbus.

I met Crystal and Noble last year, when they made the trip from Ohio to Washington to talk to Members of Congress about CHIP. Crystal's life is not easy because she is taking care of a child with a disability whom she so clearly and dearly loves. I could see, watching Noble, how much he loves his mother and how important they are to each other.

Noble was born with a rare genetic disorder. He needs three therapy sessions every week. He gets daily hormone injections. His medications cost \$1,500 a month. I talked to Crystal when she visited. I talked to her again. We talked about how she and her family are scared to death about what will happen to them if Congress doesn't save CHIP.

This is not difficult. Congress has renewed it every year for 20 years. It is bipartisan. It has never had much of any opposition. There are a lot of people like Noble's mother. Crystal said CHIP is "the difference between living a middle class lifestyle, or being part of the poverty line."

Congress had time to hand out massive permanent tax cuts to the richest Americans and the biggest corporations that send job overseas, but it could only manage to scrape together just a little short-term 3 months of funding for these families.

It is really what is wrong with this city. Folks here listen too much to the lobbyists. I remember—and the Presiding Officer remembers, too—seeing the stream of lobbyists from drug companies, from insurance companies, from the big banks, and from the oil industry, in and out of Senator McConnell's office, writing a tax bill. We remember that from just a couple of months ago. But for some reason, Crystal and Noble couldn't get in that line—the line of lobbyists asking for huge tax breaks, saving billions of dollars for their employers while these lobbyists are paid very well. But, frankly, there was nobody having the political wherewithal to convince the majority leader that we ought to move on the CHIP bill.

Healthcare for our kids shouldn't be controversial. It never was until this recent Senate and until this recent President was sworn in. It shouldn't be partisan. It should be easy. It is a program created 20 years ago. It was bipartisan. It has always been bipartisan. It still has bipartisan support today, except that the Speaker of the House down the hall and the majority leader a little closer to us just simply don't want to pass it.

We passed the CHIP extension out of the Finance Committee. It is ready to go. Republican leaders could put it on the floor today, and it would pass. I am

guessing that it would pass with no more than 5 or 10 "no" votes.

I want my colleagues to explain to Noble's mother Crystal and to explain to other mothers and fathers like her why corporate tax cuts are more important than their children's health.

This is about whose side you are on. Do we work for the corporations that send our jobs overseas, do we work for those companies that line up hungrily for tax breaks, or do we work for families who just want the peace of mind so they can take their kids to the doctor?

It is past time for folks in Congress, with taxpayer-funded healthcare, to do their jobs and extend CHIP. I don't want more families to get a letter like this from their capital city, from the Department of Welfare or the Department of Job and Family Services, whatever it is in each community in each State. I don't want any more parents to go to the mailbox, to open this letter, and to have that fear and anxiety hit them in their gut, thinking: Oh, my God, my children's health insurance may be canceled.

We can do better than that.

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. 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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Arlington, VA.

Hon. BOB CORKER,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 17-69, concerning the Navy's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Japan for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$133.3 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

CHARLES W. HOOPER,
Lieutenant General, USA,
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17-69

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of Japan.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment * \$123.0 million.

Other \$10.3 million.

Total \$133.3 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):

Four (4) Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA Missiles.

Non-MDE: Also included are four (4) MK 29 missile canisters, U.S. Government and contractor representatives' technical assistance, transportation, engineering and logistics support services, and other related elements of logistical and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Navy (JA-P-ATB).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: January 9, 2018.

* As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Japan—Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA Missiles

Government of Japan has requested a possible sale of four (4) Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA missiles. Also included are four (4) MK 29 missile canisters, U.S. Government and contractor representatives' technical assistance, transportation, engineering and logistics support services, and other related elements of logistical and program support. The estimated total case value is \$133.3 million.

This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by improving the security of a major ally that has been, and continues to be, a force for political stability and economic progress in the Asia-Pacific region.

The proposed sale will provide Japan with an increased ballistic missile defense capability to assist in defending the Japanese homeland and U.S. personnel stationed there. Japan will have no difficulty absorbing these additional munitions and support into the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF).