

the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 36, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 240 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Roberts
Boozman	Hoeben	Romney
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Burr	Inhofe	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Sasse
Collins	Jones	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Shelby
Cramer	Lee	Sinema
Crapo	Manchin	Sullivan
Cruz	McConnell	Thune
Daines	McSally	Tillis
Enzi	Moran	Toomey
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	Young

NAYS—36

Baldwin	Hassan	Rosen
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Menendez	Tester
Coons	Merkley	Udall
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murray	Warner
Durbin	Peters	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Reed	Wyden

NOT VOTING—10

Bennet	Harris	Sanders
Booker	Isakson	Warren
Cassidy	Klobuchar	
Gillibrand	Markey	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 54, the nays are 36.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Sean D. Jordan, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, recently, I joined the Senate delegation to visit the southern border and view firsthand the migration and humanitarian crisis facing the United States.

We visited the Donna Holding Facility, the Catholic Charities Respite Center, the McAllen Border Patrol Station, and the Ursula Centralized Processing Center. Earlier this week, I held a roundtable discussion on my trip at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Highlandtown. The group was organized by the Latino Providers Network in Baltimore, which included rep-

resentatives from the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Catholic Relief Services, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and other nonprofits in the community that do work in Baltimore and at our border.

I was impressed by the Catholic Charities Respite Center run by Sister Norma Pimentel. The center provides a warm meal, a shower, a change into clean clothes, medicine, and other desperately needed supplies. These migrants are very lucky to make it there.

What I saw in McAllen, by contrast, was very disturbing. I saw many families huddled together in overcrowded conditions. I saw children behind fencing and, basically, in cages. Some children wore clothing that was soiled and had not been changed since they arrived in the United States. Children and families were supposed to be there in temporary holding only for a day or two, but we heard stories that families are being held for up to 10 to 14 days and, in some cases, even longer.

Why are migrants leaving their homes in the first place? These individuals are desperate. They are desperate because they are fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries. These families are often given a terrible choice to have their young son or daughter join a criminal gang or suffer the consequences as a family. That means being attacked, kidnapped, and even murdered. Even though it is a dangerous journey, these families feel they have no choice.

Let me remind my colleagues that these individuals are lawfully seeking asylum at our border and should not be treated as criminals. We need to respect their human rights, their rights under international law, and their rights under U.S. law.

These migrants are not trying to do harm to the United States. Indeed, government officials told us that the vast majority of those screened present no safety risk, such as being on a watch list for terrorist or criminal behavior, and that most migrants have not tried previously to enter the country illegally.

I am gravely concerned about the new metering system used by Customs and Border Protection for those seeking asylum and refuge in our country as part of the expansion of the Remain in Mexico program. Normally, a migrant would present themselves to a Customs or Border Patrol agent at the point of entry and ask to seek asylum. But under the Trump administration's new metering policy, Border Patrol agents will stop migrants at the border, oftentimes halfway across the bridge as they approach a legal border point of entry. Border Patrol will then give the migrant a number, and they will have to then wait for their number to be called before they can formally present themselves for admission at a legal point of entry.

How long is the wait for your number to be called? In some cases, it is weeks or even months. In the meantime, mi-

grants are told to wait in a border town and tent city set up on the other side of the border. One of most dangerous towns in all of Mexico is Reynosa, just across the border from McAllen Border Patrol Station. Migrants staying in these tent cities are subjected to violence, extortion, human trafficking, and even death at the hands of gangs that operate with impunity in the city, which are effectively not controlled by Mexican law enforcement authorities. In fact, the town is so dangerous that U.S. law enforcement personnel are forbidden by our government from visiting there or trying to meet with migrants on the Mexican side of the border. This is outrageous, and America can do better to live up to our values.

Migrants who are desperately fleeing violence and prosecution at home come to the United States in search of safety for themselves and their families. Now they are told they must wait indefinitely on the Mexican side of the border in, essentially, a lawless town where they are at the mercy of criminals, gangs, and traffickers who prey on the most vulnerable.

What happens next? Many of these migrants decide they have no choice but to cross the border illegally so that they can escape the camps in Reynosa. When migrants try to cross the border illegally, they face new dangers of dehydration, drowning, and even death.

Under the Trump administration, the United States is undermining our asylum policy and America's leadership in the world in welcoming refugees and those fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries. Indeed, the Trump administration is deliberately trying to hurt migration and legitimate asylum seekers and refugees by making it more difficult to seek asylum and deter refugees from coming to the United States in the first place. Proposed asylum law changes, such as expansion of the Remain in Mexico and metering policies, will make it more difficult for asylum seekers to apply if they have traveled through multiple countries as they make their way to the United States.

I believe asylum law should be changed to make it easier for migrants to apply in their home country, if safe, and expeditiously get an asylum determination from the U.S. Embassy so that they do not have to make the dangerous journey to the United States and try to cross our border with the uncertainty of what awaits them once they reach the U.S. border.

I am concerned, as well, that migrants who do not ultimately make it through the process of applying for asylum may not receive proper notice of their hearings before an asylum judge to make their case. These are people who are released in our country but have to show up for a hearing. The notices may be given out in English, which many migrants cannot read. The address may be incorrect or outdated in terms of where the migrant is heading in the United States to await their

asylum hearing before the judge. In other words, the information may be inaccurate, and they never get the notices to appear. They are therefore out of status and never had a chance to make their case.

NGOs in Texas made a strong case to our delegation to reinstate the Family Case Management Program, which the Trump administration has canceled. They explained that if ICE reinstated this program, we could see 99 percent compliance with immigration court orders without the need for expanded detention and overcrowding. This compliance rate is backed up by the track record and statistics of the Department of Homeland Security itself when the program was in use. This program is a promising alternative to detention that should be expanded instead of canceled by the Trump administration.

Let me say a word about the Border Patrol agents themselves. They are trying to do their jobs under difficult circumstances. The main problem is the Trump administration's asylum policies, not the Border Patrol agents. I hope that the recent emergency supplemental appropriations measure passed by Congress and signed by the President will help in terms of providing better and more humane care to children in Health and Human Services Department custody, under the auspices of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The measure seeks to improve conditions for migrants in the Department of Homeland Security's custody by addressing the dangerous overcrowding found by the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general. The bill improves due process for migrants and seeks to ease the immigration court backlog by hiring new immigration judges to hear cases and giving migrants greater access to the legal orientation program.

What should Congress do to address the immediate needs of migrants, particularly the children, as well as addressing the root cause of this humanitarian crisis? I am a cosponsor of the Stop Cruelty to Migrant Children Act. This bill would provide guardrails and minimum standards for the treatment of children and families, ensuring that government funds are not used to traumatize or harm asylum seekers. It would do so by dramatically reducing family separations, setting health and safety standards, ending the operation of refugee shelters by for-profit contractors, making it easier to place children with sponsors, and ensuring that unaccompanied children have access to legal counsel.

In terms of root causes, I have joined with my colleagues in introducing the Central America Reform and Enforcement Act designed to address the endemic violence and humanitarian crises that are driving immigration from Central America and also to smooth the path of those seeking asylum in this country. This bill would condition assistance to the Northern Triangle governments in order to address the

root causes of the violence and instability that are driving migration and crack down on smugglers, cartels, and traffickers exploiting children and families.

This legislation also enhances monitoring of unaccompanied children after they are processed at the border, provides a fair legal process for asylum seekers, and improves immigration court efficiencies. Those are some of the things we can do.

In particular, this legislation would reverse the ill-advised foreign aid cuts made by the Trump administration that are worsening the migration crisis in the Northern Triangle, which includes Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

I am concerned, however, that the President sees immigration and immigrants as a good political issue for the 2020 election. Congress needs a partner to take up and pass comprehensive immigration reform, which I believe could pass comfortably in both Houses if the President of the United States would join us in a constructive manner for comprehensive immigration reform.

This administration has shown just the reverse. The administration has proposed a Muslim ban, canceled temporary protected status, canceled the DACA—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival—Program for Dreamers, tried to institute an asylum ban, lowered and now seeks to eliminate refugee admissions, increased domestic immigration enforcement for nonviolent offenders, and sought to expand the program of expedited removal of residents in the United States without due process or a court hearing.

In many of these cases, the Trump administration's decisions have been subjected to successful legal challenges in court, and, thankfully, our independent judiciary has largely continued to uphold the rule of law and serves as an important check and balance against the worst excesses of the Trump administration as it disregards our laws and the Constitution.

I therefore urge the President to reverse course and work with Congress on comprehensive immigration reform, which must include sensible border security. Yes, we do need border security. In these times, when we have international terrorism and international drug trafficking, we need to know who is coming into our country. We have to have an orderly way to process those who want to work or live or go to school in the United States. But it must include an asylum policy for families who are at risk in their native country.

Let us build on the proud history of America and welcome those who seek refuge from persecution and want to help build a better America.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, as I travel across Montana, I hear from folks who work tirelessly every day to make ends meet.

Many work long hours for too low wages, and they face ever-rising costs in housing and healthcare and other basic necessities, but folks in Montana are resilient, they are resourceful, they know how to live within their means, and they know how important it is to make the numbers add up at the end of the month.

I rise because, as usual, Washington, DC, could learn a lot from Montana. This week, we will vote on a bill that swipes Washington's credit card to the tune of about \$250 billion over the next 2 years—dollars that will come out of the pockets of our kids and our grandkids. Now, this \$250 billion comes on top of the \$1 trillion the United States will add to the national deficit this year because our budget is that far out of whack. The previous year to this year was \$800 billion that we added to the national debt.

So to put that in perspective, that is about \$2.2 trillion in just 2 years. If you are sitting at home wondering, \$2.2 trillion; how much is that, it is far more than \$250 billion.

With \$250 billion, half the students going to college for 4 years would not have to pay anything to go to school in the United States. We are adding \$2.2 trillion, and it is going to continue on until we get our budget in line.

Unfortunately, this sort of reckless spending by both parties has shown a disregard for its impact on the national debt, and it is now the norm in Washington, DC.

Folks on both sides of the aisle are calling for this agreement, and they are calling it a compromise, but in reality, the only thing it will compromise is our children and our grandchildren's future.

Montanans expect me to hold Washington, DC, accountable and fight back against irresponsible spending and poor tax policy. This falls on the irresponsible spending side.

The bipartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget projects that this administration's policies will add \$4 trillion to the debt over the next 10 years. I am here to tell you that is too conservative a figure.

At this point in time, we are going to be adding about \$1.2 trillion to the debt every year if things don't change. Our debt is skyrocketing, and guess what. We are not fixing the healthcare problems that need to be fixed; we are not fixing the high cost of education; we are not investing in our infrastructure, but our debt continues to skyrocket because of irresponsible spending and, quite frankly, a Republican tax giveaway for the wealthy at the expense of our kids and our grandkids.

I have listened to colleagues on both sides of the aisle during my tenure here

who warned of debt and how our national debt could damage our economy and our national security.

Two years ago, my Republican colleagues passed a partisan tax giveaway, drafted behind closed doors, with no—with no—public input from Montanans or anyone else in this country. They promised that this tax giveaway would pay for itself, but it did not. Let me say that one more time. They promised the tax giveaway would pay for itself, but guess what. Just like the previous ones, it didn't.

Instead, it tacked about \$2 trillion onto our national debt, and it is another example of why we can't get our books in order—because we have a shortsighted fiscal approach that makes us the first generation to inherit from our parents and borrow from our kids.

My colleagues made campaign promises to tackle this debt. As a Congressman—as a Congressman—Mick Mulvaney, who happens to be the President's Chief of Staff, pledged to eliminate it, but this White House has done just the opposite.

As we stand here today, the debt has exploded to more than \$22 trillion, and it continues to climb higher every day, despite the country being in the middle of the longest period of economic expansion in our history.

Now, I am going to tell you it is one thing to run a deficit when you are in a recession—it is necessary to bring the economy back—but when you are in the longest period of economic expansion in this country's history, we should be paying down that debt, and we are not. We are adding to it as if we were in a recession.

