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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. WALSH, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain Dean Chambers, who is the associate pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Elkview, WV.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our heavenly Father, we come before You humbly to thank You for the awesome privilege it is to live in this great Nation. Thank You for all the many blessings You have given us past and present, as well as the continued blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as we continue toward the future.

We ask that You protect us from all who threaten the cause of liberty. We especially pray that Your hand of protection be upon all those serving in our Armed Forces and all those who serve the cause of freedom around our world.

In this assembly today, we invite Your leadership and guidance as the affairs of state are pursued. I ask also that You give to each person wisdom and understanding for the decisions that are made. In times of debate and difference, may we remember that at the end of the day we are, indeed, ''one Nation under God.''

May the love of God the Father, the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus, and the communion of Your spirit rest upon the Members of our Senate today.

In Jesus's Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN E. WALSH, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WALSH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m. this morning, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1086, the child care and development block grant reauthorization bill.

We did extremely well yesterday. I expect more rollcall votes on it today. We are also working on an agreement on flood insurance, we are working on additional executive nominations, and we are seeing what we can do on minimum wage. We have Ukraine sanctions out there someplace, and we are trying to put it all together. We hope we can finish that today, but it is not guaranteed.

Senators will be notified with as much notice as possible when votes are scheduled.

CAMPAIGN DISTORTION

Mr. REID. Over the last couple of weeks I have taken some heat from Senate Republicans and conservative pundits for exposing two multibillionaires. These are two oil barons, and they are trying to rig the political system to favor the rich and especially favor themselves.

After the 14th statement adverse to me issued by a spokesman for the Koch brothers, it seems abundantly clear I have gotten under their skin.

As the saying goes, from the great Senator Pat Moynihan: ''Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.''

But I had guessed the Koch brothers have been able to buy their facts over the years, not paying any attention to whether they are true or false. This week media outlets from New York, and especially the New York Times, to the Washington Post, to the Detroit News, revealed the truth. The truth is millions in political ads sponsored by these two multibillionaires are misleading at best and outright false in many instances.

The truth is the Koch brothers are willing to do anything, even exploit Americans suffering from cancer, to advance their campaign of distortion.

I am not afraid of the Koch brothers. None of us should be afraid of the Koch brothers. These two multibillionaires can spend millions of dollars of their money rigging the political process for their own benefit, but that doesn't mean we have to lie down and take it—because we are not going to. They may believe that whoever has the most money gets the most free speech. That is wrong, it is unfair, and it is untrue. I will do whatever it takes to expose their campaign, their campaign to rig

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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the American political system to benefit the wealthy at the expense of the middle class.

A number of Republican Senators have rushed over here to defend the Koch brothers. That is hard to comprehend, but they have done it. If someone asked me—and no one has, but I will give my opinion anyway—billionaires seem perfectly capable of defending themselves. They do it with hundreds of millions of dollars. I am sure it has over the past couple of years reached close to $1 billion spreading these falsehoods. Remember, they don't just do it under the phony banner of Americans for Prosperity, they divert money to a lot of other organizations; for example, millions of dollars to the chamber of commerce, which runs ads against Democratic Senators.

They are capable of defending themselves. But when Senate Republican Senators rush to defend the Koch brothers, they are also defending the Koch brothers' radical philosophy—and it is radical. How do we know it is radical? Because they said it is radical. They said so. I am not making those words up. One of the brothers kept harping on the fact that he had a radical philosophy, and they do.

I ask my Republican colleagues in the Senate, is even one—is even one—willing to stand and disavow the Koch brothers' radical agenda? It is radical. It is radical because they say it is radical—and it is radical. All we have to do is look at it.

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to privatize Social Security?

Will they come to the floor and reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to end Medicare as we know it?

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to end the guarantee of affordable, quality, health care and put insurance companies back in charge so tens of millions of Americans are again one heart attack or car accident away from bankruptcy?

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to allow insurance companies to deny coverage for a child with a heart murmur, a survivor of breast cancer, a teen who suffers from acne or absolutely anyone with a preexisting condition no matter how minor?

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to eliminate minimum-wage laws and workplace safety standards? That is what the Koch brothers want.

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to decimate America's public education system? That is what they want.

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to roll back environmental safeguards and give themselves the unfettered right to pollute our air and water? We have to look out for our children and our grandchildren having pure water to drink, good air to breathe—not with the Koch brothers. That isn't what they want.

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to give more tax breaks to the richest of the rich—to profitable oil companies, corporations who ship jobs overseas, and billionaires who pay lower taxes than their secretaries?

