

agribusinesses properly store and handle farm input supplies. The program helps members ensure they are compliant with federal environmental, health, safety, security, and transportation regulations, including CFATS, to keep employees, customers and communities safe.

The CFATS program provides an important framework to ensure facilities are taking appropriate steps to be safe and secure. The current Congressional authorization for CFATS is set to expire in January of 2019. Any lapse in authorization of the CFATS program would subject our members to uncertainty in an already volatile agricultural market and environment.

S. 3405 makes several improvements to the CFATS program. We are pleased to see the legislation requires DHS to conduct notice and comment rulemakings to make changes to Appendix A. This requirement will ensure a thorough exchange of information is done so the most informed decisions can be made.

ARA and TFI also appreciate the inclusion of Section 7, which would make the Personnel Surety Program requirements of CFATS optional for tier 3 and 4 facilities. Tiers 3 and 4 facilities do not face the same insider threat possibility as tiers 1 and 2. This provision gives industry the flexibility to find a personnel surety solution that best fits their facility and security needs.

ARA and TFI also strongly support Section 5, entitled, "CFATS Recognition Program." This portion of the legislation will allow DHS to utilize and focus limited resources, while incentivizing other facilities to voluntarily come into compliance through stewardship programs. Stewardship programs, like ResponsibleAg, are already working to identify gaps in CFATS compliance at agricultural retail facilities. When gaps in compliance are identified, ResponsibleAg works with the facility on a timely and thorough corrective action plan to bring that facility into compliance. A "CFATS Recognition Program" would be a great "win-win" and strengthen the collaborative partnership between industry and government.

Finally, thank you for your leadership regarding reauthorization of the CFATS program. We appreciate all of you and your staffs' efforts to make a good government program better.

Should you have any questions, please reach out to our staff, Kyle Liske at ARA.

Sincerely,

DAREN COPPOCK,
President and CEO,
Agricultural Retailers Association.

CHRIS JAHN,
President and CEO,
The Fertilizer Institute.

INSTITUTE OF MAKERS OF EXPLOSIVES,
Washington, DC, September 12, 2018.

Hon. RON JOHNSON,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR JOHNSON: Yesterday our nation marked another somber milestone, the 17th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. That tragedy led to great changes in our government, including the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As directed by Congress, DHS focuses on securing high-risk chemical plants through the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) program. The members of the Institute of Makers of Explosives (IME) fully support your legislation that reauthorizes this important program, the Protecting and Securing Chemical Facilities from Terrorist Attacks Act of 2018 (S. 3405), and we urge the Senate to approve the legislation.

Founded in 1913, IME is the safety and security institute for the commercial explosives industry, a charge we do not take lightly, as evidenced by the industry's excellent security track record and work with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, among other agencies. IME represents manufacturers of commercial explosives and other companies that distribute explosives or provide related services. Commercial explosives are used in every state and are distributed worldwide. The ability to manufacture and distribute these products safely and securely is critical to this industry and to the mining, construction, and oil & gas industries that use our products. IME takes an active role in promoting responsible practices through the full life cycle of commercial explosives and regularly publishes, updates, and distributes free of charge, our series of Safety Library Publications (SLPs), including SLP 27, Security in Manufacturing, Transportation, Storage and Use of Commercial Explosives, to the benefit of our workers and the general public.

Your leadership, as demonstrated by including improvements identified during the June CFATS roundtable oversight hearing which you chaired, is greatly appreciated. The commercial explosives industry looks forward to work with you and the Committee to reauthorize the CFATS program. We believe that S. 3405 enhances national security while reducing blatantly duplicative regulations; clearing the path for government to focus resources on highest priority threats to our national security while allowing industry to invest their time and resources in a regulatory system that has proven to be effective.

IME fully endorses S. 3405 and urge the Senate to pass this common-sense solution without delay. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to advance this important legislation.