Running trillion-dollar deficits during times of growth like this one, and everybody in this body knows it, puts the economy on a sugar high. It feels good now, but we all know it is not sustainable, and a crash is inevitable.

The same folks who voted to pile \$2 trillion onto the deficit now argue—some of them—that we cannot find the money to provide our veterans with the healthcare they have earned. They say we need deep cuts—deep cuts—into Medicaid and Social Security and other programs that many folks have paid into for their entire life, but yet we are going to cut them.

I have known, and we all know, that budgets and spending are about priorities, and it is clear that Congress's priorities are out of whack.

You wouldn't know it from watching C-SPAN, but it is possible to be fiscally conservative without cutting working folks off at the knees. I know this because, as president of the Montana Senate, I negotiated and passed a balanced budget because the State constitution requires it. Since coming to the U.S. Senate, I have led a push to add a constitutional amendment requiring that Congress pass a balanced budget.

Now, look, we all know it can't be done overnight, but in a measured ap-

proach, with bipartisan cooperation, we can at least get headed in the right direction. There is no reason why we cannot make smart investments in working families, our kids' education, 21st century infrastructure, and the other needs across this country without bankrupting future generations. Folks in the Treasure State know that, and Washington, DC, needs to know that too. It is time for Congress to follow Montana's lead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as much time as I may require.

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I often recommend to Tennesseans that they look at the U.S. Congress as if it were a split-screen television set.

Here is what I mean by that. During the last month, on one side of the screen you saw the usual Washington, DC, turmoil—Trump versus the squad, Mueller testifying, impeachment votes, battle over the border, Presidential candidates posturing, and of course the daily tweets.

On the other side of the screen was the President and congressional leaders agreeing to a 2-year budget that will strengthen our military, help our veterans, fund research for medical miracles, fund research for our National Laboratories, support our national parks, and save taxpayers a boatload of money by providing stability in funding.

I might add that this part of the budget—31 percent of the budget—is not the part of the budget that is creating the budget deficit. This part of the budget that we will be voting on tomorrow has gone up at about the rate of inflation for the last 10 years and is projected by the Congressional Budget Office to go up at about the rate of inflation for the next 10 years.

It is the entitlement part of the budget that is the problem, which is why I am voting for what the President and the congressional leaders have recommended, but then also on that side of the screen, away from the Washington, DC, turmoil, there was another story, which is the story I want to talk about today.

During that last same month, three Senate committees, by my count, made more than 80 bipartisan proposals, sponsored by at least 75 U.S. Senators of both political parties, to reduce the cost of healthcare that Americans pay for out of their own pockets.

On June 26, after 17 hearings, 6 months of work, recommendations from 400 experts, our Health Committee, which I chair and of which Senator PATTY MURRAY, the Democrat from Washington State, is the ranking member, voted 20 to 3 to recommend to the full Senate 55 proposals from 65 Senators that would end surprise med-

ical billing, increase transparency so you can know the cost of your medical care—you can't lower your healthcare costs if you don't know your healthcare actually costs—and increase competition to reduce the cost of prescription drugs.

The next day after our Health Committee reported that legislation, the Judiciary Committee, headed by Senator GRAHAM and Senator FEINSTEIN, reported out 4 proposals from 19 Senators that would reduce prescription drug costs by banning anticompetitive behaviors by drug manufacturers and helping the Federal Trade Commission to block those who game the citizen petition process to delay generic drugs and biosimilars.

Then, last Thursday, the Finance Committee—this one headed by Senator GRASSLEY and Senator WYDEN—by a vote of 19 to 9, reported more than two dozen additional bipartisan proposals also aimed at reducing the cost of prescription drugs.

That is not all. The House Energy and Commerce Committee has passed its own solution to surprise billing.

Last Thursday, Senator MURRAY's staff and I met with Representatives FRANK PALLONE and GREG WALDEN, the leaders of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. The four of us agreed to work together to lower healthcare costs.

All of this work is consistent with what Secretary Azar and the President have been saying and doing to lower prescription drug costs and increase transparency.

For example, last week, after the Finance Committee released its legislation, the White House said it "is encouraged by the bipartisan work of Chairman GRASSLEY and Senator WYDEN to craft a comprehensive package to lower outrageously high drug prices, and today we are engaging with coalitions to help build support." That is from the White House.

Here is why this amount of activity is, in so many ways, such a good sign for the American people. In our committee, what we have seen before with fixing No Child Left Behind, 21st Century Cures Act, last year's response to the opioid crisis—the last of which occurred, by the way, while on the other side of the split-screen television was the acrimonious Kavanaugh confirmation hearing—what we have seen with these recent new laws I just mentioned is that when that many Senators and that many Congressmen of both political parties go to work together on a big issue that affects millions of American people, there is likely to be a result that affects the American people.

In other words, I believe legislation to end surprise medical billing, increase transparency, and lower prescription drug costs is looking like a train that will get to the station when Congress reconvenes in September, and well it should.

The cost of healthcare is Americans' No. 1 financial concern, according to

Gallup, and at one hearing before our Health Committee, experts from the National Academy of Medicine testified that up to half of what our country spends on healthcare is unnecessary.

That is such a startling fact that I sat down then with Senator MURRAY and with Senators GRASSLEY and WYDEN and with Senators GRAHAM and FEINSTEIN, and I said to the leaders of those committees: Surely, if the experts say that half of what we are spending is unnecessary, Democrats and Republicans can find some things we can agree on that reduce the cost of what we pay for healthcare out of our own pocket, and we have.

The work of these three committees, more than 80 proposals from 75 Senators, is the result of that work over the last 6 months.

Let me say a word about perhaps the most visible proposal in the Health Committee's bill. Surprise medical billing is one of the most urgent problems that the House, the Senate, and the President are trying to fix.

After about 20 percent of all emergency room visits, patients are surprised a few months later to receive an unexpected bill. It could range from \$300 to \$3,000 to \$30,000. This happens because patients see a doctor they didn't choose, either because of emergency care at an out-of-network hospital or because an out-of-network doctor, not chosen by the patient, treats them at an in-network hospital.

In his State of the Union Address and again at a White House event in May, President Trump called for an end to surprise billing. At the event, he gave me a copy of this medical bill, which we have enlarged on this chart. It was a bill sent to Liz Moreno, a Texas college student who had back surgery, and during a postsurgery followup visit, her doctor ordered a urine test. A year later, this bill showed up: \$17,850 for a urine test. That is about the price of a new Nissan Sentra. The bill was sky high because the lab that ran the test—a lab Liz did not choose—was considered out of network by her insurer.

Take Drew Calver, a Texan who told the President his story about getting \$110,000 in bills—the emergency room he was rushed to during his heart attack was out of network and so were the doctors who treated him.

That day, the President said: "For too long, surprise billings . . . have left some patients with thousands of dollars of unexpected and unjustified charges. . . . So this must end."

The Lower Health Care Costs Act the Senate Health Committee passed last month by a vote of 20 to 3 would have protected Liz and Drew from receiving those surprise bills. Here is how it works: Insurance companies would pay out-of-network doctors a local, market-driven benchmark rate, which would be the same local, market-based rate that insurers negotiated with doctors who agreed to be in network. Obviously, this would have saved Liz and Drew because they wouldn't have gotten a surprise medical bill.

The Congressional Budget Office says that by ending surprise medical billing, this approach would generally lower health insurance premiums. CBO also estimates that the approach would save taxpayers \$25 billion over the next 10 years.

Based on data from Kaiser, only about 5 percent of doctors at 10 percent of hospitals send most of these surprise medical bills. So our solution primarily affects those doctors whom patients have little control over choosing—anesthesiologists, radiologists, pathologists, emergency room doctors, and neonatologists. It does not affect doctors whom a patient can choose, such as cardiologists or primary care doctors or pediatricians. In fact, the American Academy of Family Physicians, representing primary care doctors, supports our Lower Health Care Costs Act that ends surprise medical billing.

Over the 17 hearings our Health Committee conducted in developing our legislation, we heard many stories about surprise billing. Here are a few.

Todd, a Knoxville father who wrote me, took his son to the emergency room after a bicycle accident. Todd was surprised when a few months later he received a bill for \$1,800—because, even though the emergency room was in network, the doctor who treated his son was not.

Ahead of the birth of their first child, Danny and his wife Linda, from Georgia, chose an in-network doctor and hospital. Of course, they thought their insurance would cover their bills. When Luke was born 3 weeks premature, he had to spend 11 days at the in-network hospital's neonatal care center. In the weeks after Luke went home, \$4,279 in bills were sent to Danny and Linda because the neonatal care center, located in their in-network hospital, was out of network.

Carrie Wallinger, from Phoenix, AZ, received a \$9,000 surprise medical bill after going to an in-network emergency room after her dog bit her finger. The doctor who came to stitch up her finger was from an out-of-network facility, and so she got an unexpected \$9,000 surprise bill.

A South Carolina woman who had to have an emergency C-section received a \$15,000 bill from an out-of-network anesthesiologist.

Usually when you are being wheeled into an emergency room for an emergency operation, you are not thinking about choosing a doctor, and you are not interviewing them about whether they are in network or out of network.

In Texas, after an ATV crushed his arm, Dr. Naveed Khan, a radiologist, needed advanced medical care. The cost of a 108-mile trip in an out-of-network helicopter cost \$44,631.

Nicole Briggs, from Colorado, had emergency surgery to remove her appendix at an in-network hospital. She owed \$4,727 because the surgeon was out of network.

In Mississippi, Stacy White took her husband to the emergency room at an

in-network hospital. The emergency physician who saw her husband was out of network, and to her surprise, they received a bill for \$2,700.

West Coz, a 3-year-old with a 107-degree fever, was airlifted from a small community in West Virginia to a more advanced hospital 75 miles away. His parents were left with a \$45,000 bill for the helicopter.

In Maine, the State representative who sponsored a bill to protect patients against surprise bills received a several-hundred-dollar bill himself because the radiologist who read his daughter's x-ray was out of network even though he took his daughter to an in-network hospital.

There are many more stories I could tell, but the bottom line is, in each case, this happened because the patient almost always had little choice. If you don't have choice, then you really don't have a functioning market. It is a market failure.

One reason for the uptick in surprise bills is that this market failure is now being exploited by private equity firms. Oftentimes, hospitals will contract with a company to staff their emergency rooms and hospitals. These companies will handle billing, manage schedules, and hire doctors to staff the hospital emergency room.

Here is some research done by Yale economist Zack Cooper. He found that two of the leading staffing companies—both backed by private equity firms—significantly increase the rate of out-of-network billing in a hospital once the firms are hired.

In the case of one of the physician staffing companies that Cooper studied, a large insurer's data showed that the cases of surprise billing increased by 100 percent at six different hospitals once this physician staffing firm took over those hospitals' emergency rooms.

In a New York Times article, Cooper described the 100-percent jump in surprise bills once these private equity-backed staffing companies entered by saying it was "almost . . . like a light switch was being flipped on."

In Axios, Cooper said: "If you're willing to engage in some fairly unsavory billing practices, (these services) could be quite lucrative. . . . That's just discouraging, and it makes people want to go to single payer." These surprise bill abuses make Americans want to go to single payer.

Our goal is to protect patients, not private equity firms and companies that are taking advantage of patients. Surprise medical bills are one of the most visible problems for the 180 million Americans who get their health insurance on the job.

When growing numbers of patients are receiving surprise medical bills that could bankrupt their families, it is time for Congress to act. If Congress can't fix such an obvious market failure in healthcare, pressure will only grow for a radical Federal takeover of healthcare that will take away private insurance from the 180 million Americans who get insurance on the job and

leave patients with less choice, fewer doctors, and worse healthcare.

