

I have already read the national statistics. I am even prouder about this. Instead of being left behind, Kentucky is helping to lead the charge. The State's unemployment rate has hit and sustained its lowest level on record. Again, that is recordbreaking low unemployment.

Last year, Governor Bevin helped Kentucky to welcome more than \$5.3 billion of planned business investment. This new growth isn't just concentrated in urban areas. Rural communities in the Bluegrass are seeing more jobs, investment, and expansion as well.

Of course, it takes more than 2 years to unwind the mistakes of the past. Parts of Kentucky are still struggling from the effects of liberal policies, and this Republican Senate, the administration, and leaders in Frankfort are laser-focused on continuing to invest in and fight for recovery.

In many communities, particularly in rural Kentucky, the lingering pain has been hard to shake—the damage to the coal industry, the devastation caused by opioid and substance abuse. So more work is certainly needed, and I am honored to lead the charge in Washington to help Kentuckians confront these challenges.

Through programs like the Appalachian Regional Commission and the abandoned mine land pilot program, we are investing hundreds of millions of dollars into struggling areas and out-of-work Americans. In Eastern Kentucky, Congressman HAL ROGERS and I have partnered with local organizations to secure Federal resources for everything from skills training to water infrastructure improvements.

I have helped to secure tens of millions of dollars to aid the retraining efforts of the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program and job-creating programs like the Kentucky Highlands Community Development Corporation. We have also secured grants to bolster good jobs, support the environment, attract tourism, and promote healthy lifestyles.

These are just a few examples from just one State. There are stories like this all over our country. While the previous administration left these men and women behind, Republicans recognize their skills and their drive. We are investing in their futures.

#### TREATIES

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, speaking of economic growth and development, the Senate will soon turn our attention to a number of bilateral tax treaties with important U.S. trading partners. We have these kinds of agreements in place to reduce tax evasion, tax avoidance, and unfair double taxation of U.S. citizens and businesses who conduct businesses overseas. The four we will consider this week are agreements with Spain, Switzerland, Japan, and Luxembourg.

The U.S. Government and each of these foreign governments have pains-

takingly negotiated updates to existing agreements about how certain kinds of commerce would be taxed and which country will tax them. In short, Senate ratification of these protocols would mean less confusion, more certainty, and, often, fewer taxes for U.S. job creators—and, by the way, a simpler rule book for overseas investors who want to invest their money here. Fairer treatment for our own American job creators and more enticement for foreign investment to head to our country—that is what we would call a win-win.

We are talking about a serious economic impact. In addition to the four countries we are tackling this week, there are three more nations with tax treaties pending which I know the administration is continuing to work on with the Foreign Relations and Finance Committees to finalize work on these remaining agreements.

Combined, these seven foreign countries invest more than \$1.2 trillion in the United States. That is more than \$1 trillion in foreign investment and, by some estimates, hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs are tied up, either directly or indirectly, in trade with these countries.

These trading relationships touch all 50 States. Every one of my colleagues is familiar with communities that benefit from the foreign investment. For my part, that includes thousands of workers in Kentucky.

One major manufacturer with ties to Spain employs 1,500 people in my State. It accounts for more than one third of all the stainless steel produced in the United States every year. Over the three decades it has operated in Carroll County, the surrounding communities benefited from more than \$60 million in tax revenue.

That is just one of many job creators in my home State, and it is far from the only one with a serious interest in seeing these measures get across the finish line. From consumer goods makers to industrial suppliers, Kentucky continues to welcome job-creating investment from around the world.

I think practically every American is familiar with Hot Pockets, a culinary staple of busy families, workers, and college students everywhere. But not everyone knows that, as of several years ago, every single Hot Pocket is cooked in Mount Sterling, KY. The facility employs more than 1,000 Kentuckians. The parent company is Nestle, based in Switzerland. So there are not only hard-working Kentuckians but also a lot of hungry consumers across the country who can understand why we need to keep our international trade in sync.

Passing these agreements will help every State to keep up the economic momentum. It will reinforce the international trade that is so essential to our economic success and help stave off further trade disruptions. I urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting for these this week.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Peter Joseph Phipps, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened as the Republican leader came to the floor and announced the business of the Senate for this week. Highlighted in the business will be tax treaties—tax treaties with Spain, Switzerland, Japan, and Luxembourg. According to the Republican leader, these are critical to economic development in the United States. I don't question their importance, but I will tell you that, routinely, these are done by voice vote. We don't spend the time of the Senate to come to the floor and talk about our relationship with Luxembourg.

When you look at the issues that most American families expect us to address, I would say the tax treaty with Luxembourg would be low on the list. What might be high on the list and should be considered in the Senate this week is the No. 1 concern of families across America—Democrats and Republicans. The highest concern and the No. 1 issue when asked about the economy of the United States is the cost of prescription drugs.

The United States Senate has the authority to do something about the cost of prescription drugs. We will not be doing it this week. We will be dealing with a tax treaty with Luxembourg.

What kind of issues, when it comes to the cost of prescription drugs, might be important? Let's start with one that I have started focusing on back home.

Did you know that there are 30 million Americans who suffer from diabetes, type 1 and type 2 diabetes? Did you know that 7.5 million Americans use insulin every single day to stay alive? Four of them were in my office last week from Illinois. They were between the ages of 10 and 17. Talk about amazing young people. Three young women and a young boy talked about their lives and what had happened to them since it was discovered that they had juvenile diabetes.

Their lives have been changed a lot. Each one of them is hooked up to a CGM—I believe that is the proper term, a continuous glucose monitor—that measures whether they need additional insulin, which is pumped in another device on their arm. They talked about how this was a commitment around the clock to make sure their insulin levels were appropriate.

One little girl talked about what it meant to her family for her to be a type 1 diabetic. This beautiful young lady started talking about it. Then she got to the point where she said: It has changed our family; my diabetes has changed our family.

Then she started crying.

She said: We can't do things in our family that others do. We can't take the same vacations that my cousins take, and we can't rent that house out on the lake because of the cost of my drugs, the cost of my insulin.

I turned to her mother, and I said: Tell me, what does it come down to?

Her mom said: We are lucky. We have health insurance. Our health insurance covers prescription drugs. However, there is an \$8,000 deductible. So we start each year buying the insulin for our daughter until we have spent \$8,000 out of our savings. Then the health insurance kicks in. Usually it is about 3 months.

She is paying, or she is being charged, about \$3,000 a month for insulin.

Let's look into this for a minute as we consider why the U.S. Senate thinks a tax treaty with Luxembourg is more important than this issue. Let's look into the fact that insulin was discovered almost 100 years ago in Canada, and the researchers who discovered it came to the United States and said: We have the patent rights to this lifesaving drug for diabetics. We never want to see anybody make a profit at the expense of this lifesaving drug.

The Canadian researchers surrendered their patent rights to insulin for \$1—gave it up. I recall that when it came to the Salk vaccine for polio, he did the same thing. He said that no one should ever make a profit on a drug that eliminated polio. These two Canadian researchers felt the same about insulin.

What happened then? Insulin was produced in the earliest stages in a rather crude way but in an effective way to save the lives of people with diabetes. Over the years, that process was improved. There is no question about that.

Today there are three major pharmaceutical companies that make insulin products for the United States—Eli Lilly of Indianapolis, IN, is one of them; Novo Nordisk is another; Sanofi is another. I know a little bit about the Eli Lilly product. It is called Humalog. Humalog was introduced in the American market in 1996, an insulin product. The charge was about \$20 to \$30 for a dosage—a vial, I should say, and was

used as a dosage for those with type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes. It was about \$21.

Here we are 20 years later, and how much is that same vial? It is \$329. Remember, this was a drug discovered almost 100 years ago. Remember, those who could have capitalized and made a fortune off of it surrendered their patent rights.

How did we reach the point where this drug, in 20 years, is 10 times more than it cost when it was introduced? It is the same drug from the same company. Why has it gone up so much in price? Because they can do it, because these pharmaceutical companies have the power to raise their prices, and people like that little girl in my office from Jerseyville, IL, who broke down in tears, can't control how much that price would be. They need this to survive.

Now you must ask yourself: What are other countries paying for exactly the same drug made by the same American pharmaceutical company, Eli Lilly?

We don't have to go very far to find out. All we need to go to is Canada—Canada. The \$329 Humalog vial in Canada costs \$39. Why? It is exactly the same drug and is a fraction of the cost in Canada. It is because the Canadian Government stands up for the people of that country and says: You cannot gouge, you cannot overprice these drugs. You are going to be paid a reasonable amount so that you make a profit, but you aren't going to do it at the expense of our families in Canada.

They care. They have done something about it.

We care about a tax treaty with Luxembourg. I am sorry, but as important as that may be in that small part of the world, it is more important for us to deal with the issue of prescription drugs and to ask ourselves why this U.S. Senate, this empty Chamber, is not filled with Senators of both political parties doing something about the cost of prescription drugs.

There is one traffic cop in this Chamber. He just spoke. The Republican leader decides what comes to the floor of the Senate. He has decided we are not going to consider prescription drugs. Maybe he will change his mind, but I think he will need some persuading to reach that point.

What I am hoping is that the 30 million Americans and their families will speak up when it comes to the cost of lifesaving insulin for diabetes. I hope they will do the same when it comes to other drugs—so many of them.

Senator GRASSLEY of Iowa, a Republican, was just on the floor a few minutes ago when we opened the session. He and I are working on a bill, which is just a first step—and I underline, only a first step and not the answer to the problem. But it comes down to this: You can't turn on the television these days without seeing a drug ad. If you haven't seen drug ads on television, you must not own a television. They are on all the time. All of the informa-

tion we are given about drugs with long names that are hard to pronounce and remember—all of that information is given to us over and over again so that we know much more than we ever dreamed we would know about XARELTO. We can even spell it. We know what different drugs are supposed to do to improve the lives of individuals. Those ads are being thrown at us so that eventually we have that name in our head and take it into the doctor's office and ask for that expensive drug as opposed to a generic drug. That is running up the cost of healthcare.

Senator GRASSLEY and I put in a bill, and the bill is pretty basic. With all of the things they tell you on television about the drugs, it wasn't until just 2 weeks ago—the first time I have ever seen it—that one of these companies disclosed the cost of the drug.

You say to yourself, maybe that is an important part of speaking to consumers across America. Senator GRASSLEY and I have a bill that will require price disclosure on these pharmaceutical companies' advertising. It is not the total answer, but I am hoping it will in some way at least slow down, if not embarrass these companies from the runups in cost that these drugs are going through.

That is part of the answer, but it is not the total answer by any means. There is a long list of things we can do and should do that are a lot more important than a tax treaty with Luxembourg, which should pass by a voice vote without taking the time of the Senate.

#### HEALTHCARE

Madam President, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, 20 million Americans gained health insurance—including more than 1 million in Illinois. Thanks to the law, the uninsured rate in Illinois has been cut in half. People with preexisting conditions can no longer be denied health insurance coverage or be charged higher premiums. This protects 5 million people in Illinois with a preexisting condition. Insurance companies are no longer allowed to impose annual or lifetime caps on benefits or deny coverage for maternity care, mental health treatment, prescription drugs, or hospitalizations. Young people are allowed to stay on their parents' health plans until age 26 and seniors in the dreaded Medicare donut hole are saving money on their prescription drugs. Thanks to the law's Medicaid expansion, rural hospitals in Illinois have found a critical lifeline to help alleviate economic challenges. Yet, just last week, the Trump administration and 18 Republican-led States argued in a Federal court that the entire law should be thrown out—ruled unconstitutional. If President Trump is successful, more than 600,000 people in Illinois will lose their health insurance. Nearly 5 million Illinoisans with preexisting conditions will, once again, be at risk of discrimination.

Two years ago, President Trump tried to convince Congress to repeal

the Affordable Care Act. He failed. So what President Trump couldn't do with a Republican-controlled House and Senate—eliminate health insurance for 20 million Americans—he is now trying to do through the courts. That is right. Rather than defending the law of the land, President Trump's Department of Justice is arguing before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit that the entire law is unconstitutional. Protections for people with preexisting conditions? President Trump wants them struck down as unconstitutional. A prohibition on insurers imposing annual or lifetime caps on benefits? President Trump wants that ruled unconstitutional. Tax credits to help people afford health insurance? Unconstitutional, according to our President. If you thought that the U.S. President would be on the side of Americans with preexisting conditions—women in need of maternity and newborn care, young adults just out of college, or seniors with high drug costs—well, you would be wrong. Instead, President Trump's administration is arguing that every single one of these protections should be eliminated. If President Trump and Republicans have their way in court, insurers will once again be able to discriminate against patients with preexisting conditions and impose arbitrary caps on benefits, millions will be thrown off health insurance, and families nationwide will pay more.

Earlier this year, the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives said: Not on our watch. That is right. On a bipartisan basis, the House passed the Protecting Americans with Pre-existing Conditions Act. This bill would prevent President Trump from once again allowing health insurance companies to discriminate against people with preexisting conditions. The House didn't stop there. They also passed a bill to restore funding to programs that help people sign up for health insurance, and they passed a bill to limit the sale of junk plans.

Why is the Affordable Care Act so important? Why are these House-passed patient protection bills so important? Why is this court case so important? They are important because of people like Nathan from Sleepy Hollow, IL, who recently wrote to me about his brother. Nathan wrote:

My 12-year old brother has Crohn's Disease and his treatments are very expensive. . . . I worry about whether he will be able to still have insurance if the ACA is overturned. . . . Please do everything you can to help.

To Nathan and his brother, I say this: The House of Representatives is attempting to help you. Unfortunately, the Republican-controlled Senate is not. What is the Senate, under McCONNELL's watch, doing instead? Nothing. Rather than address the existential threat facing America's health care system, the Senate HELP Committee advanced legislation that is stunningly silent on protections for preexisting conditions. Republicans are abdicating

their legislative duty to preserve healthcare in America. As my colleague, Senator CHRIS MURPHY, said during the HELP Committee markup, we are applying a bandaid to one arm, while the other is being sawed right off. Republicans on the HELP Committee announced grand plans to lower prescription drug costs and shield patients from surprise medical bills, but all they really did is tinker around the edges of the problems. Similarly, the Senate Judiciary Committee was slated to tackle the outrageous cost of prescription drugs. Yet what emerged from committee was the bare minimum of legislative action. When will Congress get serious about going after drug companies that are gouging the American public? When will congressional Republicans stop tweeting and issuing press releases about preexisting conditions and instead do something—anything—to help protect people in need? Talk is cheap, but, unfortunately, it is all congressional Republicans know how to do.

#### IMMIGRATION

Madam President, I went to Chicago on Friday. I went to the northwest side of the city, and I met with a group called Communities United. It was a meeting I am not going to soon forget. There were about 20 people in the room. Most of them were women with their children, and a couple of us were politicians. They talked about the fear that is running through their community with President Trump's threat of mass arrests and mass deportations. Each one of them had an important thing to say. The one that stuck with me was a young lady—I will give just her first name. Guadalupe was her first name. She is a high school student in that section of Chicago. She started to read from a little piece of paper on which she had written down the feelings of her family about what was happening with the threats of these raids.

You see, one of her parents is undocumented. She is a citizen of the United States, having been born here, but her mother is not so lucky.

Guadalupe said: I am tired of living in fear. I am tired of being afraid that the next knock on the door means our family will be torn apart; that my mother, who has been here for almost 20 years, will be forced to leave.

She has never committed a crime. She has worked hard every single day for the family, to bring a little money home, taking jobs that most of us don't want to take, being paid low wages in the hope that her daughter Guadalupe and others would have a better life in the years ahead.

I remember that meeting because that was just the beginning of a weekend filled with meetings just like those all across that great city of Chicago, particularly among the Hispanic population—a genuine fear that ICE would start knocking on doors. People are being told their rights, their legal rights, if ICE comes to the door. Most of them are being told: Don't open the

door unless there is a real search warrant from a real judge, not an ICE administrative warrant.

These people, I am sure, will find it hard to make that distinction, but it really is a question of whether they may be able to stay in the United States or cannot.

Keep in mind that we are not talking about people who have been convicted of a serious crime. As far as I am concerned, if you come to this country and you are undocumented and you commit a serious crime, you have forfeited your right to stay here. I am not making any defense of those people, but they are a tiny, small percentage of those who are here undocumented. The vast majority came to this country, some undocumented when they came, others who have overstayed a visitor's visa, a work visa or student visa, and started a life and started a family.

These are the people who have become a major part of our economy. Of the 11 million who are undocumented in this country, 8½ million actually work. They are employed. They pay taxes. They are not officially or legally part of our economy. Yet they are all subject to the mass arrests and deportation that President Trump has threatened.

As a Presidential candidate, Donald Trump regularly used inflammatory anti-immigrant language. You will remember most of these quotes because they were said over and over again.

Donald Trump said:

The Mexican government is forcing their most unwanted people into the United States. They are, in many cases, criminals, drug dealers, [and] rapists.

Donald Trump said that a Federal judge was biased against him because the judge was "a Mexican." He called for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States."

He attacked a family I have come to know, Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the Muslim American parents of the American soldier who was killed in the line of duty. This Gold Star family gave their son to this country in defense of it and were ridiculed because they disagreed with President Trump.

For the last 2½ years, President Donald Trump has continued to use divisive language. On January 11, 2018, I heard it personally. In a meeting in the Oval Office that I will never forget, the President used a crude term to refer to Haiti and African countries.

This weekend, President Trump sunk to a new low. His tweets saying four Democratic Congresswomen should "go back" to their countries were racist and reprehensible comments. Elected officials of both parties should condemn the President's statement.

It is important to understand the President's hateful language is also reflected in his policies. The Trump administration has shown unprecedented cruelty on the issue of immigration, especially to children and families.

The Muslim travel ban created chaos at airports across the country and continues to separate thousands of American families.

The cruel repeal of DACA threatens 800,000 young immigrants with deportation to countries they barely remember.

The termination of temporary protected status puts more than 300,000 immigrants at risk of deportation to dangerous conditions. Imagine this for a moment. We have a travel advisory that says to American families: Do not—do not—go to the country of Venezuela. It is too dangerous.

But for those Venezuelans who are in the United States and should qualify for temporary protected status, this President has said: We are returning you to Venezuela.

Really? It is too dangerous for Americans, but, Venezuelans, we are going to force you to go back to the horrible situation in that country.

The disastrous separation of thousands of families at the border has done permanent damage to these families and especially to their children. Under what was known as the zero-tolerance policy announced by then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, over 2,880 infants, toddlers, and children were separated from their families at the border.

What was even worse, they were cast into this bureaucratic no-man's-land, and they couldn't be located to be reunited with their parents until a Federal judge demanded it. We still have some who have not been reunited with their parents over a year later.

The inhumane overcrowding and migrant detention facilities that the DHS inspector general found was "an immediate risk to the health and safety of detainees and DHS employees" was so bad that after I personally witnessed it, I joined with more than 20 other Democratic Senators writing to the International Red Cross and asking for them to send in a team to investigate American detention facilities. I never thought I would do that.

This President's threatening, and now mass arrests and deportations, of millions of immigrants who have committed no crime and pose no threat—no threat—to the security and safety of this country has created rampant fears, as I mentioned, in Chicago and across the Nation.

Now, today, the Trump administration has put in place a new rule which will block nearly all asylum claims at the southern border from nationals of any country except Mexico, including families and children fleeing persecution.

The UNHCR, the refugee Agency for the United Nations, said this rule proposed by the Trump administration "will endanger vulnerable people in need of international protection from violence or persecution."

How did we reach this point? During World War II, we made a fateful decision in the United States to turn away hundreds who were fleeing Europe. Many of them were people of the Jewish religion who believed the Holocaust, which Hitler had initiated, would eventually reach their families

and take their lives. There were 700 or 800 of them who were on a ship called the *USS St. Louis*. They came to the United States and asked for refuge here, asylum here, to escape the Nazis. Sadly, our government turned them away. They went back to Europe, and 200 died in the Holocaust. After that, after that horrible experience, we said we were going to do this differently from this point forward.

Since World War II, the United States has led the world in accepting refugees and asylees. Other countries have done more than their part. I think of Jordan immediately. We have tried to be a leader among developed countries in accepting refugees and asylees, and we have done it. When you look at all of the Cubans who came to the United States to escape communism under Castro—we have three Cuban Americans serving in the U.S. Senate whose families were part of that exodus from the island of Cuba. We did the same thing with Jews who were facing persecution in the Soviet Union. We did it, as well, after the Vietnam war, when those Vietnamese who had stood by American soldiers and risked their lives were given refuge to the United States. The list goes on and on, and it reflects who we are as a nation. We screen those who come in, but we say our doors are open to give them a second chance in life and the protection of the United States.

That was what we did from World War II until the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. Now he has turned back the clock. We are back in the *USS St. Louis* era, where we are turning away refugees who are simply coming here trying to find some safe place to be.

America is better than this. We can keep our Nation safe and respect our heritage as a nation of immigrants. We can have a secure border and abide by our international obligations to protect refugees fleeing from persecution, as we have done on a bipartisan basis for decades.

The reality is President Trump's cruel and ineffective policies on immigration have made our southern border much less secure than when he took office. The President's obsession with his almighty border wall to be paid for by the Mexicans, as he suggested, led to the longest government shutdown in the history of the United States—35 days, paralyzing agencies and the government, ironically paralyzing immigration courts that were supposed to process the people presenting themselves at the border. More refugees have been driven to our border because the President has shut down legal avenues for migration and blocked all the systems to stabilize Northern Triangle countries in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

There is also a gaping leadership vacuum at the Trump administration's Department of Homeland Security. In less than 2½ years, there have already been four different people heading this

Department. Every position at the Department of Homeland Security with responsibility for immigration or border security is now held by a temporary appointee, and the White House has not even submitted nominations to fill these positions.

The Republicans have tried to blame Democrats for the President's failure to secure the border, but Democrats have tried to work on a bipartisan basis to solve this crisis. In February, after the President finally agreed to end the longest government shutdown in history, Congress passed an omnibus appropriations bill that included \$414 million for humanitarian assistance at the border. When I hear Vice President PENCE and others saying they were begging the Democrats to give them money for the border, we did—\$400 million in February.

Then, last month, Congress passed an emergency supplemental appropriations bill with \$4.6 billion of additional funding to alleviate overcrowding at detention facilities and provide the basics—food, supplies, and medical care.

Last year, before the border crisis began, Senate Democrats supported a bipartisan agreement—bipartisan agreement—from centrists in both caucuses that included robust security funding and dozens of provisions to strengthen border security. We put this together last year. It was a compromise. I didn't like parts of it, but it is the nature of the Senate that you can't get everything you want; you have to do the best you can to solve a problem. We had a bipartisan solution. This was a chance last year for the President to step up and accept a bipartisan approach. The President rejected it. He threatened to veto it. Instead, he wanted to push for his hardline, get-tough immigration reform instead. The Senate rejected the President's bill, his proposal, with a strong, bipartisan supermajority. It was that unpopular and unworkable.

In 2013, 6 years ago, I was part of a gang of eight Senators—four Democrats and four Republicans—who wrote comprehensive immigration reform legislation. It passed the Senate 68 to 32. Unfortunately, the Republicans who controlled the House of Representatives refused to even consider the bill.

The acting DHS Secretary, Kevin McAleenan, recently said that if our 2013 bill had been enacted into law, "We would have a very different situation. . . . We would be a lot more secure at our border." That is what he says now about a bill we passed 6 years ago.

Republican Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER of Tennessee, who supported the 2013 bill, said: "If that bill became law, most of the problems we're having today we'd not be having." There are ways to deal with this in a sensible, bipartisan way. Our comprehensive bill did that.

Getting tough, threatening a wall, and cutting off foreign aid has backfired on this President. It has created failure when it comes to immigration.

The Democrats have introduced the Central American Reform and Enforcement Act as a comprehensive response to our current border crisis. Let me tell you the highlights.

It addresses root causes in the Northern Triangle countries that drive migrants to flee. It cracks down on traffickers who are exploiting migrants. It provides for in-country processing of refugees and expands third-country resettlements so migrants can find safe haven without making that dangerous and expensive trip to our border. It eliminates immigration court backlogs so asylum claims can be processed quickly. It expands the use of proven alternatives to detention, like family case management, so immigrants know their rights and show up for court.