Respectfully,

JOHN BOLING,
Vice President of Government Affairs.

Mr. JOHNSON. Having gone through all this work, all this oversight, taking that responsibility seriously, I recently have been asked to support a 1-year reauthorization of the program without any reforms. Without any consultation, Secretary Nielsen just sent me a letter completely ignoring the work our committee has done and informing of her support for a "short-term" extension.

Today, I was told the House plans to pass not a 1-year but a 2-year extension with no reforms. The House is claiming they cannot possibly consider reforms because there is simply not enough time, because they haven't done any oversight, because they didn't mark up a bill in this Congress. Yet the House Committee on Homeland Security has had years to act.

My committee did the work. We did act. Now I am being threatened with a false choice: Either reauthorize the program as is, without much needed reforms, or let it die. In fact, there is a much better third choice: Pass S. 3405, the bill our committee passed unanimously, the bill that provides unanimous reforms that strike the right balance between security and efficiency.

Again, our committee did the work. We did act. And I have to tell all my colleagues here, this is the only option I will support.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— CALENDAR NO. 670, S. 3405

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 670, S. 3405. I further ask that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn; the Johnson substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Thank you, Mr. President.

In the wake of 9/11, Congress took a fresh—I want us to walk back in time a little bit to how we actually got here today.

In the wake of 9/11, Congress took a fresh look at some of our Nation's vulnerabilities and realized that our country's chemical facilities—part of our industry that our Presiding Officer knows a lot about—realized that our country's chemical facilities could be potential targets for terrorist attacks. So we created the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards Program, known as CFATS, to better protect high-risk chemical facilities from those looking to do us harm.

My recollection is not perfect, but my recollection is that among the people who were the prime authors of that were, I believe, Senator COLLINS from Maine and possibly Senator Lieberman from Connecticut, the senior Democrat and senior Republican on the Homeland Security Committee at that time. The program that was created—I believe, and I hope I am not mistaken, with their guidance and leadership at that time, roughly 10 years ago—started out with some stumbles out of the gate, as some of you may recall. The Department of Homeland Security—then a younger organization—lacked the trust of industry. The program also lacked a long-term authorization. There was a fair amount of concern about predictability, and we know how businesses like predictability and certainty, which is understandable.

In 2014, Senator Coburn and I, the chairman of the committee at the time—and he was the ranking member—we had what turned out to be a great partnership on a lot of issues, including this one. We worked with industry stakeholders, the Department of Homeland Security, their folks, labor groups, and others in order to provide CFATS with a clear statutory authorization laying out the roles and responsibilities of chemical facility owners in securing their sites against attack.

What was first created when CFATS was a brandnew bill becoming a brandnew law was obviously not perfect. That is why we came back roughly 5 years later to perfect it. What we did in 2014—I think that is the right year—what we did then was not perfect

either. I think he knew that, and I knew that as well.

Having said that, it appears, for the most part, that the reauthorization that we worked on is working. It is not perfect, but it is working a whole lot better than what has been replaced. The GAO, for example, has reported that the Department eliminated the inspections backlog. We had a very long inspections backlog—huge. We have worked through that, and the Department has worked through that. I think we are seeing, over time, improved trust and a sense of cooperation between the Department and the stakeholders, including those in the industry.

The authorization that Senator Coburn and I worked on, which was almost 5 years ago, is set to expire in January. If it does, this important anti-terrorism program will, most likely, go back to a year-to-year authorization. Industry and labor groups and the Department deserve, I think, more certainty than that this time.

To his credit, Chairman RON JOHNSON and his staff have worked cooperatively with mine this week to address a number of outstanding issues with the bill that was reported out of committee. It was one of those bills that was reported out of the committee—and we have all been there with, I think, an implicit understanding, a tacit understanding, that some work would be done on the bill on the way to the floor. With that in mind, at least this week, there has been an effort to do that from his staff and, I think, from my staff.