Avik Roy wrote in *Forbes* that “if we do nothing [to address surprise medical bills], the problem will get far worse. If we do something that is too incremental, we’ll pat ourselves on the back and then be forced to revisit the problem in a few years. Americans deserve market-based alternatives to single-payer health care. Without reform of exploitive hospital prices, we’ll never get there.”

Americans want to be mindful consumers of healthcare. When Todd, the Knoxville father, wrote me, he said: “If I’m expected to be a conscientious consumer of my own health care needs, I need a little more help.” In other words, he needs for Congress to end surprise medical bills.

It is unacceptable to say to patients that, even by paying their premiums every month, even by researching and choosing in-network hospitals and doctors, they may be on the hook for thousands of unexpected dollars because of a surprise bill over which they had no control.

At least 75 Senators and the President of the United States have made it clear that our intent is to end surprise billing and to reduce what Americans pay out of pocket for their healthcare. When Congress reconvenes in September, I would encourage all of my colleagues to support these efforts to reduce healthcare costs.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I am here on the Senate floor today with my friend and colleague, the senior Senator from the State of Maryland, Mr. CARDIN, and I think we both agree that we would rather not be here today to talk about this subject. But I feel compelled to come to the Senate floor today because, in my view, we have a duty to speak out when the President of the United States of America engages in conduct that brings dishonor and disgrace to the Office of the Presidency. That is what we witnessed, once again, over the weekend when President Trump unleashed a torrent of personal, nasty, and racist attacks on Congressman ELIJAH CUMMINGS and the city of Baltimore, and President Trump has continued his poisonous barrage for days.

Congressman CUMMINGS can defend himself. He grew up having to confront racist bullies. In the face of these attacks, he has shown great strength and great integrity—the same strength and integrity he has brought to his efforts to fight for his dear city of Baltimore, his entire congressional district, and his constituents over many years.

Baltimore is a great American city with great people, great spirit, and great heart. Yes, of course, Baltimore faces many challenges. It is facing those challenges with determination, with unity, and with grit. The Presi-

dent’s attacks on this great American city have only served to rally the people of Baltimore, the people of Maryland, and, in fact, the people of the United States of America to support the city and the people of Baltimore.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the *RECORD* an op-ed that appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* today entitled “Baltimore leaders: ‘Proud not only to be in Baltimore, but of Baltimore.’”

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

[From the *Baltimore Sun*, July 30, 2019]

BALTIMORE LEADERS: ‘PROUD NOT ONLY TO BE IN BALTIMORE, BUT OF BALTIMORE’

(By Ronald J. Daniels and Kevin Plank)

We are proud and privileged to call Baltimore home. Baltimore is a city of creativity, optimism, and determination. Home to leading public and private research universities, world-class medical institutions, and a diverse business community, Baltimore is a city where both artists and start-ups thrive. From creating one of the nation’s first racially integrated library systems to producing today’s modern medical and technological breakthroughs, our city has a proud legacy of leadership in improving lives and setting a national example for a stronger tomorrow. It’s no wonder we are often named as a place where millennials are moving and staying. This is a city where people not only want to live, but love to live.

That is why we, as leaders of 10 of Baltimore’s anchor institutions, reject the recent unfair and ungenerous characterizations of our great city and its region. Like so many cities across America, Baltimore is a place of paradox, at once vibrant and full of promise and yet also burdened by the weight of generations of racial and economic inequities, deindustrialization, and disinvestment. Like other cities of our size and history, we face urgent challenges with crime, housing equity and our education system. But like all Americans, Baltimoreans deserve respect, support and steadfast partnership from elected officials at every level.

Baltimore is not and will not be defined by our challenges. What defines us is that we continually meet those challenges with resilience and persistence, that we invest in innovation for Baltimore and for the nation, and that we harness the talent of so many exceptional individuals to create opportunity not for the few, but for the many.

Baltimore’s remarkable people include icons past and present like Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall; the longest serving woman in Congress, Sen. Barbara Mikulski; and Rep. Elijah Cummings, outspoken advocate for all his constituents, from west Baltimore to Catonsville and beyond. These leaders are known not only for their deep commitment to our city and communities, but for their stature and public service on the national stage.

We see the promise of Baltimore because we are fortunate to work, serve and live here, alongside our colleagues, employees, students and neighbors. Such promise is proven daily in our shared commitment to our city’s growth and the success of its residents. Baltimore fosters talent in its strong academic institutions and has seen rising venture capital investment in its businesses—a testament to the dynamism and innovative spirit of our businesses large and small. Our leading businesses and non-profits, called upon and supported by our vibrant faith community, launched BLocal, a targeted economic investment and community

development plan that over three years has invested more than \$280 million and hired more than 1,700 Baltimore residents in underserved neighborhoods. BLocal expresses to the fullest the deep and long-term investment of the city’s anchor institutions.

We never move forward as a community—or indeed, a nation—by denigrating each other. Nor does it serve any of us to demean a vibrant city and its citizens who exemplify those most American of qualities: can-do optimism, grit and creativity.

Justice Thurgood Marshall wisely counseled that “In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.” And as this city has shown, time and again, when we work together, we rise together. For this and so many reasons we are proud not only to be in Baltimore, but of Baltimore.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. This is signed by many of the leaders in our community, including the President of Johns Hopkins University; the head of Under Armour, a great American company; the head of a number of major companies in the city of Baltimore; the Casey Foundation; Morgan State University, a great HBCU; Eddie Brown, one of our great civic leaders; and many other leaders of Baltimore—diverse leaders who have come together to stand up with pride for the city of Baltimore.

I would like to read to the Senate what they say in the first paragraph:

We are proud and privileged to call Baltimore home. Baltimore is a city of creativity, optimism, and determination. Home to leading public and private research universities, world-class medical institutions, and a diverse business community, Baltimore is a city where both artists and start-ups thrive. From creating one of the nation’s first racially integrated library systems to producing today’s modern medical and technological breakthroughs, our city has a proud legacy of leadership in improving lives and setting a national example for a stronger tomorrow.

I want to pay particular attention to these next sentences:

It’s no wonder we are often named as a place where millennials are moving and staying. This is a city where people not only want to live, but love to live.

If you come to Baltimore today, you will, in fact, find lots of young people from other parts of the country coming to settle, work, and raise their families in this great American city. The President may say that nobody wants to live in Baltimore, but the facts show a very different story about young people—young people who understand that they have a great future in Baltimore and are moving to that great city.

Of course, it is true that Baltimore faces a series of problems. In Baltimore we have had a legacy of racial discrimination and segregation.

I would like to read from yesterday’s editorial in the *Baltimore Sun*.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the *RECORD* the editorial from the *Baltimore Sun*, dated July 29, 2019.

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

[From the Baltimore Sun, July 29, 2019]

CUMMINGS DIDN'T CAUSE BALTIMORE'S WOES;
IT WAS PEOPLE WHO PROFITED FROM RAC-
ISM. SOUND FAMILIAR, MR. TRUMP?

(By Baltimore Sun Editorial Board)

It's not our job to defend Rep. Elijah Cummings from President Donald Trump's Twitter rants. For one thing, he's quite capable of doing it on his own, and for another, our role isn't to offer blind loyalty to political leaders of any party but to hold them to account. Likewise, we're not in the business of defending Baltimore from any and all criticism. Our city has problems, big ones, and we don't shy away from them, nor do we give any politicians a pass for failing to do as much as humanly possible to fix them. But we are sticklers for facts and perspective, and in case anybody is still interested in those things, we have a few that are worth mentioning.

Mr. Cummings has not single-handedly solved Baltimore's racial and class inequities, its injustices, its blight, its epidemics of lead poisoning and asthma, its violence or, indeed, its problems with rats. And he has been in office for a long time, more than 30 years between Congress and the Maryland House of Delegates. But Baltimore's problems go back a lot farther than that.

President Trump, whose early career was marred by a federal housing discrimination suit, may be interested to know that Baltimore was something of a pioneer in that regard. It enacted the first housing segregation ordinances, which were soon invalidated by the Supreme Court, leading to subtler and more nefarious tactics. Racially restrictive covenants, privately enforced, prevented the sale of homes in certain neighborhoods to minorities. Redlining prevented minorities from getting financing to buy homes in white neighborhoods. And blockbusting made rich the unscrupulous men who capitalized on racism and fear to drive white flight. They profited on blacks who sought security and better opportunities but instead found themselves exploited and impoverished.

Those days aren't nearly so far in the past as we might like to think. Just seven years ago, Baltimore settled a landmark lending discrimination suit against Wells Fargo, which steered minority borrowers into subprime mortgages—the sort of abuse the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which Mr. Trump has eviscerated, might have prevented. Landlords in Baltimore continue to take advantage of rules stacked in their favor to evict low-income (and frequently minority) tenants; in a particularly egregious example, the Kushner Cos. (as in Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner) has aggressively sought to jail tenants who fall behind on their rent.

As whites moved to the suburbs, sped along the way by massive investments in new highways, water and sewer systems, schools and other public amenities, Baltimore City's infrastructure began to crumble. Neighborhoods like those in the East and West Baltimore portions of Mr. Cummings' district became increasingly isolated from economic and educational opportunities. (Mr. Cummings was among the Baltimore leaders who sought to address that problem through the development of a new light rail line connecting those neighborhoods to employment centers including the Social Security Administration and Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, but Gov. Larry Hogan, who over the weekend responded to Mr. Trump's tweets by calling Baltimore “the very heart of the state” and on Monday by asking why politicians aren't “focused on solving the problems and getting to work,” killed the project.)

Meanwhile, back in the '90s, Democrats and Republicans both discovered that espousing zero-tolerance policing was great politics, so long as it was enforced disproportionately against blacks and Hispanics in the nation's cities and not against whites in suburban and rural communities. Plenty of people share blame for that, including former Vice President Joe Biden and former Maryland Gov. (and former Baltimore mayor) Martin O'Malley. But not a lot of them continue to espouse the notion that locking more people up for minor offenses or stopping and frisking people on the streets are good ideas, as the Trump administration has done.

The Obama administration tried to do something about the pockets of concentrated poverty in American cities (and Baltimore specifically) by using federal housing policy to affirmatively foster desegregation, something the Fair Housing Act had called for 50 years before, but Mr. Trump's HUD secretary, Baltimore's own Ben Carson, has been working to dismantle those efforts.

We will agree with President Trump on one thing, though. We wish Mr. Cummings weren't so focused on investigating the Trump administration. We wish, for example, that immigrant children weren't being held in inhumane conditions at the border, that the White House complied with congressional subpoenas, that administration officials weren't conducting public business on private email accounts or that the president of the United States didn't look on the office as a giant profit center for himself and his family. If not for things like that, Mr. Cummings' role as chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform would probably take up much less of his time.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Here is what yesterday's Baltimore Sun editorial states:

President Trump, whose early career was marred by a federal housing discrimination suit, may be interested to know that Baltimore was something of a pioneer in that regard. It enacted the first housing segregation ordinances, which were soon invalidated by the Supreme Court, leading to subtler and more nefarious tactics. Racially restrictive covenants, privately enforced, prevented the sale of homes in certain neighborhoods to minorities. Redlining prevented minorities from getting financing to buy homes in white neighborhoods. And blockbusting made rich the unscrupulous men who capitalized on racism and fear to drive white flight. They profited on blacks who sought security and better opportunities but instead found themselves exploited and impoverished.

They go on to make the point:

Those days aren't nearly so far in the past as we might like to think. Just seven years ago, Baltimore settled a landmark lending discrimination suit against Wells Fargo, which steered minority borrowers into subprime mortgages—the sort of abuse the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which Mr. Trump has eviscerated, might have prevented. Landlords in Baltimore continue to take advantage of rules stacked in their favor to evict low-income (and frequently minority) tenants; in a particularly egregious example, the Kushner Cos. (as in Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner) has aggressively sought to jail tenants who fall behind on their rent.

We do have a legacy of discrimination in Baltimore City to overcome. The President, instead of challenging that legacy, has decided to pile on in the manner he did with his comments.