Democrats stand ready to work on smart, effective, and humane border security policies, but we need our Republican colleagues to condemn President Trump's cruel campaign against families and children and to work with us on a bipartisan basis.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### TREATIES

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I am pleased, at long last, to speak on the floor today in support of four protocols amending the tax conventions between the United States and Spain, Switzerland, Japan, and Luxembourg.

I have long been a strong supporter and proponent of these tax protocols and worked to advance them across multiple Congresses. In the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I voted to advance Japan and Spain protocols three times and voted four times to advance the protocols with Luxembourg and the Swiss Confederation. I am pleased that, after too many years of waiting, the majority leader has finally decided to take up these protocols.

I am a strong believer in the benefits these treaties provide our country. They play a critical role in relieving U.S. citizens and companies of double taxation, encouraging foreign investment in the United States, and enforcing U.S. tax law on those who seek to evade it. There are no downsides to these treaties.

As I conveyed directly to Secretary Mnuchin, the Treasury Department's initial interaction on these treaties without consulting the Foreign Relations Committee was completely inadequate. This botched effort resulted in a completely avoidable delay in taking up these four protocols. However, I am pleased that Treasury responded quickly to my concerns, including providing a written commitment on behalf of the

administration that the Foreign Relations Committee chair and ranking member would be consulted on any changes to the model tax treaty prior to negotiations based on a new model or new model provisions. Therefore, I support moving the tax treaties as expeditiously as possible and urge my colleagues to support them.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### MEDICARE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, last month, during National Nurses Week, Ballad Health, a healthcare system in East Tennessee, announced it would be giving several thousand nurses a raise.

The head of Ballad Health announced a \$10 million investment in pay increases for nurses.

He said: "Our nurses and those who work with them in the provision of direct patient care are heroes . . . however, it is also true that . . . we face significant national shortage of these critical health care providers."

Alan, the head of Ballad Health, said that his investment was, in part, because of a new rule proposed by the Trump administration in April.

This new rule will update the formula that determines how much Medicare will reimburse hospitals for patient care. The formula takes into account, among other things, the cost of labor in that geographic area called the area wage index.

This new rule attempts to level the playing field between hospitals in areas that have higher wages, and therefore are reimbursed at a higher rate than hospitals in areas with lower wages.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator, Seema Verma, wrote in a recent op-ed in *The Tennessean* in Nashville:

Many stakeholders have raised concerns that the Medicare hospital payment system disadvantages many rural hospitals. Our proposed rule brings payments to rural and other low-wage hospitals closer to their urban neighbors.

I say this standing in the Senate Chamber, where we have the chairman and the ranking Democrat on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee—two experts on rural areas and rural hospitals in our country.

In recent years, too many rural Americans have seen their local hospital close and their doctors leave town.

Since 2010, 107 rural hospitals have closed across 28 States and another 637—about one-third of all rural hospitals—are at risk of closing.

In Tennessee alone, 12 rural hospitals have closed since 2010.

A recent survey by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health found that one in four Americans in rural areas couldn't access healthcare when they need it.

This new rule will help rural hospitals keep up with the cost of providing care and keep those hospitals open.

Alan from Ballad Health said: "This proposed change indicates that Washington finally understands that rural health systems, like ours, have been historically unable to keep up with the real cost growth of nursing and other direct care providers."

Craig Becker, who leads the Tennessee Hospital Association, wrote in *The Tennessean* earlier this month that this rule "is good news for our State's hospitals and will provide much-needed relief to many of them, especially those in rural areas" and that the rule "finally will address the significant inequities in the Medicare area wage index—the first meaningful effort by any administration to address this flawed system."

This new rule from CMS will help ensure Americans can access healthcare close by to their homes by leveling the playing field between urban and rural hospitals that rely on the Medicare hospital payment system.

Last month, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, which I chair and Senator MURRAY of Washington State is the ranking Democrat, approved, by a vote of 20 to 3, a bipartisan package of 55 proposals from 65 Senators to lower healthcare costs that will help rural Americans.

For example, the legislation would ban anticompetitive terms that large hospital chains sometimes use in contracts with employers, such as the so-called all-or-nothing clauses. These clauses increase prices for employers and patients and can block healthcare plans from choosing hospitals based on the care quality, the patient experience, or one hospital's competitive pricing.

Banning all-or-nothing clauses will help level the playing field for smaller, independent hospitals who are not part of a large corporate chain.

Another provision in the Lower Healthcare Cost Act of 2019 will expand technology-based healthcare to help Americans in rural areas have access to specialty care.

I hope the Trump administration and CMS Administrator Verma will quickly finish this rule and give Americans better healthcare choices and outcomes at lower costs, especially in our rural areas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, before our distinguished leader and chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee leaves, I want to thank him for his hard work.

Having grown up in a small, rural community in Northern Michigan, I

can speak directly to how important healthcare services are. My mother was director of nursing at a small hospital, and I know, since that time, they have gone through many changes, barely holding on to the hospital. We have had a number of hospital closings and consolidations.

There is important work that has happened in the health community. I want to congratulate the distinguished chairman and also indicate that the Presiding Officer and I, as we were doing the farm bill—it is my honor and privilege to work with the Presiding Officer—we were part of the solution, including language on telehealth in rural development to actually help expand services, and I think telehealth is an important way to do that as well.

I thank the chairman for his comments.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, people in Michigan and across the country were getting ready to celebrate the Fourth of July.

Families were deciding what to take on picnics and planning a day on the water, particularly if you were in Michigan, on the Great Lakes, and were finding the very best possible place to watch the community fireworks display—and we have many great fireworks displays.

So what were drug companies doing to celebrate?

Well, nothing so wholesome, I am afraid. Instead, they were raising prices on prescription medications—prices that are already the highest in the world.

People in the United States have the highest prices in the world. Happy Independence Day.

On July 1 alone, just 1 day, 20 companies ratcheted up the price of 40 of their prescription drugs by an average of more than 13 percent—just in 1 day.

Those companies aren't alone. Already this year, prices have gone up for more than 3,400 different medications. The average price hike was five times the rate of inflation.

I know families in Michigan, seniors in Michigan, would love to have their incomes, their wages go up five times the rate of inflation, but that certainly didn't happen. It is getting harder and harder for the average Michigan family to afford the medications they need to get and stay healthy, and I know that is true all across the country. I know because I hear about it every day.

I know we hear these stories every day. I hear this from friends and family and certainly people as I am moving and traveling throughout Michigan. Some folks skimp on groceries—it is still happening today—or put off paying their electric bill or their gas bill. Other people take their heart medication every other day instead of every day, which, by the way, is dangerous to do. Still others cut back on insulin, putting their lives at risk. We had testimony before the Finance Committee from a mom whose son did that and lost his life.

Perhaps nobody has been hurt more than our seniors. Seniors tend to live on fixed incomes, as we know—pensions and Social Security. They also tend to have more medications than younger people, and costs quickly add up.

In 2017 alone, the average price of brand-name drugs that seniors often take rose at four times the rate of inflation, according to AARP—four times the rate of inflation in 1 year—for the average medication a senior citizen is using. That is one of the reasons why 72 percent of seniors in a recent poll said they are very concerned about the cost of their medications.

It is absolutely shameful that people in America, one of the richest countries in the world, are going without the medicine they need to survive. We can fix that. This does not have to happen.

I have always believed healthcare is a basic human right and that it includes medicine. Over and over again, I say on the Senate floor: Healthcare is not political. For a senior, for a family, for a child, it is personal. It is personal.

We need to do something about it, and the No. 1 way we know we can bring prices down is to let Medicare negotiate—let Medicare negotiate—for prescription drugs. Harness the full power of tens of millions of seniors and people with disabilities across the country who are on Medicare to bring down the prices.

We know negotiation can work because it works for the VA. We know that. The VA—Veterans' Administration—is allowed to negotiate the price of prescription drugs and, on average, saves 40 percent—40 percent—compared to Medicare.

In fact, if Medicare paid the same prices as the VA, it could have saved \$14.4 billion on just 50 of the most commonly used drugs in 2016 alone—in 1 year, \$14.4 billion on just 50 commonly used medications. This is according, again, to the AARP.