I thank him for his willingness to reinsert the enhancement to whistleblower protections that our ranking member of the Homeland Security Committee, CLAIRE MCCASKILL, and her staff worked hard to try to enshrine. However, the bill still contains a number of concerning provisions.

Most importantly, the bill would exempt facilities that store and manufacture some of the most dangerous materials—chemical explosives—from regulation under CFATS if they are subject to a separate regulatory program. This change, as far as I know, has not been studied adequately, as a number of folks have suggested, and if enacted, it could expose our communities to significant harm.

Earlier today, I was surprised to receive a copy of a letter that I hold here from the Secretary of Homeland Security. I think the chairman alluded to it already. This letter from Secretary Nielsen basically urges caution in making the kinds of changes that our chairman's bill would provide. She has urged the House and the Senate to pass a clean reauthorization of the program in order to ensure that it does not elapse. So I was surprised to get this today and, I think, anticipating I would have this opportunity to have a back-and-forth with our chairman on a unanimous consent request.

I was also surprised to hear this morning that the chairs and the rank-

ing members of the House's Homeland Security Committee and the Energy and Commerce Committee—committees that have shared jurisdiction over the CFATS Program—basically answered the administration's Secretary of Homeland Security's call by introducing a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the program for 2 years. Their bill—although, not perfect—would provide a 2-year extension—not perfect—or a 1-year extension—not perfect. Their bill would provide industry and stakeholders with the certainty they need but, maybe, not without some of the changes that should be made in the program as we know it.

I am trying to remember the name of a Paul Newman movie. Maybe the chairman can help me. I think it was "Cool Hand Luke." Maybe the Presiding Officer can help me with the movie Newman was in when he was captured and was a prisoner and an inmate. He escaped, and he was hard to catch. Before he escaped, he was always at odds with the warden, who was a short, stout guy. It was cast in the South, so this guy had a real southern accent—the warden. They tracked him down. They had dogs, and they were doing everything they could to track down the character who was played by Paul Newman.

I see the Presiding Officer smile. He remembers this movie.

They finally captured Paul Newman, and the warden was really happy that they had their guy. He looked at Paul Newman, and I will never forget what he said: "What we've got here is failure to communicate." Yet I cannot do justice to his accent.

I think, really, what we have here is a failure to communicate. Senator RON JOHNSON and I get along pretty well, I hope. Until, actually, today or yesterday, we haven't had the kind of communication on this issue that we ought to have been having on something this important. I can object, and he can object to anything I might try to do with a 1- or a 2-year straight extension, but I think what we really need to do is kind of like lay down our arms—not literally our arms—and go back not necessarily to our respective corners but to a negotiating table and, maybe, even invite some of our House colleagues and the Department—which, obviously, has a clear interest in doing this—and some other stakeholders to join us as well.

We are going to be in session. What is today? Today is the 29th of November. We could be here for a couple more weeks. I think there is probably time to, maybe, hammer something out. At the end of the day, if we are not successful in doing that, then we come back out here and go through all of this machination and object and counter object and so forth.

I think the folks who care about this and the communities that care about this—the folks who are in the chemicals business and the folks who make explosives—as well as the Department,

which has jurisdiction, would like to see us try to work it out. As the chairman knows and as the Presiding Officer knows, we are working on a number of things together, and it is always my inclination to try to work things out. I think there is a win-win here. We just need to work a little harder to, as we say in Delaware, seize the day. I don't know much Latin, but I do know "carpe diem." In Delaware, we say "car-pa dee-um." We need to seize the day before time expires in a couple of weeks. That would be my thought.

I yield to the chairman for any thoughts that he has. He may want to pour water on what I just said. I hope not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. I am happy to respond.

The Senator from Delaware is well aware that we have been working. We have already agreed on three improvements from your standpoint. We increase the frequency of inspections for companies participating in CFATS recognition programs. We have added a third-party study to look at how workers can be made more aware of the fact that their facilities are covered by CFATS. We had a future GAO study to look back at how our provision exempting explosive materials covered by both CFATS and ATF is affecting the program.