I know that Baltimore will rise above this. I know the city is resilient, and I know this great city's greatest days are still ahead as we tackle that legacy and move on to the future. But I think we as a body—both Republicans and Democrats alike—have an obligation to also stand up for our country. We cannot allow these kind of remarks out of the Oval Office to go unanswered. We cannot allow silence when the President of the United States challenges the very idea of what it means to be American, which is a place where people of all different backgrounds, all different races, and all different religions can come together: “E pluribus unum.” The President wants to drive a stake in that idea. He wants to divide the country, and we cannot be silent while he soils the Oval Office.

I ask all of us to speak out, wherever we are, when we see this kind of attack by the President of the United States. It is wrong for our country. It is bad for our country. It is a disgrace to the Oval Office.

The one thing I can say is that, in the face of that disgrace, Baltimore has shown great dignity, incredible dignity, the dignity of a city of people who see a wonderful future ahead, and we should all work together to make that future as bright as possible.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article from today's Baltimore Sun editorial board.

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

[July 30, 2019]

BETTER TO HAVE A FEW RATS THAN TO BE
ONE

(By Baltimore Sun Editorial Board)

In case anyone missed it, the president of the United States had some choice words to describe Maryland's 7th congressional district on Saturday morning. Here are the key phrases: “no human being would want to live there,” it is a “very dangerous & filthy place,” “Worst in the USA” and, our personal favorite: It is a “rat and rodent infested mess.” He wasn't really speaking of the 7th as a whole. He failed to mention Ellicott City, for example, or Baldwin or Monkton or Prettyboy, all of which are contained in the sprawling yet oddly-shaped district that runs from western Howard County to southern Harford County. No, Donald Trump's wrath was directed at Baltimore and specifically at Rep. Elijah Cummings, the 68-year-old son of a former South Carolina sharecropper who has represented the district in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1996.

It's not hard to see what's going on here. The congressman has been a thorn in this president's side, and Mr. Trump sees attacking African American members of Congress as good politics, as it both warms the cockles of the white supremacists who love him and causes so many of the thoughtful people who don't to scream. President Trump bad-mouthed Baltimore in order to make a point that the border camps are “clean, efficient & well run,” which, of course, they are not—unless you are fine with all the overcrowding, squalor, cages and deprivation to be found in what the Department of Homeland Security's own inspector-general recently called “a ticking time bomb.”

In pointing to the 7th, the president wasn't hoping his supporters would recognize landmarks like Johns Hopkins Hospital, perhaps the nation's leading medical center. He wasn't conjuring images of the U.S. Social Security Administration, where they write the checks that so many retired and disabled Americans depend upon. It wasn't about the beauty of the Inner Harbor or the proud history of Fort McHenry. And it surely wasn't about the economic standing of a district where the median income is actually above the national average. No, he was returning to an old standby of attacking an African American lawmaker from a majority black district on the most emotional and bigoted of arguments. It was only surprising that there wasn't room for a few classic phrases like "you people" or "welfare queens" or "crime-ridden ghettos" or a suggestion that the congressman "go back" to where he came from.

This is a president who will happily debase himself at the slightest provocation. And given Mr. Cummings' criticisms of U.S. border policy, the various investigations he has launched as chairman of the House Oversight Committee, his willingness to call Mr. Trump a racist for his recent attacks on the freshmen congresswomen, and the fact that "Fox & Friends" had recently aired a segment critical of the city, slamming Baltimore must have been irresistible in a Pavlovian way. Fox News rang the bell, the president salivated and his thumbs moved across his cell phone into action.

As heartening as it has been to witness public figures rise to Charm City's defense on Saturday, from native daughter House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Mayor Bernard C. "Jack" Young, we would above all remind Mr. Trump that the 7th District, Baltimore included, is part of the United States that he is supposedly governing. The White House has far more power to effect change in this city, for good or ill, than any single member of Congress including Mr. Cummings. If there are problems here, rodents included, they are as much his responsibility as anyone's, perhaps more because he holds the most powerful office in the land.

Finally, while we would not sink to name-calling in the Trumpian manner—or ruefully point out that he failed to spell the congressman's name correctly (it's Cummings, not Cumming)—we would tell the most dishonest man to ever occupy the Oval Office, the mocker of war heroes, the gleeful grabber of women's private parts, the serial bankrupt of businesses, the useful idiot of Vladimir Putin and the guy who insisted there are "good people" among murderous neo-Nazis that he's still not fooling most Americans into believing he's even slightly competent in his current post. Or that he possesses a scintilla of integrity. Better to have some vermin living in your neighborhood than to be one.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. With that, I yield to the senior Senator from Maryland, my friend, BEN CARDIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first, I thank Senator VAN HOLLEN, my seatmate and friend representing the State of Maryland in the U.S. Senate. His comments reflect the views, I hope, of the overwhelmingly majority of Americans. It is critically important that we speak out as to what the President has said.

I have lived my entire life in Baltimore. I love Baltimore. It is a great city. As Senator VAN HOLLEN has said,

it has an incredible history. It is a vibrant city. There are so many good things happening there. It has a great future, and it needs our help from the point of view of any major urban center in America.

On weekends, my wife and I will frequently walk areas of Baltimore City in order to get some exercise, to clear our heads from the workweek, and to see what is happening in Baltimore. I must tell you that it is so energizing to see the building cranes in downtown Baltimore building new housing for our young people coming into our city because they know the economic future of Baltimore. They are there because they want to live in an exciting place in Baltimore City.

We see the optimism on their faces as they are doing their exercise in the morning and walking the streets of Baltimore. We see a great city that is continuing to rebuild in a modern economy. So when the President of the United States insults the city of Baltimore and Congressman CUMMINGS, it is incumbent on all of us to speak out and tell the President: This is unacceptable.

We know the Office of the President is frequently referred to as a bully pulpit that he can use, but the President of the United States cannot be a bully. Yet that is exactly what he is doing, trying to bully minorities and others in this country. It will not work.

The bully is not ELIJAH CUMMINGS, as President Trump called him. The bully is President Trump. The person who is dividing our country is President Trump, and he should be the one bringing us together.

Why does he do this? I don't think any of us believe that he isn't doing it for political reasons. He wants to distract from what is happening in this country. In the Congress of the United States, Congressman CUMMINGS is leading a committee that has the responsibility of checks and balances of our system to act as a check on the President of the United States.

Does anybody in this Chamber believe there shouldn't be a check and balance in our system on this President? Look at how he has used his Executive powers and abused his Executive powers and the emergency declarations that he has used.

The Mueller report spells out how the President tried to interfere in the investigation. The way he talks about our judiciary, saying that he is not going to follow the orders of our court, and the way he trashes our free press—all of that cries out for an aggressive check and balance on the independent first branch of government, and that is what ELIJAH CUMMINGS is doing.

So why is the President using these personal attacks against ELIJAH CUMMINGS and the city he represents, Baltimore? To try to distract from the legitimate role Congress plays as a check and balance on the powers of President Trump.

It won't work. I can assure you that Congressman CUMMINGS is going to

continue to do his work. His committee is going to continue to do its work. I am going to continue to do my work as a U.S. Senator, and Senator VAN HOLLEN is going to continue to do what is right to make sure we carry out our constitutional responsibilities.

He also does this, quite frankly, for a political appeal against minority communities. That is inexcusable for any American, but for the President of the United States, it is totally outrageous.

As Senator VAN HOLLEN said, we don't have to defend ELIJAH CUMMINGS. He can defend himself.

I have known ELIJAH CUMMINGS now for about 40 years. When I was speaker of the house of delegates in Annapolis, there was a young, new legislator who came upon the scene—ELIJAH CUMMINGS. I recognized from the beginning that he was going to be a great leader, and he showed that in his very early years. He rose to become speaker pro tempore of our house of delegates, and he was a leading voice as a member of the house of delegates.

You see, we had something in common. Both ELIJAH CUMMINGS and I graduated from the same public high school in Baltimore City, Baltimore City College. By the way, so did DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER and three members of Congress—from the same public high school in Baltimore City. We both attended the same law school, the University of Maryland School of Law.

So I recognized from the beginning that there was a lot in common, and I wanted to help this young legislator. He then, of course, ran for Congress. He was elected to Congress, and he has done an incredible job. He is a gifted orator. He motivates people by his speech. He is a mentor for young people, and he has helped so many young people with their lives.

He lives in Baltimore City in a neighborhood where he is an inspiration to people who otherwise would not have much hope. He has used his own life experiences to lift the lives of others, and, yes, I can tell you the record of so many accomplishments that he has.

Just this past week, along with Senator VAN HOLLEN, we announced a \$125 million grant for the Howard Street tunnel for which Congressman CUMMINGS played a critical role in getting those funds. That is going to mean thousands of jobs for Baltimore and economic opportunity for our region. That is just one example.

In the revitalization of Penn Station, Amtrak is going to invest \$90 million in revitalizing that part of Baltimore. ELIJAH CUMMINGS was instrumental in getting that done.

In the Ellicott City flood—two floods within a 20-month period—it was part of his congressional district. President Trump doesn't quite understand how Congressman CUMMINGS' district is redistricted, but he represents Ellicott City. He was on the scene immediately and helped bring in all of the Federal partners so that Ellicott City could beat the odds.

When you have a major flood like that, most businesses don't return. In Ellicott City, they returned. Why? Because of the Federal partnership in which ELIJAH CUMMINGS played a critical role, as well as other members of our congressional delegation.

Affordable housing—Congressman CUMMINGS has brought affordable housing to Baltimore.

Public safety—after Freddie Gray, I will never forget the scene I was watching on the television screen. We saw the riots and the disruption that started in Baltimore. There was ELIJAH CUMMINGS on the streets, calming things down and saving lives. That is what he was doing to represent his community. That is the type of legislator he is.

He has provided support for public safety in Baltimore, for public education in Baltimore, and for STEM education in Baltimore City public schools.

So, President Trump, when you say this guy hasn't done his work to represent the people in the Seventh Congressional District, you are absolutely wrong. Come to Baltimore. Let us show you exactly what we have been able to accomplish and how you can help us, but don't defame our city. You are the President of the United States. Act as President. Bring us together. Recognize that you are responsible for this entire country, and help us with the reputation of Baltimore.

Again, I don't have to defend my city. My city is well known. It is one of the great cities in America, but I am going to do it anyway because I want my colleagues to understand how proud we are of our city, those of us who represent the State of Maryland and represent Baltimore City.

There is the Nation's first Washington Monument, the National Aquarium, Oriole Park, M&T Bank, Fort McHenry. Talk about Enoch Pratt library, one of the great libraries in America that gave free libraries to the people of our city. There is Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center.

I could go through all the museums we have in Baltimore: the American Visionary Art Museum; the Baltimore Museum of Art; the Baltimore Museum of Industry; Walters Art Gallery; the Jewish Museum of Maryland; Babe Ruth's birthplace—born in Baltimore; the Reginald F. Lewis Museum; and the B&O Railroad Museum. How many of us have been there? The great history of the railroads in Baltimore started there. There is the Maryland Science Center.

There are great sports icons that have come out of Baltimore—from Johnny Unitas to Frank Robinson, to Brooks Robinson, Cal Ripken, and Ray Lewis.

We have great healthcare institutions—Johns Hopkins. I just got an email as I was sitting on the floor. I know the rules of the Senate prohibit me from looking at my electronic de-

vice, but U.S. News & World Report today ranked the Johns Hopkins department of neurology No. 1 in the Nation. It is located in Baltimore City, MD.

We can go over the other great institutions we have, such as the University of Maryland Medical Center, the Kennedy Krieger Institute, and the Lieber Institute for Brain Development.

We have great colleges, from Morgan State University to the University of Maryland School of Law, to Loyola University, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore Coppin State, Notre Dame of Maryland University.

The list goes on and on: farmers markets and public markets; trend-setting writers from John Waters to David Simon, Tom Clancy, and Barry Levinson; the unique neighborhoods from "Lil' Itlee" to Pigtown.