So what is stopping us?

Well, we have the biggest lobby in the world called the pharmaceutical lobby in DC. The fact is, in 2018, there were 1,451 lobbyists for the pharmaceutical and health product industry. That is almost 15 for every 1 of us as Senators.

Their job—and they do it extremely well—is to stop competition and to keep prices high.

Back in 2003, Medicare Part D was signed into law. I had worked very hard as a new Member of the Senate to have Medicare cover prescription drugs, but in the end, they blocked Medicare from harnessing the bargaining power of 43 million American seniors in order to bring down prices. Unfortunately, our Republican colleagues supported that.

Sixteen years later, pharmaceutical companies are still doing everything they can to put profits before people. One of those people is Jack, who lives in Constantine, MI, and was diagnosed with cancer late last year.

Imagine being told you have cancer and then being told the drug you need to treat it is going to cost you \$15,000 the first month—\$15,000. Jack was lucky. A generic drug became available. However, that drug still cost \$3,400 the first month and \$400 every month after that. That is about \$8,000 a year. In Jack's words, it is an "extreme hardship"—\$8,000 a year—trying to figure out how to be able to have your cancer medication so you can continue to live.

Jack added: "I hope and pray you and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle would be able to get something done."

We can get something done, and we can do it quickly. The best thing is to let Medicare negotiate and harness the bargaining power of 43 million people. There are various proposals that are good proposals and are being talked about. We can cap increases, but that doesn't cut prescription drug costs right now. If we are going to seriously talk about making medicine affordable and do it the right way—do it the right way and the way we know that will work—it is about letting Medicare negotiate. Let Medicare negotiate.

I think it is time to take Jack's advice. We need to work together. We need to put people above profits. We need, very simply, rather than moving the chairs around on the *Titanic*, to harness the bargaining power of 43 million Americans and get the best price for them. They deserve it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last Friday I joined the Vice President of the United States and a number of our colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee for a trip to the Rio Grande Valley and, specifically, to McAllen, TX.

The Rio Grande Valley Sector, headquartered in McAllen, is ground zero for the humanitarian crisis on our southern border. I know some of our colleagues refused to acknowledge that this was indeed a humanitarian crisis on our border, but that seems to have waned in recent days in light of the overwhelming evidence. In fact, in 2014 President Obama himself called it a humanitarian and security crisis, and it has gotten nothing but worse.

Of all the sectors, it is head and shoulders above the rest in terms of apprehensions of people trying to enter the country illegally. In fact, 46 percent of all apprehensions along the southern border last month occurred in the Rio Grande Valley Sector. Across

the entire border, 68 percent of those apprehended in June were unaccompanied children or part of a family unit. In the Rio Grande Valley, that figure shot up to a whopping 79 percent.

People may be asking themselves: Why are unaccompanied children and families—that is, an adult with a child—the ones predominantly coming across the border? It is because human smugglers know our laws better than we do, and they are exploiting the vulnerabilities in our asylum laws in order to make a lot of money. They charge roughly \$5,000 to \$10,000 per person whom they deliver across the border from Central America or from anywhere around the world. As a matter of fact, the Border Patrol told us on Friday, when we were in McAllen, that just in the last year they had detained people from 60—six-zero—different countries coming across the border at the Rio Grande Valley Sector. That is because these human smuggling networks are really worldwide. If you want to come from Bangladesh or Syria or Iran or Russia, all you have to do is make your way to Central America, hire one of these human smuggling networks, and they will work your way up across the border into the United States. This is a national security as well as a humanitarian crisis.

As of July 1, the Rio Grande Valley Sector had 8,000 migrants in custody. They are overwhelmed, to be sure. This is placing a huge strain on our resources. Our Border Patrol stations were never designed to hold that many people.

The men and women who apprehend and care for these migrants have been unfairly criticized and mischaracterized as bad guys, but last week I got to see once again that they aren't the real villain in this scenario. In fact, they are the heroes.

The Border Patrol agents in the Rio Grande Valley, and those along the entire border, are pulling double duty as law enforcement officers and caregivers. They are hired to be law enforcement officers, but they have had to basically end up handing out juice boxes and diapers to unaccompanied children or family units because that is what we are seeing flood across our borders. One minute they are stopping fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine from coming across the border and they are stopping dangerous criminals from entering our country, and the next they are comforting crying babies and providing sustenance to children.

Balancing an overcrowded facility and a constantly growing list of responsibilities is no easy task, but it is not their fault. It is Congress's fault because only Congress has the authority to provide the change in the laws necessary to stop this endless flood of humanity and this overwhelming of our resources, both human and infrastructure. These dedicated agents handle these demands with professionalism and compassion.

My colleagues and I had the opportunity to hear from several of these agents, including Chief Patrol Agent Rudy Karisch. Chief Karisch talked about the work his agents do to provide quality care to those in custody, particularly medical care. In his sector alone, that equates to an average of 32 hospital runs each day—32 hospital runs each day—to ensure that migrants receive the care they need.

As these agents know too well, many of the people who cross the border do so because they are deeply familiar with the loopholes in our immigration laws, and they are eager to exploit them, as I described a moment ago.

One of those loopholes is something called the Flores Settlement Agreement, which was created as a way to ensure that unaccompanied children don't remain in Border Patrol custody for long periods of time. It was expanded in, I believe, an unintended and unnecessary sort of way to effectively expand this protection for unaccompanied children to families as well.

As a result, we can't detain those families for more than 20 days, the adults in particular. As a result, we see the dramatic increase in the number of families arriving at the border. Why not? What is to discourage them or dissuade them?

As we learned during our visit, many of these migrants coming across the border are not families at all. Tim Tubbs is a deputy special agent in charge for Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, HSI. He discussed the rise in fraudulent families. In other words, by that I mean adults claiming to be the parent or family member of a child when, in fact, they are not related at all.

In April, ICE HSI sent more than 400 employees to the southern border to investigate these fraudulent claims of family units. In the roughly 90 days since, more than 352 fraudulent families were discovered across the southern border.

He described one case of a Honduran man that illustrates why leaving these loopholes untouched is so dangerous. Again, only Congress can change that. He mentioned the fact that a 51-year-old man negotiated with a pregnant Honduran woman to purchase—to buy—her baby when it was born. For the equivalent of about 80 U.S. dollars, this man purchased her child and then traveled with human smugglers into the United States. If you have a child with you, it is a ticket to entering the United States and exploiting those gaps in our immigration laws.

Deputy Agent Tubbs said HSI also uncovered an organization that recycled—recycled—approximately 69 children in order to smuggle people into the United States. In other words, once you successfully get to the United States, these children are sent back and used over and over again in an endless loop to smuggle more adults into the United States under the guise of being a family.

We can point the finger of blame at the Border Patrol for being overwhelmed for not having facilities that were designed to handle the influx of this number of people, but that would be a terrible miscarriage of justice. The fact is, Congress needs to look in the mirror. The only people who can change the laws under our Constitution is the U.S. Congress and the President. The President has called time and again for Congress to fix these loopholes in our immigration laws to begin to stem the tide of humanity coming across our border.

Our broken laws are fueling this behavior. Unless we take action to close those loopholes that invite more people to illegally enter into our country, the problem will only continue to grow.

Amid calls from many of the so-called progressive Democrats running for President to do things that make illegally crossing the border legal—in other words, rather than protecting the sovereignty of our country, securing our borders, they want to actually make entry into the United States legal—the work being done by our Border Patrol and our Health and Human Services and other nongovernmental organizations at the border to keep our country safe and care for migrants in their custody cannot be overstated.

The key to solving this crisis isn't opening the door to more illegal immigration; it is removing the pull factors that encourage people to come here in the first place. Of course, you can imagine, if the door were wide open, how many people would come from other countries into the United States at will. They would flood our country. That is part of what is happening now because they don't see any limits or any order or any rules being applied to who enters our country.

We are a proud nation of immigrants. We naturalize almost 1 million people a year. This isn't about being anti-immigrant. Immigrants have made our country stronger. Legal immigration is the key distinction.