We are already making movement. If you want to discuss this for a few more days, fine. Time is, obviously, running out.

I do want to make everybody aware of the fact that because we have done this work, because we have passed this out of our committee unanimously, I am not in any way, shape or form, accepting some of the typifications in terms of the fact that we have not communicated. We have been trying for months to work with the House. There has just been no yield whatsoever. There has been no give whatsoever. There has been very little desire on its part to do anything other than to have a "take it or leave it," a "let's extend this," a "no reforms." That is, simply, unacceptable to me.

I have great respect for President Ronald Reagan. I don't want to prove him wrong. I, actually, want to reauthorize this thing. Yet if we can't come to an agreement with a reformed, reauthorized CFATS Program, I am more than willing to prove Ronald Reagan wrong when he said, to paraphrase, that the closest thing to eternal life on this Earth is a government program. I will let the program expire because I really do not think it really enhances the security of our Nation. It, certainly, has not been proven in that way, and without reforms, I am happy to let this program go by the way of the dinosaur.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. I am trying to think of a really quick comeback to this, but

my memory fails me. I have a pretty good one from JOHN KENNEDY, who once said to never negotiate out of fear but always be ready to negotiate. That is the preference—to never negotiate out of fear but be willing to negotiate.

I would just suggest that we kind of withdraw from what we are trying to do here in a parliamentary way and get back to negotiating. If, in the end, we come back here in a week or two, we come back, but I would like to give it the old college try.

Mr. JOHNSON. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. CARPER. I yield to the Senator.

Mr. JOHNSON. Again, I am happy to do that, but we have not had that kind of engagement. Right now, there is, basically, a gun to my head, threatening me to take it or leave it. That is not collegial, and that is not a very high-integrity approach. I am happy to sit down. Let's continue working on this thing. This program needs reforms. We have done the work, and I think that work needs to be recognized and respected. Again, let's sit down and get our staffs together on this, and let's reauthorize and reform the CFATS Program.

Mr. CARPER. I welcome your words.

I used to be a House Member. I think we need to respect their views as well. Obviously, they have some views that need to be taken into account. This is not something I have discussed with the Secretary. I don't even know how much she has thought about it, given everything else that is on her plate. Yet, clearly, she has people who work for her who have thought about it a lot, and I would very much welcome the chance to reengage with our chairman, his staff, and our staff but with some of the other stakeholders we have talked about here being engaged as well. We need to put some pedal to the metal and get something done.

Mr. JOHNSON. Will the Senator please yield?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Had the House put an ounce of effort—of work—into this, I would have something to respect, but they have done nothing other than, basically, just to threaten me with these types of tactics. So, again, let's work together. Let's provide a product that we can present to the House and that they can pass.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is before the Senate a pending unanimous consent request.

Is there objection?

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I was prepared to ask the Senator to modify his request to the Senate and, instead, take up a bill that I have introduced that basically reflects what the Secretary has done and what the House has done and is at the desk.

Help me on this, Mr. President. I think the chairman of the committee is willing to withdraw his unanimous consent request. I think that is a good way to go.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I am not withdrawing my unanimous consent request. He can object to it, and we will work with him, but I will not consider that the final say. We will work in very good faith to come up with something better and come back to the floor, hopefully, with a bill that we have agreed to.

Mr. CARPER. I don't get to object to unanimous consent requests every day. I think I will do that in this case just to see what it feels like, but do it in the spirit of trying to get something done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is an objection to the unanimous consent request.

Mr. JOHNSON. The objection is taken in that spirit.

Mr. CARPER. Good. All right. Thank you.