Baltimore is well known. The Taste of Baltimore—how many of you know that the only place you can get a really legitimate crab cake is in Baltimore City? We all know that. And there are Old Bay Seasoning, Berger Cookies, and Goetze's Candies.

There is the Port of Baltimore, the economic heart of our State; Domino Sugar; and Under Armour, which is investing hundreds of millions of dollars into Baltimore City because they know the future.

There are the NGOs that are centered in Baltimore—the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Abell Foundation, Center for Urban Families, Catholic Relief Services, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services.

I do this in hopes that the President might be listening so that he can learn a little bit about why we are so proud of Baltimore City. What we do ask is very simple. To the President: Come and learn about our urban centers and how you can help us in meeting the problems that we have in Baltimore and many urban cities around the Nation. We need a Federal partner who will help us with our economic growth and help us meet the challenges of the future.

It is exciting to live in Baltimore, and it is exciting to see our city grow. I am proud to be a Baltimorean, and I am proud to represent Baltimore in the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, Senator CARDIN, for talking about some of the highlights of Baltimore City and the storied history of Baltimore City. It is a history of much good but also a lot of challenges that I recounted earlier. It doesn't do Baltimore City or any city in this country any good when the person in the highest office in this country launches these nasty, personal, racial diatribes.

I know the President had a history of these kinds of comments before he came to the Oval Office. But now that he is in the Oval Office, all of us have

an obligation and responsibility to speak out when he fouls the office in that way.

If the President really wants to help cities like Baltimore, he can do some of the things Senator CARDIN talked about. On a bipartisan basis in the Appropriations Committee, we are working to make investments that will help that city and many other cities with things like the CDBG—community development block grants—things like economic development administration proposals, things like financing through CDFIs, and things like minority business enterprises. Those are four investments. They don't solve the problems, but they certainly help.

Here is the thing. In President Trump's budget, zero—he zeroed out every single one of those programs.

I propose a major additional investment in our schools throughout this country, including title I schools, which are schools in lower income areas. That would be a huge boost to education throughout the country and to the city of Baltimore.

As Senator CARDIN said, we need to make investments in our national infrastructure. We have a great, thriving port in Baltimore with good-paying jobs, so we need to expand it.

There are so many things we can and should be doing, but the President, apparently, according to many, has this political strategy where he doesn't want to talk about those things. It is a political strategy that seeks to divide this country, not to unite this country. If you think about that, that is a pretty sick political strategy. It is sick for the country, sick for Maryland, and sick for Baltimore.

So I hope all of us will work to focus on the things we can do to make Baltimore and Maryland and this country stronger and end this kind of divisive rhetoric. Part of ending it means speaking out against it when we see it. We need everybody in this body to join us in doing it.

Again, I think when it comes to the city of Baltimore, it is going to rise way above the President's comments. It understands it has challenges, but it also understands it has a great future. Let us—all together—be part of a great future for Baltimore and this country, and that means coming together to serve the interests of all of our constituents.

I thank the Senate for the time Senator CARDIN and I have had here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the need to fix our broken budget and spending process.

Picking up efforts we began in the 114th Congress, the Senate Budget Committee has spent the last several months holding hearings and meetings with Members of Congress, State officials, the administration, and stakeholder groups to listen to their budget

reform priorities. Along the way, we have collected a lot of good ideas.

Today, I come to the floor to outline the fiscal reform plan that incorporates a lot of the feedback we received. It reflects suggestions from Members on both sides of the aisle and from groups that span the political spectrum. These reforms are not driven by politics but, instead, are rooted in fixing our broken budget and spending process in favor of a system that works for everyone.

In developing this plan, my focus was on creating a durable system to substantially manage our country's finances, to improve transparency, to improve oversight, to improve accountability in the budget process, and to end the brinksmanship in our fiscal debates.

I have broken the plan down into four separate discussion drafts, which I am sharing this week with Senate Budget Committee members. Each of the drafts tackles a different aspect of the broken budget and spending process.

The first proposal is the most ambitious. It would reorient the budget process around long-term planning and shift the Federal Government to a biennial budgeting and spending system. There are 20 States, including my home State of Wyoming, that have some form of biennial budgeting and appropriations. I have long believed that one of the most important reforms we could do at the Federal level would be to move to a biennial process to have the problem only every other year.

The plan proposes to maintain the budget resolution as a concurrent resolution but with a few important changes.

First, it would change how we write the budget. Topline discretionary figures would be clearly stated in the resolution, while mandatory spending would continue to be displayed on a portfolio basis. This new approach will allow each individual Member to have more of a say in the budget through the amendment process.

Second, it would require the budget resolution to include debt-to-GDP targets to focus Congress on creating a path to stabilize our debt levels and sustainably manage our finances. It could even provide an estimate of anticipated revenues.

Third, the plan would allow for, upon adoption of a concurrent resolution on the budget, the automatic enrollment of a bill that would set discretionary spending caps—something that has taken until right now to get done this year—enforced by both Congress and OMB and increase the debt limit in line with the levels assumed in the resolution. It saves a lot of time.

The proposal seeks to encourage Congress and the President to reach agreement on a fiscal framework early in the budget process while maintaining the budget resolution as a congressional document. The budget resolution would be enforced whether or not

the President signs the joint resolution.

To encourage Congress to adhere to its budget blueprint, the proposal would create a special reconciliation process that would be triggered if the Congressional Budget Office finds that Congress is not on a path toward meeting the budget resolution's fiscal target that everybody voted on. This process would allow Congress to make surgical changes to achieve the debt target and could only be used for deficit reduction. The Byrd rule, which prohibits changes to Social Security in reconciliation, would apply.

The plan also seeks to get legislative committees more involved in the budget process. It would require them, at the beginning of the process, to share their plans to address spending on unauthorized programs in their jurisdiction, as well as programs that Agency-based inspectors general and the Government Accountability Office have identified as "in need of improvement." For that budget cycle, the committee would have to suggest a dollar amount for those programs listed as "such sums."

It would change our committee's name to the Fiscal Control Committee to better reflect the committee's focus on setting spending and revenue guardrails. It would also require the chairs and ranking members of the Appropriations and Finance Committees, if not already members of the Fiscal Control Committee, to serve as nonvoting members of the committee. This change is intended to increase the input in the primary spending and taxing committees in developing fiscal plans.

The second discussion draft I am releasing deals with congressional budget enforcement. Justice Louis Brandeis once wrote that "sunlight is said to be the best disinfectant." In keeping with this principle, the proposal would require reports tracking Congress's adherence to its budget plan to be regularly printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and posted on a publicly accessible website. This would help ensure that Members of Congress and the leadership of each committee are accountable for their fiscal decisions.

The other two components of this draft deal with Senate budget points of order, which are the means through which the body enforces congressional budgets and rules. These points of order are supposed to create a meaningful obstacle to breaching the budget, but in recent years they have been routinely ignored or waived.

The discussion draft proposes to make it harder to rewrite "inconvenient" budget rules. There have been a number of attempts in recent years to rewrite budget rules outside of the normal budget process to allow for more spending. There is already a point of order against this practice under the Congressional Budget Act, but that point of order lies against the whole measure, making it a very blunt in-

strument. The discussion draft would make the current point of order surgical so it would target only the offending provision without threatening to shut down the whole bill.

In a similar vein, the discussion draft would disallow global waivers for surgical points of order. Right now, any Senator can make a single motion to waive all budget points of order that lie against a measure. These global waivers allow numerous budget rules to be broken with one vote, regardless of whether the points of order that lie are surgical or apply to the whole measure. These waivers have even been used to preemptively prevent surgical points of order that could alter the bill text from being raised. The discussion draft aims to end that practice and ensure the ability of Senators to raise points of order that could remedy a budget violation without killing the bill.

The third discussion draft I am releasing deals with Congressional Budget Office operations and transparency. The CBO serves a vital role in the budget and legislative processes. While the Agency's longstanding mission has been to produce timely, objective, and accurate information for Congress, there have been growing calls for increased transparency in the estimating process. The discussion draft aims to build on bipartisan transparency reforms already underway at the CBO in a number of ways.

No. 1, it would require CBO to report on its transparency initiatives, review past estimates to see where the Agency got it right or got it wrong, and produce underlying data for its estimates of major legislation.

No. 2, it would require interest costs to be included as supplemental information in cost estimates, ensuring that lawmakers and the public have better information about the true costs of legislation.

No. 3, it would require public cost estimates of appropriations legislation. Unlike legislation reported from authorizing committees, there is not currently a requirement for CBO to provide public estimates of legislation reported by the Appropriations Committee.

No. 4, it would require CBO and the Government Accountability Office to conduct ongoing portfolio reviews of Federal programs to help lawmakers identify spending on duplicative, overlapping, and fragmented programs, as well as long-term funding trends and liabilities.

That was my third discussion draft.

My fourth discussion draft relates to how budget resolutions are considered on the Senate floor. The Congressional Budget Act provides special expedited procedures for consideration of a budget resolution on the Senate floor. These procedures were meant to ensure that the budget is considered and adopted in a deliberate but efficient manner. However, arcane floor procedures and a quirk of the act have undermined this intent by allowing a

marathon of votes known as a vote-arama. Once debate on the budget has ended, we have a vote-arama. Without time for debate or analysis of what is being proposed, this process is not conducive to substantive consideration of fiscal policy and serves as a major deterrent to considering a budget on the floor. The discussion draft aims to establish a more orderly process for Senate consideration of the budget resolution that ensures the ability of Senators from both sides of the aisle to offer and have votes on amendments.

It would change the current 50-hour rule on debate of a budget resolution to a limit on consideration and force the Senate to consider amendments after all allotted general debate time expires. Amendments would alternate between those offered by the minority and those offered by the majority, and the maximum debate time on the first-degree amendments would be reduced from 2 hours to 1 hour, to allow for the consideration of more amendments.

Under this proposal, even if the maximum debate time was burned on each amendment, 24 amendments could be considered. Coincidentally, 24 is both the average and the median number of rollcall votes on budget resolutions since 1976. Of course, it isn't 1 minute of debate. It would be an hour of debate.

This proposal would apply only to the Senate consideration of budget resolutions. It would not preclude adoption of a managers' package, apply to reconciliation bills, or change House procedures.

We can all agree that the current budget and spending system has broken down. Reforming this dysfunctional system has been a goal of mine since entering the Senate and is one of my top priorities before I leave this body at the end of this Congress.

I encourage my colleagues to consider the reform ideas I have laid out today and invite their feedback. I am hopeful that through this process, we will be able to reach bipartisan agreement to end the current dysfunction and put our country back toward a sustainable fiscal future—and on time so we will not have government shutdowns.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

AMERICA'S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE ACT

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, yesterday I joined the fellow leaders of the Environment and Public Works Committee to introduce America's Transportation Infrastructure Act, a 5-year reauthorization bill that would deliver resources to repair and maintain critical surface transportation infrastructure.

Today the committee approved our comprehensive legislation with a strong bipartisan vote of 21 to 0 this morning.

As the chair of the EPW's Transportation and Infrastructure Sub-

committee, I am incredibly proud of this legislation, which is the result of months of serious negotiations with the full committee chairman, Senator BARRASSO, and Ranking Member CARPER, my subcommittee, and my ranking member, Senator CARDIN of Maryland.

It was not always easy, but I think we have produced a bill that achieves our priorities and secures needed investments in our Nation's infrastructure. First and foremost, the bill provides additional funding for highway investment. How many times do we hear: We don't have enough money to complete this. We can't get it done.

This also maintains the States' shares through formula dollars. That means a rising tide lifts all boats, whether a State is urban or rural, like my home State of West Virginia.

The majority of these funds—90 percent—are distributed by the formula to the States, providing maximum flexibility to our State programs, and with a full 5-year reauthorization, State DOTs will have the certainty they need to plan their investments without fear of lapses in their contracting authority. After all, it is the States, not the bureaucrats in Washington, that know their communities' needs the best.