Our friends across the aisle seem to be the champions of illegal immigration. We want our legal, orderly, lawful, rules-based immigration system to work so it can be fair to everybody, rather than let people who have been waiting in line for years to come into the country legally see people jump in line ahead of them and enter the country illegally. That is not fair to them, and that is not a rules-based and lawful and orderly system of immigration.

I have introduced legislation that will take major steps to achieve filling those gaps, plugging those holes in our asylum and immigration laws. It is called the HUMANE Act. This bill would close the Flores loophole, streamline the processing of migrants, improve standards of care, which we all want to do for individuals in our custody, and require additional training of customs and Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees who work with children.

This bill is, to my knowledge, the only bipartisan, bicameral solution that has been offered. It is bicameral. My friend and colleague in the House, HENRY CUELLAR, from Laredo, TX, and I have cosponsored this bill—bipartisan, bicameral.

As we consider this and other legislative proposals, I hope our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will finally get serious about taking the required action.

Chairman GRAHAM of the Judiciary Committee tried to organize a bipartisan trip to the border, believing that would be an important step in helping us witness together the facts on the ground and then hopefully work together to try to solve the problem.

I am disappointed that none of our Democratic colleagues accepted his invitation. I hope this is not an indication of what our immigration reform discussions will look like moving forward: no desire to help, no desire to solve the problem, no desire to work together on a bipartisan basis. I hope that is not where we are, but I am fearful that is exactly where we are.

I appreciate the Vice President taking the time to visit Texas once again and getting a chance to see the front-line challenges our officers and agents are facing. I would thank Mrs. Pence as well for accompanying the Vice President.

Despite the challenges this humanitarian crisis has brought, the Rio Grande Valley remains a wonderful region, characterized by a thriving economy and a vibrant culture. You would be hard-pressed to find more generous people. They have been extraordinarily generous to the migrants who found their way to our front doorstep and are trying to take care of them in a compassionate sort of way, but, frankly, they are overwhelmed too.

I thank the men and women of the Border Patrol, as well as local officials, businesses, and members of the border communities who continue to assist with this humanitarian crisis. It would be nice if Congress, on a bipartisan basis, would lift a finger to help.

#### ENERGY INNOVATION

Mr. President, on another matter, this morning, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to consider numerous bills introduced to promote energy innovation in the United States. Breakneck changes in technology have fueled our economy, propelled our communications sector, and completely transformed each of our daily lives. Just this alone has done that. It is time to harness this ingenuity to revolutionize our energy sector. Smart policies can't prioritize only conservation, productivity, or economic power. We obviously need to strike the proper balance. You are not going to achieve that balance by imposing heavy-handed regulations and driving up costs for consumers.

To put it another way, the Green New Deal will bankrupt our country and crush our innovation economy. In-

stead, we have to harness the power of the private sector and build partnerships to create real solutions.

The NET Power plant in La Porte, TX, is a shining example of how public-private partnerships can drive next-generation energy solutions. NET Power has developed the first-of-its-kind power system that generates affordable, zero-emissions electricity from natural gas. Using their unique carbon capture technology, they have taken natural gas and made it emissions-free.

This technology is relatively young, and it is not ready to be scaled up yet at the national level. By investing in this type of research, I believe we can take serious strides to decreasing our carbon emissions.

While renewable energy sources like wind, solar, hydropower, and biomass have come a long way in recent years, they are not alone sufficient to fuel our economy. As one witness said, the Sun doesn't always shine, and the wind doesn't always blow. So you need a baseload of electricity that has to be provided by other sources like natural gas powerplants like the one I saw.

Last year, renewables accounted for 17 percent of our total energy sources. In Texas, as the Presiding Officer knows, we produced more electricity from wind turbines than any other State in the Nation. Yes, we are an oil and gas State, but we truly believe in the all-of-the-above approach. Some people say that and don't really mean it, but we do it every day in Texas.

While renewables account for 17 percent of our total energy sources, natural gas alone accounts for double that. Imagine if we could take natural gas, a plentiful energy source, inexpensive, and bring more projects like NET Power online. That is precisely why I introduced the LEADING Act with my colleagues, Senator COONS, Cassidy, and Sinema. This bill would incentivize research and development of carbon capture technology for natural gas and support energy innovation.

This legislation was crafted with the understanding that reliable, affordable, and environmentally sound energy supplies are not mutually exclusive. You wouldn't know that sometimes by the rhetoric here in Washington.

By incentivizing research into the development of new technologies, we can keep costs low for taxpayers, for seniors, for people on fixed incomes, while securing our place as a global leader in energy innovation. The goal of this legislation is to accelerate development and commercial application of natural gas carbon capture technologies. We should do this by requiring the Department of Energy to establish a program to develop cost-effective carbon capture technologies for natural gas power facilities.

This legislation would also encourage partnerships with the National Laboratories, as well as universities and other research facilities to improve and strengthen our efforts. I am proud the

LEADING Act passed the Energy and Natural Resources Committee this morning, and I hope we will have the opportunity to vote on this and other similar and related bills before the full Senate soon.

We need smart energy policies that will strengthen our economy without bankrupting American families or turning the keys over to the central government to regulate our lives, to micromanage our lives. We don't need the Federal Government to tell us what to do. We need to follow the private sector and innovate our way to solve these problems, and that is exactly what the LEADING Act would do.

When you implement policies that get government out of the way and let the experts do their job, you can be pro-energy, pro-innovation, pro-growth, and pro-environment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

#### 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF APOLLO 11

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, today I rise in absolute awe—remain in awe—of what happened in this country and in this world 50 years ago this week, and I am still inspired by the events of our space program 50 years ago.

Fifty years ago today, Americans of all ages, in every corner of this great Nation and, in fact, all over the world, stopped what they were doing to watch in complete awe as Apollo 11 launched from Cape Kennedy, headed toward the Moon. It is unbelievable what we saw, what we witnessed, that entire week.

It would be the first time that humans would set foot on a celestial body other than the Earth. We would step foot on the Moon, which had captured the imagination of the world since time began, trying to reach that big, round object in the sky. It was a remarkable feat, made possible by the sheer determination and grit of the American space program and all of those who participated in it.

I was just a kid growing up in Alabama at the time. I lived just 2 or 3 hours south of what was known as Rocket City in Huntsville, AL. It is still known as Rocket City because of all of the work at NASA and in our space program today. It was a thriving metropolis then and even more so today. That is where all of the rockets were built. That is where the engines, the powerful engines that drove the rockets into space, were built. They were tested in Huntsville, AL. If you go there today, most of those stands are still there. Some of them are about to be used again. Those Saturn V rockets, the most powerful rocket engines man had ever created, were built in Huntsville, AL. They were the engines that would propel man to the Moon.

I was absolutely mesmerized—absolutely mesmerized—by all things involving the space program. I still am. I can remember so many times when my maternal grandfather, Oliver Wesson, whom I called Paw-Paw, and I would just sit for hours and watch and listen

to the commentaries. We would watch the liftoffs. We would watch the splash-downs. Some of my best memories as a kid were literally sitting in front of a TV set with my granddad, watching the heroes I saw, the heroes I wanted to be, and the heroes America wrapped their arms around. At the time, there was nothing—nothing—and maybe to some extent today—more that I wanted to do than to be an astronaut and to go into space. It sounds corny for an old man like me to say that, but it is absolutely true.

Those astronauts, the original Mercury Seven astronauts, were heroes in every sense of the word. I admire their courage, not having a clue when they blasted off from Florida whether they would return safely. And we did lose astronauts along the way.

I did so many things. I read. I studied. I watched. I read papers. A lot of papers in my grammar, junior high, and high schools were all written about the space program.

I am a memorabilia collector, as many of you may know, including of autographed baseballs. I have a few autographed baseballs by some of the astronauts, but the ones I like most are the newspapers. From that time, I could see that everybody could sense something was special. From the time Apollo 11 took off from Cape Kennedy, and the headlines in the Birmingham News read “Man Sets Foot in Heavens,” to the time they splashed down, I collected and saved every one of those newspapers. They are still at home, and they are prized possessions.

We watched every single launch. We knew every single name of every astronaut. We stood there with intense, mesmerizing attention to every moment of those launches.