Democracy. What did Churchill say? Democracy is the worst form of government devised by way of man, except for all the rest. He also said that you can always count on America to do the right thing in the end, after trying everything else. Hopefully, in the end, we will get a lot closer to perfection. So let's give it a shot.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO RON TRAVIS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, it is Thursday, and that means it is typically time for me to recognize somebody in my State who has made a big difference for Alaska, sometimes someone who has made a big difference for America. We like to call that person the Alaskan of the Week.

For the pages, I know this is your favorite time of the week because these are usually great stories about great Alaskans, great Americans. Today, I guarantee you I am not going to disappoint you talking about another great Alaskan.

I like to brag about Alaska—its beauty, its mystique, its great people, its vastness, its welcoming communities, its tough people, and its tough environment. Everybody should visit.

If you are watching, come on up, and come on up in winter, by the way, not just the summer. The northern lights are out. You can see them. They are beautiful. We actually get a lot of tourists in the winter, believe it or not.

There is something else that is very unique about my State, very special, and it is this: It is one of the most patriotic States in the entire country. There are more veterans per capita than any State in America. We like to brag about that. I certainly like to brag about my constituents who serve in the military and their families' sacrifice. So many of these veterans—like they do throughout the country, so many of our Alaskan veterans devote time, energy, and resources to giving back to the community but to also helping with other veterans.

We all know that a few weeks ago we celebrated Veterans Day. As part of that celebration and as part of our "Alaskan of the Week" series, I want to recognize today's Alaskan of the Week, Mr. Ron Travis, along with his wife Linda, and what they have done in terms of spending years making a difference for American veterans—Alaskan veterans—hundreds, if not thousands.

Let me tell you a little bit about Ron. He came from a patriotic family. His father fought in World War II. His mother was a member of the VFW Auxiliary. In 1961, Ron joined the Navy, where he served from 1960 to 1964 as a machinist's mate, third class, on the USS *Providence*. This was a guided-missile cruiser and was the first U.S. Navy ship to travel up the Saigon River and park in front of Saigon during the Vietnam war. So he is a Vietnam vet. We love our Vietnam vets.

After he got out of the military, he used the GI bill to go to college at what was then Eastern Washington College in 1967. There was a lot of turmoil during that time in our country, particularly on college campuses. This was during the height of the Vietnam war. There were a lot of protests.

When he was in college, like so many Vietnam veterans, he was certainly upset to see a lot of the protests. He was particularly infuriated to see his professors canceling class so they could join the protestors. He said: "A lot of the teachers we had didn't even know what Vietnam was," but they went out and protested.

However, there was a rule on campus that even if one student showed up for class, the professor couldn't cancel the class to join the protestors. So Ron and other veterans formed a club. They organized a club at their university to make sure there was a veteran in every classroom. It was a pretty good idea—keep the professors doing what they were supposed to be doing, teaching.

They also helped veterans pay for books they needed and got them help with their classes. Again, veterans helping veterans is what Ron has been doing his whole life. It turned into the biggest club on campus.

There was another club on campus—it is kind of infamous—the Students for a Democratic Society, better known as the SDS. It was not necessarily the most pro-military group in the country at the time, to say the least. At one point, they tried to take over the veterans club's canteen, but that didn't work. As Ron said, "They forgot one thing. We would fight for what we believe in." We had already done that.

Now, fortunately, it never came to blows. He is quick to point that out, but the SDS certainly backed down to Ron's veterans club.

Eventually, Ron made his way up to the great State of Alaska to work on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Like so many people who come up to our State, he fell in love with it. He brought his

wife Linda to Alaska to settle. They settled in a wonderful community called Big Lake—it is about an hour's drive from Anchorage—and they made a wonderful life for themselves. They built a cabin off the grid. They raised their kids in Alaska.

Ron worked as a mechanic all across the State, then as a parole officer. Eventually, he realized he had health issues associated with the service in Vietnam—exposure to Agent Orange.