Our legislation would get rid of some of the obstacles the States face as they work to start and finalize infrastructure plans. They take forever, and they cost so much. The bill incorporates the Trump administration's focus on One Federal Decision. Under that policy, the U.S. Department of Transportation is in charge of leading the regulatory review process—One Federal Decision—and it would consolidate the review of other Federal agencies like the EPA, the Corps of Engineers, and others who weigh in on these projects. That means the States will not end up in a regulatory purgatory, going back and forth from agency to agency seeking endless approvals.

DOT would also maintain a Federal dashboard system so the States can see where they stand in the process.

America's Transportation Infrastructure Act directs the Department of Transportation to work to complete its review process within 2 years and to push other agencies to expedite their regulatory reviews. Everything drags on so much, and it makes it so long and expensive. This would push our agencies to expedite their regulatory reviews under its own categorical exclusions. That is a fancy term for when the Department doesn't think a full, costly, and time-consuming permitting process is necessary for a straightforward infrastructure project such as replacing a bridge from right where it is and putting a new bridge right where it is. It takes forever. So we would eliminate that.

We also worked in a bipartisan way to promote natural infrastructure that will help reduce costs and timelines, diminish environmental impacts, and improve the resiliency of our infra-

structure to natural disasters such as floods that are so common in my part of the country.

West Virginia has the unfortunate title of being in the top five States of structurally deficient bridges. That is why I am very proud that America's Transportation and Infrastructure Act includes language I cosponsored with Senator BROWN implementing the new Bridge Investment Program.

This program will infuse \$6 billion over 5 years in additional funding to fix bridges in poor condition—dedicated funding that is essential to addressing this problem.

When faced with the decision on using scarce taxpayer dollars on a new highway expansion or improving bridge safety, too often—it is too tempting—States opt for the appeal of a ribbon-cutting on a new stretch of highway. Now, hopefully, they won't have to make that choice and we can reduce both congestion and the odds of a bridge failure—something that not only threatens our lives but also cuts off a community while they wait for a costly replacement.

The climate and resilience portion of America's Transportation Infrastructure Act will reduce emissions from the transportation sector and ensure that the taxpayers are not repeatedly replacing infrastructure affected by natural disasters.

This portion of the bill also includes important bipartisan legislation that I cosponsored. The first is called the USE IT Act. This would facilitate the deployment of carbon capture, utilization, and storage technologies by reducing regulatory obligations that the project stakeholders would face. It also includes the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act, which will provide funding to States and communities to replace older, smog-producing vehicles—like obsolete schoolbuses—with modern vehicles that use diesel, propane, natural gas, and electricity.

Most importantly for West Virginia and for broader Appalachia, this legislation includes several provisions, which I wrote, to accelerate the completion of the Appalachian Development Highway System and reauthorize the economic development activities of the Appalachian Regional Commission. The commission was first authorized in 1965. The Appalachian Development Highway System was designed to better integrate our region with the Midwest, Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and South. For an economically-distressed area with communities that are relatively isolated, this infrastructure network is vital. It is vital for attracting investment, creating new economic opportunities, and improving quality of life.

The Appalachian Regional Commission has found that the highway system has already created and supported more than 168,000 jobs and generated \$7.8 billion in wage income that otherwise would not have existed. Those wages, in turn, drive local and Federal

tax bases. Completing this system would generate an additional \$8.7 billion in annual economic activity. It would support another 46,000 jobs and lead to an additional \$2.7 billion in worker income. These are very significant numbers. I can't really overstate the impact this additional economic activity would have in our region.

Unfortunately, the Appalachian Development Highway System is only 90 percent complete. The remaining 10 percent generally represents the most challenging mountain terrain, and that means these are the costliest and most environmentally complicated miles to complete. We have to get this done.

The highway system was started almost 55 years ago. America is better than letting an infrastructure priority just sit around for more than half a century with no end in sight due to lack of funding or regulatory uncertainty. This was also a promise made to the people of Appalachia.

The Appalachian Development Highway System completion was identified as being in our national interest in the last two highway bills. But it is America's Transportation Infrastructure Act that will actually provide a mechanism to move us toward the finish line.

Beyond the regulatory reforms I just spoke about, my language allows States that for whatever reason have accrued significant Appalachian Development Highway System balances to exchange those dollars with States like West Virginia that are still working to complete projects, like our Corridor H. But we lack the resources to engineer and construct these challenging remaining miles. In return, those States that turn their dollars back in to the Appalachian Development Highway System will receive dollars that they could use for any project in their State that would otherwise be eligible as a Federal highway project. That means that States can respond to the changing transportation needs in their particular area. They use excess dollars from an undersubscribed Federal loan program, which has historically not contributed to infrastructure investment in rural America.

This would be a win for all States involved. Those needing additional funding will be able to continue to advance the Appalachian Development Highway System, and States that have needed to shift their focus—say on growing urban transportation needs—will have the added flexibility to be able to do that.

I appreciate my fellow Appalachian Development Highway System State committee colleagues for working with me to include this provision, as well as Leader MCCONNELL's support on this section of the bill and our counterpart legislation, the Advancing Infrastructure Development in Appalachia Act.

The committee also included language that I wrote and worked with those individuals on to reauthorize the Appalachian Regional Commission—a key economic development agency—at

\$180 million a year. My provision also doubles to \$20 million the funding available for something that I care deeply about, and that is broadband deployment in Appalachia, which is a critical tool for connecting our communities and making and keeping our region more competitive.

I thank Leader MCCONNELL and Ranking Member CARDIN and Senator WICKER for their support of this language and the stand-alone ARC authorization bill.

Leader MCCONNELL also joined me in authorizing the ARC to provide up to \$5 million in grants to support the development of a central Appalachian natural gas liquids storage hub, along with the associated downstream manufacturing sector for it. This infrastructure project would be huge for the economies of West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. In fact, the American Chemistry Council estimates that this regional market and downstream manufacturing would generate \$36 billion in capital investment and more than 100,000 jobs. It would also help keep a much larger share of the economic value and employment opportunity in our States where the resources are, compared to just producing and then exporting the gas and associated natural gas liquids to other parts of the country or abroad.

Secretary Perry and the Department of Energy have also endorsed the concept of this project, as well as the significant economic and energy security dividends that it would pay for Appalachia and the entire United States.

This is somewhat of a modest investment given the significant private sector capital needed to build this out, but it is essential that the Federal Government send clear messages to potential investors that it supports this driver of economic growth in an area that would greatly benefit.

This legislation gives the ARC the power to lead the way.

Investment in our country's infrastructure is vital to the many aspects of our American life, from keeping us competitive in the global economy and keeping our drivers safe—there are a lot of safety aspects in this bill—to reducing irritating congestion and minimizing impacts to the economy.

America's Transportation Infrastructure Act delivers on all these fronts and ensures that rural America will benefit equally from these investments. Not only will our legislation help rebuild and repair our infrastructure system, but it will also help us create new infrastructure opportunities for generations to come.

I appreciate my colleagues' collaboration. My colleague from Rhode Island is on the floor. He was on the committee this morning when we both voted in favor of this legislation. It is a bipartisan bill working to make sure that this country sees a 5-year highway reauthorization and all the benefits it would provide.

I think all my Senate colleagues will find a lot to like in this legislation. I

am hoping we get it on the floor in the fall. I encourage their support when it comes time for a vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MCSALLY). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I thank the distinguished Senator from West Virginia for her work on the highway bill that we voted out of the Environment and Public Works Committee today and on our industrial emissions bill and on carbon capture. It has been a terrific working relationship.

TRIBUTE TO DR. KIM BINSTED AND DR. RYAN EDWARDS

Madam President, as I begin my 251st "Time to Wake Up" remarks, I would like to thank two AAAS fellows who will be shortly leaving my office.

Dr. Kim Binsted came to us from the University of Hawaii, where she was principal investigator on the NASA-sponsored Hi-Seas project, studying conditions like those that astronauts would encounter on Mars. Next month, she returns to Hawaii to continue her research.

Dr. Ryan Edwards joined us after completing his Ph.D. at Princeton University, where he studied carbon capture and storage. He hails from Australia and is thus by far the best cricket player on my staff—low bar. Next up for him will be Houston and more carbon capture research.

I thank both of them for their service and their expertise, and I wish them the best.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Madam President, tomorrow, about 2½ miles from here, executives from some of the biggest fossil fuel companies in the world will be meeting at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. It is a power-packed event. The chamber is the most powerful lobbying force here in Washington and a fierce political operator. The fossil fuel industry runs remorseless and often covert political operations. They are defending a \$650 billion annual subsidy, as the International Monetary Fund estimates, so hundreds of millions spent on lobbying and election mischief is money well spent: The Chamber and Big Oil together have stopped climate progress here.

For the member companies of the chamber, including companies that say they support climate action, it is time to confront the relationship between the chamber and the fossil fuel industry. The Earth is spinning toward climate catastrophe. Action in Congress to limit carbon pollution is essential to averting this catastrophe. Yet the chamber, according to the watchdog InfluenceMap, is in a virtual tie as the most obstructive group on climate change, blocking legislation, opposing Executive action, and even seeking to undermine climate science. The chamber is so obstructive, it would be better called the Chamber of Carbon.

The chamber has opposed one comprehensive climate bill after another—

first, the bipartisan cap-and-trade bill in 2005, the Energy Policy Act. The chamber helped defeat it with a Key Vote Alert—a signal that whoever voted in favor of the bill could face an onslaught of Chamber political attacks in the next election.

In 2007, the chamber ran political TV ads against climate legislation, claiming that it would prevent people from heating their homes or that they wouldn't be able to drive to work any longer. Here is somebody cooking an egg over candles.

In 2009, the chamber led the charge against the Waxman-Markey bill. For that legislation, the chamber pulled out all the stops—haranguing Members, more “vote alerts” and “how they voted” scorecards, sending more messages of election doom if they dared to support Waxman-Markey. Since the U.S. Chamber tanked Waxman-Markey, Republicans in Congress have refused to hold hearings on, mark up, debate, or vote on any legislation proposing a policy framework for economy-wide reductions in carbon pollution.

It is not just in Congress that the chamber wields its baleful influence; the chamber also fought climate action in the courts and at the executive branch. In fact, in 2010, the chamber sued the EPA to overturn the finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger public health and welfare. You would think it would be obvious that they do. Look around, and you will see that they do. Disabling the endangerment finding would cripple the Agency's ability to regulate carbon pollution under the Clean Air Act, so off went the chamber.

When the courts rejected this lawsuit on the endangerment finding, then the chamber became central command for corporate lawyers, coal lobbyists, and Republican political strategists to devise legal schemes to fight climate regulations. This produced another chamber lawsuit to block the Clean Power Plan reducing carbon pollution from powerplants.

Of course, once President Trump took office, the chamber went from defense to offense and attacked many Obama administration rules limiting carbon pollution. The chamber even funded the phony report the Trump administration used to justify leaving the Paris accord.

Perhaps, worst of all, the Chamber has fought against science itself. It has proposed putting the evidence—the scientific evidence—of climate change on trial in what its own officials have branded the “Scopes monkey trial of the 21st century.” That is what this crowd was for. Indeed, the Chamber has said the trial “would be evolution versus creationism.” Guess what side it would be on.

This is not your hometown Chamber, folks.

The Chamber has even tried to limit the scientific studies that regulators could consider. The Chamber's evident target was public health studies that

demonstrate just how dangerous burning fossil fuels is to public health. The Chamber is an electioneering force, not just a lobbying force, and it spends massive sums in politics to shore up its control in Congress. Since the 2010 Citizens United decision has allowed outside groups to spend unlimited sums on electioneering activities, the Chamber has funneled, roughly, \$150 million into congressional races, which has made the Chamber the largest distributor of undisclosed donations—dark money, we call it—in congressional races.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent to speak for an additional 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the Presiding Officer. I appreciate that courtesy.