Not one Republican stepped forward, so obviously they must agree with the Koch brothers' radical philosophy. Republicans are willing to defend the Koch brothers on the floor of this Senate, but are they willing to defend the Koch brothers' radical agenda as well? I guess that is what they are doing by coming to the floor.

If Republicans don't support the Koch brothers' ''survival of the richest'' philosophy, all they have to do is say so because the truth is it will be terrible to allow the Koch brothers to buy Congress and to buy our country. And that is what they are trying to do.

It would be catastrophic to allow the Koch brothers' Congress to devastate the American middle class with their richest-take-all policy agenda.

This discussion isn't only about fairness or the democratic way. This discussion isn't only about the inherent danger in allowing two multibillionaire oil barons to buy America's political system. This is also about how these two multibillionaires would use a political system, once they have bought it, and how they would abuse it in order to add zeros to the bottom line while hurting middle-class families.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

U.S. TRAGEDIES

Mr. MCCONNELL. I begin this morning by extending my sympathy to families of the victims in yesterday's explosion in Harlem. News reports suggest a truly tragic loss of life and a lot of injuries, so it is a very sad day in New York today.

As usual, in a catastrophe such as this, the response from firemen, police, and first responders was both quick and courageous. Many ordinary citizens who just happened to be in the area showed a lot of humanity and a lot of heroism too.

We are grateful for them and we are all hoping and praying for a fully speedy recovery for those who were injured. These kinds of tragic accidents always take a big toll on the communities where they take place.

A few months back there was a horrible house fire in western Kentucky that took the lives of eight children and their mother. It was devastating to the entire community and still is, so we are thinking of them also today.

ANTI-FREE SPEECH

Mr. MCCONNELL. I wish to take a moment to address anti-free speech legislation the Obama administration has made a priority for this term. It is a regulation that comes in the wake of an unprecedented IRS attack on Americans' civil liberties and it represents a direct assault on the First Amendment.

First, let's be clear. This is not some partisan issue. Right across the political spectrum the American people agree this is a terrible idea. That is probably why it has generated more public backlash than any similar regulation in our entire lifetime.

Americans on the left hate it. Americans on the right hate it. Unions, business groups, environmentalists, conservatives, the ACLU, all of them have expressed concern. It is very rare to see a coalition that broad agree on anything in this town. Yet it is easy to see why Americans would be so united in opposition to this regulation.

The First Amendment exists to protect political speech. That was what the Founders had in mind when they wrote First Amendment political speech. The government should be doing everything it can to protect that right, not hurt it.

That is why we saw a record number of Americans register their complaints with the IRS. In fact, there were more than 140,000, comments—140,000 comments—on this regulation, which I hear is the highest number ever received in the agency's entire history. And let's not forget the IRS has a long way to go to regain public trust these days. Too many Americans look at the agency and see an instrument of political harassment rather than a bureau of tax processors. So if the agency wants to regain trust and return to its true mission, then it simply has to get out of the speech regulation business altogether. The IRS needs to get out of the speech regulation business altogether, and the Obama administration can do that.

Look. The administration ran this idea up the flagpole. In the midst of a historic crisis of public confidence at the IRS, it decided to upend more than half a century of practice and rewrite the rules on how Americans could express themselves, how they could be heard. They asked for comments, and the American people let them know what they thought in over 140,000 comments, almost all of them in opposition.

This regulation needs to go. This regulation needs to go, and it needs to go now. It is in the administration's power to make that happen. All it has to do is to listen to the American people who are speaking out in record

numbers—record numbers—and put an end for good to the idea that the law should be used to harm political enemies.

Let's protect the First Amendment and restore integrity to the IRS at the same time by withdrawing this awful regulation.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CAPTAIN DAVID I. LYON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to speak about a U.S. airman lost in battle who has left behind a saddened but grateful country. Capt. David I. Lyon of Sandpoint, ID, was killed in action on December 27, 2013, in Kabul, Afghanistan, when his convoy was intentionally and deliberately attacked by the enemy with explosive devices. Captain Lyon's mission was an advisory one for the Afghan National Army Commandos. He was 28 years old.

For his service in uniform, Captain Lyon received several medals, awards, and decorations, including the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Force Combat Action Medal, the Meritorious Unit Award, the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, the Air Force Organizational Excellence Award, the Air Force Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, and the Air Force Training Ribbon.

As a cadet at the U.S. Air Force Academy, David was a star track and field athlete. As a team captain who is still ranked third all-time in academy history for indoor and outdoor shot put, his teammates gave David the nickname ''Leonidas''—after the ancient Greek warrior-king of Sparta—for his courage against fearful odds.