The American Legion advocated for him to get help, so he joined the American Legion—Post 35, in particular—in Wasilla, AK, and began to get more and more involved in veterans' issues, eventually becoming the commander of the post.

Then, again, duty called another time for Ron to help with regard to our veterans.

I say to the Presiding Officer, no doubt you and most other people watching have heard about this great network of Americans called the Honor Flight Network. This network has chapters in individual States that bring veterans to Washington, DC, at no cost to the veteran so they can visit the memorials that, in many ways, they have dedicated their lives to—the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial.

It is an outstanding program that started with bringing World War II veterans here who haven't seen the wonderful World War II Memorial on the Mall that was built for them and finished in 2004.

Because of Alaska's distance—literally thousands of miles from DC—we did not have a program. Despite having all of these veterans, we did not have an Honor Flight Program. Well, guess who changed that. Ron and his wife Linda.

They were at a veterans facility when they were down in Washington State visiting Ron's mother in a rest home. At that facility, they met another veteran. He told him all about the Honor Flight Program and showed him pictures of a recent trip. He said: Do you know what? Alaska needs to do this. Alaska needs to do this. Ron said: Someone should start one. Someone should start one of these programs. He looked at his wife, and they realized they were going to start it, and the Last Frontier Honor Flight Program was born.

Two times every year, since 2013, they organize a trip for up to 25 veterans, their escorts, a photographer, a doctor, and two staff members. They come to Washington, DC, to visit the different memorials for our veterans living in Alaska—World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. All told, they have organized trips for 286 veterans. One hundred fifty-five of them fought in World War II just from Alaska.

It is not an easy flight, especially for some of our older veterans, but they are all doing it through Ron's and Linda's love and care and dedication.

His goal is to try to reach out to as many World War II veterans as they

can while they are still with us. Of course, it is a trip of a lifetime for so many of these veterans. A "wonderful gift," one veteran called it. Others have referred to it as their "final mission."

Ron says, the veterans often shed tears in front of the World War II Memorial. "It takes them by surprise," he said. "They often don't realize how much they feel" until they see it. It is a healing mission and trip for them. They do a lot of things during these trips. "It's an honor to be part of it."

I try to see Ron and his team every time they come to Washington, DC. We usually greet them with a couple dozen doughnuts when they are out looking at these wonderful memorials.

Ron recalls one particularly wonderful moment with one of the World War II veterans he brought from Alaska when he was in front of the World War II Memorial. He was approached by a woman who was also visiting the memorial. He saw them talking. Then they hugged. Then they cried—total strangers. What was going on there?

This woman's parents had been at the concentration camp, Dachau. The veteran—the World War II veteran, the Alaskan veteran—had been part of the unit that liberated the camp. Her parents, she said, were in some ways alive because of what he and his unit did to liberate them. That happened right here on the Mall—powerful.

Ron credits the community in Alaska for making these trips possible. Of course, he and Linda are being humble. There has been great community involvement. Alaska Airlines pays for the flights for the veterans and offers discounts for the escorts. Various community organizations and veterans groups and businesses help pay for the hotel rooms and all of the food. Volunteers and board members come together to raise money.

The community that helps with these trips includes our Active-Duty and Reserve Forces in Alaska. Back home, when they come home—many of whom are in wheelchairs—hundreds of Alaskans come out to greet them in the airport. It is great. It is wonderful.

It is the community of my State and really the community of this great country coming together, but it needs leaders. It needs leaders, and Ron and Linda have been those leaders, founding the Alaska Last Frontier Honor Flight.

I thank Ron and Linda for their great service to Alaska, great service to their country, great service to our veterans, for all they have done, and congratulate them on being our Alaskans of the Week.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

EMPOWERING OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

MR. NELSON. Mr. President, I want to talk about trickle-down economics and give my colleagues an example of why it doesn't work, particularly in parts of the country that have long

been neglected by the power structures in those communities.