Blocking action on climate has been the central focus of the Chamber's campaign spending. It ran this ad in Pennsylvania in 2016. Two moms watch their children on a playground. One comments on how much energy the children have. The other says: Oh, don't say that. The candidate wants to tax that energy. The ad gets even weirder when a faceless woman arrives in a car and steps out toward the children. Alarmed, one of the mothers yells the ad's punch line: “Run, Jimmy. Run.” Classy stuff. I wonder who the Chamber was fronting for.

So how does the Chamber's anti-climate crusade square with its big corporate members?

It has members like Coke and Pepsi, which have good internal climate policies and websites that are full of commitments to reduce corporate carbon footprints, and they have signed letters on climate action.

Pepsi signed the Ceres BICEP Climate Declaration. Coke plans to reduce CO₂ emissions by 25 percent. It says it “will work to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions across its value chain, making comprehensive carbon footprint reductions across its manufacturing processes, packaging formats, delivery fleet, refrigeration equipment and ingredient sourcing.”

Yet both Coke and Pepsi fund the Chamber of Commerce, and they fund the American Beverage Association, which, in turn, runs more money to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The end result? Two companies that are actively reducing their carbon emissions and that enthusiastically support good climate policy have the position in Congress, via their funding of the Chamber, of opposing climate action here in Washington—the place where it really counts.

Verizon has reduced its carbon intensity by 28 percent since 2016, and its CEO has publicly stated Verizon's commitment to combat climate change. Yet Verizon, too, funds the Chamber's obstruction.

Then there is Google with its motto: “Don't be evil.” Google is warning its investors that climate change threatens its systems. It says that it is vulnerable to damage or interruption from natural disasters and to the effects of climate change, such as sea level rise, drought, flooding, wildfires, and increased storm severity. Google has signed pledges to fight climate change; yet Google, too, funds the Chamber's anti-climate crusade.

Coke, Pepsi, Verizon, and Google are just four examples among many. These companies say they support climate action but fund one of climate action's worst opponents.

Why does the Chamber put these members in this position? The best explanation I have is that the fossil fuel industry is secretly calling the shots at the Chamber; that is, it is secretly funding the Chamber. That would explain the Chamber's refusal to disclose its funders.

I think this is a governance issue now for these companies, particularly for those members who serve on the Chamber's board. Board members of nonprofit organizations have a common law duty of care. Not knowing who is funding your organization looks like a breach of that duty of care.

The Chamber's member companies need to ask themselves: Do we know who is funding the Chamber? Do we know how much each donor is giving? Do those donations explain the Chamber's years of obstruction?

The Chamber holds itself out as a business association. Another question: Why is it accepting money from non-businesses?

In 2012 and 2014, the Chamber took at least \$5.5 million from front groups that have been backed by the Koch brothers. In 2014, it took \$5.25 million from a front group that was affiliated with Karl Rove.

Did the Chamber's board members know this? Did they exercise the proper duty of care? Do they know what nonbusiness money is funding the Chamber these days? Do they know what percentage of the Chamber's funding comes secretly from fossil fuel interests?

I don't think the Chamber's board members know the answers to any of these questions.

Here is a question for the general counsel of these board member corporations: Should they know or are you going to go with willful ignorance? Good luck with that.

The bottom line is simple. Chamber board members with good climate policies are supporting one of the worst climate obstructors in America. Indeed, they are writing big checks to do so. This, I believe, is not just a moral problem but a governance problem. If these companies aren't asking these tough questions and if they are not pushing the Chamber to be transparent about its funding sources, they are answerable. Until this mess gets sorted out, in spite of all of corporate America's efforts to reduce emissions, its

funding of the “U.S. Chamber of Carbon” means that corporate America is doing more harm than good for our climate.

Again, I thank the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma for his courtesy in allowing me the extra time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, first of all, despite what some people might think, I have the highest regard for the Senator from Rhode Island.

It is very interesting in that the climate is changing, and the climate has always changed. All evidence out there—all historical evidence, all scriptural evidence—tells us over and over again that the climate is changing. It always has been changing, and it always will change.

The good news is that the world is not coming to an end because of climate change. That is because the climate is always changing. So, for those people who believe the world is coming to an end because of greenhouse gas emissions, the good news is it is not. I am happy to share that good news with you.

BIPARTISAN BUDGET ACT OF 2019

Madam President, I am here to speak about some other good news, which is that we have an opportunity with a vote that is coming up. Some people call it the budget vote or the budget agreement. I don't refer to it as such. I call it a defense agreement. I think everybody knows where I stand on this. This is a vote that is going to have to come up before too long, and there is a unique group of people in the U.S. Senate who know the reason that we have to pass the defense budget. They are the members of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services. It happens that I chair that committee and that we have done really great work.

I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, we had a situation in which we went through an 8-year period of time when our military was somewhat devastated, and I want to share some of the specifics of that because it is a serious thing. We are going to be voting on the defense budget agreement, and I have already stated where I stand on it. I am here to outline why the budget agreement is necessary for our national defense.

This defense budget agreement will be able to focus on the Senate's Armed Services' top priorities, one of which is to fix the on-base privatization of military housing.

Remember that this happened about 6 months ago. We discovered, all of a sudden, that we were not doing a good job on our privatized housing. Hey, I have to admit that I am partly responsible for that because I was around here when we decided to privatize the

housing. It did work for a while. I think, after a period of time, people got a little careless, and there was a little slack. Some of the contractors who made that commitment got a little bit greedy. This information as to how bad the conditions were came from a person at Tinker Air Force Base who was the spouse of a military person. When I first heard this, I thought there were bad conditions just in my State of Oklahoma, but there were not; they were all over the Nation.

So we fixed that thing. We fixed it with our defense authorization bill, and we had a lot of provisions in there. We are now modernizing our military housing in a way that is going to be good for all of our spouses and others who are forced to live there. For some reason, if our defense budget agreement were to go down in flames and not be passed, there wouldn't be the modernizing of our military or the giving to our troops a well-deserved pay raise, and they have not had a pay raise in a long time. This is going to be the largest pay raise for our military people in the last 10 years. It is a good thing.

By the way, people are always talking about how we can be so concerned about building our military when we have China and Russia that have passed us up in many areas and spend just a fraction of the amount. The reason is very simple, which is that China and Russia are countries that don't have to do anything for their soldiers. We take care of ours. We try to provide good housing. We provide the types of things that our all-volunteer force can be very proud of and are very proud of. That is something we have to incur. The largest single expenditure that we have in the military is end strength—the people out there. Communist countries—China, Russia—don't have to worry about that. “Here is a gun. Go out and kill somebody.” We don't have that luxury, and we wouldn't do that if we wanted to.

If we don't pass this budget bill, the effects on the military will be devastating. Let me just share a couple of things that would happen.

We would force the Department of Defense to operate under a continuing resolution, which would shortchange our troops and waste taxpayer dollars. We all know that. We would face destructive, haphazard cuts in sequestration. What is it we hear on our committee? The Presiding Officer is fully familiar, for she is one of the most loyal members of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services. We have posture hearings for about 6 months at the beginning of every year with the leaders of the various branches of the military—General Votel, Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, ADM Craig Faller, ADM Phil Davidson, all of these people.

What do they tell us?

They tell us, if we don't actually start funding our military again, we are going to have sequestration. Look, if we vote for this thing and pass it, we

will end the sequestration problems and threats forever. It will not happen again.

What else do they tell us?

They tell us that a CR, which is a continuing resolution, would be an absolute disaster. A lot of people in this body don't know this, but every member of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services does know this because they were there.

All of these people—16 leaders—come in for posture hearings each year, and we know the problems we are having and the problems we are confronted with. We would be faced with cuts in sequestration.

This document right here is the “Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission.” Here it is right here. This is our blueprint of what we are doing to save America and to put us back on top in all of these areas in which we are deficient. If, for some reason, we don't pass this defense budget agreement, then we will not be able to continue the implementation of the national defense strategy, and we all know that. Certainly, we don't all know that, but the members of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services do know that.

So that is what would happen. But what would this mean? The members of the Armed Services Committee know what it means, but for everybody else, the deficit budget deal would end the threat of sequestration forever. You don't need me to tell you that sequestration would be devastating.

General Milley, just confirmed to be the Chairman of the Joints Chief of Staff, said that the levels of funding caused by sequestration would place America “at great risk.”

Remember, unfortunately, Heather Wilson, the former Air Force Secretary who had to leave her position. She said the cuts would be “absolutely devastating in scope and scale.”

If we were hit by sequestration, there would be an across-the-board cut of \$71 billion to the defense programs. That would halt our progress on the Space Command and developing crucial capabilities like hypersonic weapons and artificial intelligence. Those are two areas where we have actually been passed up by both Russia and China.

Just yesterday, the DARPA announced that they have completed a successful design review of a hypersonic weapons program. Now, that is a good first step. I am really glad because we were way ahead of them back before the last administration came into office, and then, all of a sudden, over that period of time, we got behind. So, meanwhile, China and Russia are already testing their hypersonic weapons, and they are ahead of us. We are just trying to catch up, and that is what this budget vote is all about.

The 2020 NDAA invests in hypersonic weapons, but we can't move forward if we are hit by sequestration. It would mean it would set us even further behind.

By the way, the hypersonics that we are talking about are the state of the art. That is a new thing. That is a weaponry that moves at five times the speed of sound, and here we are, allowing our—I don't want to characterize China and Russia as enemies. They are not enemies, but they are certainly on the other side, and people are in shock when they find out that they have something that we don't have. We have to be competitive with them, and we are going to be if we pass this defense budget vote that we are going to have before us.

So another example, in our NDAA that we passed overwhelmingly just last month, it authorized a 3.1-percent pay raise, or increase, for our troops. They deserve that pay raise, and under sequestration that pay raise is at risk.

The ability for basing facilities to receive the next generation of aircraft is also at risk. If your State is like my State, your State is slated to house the F-35 or the T-X trainer or the KC-46. The KC-46 is a system that is going to replace the KC-135, which has been in place now for over 50 years and so is 50 years old. That is a system, and if you were going to have one of these systems in your State, you may not get it because of this deal. Without the budget vote that is going to take place, we wouldn't be able to move forward with our plan, and we would be hit by sequestration. It could all be over.

I am talking about systems like the F-35, which we talk about every day, and the T-X trainer. We have had the trainers in existence now for some 50 years, and the KC-46, the same thing.

So, anyway, that is what would happen if for some reason we vote against and don't pass the defense bill that we are going to be asked to vote on probably tomorrow.

We have also made plans to continue increasing our end strength by 17,000 troops from the Obama era to our current goal, and without this defense budget deal, that wouldn't be possible. I think we all know it.

Now, maybe we don't all know it in this Chamber, but as for every member of the defense authorization committee, the Senate Armed Services Committee, they all know because they have been told over and over, and that is why it is so important that they be very responsible in their vote.

It would be kind of hard to say that you are working for the defense of our Nation and then turn around and vote to gut their funding.

Now, we have made remarkable gains in readiness over the past couple of years, thanks to President Trump's leadership and greater budgetary stability. For just one example, at the end of the Obama administration, only 5 percent of our brigade combat teams were ready to what they call "fight tonight"—only 5 percent.

Now, we have made a huge improvement. That is up to 50 percent now after just 2 years of this administration, but we have a lot more to do. All

the improvements we have made in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 would be at risk if we were not able to go forward and pass our defense budget act that we are going to be asked to support.

Sequestration would undo what we have done and take us back where we were before. It would be abandoning our troops right when we said we would be there for them. A continuing resolution means funding will go to the wrong places—places that were important last year but don't need to be funded this year. That is just wasteful. We all understand that, but a continuing resolution would be especially devastating for the military.

Every one of these military people whom I was just reading about came in for their annual meeting. They all said the same thing: It would be devastating if we had to go into a continuing resolution. We would be forced to do programs that otherwise we would not be doing.