''Oh captain, my captain, Leonidas, we salute you. You will never be forgot,'' says Scott Irving, who was David's assistant coach. David ''knew the risk he was taking and embraced it without hesitation or fear,'' Scott adds. ''That's another Leonidas trait, I would say.''

David's wife, Capt. Dana Lyon, is an officer in the U.S. Air Force and an Air Force Academy graduate, where she herself was a two-time NCAA champion in the javelin throw. Her family hails from Lexington, KY, and I had the honor of speaking with them and hearing firsthand about David's service and tragic sacrifice.

''Dave was known as a tender warrior and a protector,'' says Rick Pounds, Dana's father and David's father-in-law. ''He was lighthearted and a gentle giant. Kind and compassionate to everyone he met, Dave's smile would light up a room. If my daughter would have given me the task of 'go find me a husband anywhere,' he is who I would have picked.''

''Dave loved the principles upon which our country was founded, and died in defense of them,'' Rick continued. ''More importantly, he was a faithful follower of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, in whom our liberty and freedom is derived.''

David attended the Air Force Academy, where he graduated in 2008. While there, he was a 3-year letter winner for the track and field team. He became a Mountain West Conference champion and was named to the National Strength and Conditioning Association All-American Team and received the Laura Piper Ironman Award. This award is named for a 1991 Air Force Academy graduate and former track and field star who was killed in action in Operation Desert Shield in Iraq. David's shot put throw of 57 feet, 11 inches earned him a place in the academy's record books.

''That gives you a sense of his intensity and his drive and his determination,'' said Scott Irving. ''When he was team captain, he would get upset with other[s] . . . if they didn't give everything they could give—it bothered him if they didn't try to take their God-given talents to the highest level. That was David, day in and day out.''

After graduation from the academy, David excelled in his Air Force career. Lt. Col. James Lovewell, his former squadron commander, recalls how much David impressed him. ''The consistency of his character showed across many facets of his life,'' Lieutenant Colonel Lovewell says. ''He was very humble and tireless in serving others. He had a superb work ethic. He was a servant leader—he served people just as much as he led them.''

Assigned to the 21st Logistics Readiness Squadron at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, David was picked over more senior officers to become the group commander's right-hand man. He worked above and beyond what was asked of him.

''I joked I was going to start calling him 'Boomerang,' because he would come into work and I told him there's nothing more he could do, and invariably he would just come back,'' said Lieutenant Colonel Lovewell. ''He was sticking around to make sure I was taken care of.''

David and Dana were both serving their country in Afghanistan at the same time. David worked in logistics, Dana in acquisitions. ''He would always talk about how proud he was of her over there, taking care of the mission, as he was,'' Lieutenant Colonel Lovewell recalls.

Just before David's tragic death, the couple were able to have Christmas dinner together one final time.

''Every day was always the best day of my life with him, so every day just got better,'' Dana said. ''The last 2 days were the best 2 days we've spent together.''

Because they were based in Colorado Springs, David and Dana maintained their ties to the Air Force Academy. They coached and mentored young athletes, sponsored cadets, and volunteered with the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program. They had members of the academy track and field team over for meals. David also enjoyed camping, hiking, lifting weights, and listening to country music with the windows down with his wife.

Dana's brother Eric Pounds is also an Air Force captain and admired his brother-in-law both as a dedicated airman and a beloved member of the family. ''They both loved the Air Force,'' Eric says of his sister and brother-in-law. ''They both wanted to fight, and they both wanted to protect their country. [David] did that at home, and he did that in the Air Force. He was a protector and a provider, and I'm just really proud of him.''

We are thinking of David Lyon's beloved ones today, including his wife Dana; his parents Bob and Jeannie Lyon; his brother Sean Lyon; his parents-in-law Rick and Nancy Pounds; his grandparents Ray and Imogene Davis; his step-grandmother Beth Davis; his brothers-in-law Eric Pounds and Darren Pounds; and many other beloved family members and friends.

It was my honor to speak with the family members of Captain Lyon, just as it is an honor for me to share his story with my colleagues in the Senate today. I know we as a nation send our condolences to this brave military family for the loss of such an incredible husband, son, friend, and dedicated airman. I want them to know the Senate has paused today in memoriam to Capt. David I. Lyon to pay tribute to his life of service and sacrifice half a world away. He will be remembered, and he will be missed by those who knew him and loved him.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half.