It was something that captivated this entire country. It was a unifying time. It was a unifying force at a time when America needed it—the 1960s. For Apollo 11 in 1969, it was a time when we needed that sense of collective pride. We needed that sense of unification. We had gone through tough times during the civil rights era. We had gone through and we were still in the midst of the Vietnam war and all that tore this country asunder. We saw all that happened in 1968. We saw the deaths of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, but the space program was that one sense of pride.

It didn't take a tragedy to unify America at that time. It took success. It took a build of what we do. It took our determination. It took knowing that we were the most patriotic, and, doggone, we were going to beat those Russians to the Moon. It sounds so corny these days, but it is absolutely the case. We were going to do it. It was going to be the United States of America, and, doggone, we did it.

A lot has changed. Today, we are building on this legacy. We are still building on this legacy in space. We are building it in Huntsville, AL, and elsewhere with NASA, and we are going to

continue to inspire a new generation—and more generations to come—of Alabamans and Americans, people all across this country, to help us reach even loftier heights.

Yes, a lot has changed since 1969—50 years ago—but there is a reason that space flight and exploration of other worlds continue to capture our attention and to capture our imagination. It is because, at the end of the day, we are all dreamers. We always dream of those loftier heights. We always want to achieve. We always want to make this country great—consistently make this country great. We always want to reach for the stars, whether it is in our personal lives or whether it is collectively as a country. That is what we do. We are dreamers.

Today, 50 years after the launch of Apollo—and on Saturday, we will celebrate 50 years of the actual steps on the lunar surface—we celebrate the achievement of a dream five decades ago, but a dream that started long, long before that, long before President Kennedy challenged America to put a man on the Moon.

Looking back, 50 years ago was really just the beginning. It showed us that a true moonshot was possible, and, quite literally, it opened our world to new possibilities.

Today, we are reaching for human spaceflight back to the Moon and to Mars. It is not just us; other countries are doing the same. We are looking for a return flight to the Moon for deeper exploration. We are receiving pictures from the farthest reaches of the galaxy, things we have never seen before. We have seen the surface. We have landed rovers on the Moon surface and have seen the pictures and have done the tests. It is just unbelievable. Who would have ever thought of this some 50, 60 years ago when I was a kid?

Today, we have a greater understanding of the universe around us and how we apply that knowledge to our own lives. We continue to reach for the stars.

Yes, a lot has changed, but a lot hasn't. We still have divisions in this country. We still need that unifying voice. We still need that sense of pride that we can all—everybody—wrap our arms around.

Today, we seem to be divided more than we were during the height of the Vietnam war. We seem to be divided over the very issues that my friend Senator CORNYN was talking about a moment ago with regard to immigration. We are divided over politics—a partisan divide. We are divided over gun violence. You name it; we are divided. So we need that unifying voice. We need something positive that we can all wrap our arms around.

It is not just a holiday—and sometimes now, in today's world, unfortunately, even our holidays get divided. Even on our holidays, people go to their corners for political reasons, on both sides of the aisle. Make no mistake, folks, I am not casting a stone

one way or another. I am casting it across this land. People are divided.

We have to honor the visionaries of long ago, as well as the visionaries of today who think big, dream big, and give our Nation a collective sense of purpose and unity—a collective sense of unity and purpose—not a divisive sense of purpose for their own benefit but a collective sense of unity and purpose.

We can honor those folks by setting aside all of the differences we see. We can honor those folks by not going to our corners every time a hot-button issue is mentioned either here on the floor of the Senate or in a tweet or in a Facebook post or in the national news. We can set that aside. We can set it aside by setting aside our differences.

We honor folks by setting aside our differences today. We can honor those folks by remembering our collective pride and who we are as Americans, by making sure that all men and women are created equal and living up to the creed that we so proudly point to in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. We can do that again. We can honor these visionaries by coming together, reaching across the aisle and also reaching within our aisles to bring people together to talk about those things we can do together and with a sense of pride. We can do it by, once again, being the leader of the world and not trying to do everything alone but bringing our friends and allies to join us in these collective efforts to make us stronger.

Yes, we owe those folks a great debt of gratitude for making America a leader in space, a leader in the world, and giving us all something to dream about. Let us now meet that challenge in a different way.

Let us continue to explore space. Let us continue to reach for the stars, but let us dedicate ourselves to becoming that unified voice so that something we can all dream about is one America—one America—not a house divided but one America for everyone.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Iowa.

**MR. GRASSLEY.** Mr. President, since it is getting close to shutting-down time, I ask unanimous consent to finish my entire remarks. I promise the Presiding Officer I will not be too long.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** Without objection, it is so ordered.

**EB-5 REGULATIONS**

**MR. GRASSLEY.** Mr. President, I come to talk to my colleagues today about the deeply flawed EB-5 green card program.

Several weeks ago, we learned that the Office of Management and Budget at the White House had completed its review of the new rules to update and reform the EB-5 Program. I have been an advocate for reforming this program for a long, long period of time. Several times I have even talked to the White

House about moving these regulations along.

Now that they have been reviewed by OMB, for the rule to come into effect, it must now be published in the Federal Register. The rule was first proposed in January 2017. We have been waiting for it to be finished for 2½ years. I hope that President Trump now makes that happen as soon as possible.

The proposed rule would raise the minimum investment amounts required under the program. It also makes sure that investments are directed to rural areas and truly high-unemployment areas, as Congress intended when EB-5 was created in 1990.

Considering those points of where EB-5 ought to be concentrated and now looking at how they have been diverted from the original intent of Congress is the very best reason for these rules to be put in place—to get us back to square one, the original intent of the law.

Since the 1990s, rampant and abusive gerrymandering of the EB-5 Program's targeted employment areas has undermined that congressional intent, which was to direct it toward high-unemployment areas and rural areas. Instead of channeling investment to rural and high-unemployment areas, EB-5 has become a source of cheap foreign capital for big-city, big-moneyed interests. The targeted employment area reforms in the proposed rule would take a first step toward refocusing EB-5 investment in the way that Congress originally intended in that 1990s legislation.

In addition to channeling investment away from the areas of our country that need it the most, this is what has happened. The EB-5 Program has been plagued with other forms of fraud and abuse, and this has been going on for years and years. There are examples of EB-5 fraud from all over the country, and I am going to give just a few examples as a reminder to the President why these rules need to be put into the Federal Registry right away.

In Chicago, a businessman defrauded 290 investors of \$150 million in funds that were supposed to be used for construction of a hotel and conference center near O'Hare Airport.

In Palm Beach, FL, a real estate developer and real estate attorney teamed up to defraud 60 Chinese and Iranian EB-5 investors of \$50 million. Instead of that money being used to fund the construction of a proposed hotel, it was instead used to pay personal taxes and purchase a 151-foot yacht.

In Wisconsin, a businessman used over half of the \$7.6 million in funds he had solicited from investors to pay for personal expenses, including Green Bay Packers tickets and the purchase of a Cadillac Escalade.

I could go on all day.

In May of 2017, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services conducted an internal fraud assessment and found 19 cases of national security concerns

within the EB-5 Program. Those are national security concerns. The No. 1 responsibility of the Federal Government is to protect the American people, and that involves national security. These cases related to terrorism, espionage, and information and technology transfer.

Unfortunately, multiple bipartisan efforts in the Congress to modify the EB-5 Program have been consistently stymied by powerful special interest groups and big-moneyed interests. Because I have been in the middle of those battles—and they are bipartisan battles—over the years, I know exactly where these big-moneyed interests are coming from and the special interest groups that keep this program from being reformed.

Now we have an opportunity for one person—the President of the United States—through regulation, to reform this program in a way that would be very helpful. So that makes the publication of the EB-5 reform rules even more important. I applaud President Trump and the administration for getting the proposed rule to this point, but now it is time for the President and his team to finish the process and make sure the final rule goes into effect as soon as possible.

Iowans and all Americans who live in rural and high-unemployment areas deserve to have the investment that Congress intended when the EB-5 Program was created almost 30 years ago. President Trump and his administration now have a chance to finally address some of the very serious flaws in this program that have hurt rural America. We have been waiting for these reforms for over 2 years. It is time for this final rule to be published, and it needs to happen right now, if not sooner.