Let's take, for example, South St. Petersburg, FL. St. Petersburg is a part of Pinellas County. It is one of our major cities in Florida. It is at the tip of a peninsula that wraps around Tampa Bay. South St. Pete is riddled with poverty. According to the Census Bureau, 16.4 percent of the people who live there live below the Federal poverty line, 6.7 percent of which have jobs, but they still live in poverty. Now, there is something wrong with that. If you have a job, you shouldn't be living in poverty.

What we know, as a result of a survey by the United Way, is that 44 percent of people in Florida, according to this survey taken in 2016—44 percent of the people in Florida, almost half—do not earn enough money to make ends meet. That means they don't have enough money for food, for housing, for healthcare, for transportation, and for child care—essentials for someone who is working to be able to have enough to live day to day. So there is something wrong with this.

We find people living in pockets of poverty all across this country, but I want to give an example of it in South St. Petersburg, FL. Many people there don't make enough to make ends meet and, of course, that means that you have to have both spouses working. Forty-four percent of the people do not have an economic situation that enables them to make ends meet. So what do they do to compensate? They work two, three jobs in order to compensate.

So in South St. Petersburg there are a lot of people who don't even have a job. It is not because they don't want jobs. It is because a lot of the established financial power—including banks, corporations, and big investors—in areas that are depressed like this one see it as a lost cause. They don't believe it has the economic potential to support new business.

I want to tell you a great success story about what a husband and wife team, Elihu and Carolyn Brayboy, found out when they tried to open a restaurant on 22nd Street in South St. Pete, an economically depressed part of the town that was long overlooked by those at the top of the economic ladder. I want to show my colleagues a picture of them. This is the Brayboys.

In fact, the building the Brayboys wanted to use for their restaurant sat idle for the previous 35 years. It was basically wasting away. When the Brayboys went looking for a loan to buy the building, every lender they went to said: No, it is too depressed. It sat vacant for 35 years.

Everywhere they went, they heard the same thing: The community will not be able to bring in enough business, and you will not be able to get enough customers from outside the community to visit that area.

Most people would have given up after receiving so many noes or given

in to the pressure to put the restaurant in a more acceptable part of town, but like most people in South St. Pete, the Brayboys are a different cut because they are not easily deterred. If there is one thing my colleagues should know about the people of South St. Pete, it is this: Don't test their resolve, because you are in for a surprise.

Undeterred, Mr. and Mrs. Brayboys took money out of their 401(k) accounts and poured all of their life savings into buying that hulk of a building on 22nd Street. After gutting the inside and pouring in their blood, sweat, and tears into remodeling the property, Chief's Creole Cafe opened in November of 2014 and has been going strong ever since, creating jobs and changing the way people think about South St. Pete. This is a picture of how the restaurant looks today.

Despite the warnings of all of those doubtful lenders, they have been able to sustain the business by attracting both locals and customers from outside of the area of South St. Pete. Does that not look like something that is a well-run, growing, successful business?

So the old saying stands: If you build it, and if you really try, they will come.

Now, this is a great story of stubborn determination triumphing over fear and adversity and rejection after rejection, but this type of story is few and far between in too many parts of Florida and across the country.

So let me show you another picture. This is the Three Oaks Plaza. The Three Oaks Plaza used to be the location of a Dollar Tree store, but the store closed last year. This is how it used to look, and this is how it looks now. The closing of the Dollar Tree store came on the heels of the closing of the local Walmart nearby.

Unfortunately, this is all too common in South St. Pete and too many other parts of Florida. The problem isn't new, but we need a new way to think about it. We need economic policies that rely less on outside investors and outside companies to come in and remake the image of the area and rely more, instead, on empowering local residents to create their own businesses. They are more likely to keep profits in the community, creating a more sustainable loop of economic activity.