The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, tomorrow President Obama is scheduled to sit down for an interview with a health care Web site called WebMD. The President will take questions about his health care law, and he is going to try one more time to convince people across the country that his health care law hasn't really been a complete disaster.

It is a little bit ironic that the President will be doing this interview because under his health care law, before we know it, healthcare.gov is going to be linking directly to WebMD. People are going to have to spend a lot more time on Web sites like that one because the President's health care law is going to make it tougher for many of them to see a real health care provider.

America is facing a looming shortage of doctors, nurses, and physician assistants. When President Obama and Democrats were ramming ObamaCare through this Congress, they focused on hiring IRS agents—agents to force Americans to buy expensive coverage—instead of training more doctors and nurses to deliver care to patients.

Now, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges, we are looking at a shortage of 90,000 physicians by the end of this decade. About half of those are family physicians, primary care providers, and about half of them specialists. We see the same numbers, if not even higher shortages, in terms of nurses.

There is an old proverb: ''Physician, heal thyself.'' Well, apparently the slogan of ObamaCare is now going to be ''Patient, heal thyself.''

The old doctor-patient relationship is going to be gone. Medicine as we know it is going to continue to change. Even when you can get time with your doctor, there is going to be a lot more of that time spent with the doctor looking not at you but at a computer screen because of the law, and that is because of the burdensome new rules and the recordkeeping requirements under the law.

As more people try to get appointments with fewer doctors, some Americans are going to start seeing actual rationing of care. Here is how one economist described it in a blog post for the New York Times. He talked about the health care law's limits on payments to doctors and other providers, and he wrote:

> If patients are lucky, the demand for doctors will be low enough that the limits will not matter. But if the new law results in a significant net increase in physician demand, the payment limits will help remind us of Soviet-era limits on the price of bread, with queues and black markets to follow.

We know the President's Web site back this past fall was a complete failure. Four days before it was unveiled the President said: Oh, it is going to be easier to use than Amazon. The rates will be cheaper than your cell phone bill. You will be able to keep your doctor.

But the Web site was just the tip of the iceberg. People are seeing higher premiums.

It is interesting, Mr. President, as I was putting this together and thinking about what remarks I would make, I hadn't even seen this morning's newspaper. Today in the Wall Street Journal—Thursday, March 13—Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius says: Higher premiums likely in 2015.

Higher premiums. What did the President promise? He said premiums would go down by $2,500 per family.

So the Web site is just the tip of the iceberg. People are seeing higher premiums now, and now the Secretary of HHS says there will be higher premiums again in 2015.

People have received notices of cancellation—over 5 million across the country. Many people can't keep their doctor and are worried about fraud and identity theft which has been reported as a result of the Web site and is ongoing. Then, of course, there are higher copays and higher deductibles—more money out of patients' pockets.

There is a report which brings this additionally to the fore in terms of concerns the people are having from people who supported the health care law originally. This report was put out last week by a major labor union discussing how badly this health care law is hurting its members.

To put this into perspective, this is a labor union which actually supported then-Senator Obama and endorsed him when he was running for President a number of years ago, and they supported the health care law. Now this union has come out with a report which says: The law's unintended consequences will hit the average hardworking American where it hurts—in the wallet.

We can go through this report called ''The Irony of ObamaCare Making Inequality Worse.'' To read from this:

> The ACA threatens the middle class with higher premiums, loss of hours, and a shift to part-time work and less comprehensive coverage.

It goes on with examples of various individuals who are members of this labor union whose lives are being hurt by the President's health care law. One, a woman from the majority leader's home State, talks about her job as a housekeeper and how, if she tries to buy the Obama health care program, the Web site says she would have to pay $8,057 a year more to keep the insurance she has now—which is a $3.87 per hour pay cut for her. She said, ''We work hard for our insurance. Why should we have to take a cut in pay for it?''

This is not what the President promised. So it is not a surprise that even the unions that had endorsed the President and supported the law are unhappy with what they see as the true results of the health care law.

The Democrat majority leader has said all the horror stories about the health care law are untrue. Is he also saying these union leaders and the people who have been made reference to in the union report are lying? Is this what the majority leader is saying? Is that what he is saying about this woman from his own State?

According to the media report, the union said the law ''will inevitably lead to the destruction of the health care plans we were promised we could keep.''

Everybody remembers the President's promises. They remember what the President said. Everybody remembers the President's statement: ''If you like what you have, you can keep it.'' The press has called it ''The Lie of the Year.''

More than 5 million Americans received cancellation letters from their insurance companies. It turned out to be so embarrassing that President Obama had to delay the rules which caused it. It has continued to be a big problem, so the administration is delaying the rule again—not just until after the 2014 election but with the potential of going beyond the 2016 election as well.