So General Dunford said it himself. He said: "The fact that we have routinely not had a budget at the beginning of the year has delayed new starts, and it's been incredibly inefficient in how we prioritize and allocate resources throughout the year." That was General Dunford.

A continuing resolution means that our military will lose key planning ability. David Norquist, nominated to be the Deputy Secretary of Defense, gave a great example to the Senate Armed Services Committee last week. He said: Let's say a unit is planning right now for some training in October, but we are operating under a continuing resolution. At that time, they will cancel training because they don't know how much money they would be getting in order to accomplish that. We may eventually get more money, but in the meantime we will have lost a month in the process.

With sequestration off the table and with a stable 2-year budget deal in place, the Department of Defense can move forward with what is really important: implementing the National Defense Strategy. This is what my committee has been focusing on all year. We are facing a different, more dangerous world than we were 10 years ago.

I look back wistfully. I have said this many times. I look back wistfully at the days of the Cold War. We had two super powers. We knew what they had, and they knew what we had—mutually assured destruction. It doesn't mean anything anymore. You have countries that are run by people that are mentally deficient having the capability of blowing up one of our American cities. It is a scary world out there. That is what we are doing. That is why it is so important that we pass this budget, because our defense is depending on it.

Not everybody knows this, but the members of the Armed Services Committee do know it. We are falling behind China and Russia as they continue to build their militaries. We are seeing

persistent threats from North Korea, from Iran, from the terrorist groups, and we no longer have the best of everything, and most people don't understand that. Of course the members of our committee do understand that.

We have set clear priorities, and now we need to fund it. The future of our Nation is at stake. This is what it will take to regain the qualitative and quantitative advantages that we have lost.

I would have liked to have seen even more funding provided to this. The National Defense Strategy Commission—by the way, they set up a system that they can use, and that system is that we should be putting together between a 3- and a 5-percent increase over inflation, but we have not done it. We have not done it even with the budget that we are working on now.

The National Defense Strategy Commission, which is nonpartisan, has said that 3 to 5 percent growth is what is needed, and that is what we did not do.

But at the end of the day, I am willing to take this smaller than ideal increase and give our military what it needs—predictability. It is also more than what the House passed in their Defense authorization bill, which was dangerously low.

Every member of Armed Services Committee should vote for this defense budget because they know everything we have been talking about. They know that we are outranged and outgunned in artillery. They know that we are at a disadvantage in air defense, having only two Active-Duty battalions. Nuclear Triad modernization has not been taking place. We aren't there. China and Russia are.

So, anyway, what I am trying to impress upon you is that those individuals who are members of the committee are fully aware of the problems we have had. They remember that under the Obama administration, at the end of the Obama administration, our Air Force was short 2,000 pilots, and 1,500 of them were fighter pilots. Only one-third of our brigade combat teams, one-fourth of our aviation brigades, and half of our divisions were ready. Also, 60 percent of our F-18s weren't flyable. This is what we are in the process of correcting, and it is all dependent upon the passage of this budget.

So I would say to those individuals who are on the committee, I can't imagine that any of them would not be supporting this defense budget when it comes up, and I would hope that we don't have members of our committee who are anticipating doing things such as hearings back in their State or amendments to go as we put our Defense authorization bill through the next steps, because now is when our defense system needs to have this budget passed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 15 minutes.

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I want to inform my colleagues and the American people about some progress that has been made on a very important bipartisan piece of legislation, plus what a couple other committees are doing along the same line of keeping healthcare costs down—that we are making progress to reduce the price of prescription medicine for the American people.

I have been tilling the fields of legislative policy long enough to know that we have our work cut out for us. The ranking member and I of the Finance Committee started out 6 months ago to cultivate a bipartisan consensus for much needed reforms. We knew that we had a long row ahead. Our efforts to reduce drug prices face big-time opposition from Big Pharma.

As we worked side by side in a Republican and Democratic way, we planted the seeds to grow a strong bipartisan coalition—one strong enough, I believe, to withstand the influence of moneyed special interests.

Now, it should be no surprise to anybody that Big Pharma and other stakeholders in the drug supply chain are working six ways from Sunday to throw sand in our gears. We know they will continue to fight us during the August work period.

As a lifelong farmer from Iowa, I learned a long time ago that the fruits of one's labor will not be worth a hill of beans without proper groundwork. For months, we have been tilling the soil and fertilizing the legislative fields to bear fruit at harvest time. We have teamed up with leadership of other key committees of jurisdiction.

Together with the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Health Committee, Senators LAMAR ALEXANDER and PATTY MURRAY, and the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senators LINDSEY GRAHAM and DIANNE FEINSTEIN, the Senate has a real opportunity this Congress to deliver meaningful reforms that would yield real savings for what Americans spend on healthcare.

Both the Health and the Judiciary Committees have advanced legislative packages that help address drug prices, including bills I have sponsored, such as the CREATES Act, the Stop STALLING Act, and the Prescription Pricing for the People Act.

Since January, the Finance Committee, which I chair, and Senator WYDEN is the ranking member, has held a series of hearings to examine the vulnerabilities in the drug supply chain that are ripe for abuse. We don't have the answers to all the problems, but it is really crystal clear that a strong dose of transparency is desperately needed to shed light on a convoluted

pricing system when dealing with prescription drugs.

From the drug manufacturer to the patient's medicine cabinet, the drug supply chain is shrouded in secrecy and is exceedingly complex. This opaque pricing system has allowed exorbitant price hikes to climb higher and higher and higher, with no end in sight.

Don't forget, the taxpayers of the United States foot the bill for the lion's share of prescription drugs through Medicare and Medicaid.

The woolly drug supply chain allows taxpayers to be fleeced year after year. We need to let the sunshine in to help root out their abusive practices. Secrecy in the supply chain has grown into a noxious weed, damaging our free market ecosystem.

Transparency is needed to help rein in unsustainable costs threatening the fiscal viability of Medicaid and Medicare. Seniors, individuals with disability, and low-income Americans depend on these programs for lifesaving medicine and innovative cures.

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee approved the bipartisan Prescription Drug Price Reduction Act. The carefully sown Grassley-Wyden bill limits seniors' out-of-pocket costs without limiting access to lifesaving cures Americans expect. It injects reasonable incentives in government prescription drug programs for drug manufacturers and insurers to keep prices low. Pharmaceutical companies and insurers need to have more skin in the game to keep prices down. It also fixes flawed policies that distort free market principles to lower the lid on spending.

We all know in the town meetings and other places we go that Americans have spoken very loudly on this subject. They want high prescription drug prices addressed. Furthermore, Americans want Congress to act and to act now.

The Senate Finance, HELP, and Judiciary Committees have acted. Now it is time to get the job done.

As my fellow lawmakers go home over the August recess, I encourage each of you to share the good news with your constituents. Americans are fed up with sticker shock at the pharmacy counter. We have the opportunity to deliver a badly needed legislative remedy.

First, we have to drain the swampy special interests blocking the path to victory. The moneyed players in the drug supply chain will use the August recess to unleash a public relations blitz against our bipartisan efforts. You can bet the farm that Big Pharma, hospitals, and pharmacy benefit managers will whip themselves into a real frenzy to kill these bipartisan reforms.

Let's remember why we started down this path in the first place. It is simply democracy working, representative government working.

Americans are demanding relief at the prescription counter. We hear it from our constituents in our town meetings, in our letters, in our emails,

and in the phone calls we get. Unchecked drug prices are putting Medicare and Medicaid in financial peril. The payment structure is unmoored from fiscal reality, and the American taxpayer is on the hook. Congress has a real opportunity to do something about the spiraling of drug prices.

For my colleagues who are on the fence about our bipartisan proposal—and there is nothing wrong with being on the fence because you have plenty of time to become acquainted with an issue you hear from your constituents all the time and to become acquainted with our solution—here are a series of questions I want you to ask yourself: Do Americans want us to act to reduce runaway drug prices? Do Americans want to keep access to breakthrough drug therapies and innovation? Do older Americans want protection from coverage gaps and out-of-pocket costs? Do people with disabilities and poor and elderly Americans who depend on Medicaid deserve access to innovative cures and next-generation therapies?

The answer to all of these questions, I think, is a resounding yes.

Farmers are smart enough to make hay while the Sun shines. Let's apply that time-tested farm lesson in the Congress. Don't bail out on the opportunity to make a meaningful difference for the people whom we are elected to serve. Too many Americans are rationing or skipping doses because they can't afford their prescription medicines.

I will finish as I started out by saying, on behalf of Senator WYDEN, Senator ALEXANDER, Senator MURRAY, Senator GRAHAM, Senator FEINSTEIN, and others, I suggest to our colleagues that this is our Goldilocks moment. Let's not let it be a gridlock moment. Our legislative reforms are not too far right and not too far left. That is what makes our bipartisan remedy to lower prescription drug prices just exactly right for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, following disposition of the Jordan nomination, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the following nominations in the order listed: Executive Calendar Nos. 205, 231, 232, 233, 326, 327, 345, 350, 352, and 364, and then up to 10 minutes of debate under the control of Senator MENENDEZ prior to the vote on cloture on Calendar No. 402. I further ask consent that if cloture is invoked, the confirmation votes on the nominations be at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader. Finally, I ask consent that the cloture motions on the following nominations be withdrawn: Executive Calendar Nos. 48, 55, 344, 346, 351, and 394, and the Senate vote on the

nominations at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3877

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 3877 be withdrawn and that at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3877. I further ask consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, if cloture is filed on H.R. 3877, there be up to 2 hours of debate, equally divided between the leaders or their designees. I ask consent that the only amendment in order be Paul amendment No. 932 and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the amendment with a 60-affirmative-vote threshold needed for adoption. Finally, I ask consent that following the disposition of the Paul amendment, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture and that if cloture is invoked, all postcloture time be considered expired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON SEAN D. JORDAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired on the Jordan nomination.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 34, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 241 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Alexander	Blunt	Burr
Barrasso	Boozman	Capito
Blackburn	Braun	Collins

Cornyn	Inhofe	Roberts
Cotton	Johnson	Romney
Cramer	Jones	Rounds
Crapo	Kennedy	Rubio
Cruz	Lankford	Sasse
Daines	Lee	Scott (FL)
Enzi	Manchin	Scott (SC)
Ernst	McConnell	Shelby
Fischer	McSally	Sinema
Gardner	Moran	Sullivan
Graham	Murkowski	Thune
Grassley	Paul	Tillis
Hawley	Perdue	Toomey
Hoeben	Portman	Wicker
Hyde-Smith	Risch	Young

NAYS—34

Baldwin	Hassan	Schatz
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Menendez	Tester
Casey	Merkley	Udall
Coons	Murphy	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murray	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Peters	Wyden
Durbin	Reed	
Feinstein	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—12

Bennet	Harris	Markey
Booker	Isakson	Sanders
Cassidy	Kaine	Warner
Gillibrand	Klobuchar	Warren

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining votes in the series be 10 minutes in length.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Mark T. Pittman, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, John Hoeven, Rob Portman, Dan Sullivan, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Thune, Roy Blunt.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Mark T. Pittman, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 34, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 242 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Roberts
Boozman	Hoeben	Romney
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Burr	Inhofe	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Sasse
Collins	Jones	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Shelby
Cramer	Lee	Sinema
Crapo	Manchin	Sullivan
Cruz	McConnell	Thune
Daines	McSally	Tillis
Enzi	Moran	Toomey
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	Young

NAYS—34

Baldwin	Hassan	Schatz
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Menendez	Tester
Casey	Merkley	Udall
Coons	Murphy	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murray	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Peters	Wyden
Durbin	Reed	
Feinstein	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—12

Bennet	Harris	Markey
Booker	Isakson	Sanders
Cassidy	Kaine	Warner
Gillibrand	Klobuchar	Warren

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 54, the nays are 34.

The motion is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Jeffrey Vincent Brown, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, John Hoeven, Rob Portman, Dan Sullivan, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Thune, Roy Blunt.