That is what I want to recommend that this Senate and future Senates do with legislation. Consider the example of legislation that I introduced earlier this year called the Economic Modernization Act. That bill does a lot of things, but one key thing it does is to create a new tax break for local businesses that move into buildings that have long sat idle and vacant. Under a piece of legislation such as that, if a business moves into a building that has been vacant for 2 or more years and renovates the property, the business would be able to get a tax deduction worth many more times than what it put into it. Any profits earned at the

property, for the first 3 years in that building, would be a tax deduction. The deduction would be capped. It could be, in legislation, at 50 percent of the business's wages to make sure that the employees are also getting a benefit, and the more the business pays its employees, the more the business saves with that tax deduction and, therefore, saves in taxes.

Simply put, the bill, or legislation like it, will make it easier for local entrepreneurs to rebuild their community, helping to turn more places like this first photo into places like Chief's Creole Cafe.

Now, that is what we ought to be doing, not digging out old policies from the 1980s and calling it something new like our colleagues here in the Congress did last year with the tax bill. The tax bill added trillions to the national debt and made it easier for big corporations to game the tax system and put Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, our infrastructure, and all other sorts of priorities at risk because the entire national debt is run up \$2 trillion over a 10-year period.

Where is the money to do all of these other priorities—Medicaid, Medicare, infrastructure, Social Security?

When big corporations see places like South St. Pete, they don't necessarily see the financial opportunity that Mr. and Mrs. Brayboy saw and turn it into a going concern. They don't necessarily want to empower places. Sometimes it just goes over their heads, and they miss the opportunity.

We need to incentivize local people to revitalize a community and, in the process, to be economically successful. We need to create more stories like the successful story of the Brayboys. We need to make it easier for locals to take old, abandoned buildings and turn them into new, thriving businesses that value their people and employ local residents. We need to encourage local communities, which understand their own needs, to be financially successful and have an opportunity to do that.

Despite what others say, instead of a tax bill that raises the national debt by \$2 trillion, wouldn't you believe that if we could do this all over America, it would help so much of the economic underpinnings of our country?

Let's think of a way that it should be, and this is one way. We need to do more to lift up those at the bottom and help them help themselves. I hope our colleagues will agree, and I hope our colleagues will consider legislation like this in the future.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as the Senator from Louisiana, the Senate stands in recess until 7:20 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:07 p.m., recessed until 7:20 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. KENNEDY).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will come to order, please.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KENNEDY. 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.

S.J. RES. 54

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I hope the Saudi royal family was paying attention to yesterday's debate in the U.S. Senate. The bipartisan vote on S.J. Res. 54, of which I am a cosponsor, was significant for multiple reasons, but most of all for what it says about the potency of the outrage and disgust in this country and in the Congress about the conduct of Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi Crown Prince.

That outrage has been building over time, as the number of civilian casualties since Saudi Arabia's intervention and ongoing aerial bombardment of Yemen—one of the world's poorest countries—has swollen into the thousands. We have all seen the photographs of the dead and dying and of children who are just skin and bones. It is said that 85,000 children already have starved to death. The UN warns that 13 million Yemeni civilians could starve to death by the end of this year, if the war does not end.

Of course, the Houthis and their Iranian benefactors share much of the blame for the death and destruction in Yemen, but we are not supporting them. Rather, until recently, we were providing aerial refueling for Saudi warplanes, and we continue to provide the Saudis with intelligence and targeting assistance.

As if the kidnapping of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri, the blockade of Qatar, the imprisonment of women's rights activists, and the carnage in Yemen were not enough, the outrage toward the Crown Prince finally boiled over with the horrific, premeditated murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a respected journalist, Saudi citizen, and American resident, who had criticized the royal family.

Mr. Khashoggi's murder and dismemberment by Saudi Government agents at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul triggered an international outcry, and it exposed the depth of depravity of the Saudi royal family. That an ally of the United States would so brazenly commit such a crime and then so blatantly attempt to cover it up, speaks volumes.

After a string of lies by the Saudi authorities, it is only due to the Turkish