#### TREATIES

Mr. President, I rise today for the purpose of expressing my support for the passage of the resolutions of advice and consent that the Senate is considering this week with respect to the protocols to our tax treaties with Spain, Switzerland, Japan, and Luxembourg.

Tax treaties are a very integral part of the architecture of our tax system. For example, these treaties would help define the rules of the road for cross-border investment and trade for U.S. individuals and companies doing business in one of our treaty partner countries, like Spain, as an example, and for individuals and companies in those countries doing business in the United States.

The protocols before us today provide important updates to the tax treaties with these four countries. In general, several of them lower withholding taxes and include provisions to prevent double taxation. Several provide mechanisms for resolving disputes in a timely manner through mandatory binding arbitration. In addition, they provide important updates to the exchange of information provisions in the underlying treaties.

I am aware of the concerns that have been raised regarding the standard

used to provide for such exchange of information. The standard provided for in these protocols is that relevant information shall be exchanged between the United States and its treaty partners. That relevant standard has been used throughout our treaty network for decades and is also the standard used in U.S. domestic tax laws.

This issue was raised last month in the Foreign Relations Committee, and an amendment was offered to the resolution regarding the protocol with Spain that would have required a narrower standard. That amendment was appropriately defeated. If the issue is raised again as an amendment here on the floor, I will urge my colleagues to vote no on the amendment.

These four protocols have been awaiting action by the Senate for many years. In some cases, it has been nearly a decade. It is important that the Senate fulfill its constitutional duty to provide its advice and consent on tax treaties and protocols. It is also important that our treaty partners know that the United States really values these agreements and negotiates these treaties and protocols in good faith, with the expectation that they will be implemented without lengthy delays.

Our actions on these protocols are also timely, given the international effort to address the effects of digitalization on the international tax system.

For the past several months, representatives from the Treasury Department have been actively engaged in negotiations at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. These talks are focused on finding a multilateral agreement to these issues and avoiding the regrettable unilateral approach that some countries have taken—most notably, France. Ultimately, if these negotiations are successful, there could be a need for the United States to update its bilateral income tax treaties.

It is important that the Senate take action on the pending protocols and send a strong signal to our treaty partners that the international tax agreements are a priority for our country.

In addition to moving forward on these four protocols, we have three new income tax treaties with Chile, Hungary, and Poland that are awaiting action by the Foreign Relations Committee. I urge Chairman RISCH and Ranking Member MENENDEZ to use the wave of momentum that is building this week to move forward on those three new treaties and send them to the floor of the Senate as soon as possible.

I thank the chairman and ranking member for moving these protocols to the floor. These treaties were reported favorably by the committee by voice vote without amendment, and their consideration is long overdue.

I thank Leader MCCONNELL and Minority Leader SCHUMER for their efforts to bring these protocols up for consideration on the floor this week.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote yes on these resolutions of advice and consent.

I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:40 p.m., recessed until 2 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to engage in a colloquy with my colleagues.

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

#### UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I rise today to speak about a very important issue not only for my home State but for our country, and that is the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, also referred to as the USMCA.

This is the agreement that would replace NAFTA. It will increase exports, expand consumer choice, raise wages, and boost innovation not just for our country but also for two of our strongest trading partners, Canada and Mexico, as well.

In the United States the U.S. International Trade Commission's analysis found that the USMCA will raise GDP by nearly \$63 billion and create more than 176,000 jobs. The implementation of this agreement will also benefit my State, as it will secure and expand market access for our ag producers, and that is true for all of our ag-producing States across the country. It will help to grow our manufacturing base, as well, for our manufacturing States, such as Ohio. I see that my good friend and colleague from Ohio has just joined us. It will provide important support and help for the technology sector and energy sector. All of our different industry sectors stand to benefit from this agreement.

Access to foreign markets is critical for American agriculture and for our producers, who have maintained an ag trade surplus for more than 50 years. We produce far more than we can consume in this country, and we need access to markets in Canada, Mexico, and beyond.

My State of North Dakota is the ninth largest producer of ag goods, exporting and shipping \$4.5 billion worth of ag products around the globe, for example, in 2017.

Farmers and ranchers depend on free and fair trade to sell the highest quality, lowest cost food supply, not just in our country but in the world. We produce the highest quality, lowest

cost food supply. That benefits every single American every single day, and it benefits many other people around the globe if we are able to export to these other countries.

According to the International Trade Commission report, the USMCA will increase U.S. ag and food exports to Canada and Mexico by \$2.2 billion. This agreement secures existing market access, makes ag trade fairer, increases access to the Canadian market, and supports innovation in agriculture, which is why it is critical that Congress consider and pass this agreement as soon as possible.

Passage of the USMCA will help to secure market access in Canada to U.S. farmers and ranchers as the agreement maintains all existing zero-tariff provisions on ag products. Canada and Mexico are crucial markets for U.S. agriculture and the USMCA gives the certainty that these markets will continue to remain open for business.

I have more, but some of my colleagues are here. So I will turn to them, starting with my colleague from Indiana, somebody who has been active in business for many years. He built a business from scratch, from nothing to, I believe, more than 1,000 employees. He is certainly somebody who understands the importance of business and understands the importance of markets and access to those markets, and trade and export. So I turn at this point to the good Senator from Indiana for some of his thoughts on this important issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Madam President, it is true. I am a mainstream entrepreneur, and I have been involved with business my entire life, including the farm markets. I started a turkey farm back in 1979 from scratch, and I was involved in it for 32 years. I sold my share of it to my partner's kids and grandkids. My wife has had a business in downtown Jasper, my hometown, for years.

I have been an entrepreneur. I have dealt with how hard the marketplace is even when things are going well.

I stand to make the point on behalf of Hoosier farmers and businesses and to express my strong opinion that we need to get the USMCA across the finish line.

This agreement is vital to secure our hard-fought market access for American agriculture. At a time when agriculture could never have more challenges, from chronically low prices to the increasing concentration among farmer-suppliers with big corporations, this is one piece of uncertainty we need to eliminate.

In stressing the importance of the USMCA, I would state that despite the fact NAFTA had its faults, it was quite successful in securing markets for farmers. The USMCA is better. It provides stronger access to Canadian markets for U.S. milk, wheat, poultry, and egg products. It ensures that Hoosier wine and spirit makers are treated fair-

ly on Canadian shelves. And it secures the Mexican market for Indiana pork, cheese, and grain.

The USMCA improves on NAFTA in other areas of the economy as well. It adds modern rules for digital trade and stronger protections for American intellectual property. We know how important that is with regard to dealing with the Chinese.

It contains new rules of origin that ensure more manufacturing is conducted in North America and has brand-new rules to bring more of that production back to the United States.

When President Trump ran for office, he ran on a few simple things, and negotiating a NAFTA improvement was one of his core promises to the American public. At the time, Congress had two requests: Follow the guidelines from the trade promotion authority and move quickly—move quickly—to minimize uncertainty. President Trump upheld his end of the bargain. He has delivered an agreement that is better than the original NAFTA in nearly every respect.

This week Congress is ready to vote, and yet we can't. Why? Because House Democrats will not bring it to the floor. Don't believe me? Look at this letter, dated July 8, from several House Democrats.

They say in plain English: Do not send this agreement to the Congress. Do not send this agreement to the Congress.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter dated July 8, 2019, to Robert Lighthizer.

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

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, July 8, 2019.

Hon. ROBERT LIGHTHIZER,  
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR AMBASSADOR LIGHTHIZER: We appreciate all the work you have done with the New Democrat Coalition and the rest of the Democratic caucus to resolve the outstanding issues that must be addressed for a successful, bipartisan passage of the updated North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

These conversations have been frank, productive and engaged in in good faith by all parties, and we are therefore optimistic that these limited concerns can be addressed in a timely manner. While we appreciate your willingness to listen, we have not seen any meaningful progress or tangible proposals from you to address these concerns. It has been clear from the outset that such proposals are necessary for a successful resolution.

The New Democrat Coalition was integral in the development and passage of the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (TPA). It is our belief, as legislators intimately involved with the law under which the new NAFTA was negotiated, that moving forward with implementing legislation absent the agreement of Democratic leadership would almost certainly be taken as a failure to fulfill the consultation requirements of TPA. We were troubled that you sent up the draft Statement of Administrative Action on May 30