Here we go, dozens of delays. This is a calendar of 2013 and 2014. There are more delays to come—another delay, another lawless ObamaCare rewrite.

The Obama administration continues to announce delays. We have seen one change after another to major parts of the law which are now ''politically inconvenient'' for the President.

Republicans warned that these were real problems and that they would hurt hardworking Americans all across the country. I was on the floor during all of the debates, talking about the problems to come with the health care law, offering solutions, offering suggestions—every one of them rejected because Democrats just didn't care.

They only cared the second they realized that all their grandiose plans were actually causing more problems than they ever anticipated because they didn't listen.

The President had an event last week where he said that the law is ''working the way it should.'' This is what he said—''working the way it should.'' Is it working the way it should after he made all of these changes? Is that what he means—''working the way it should.''

So if it is working the way it should, why has the President had to change it so many times? Does he not know what the rest of his administration is doing? Does he not know what the rest of this country is seeing? Is the President delusional or is he just in denial?

The American people want to know, and they deserve to hear from the President when he does this WebMD interview. When President Obama sits down to talk with WebMD on Friday, I hope they ask him about all of these delays and the changes he is making to the law. I hope they ask him whether he believes it is really working the way it should, which is what he said last week. I hope they ask him about how his health care law is going to reduce the time people get to spend with their doctors—if they can even keep their doctors. I hope they ask him about some of the ways the law is hurting Americans and America.

I hope the President answers that he is finally ready to make some of these delays permanent, to start over again, to work in a bipartisan way, to try to help patients get the care they need

from a doctor they choose at a lower cost. This is what health care reform was supposed to be about in the first place.

It is so interesting. Just pick up the papers. Yesterday, March 12, the Washington Post: ''Health Exchange Signups Slowed in Past Month.'' The New York Times: ''Health Care Enrollment Falls Short of Goal, With Deadline Approaching. Signing Up for Insurance, But Well Below Targets.''

Then, so many questions are asked of the White House and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The headline in Politico today: ''W.H. Playing Dumb on ACA Enrollments, Insurers Say.''

I think the President needs to come clean with the American people and tell them about what a disaster his health care law has become, how it has impacted their lives, how few people have actually been able to sign up—or have been able to but have found the cost is too high for them to sign up—and admit to the American people that when they talk about some of these numbers of sign-ups, many of those are people who got cancellation notices. They are not newly-insured individuals.

A study out last week shows that only about one in four people who have actually signed up on the Web site didn't have insurance before. So the people this was intended to help are not being helped. Many people are being harmed.

It is time to work together to help patients get the care they need from the doctor they choose at lower costs.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, across the country every day millions of Americans are working in low-wage jobs, going back to school to increase their skills in order to pay their bills and take care of their families. They do their best to balance work and family obligations, but too many moms and dads really struggle with the high cost of quality, safe childcare.

One out of three families with young children earns less than $25,000 a year, and childcare can cost $4,800 to $16,000 a year. In many parts of the country childcare for two children now exceeds average rental payments.

According to a recent report by Child Care Aware America, in more than half the States—including my own State of Illinois—it costs families more to put an infant in childcare than to cover tuition and fees in a public college. In many parts of the country, childcare for children now exceeds average rental payments. Low-income families spend almost half their salaries on childcare. It is a significant part of the family's budget. Child care and development block grant is an important program that helps low-income working families with the cost of childcare and afterschool programs. This program serves more than 1.6 million children in the United States every month. In Illinois, more than 50,000 children receive support.

As we learn more about the significance of the first few years in the life of a child's development, it is not enough just to improve access; we have to improve the quality of childcare for young children. Children in their early years are facing some of the most important moments of development, and their experiences in the first few years could literally shape their young lives. Early childhood education gives kids the solid foundation they need, not just to kindergarten but beyond. Working parents who don't have good options for quality childcare face an unfair dilemma.

Just ask Tabatha Okamoto of Chicago, IL. Tabatha has faced the challenge of finding adequate childcare for her son since he was an infant. On days when she cannot find a spot in a childcare center she hopes that maybe a family member or maybe a neighbor will be able to take care of him. She worries about losing her job, and she was almost fired because there were so many days she was late because of childcare issues.

Even when she finds reliable childcare, she still has a tough time figuring out how to pay for it. Tabatha is a good mom, but she has a lot of expenses and a low-income job. She pays her rent, health insurance, and other bills and $800 monthly for her son to attend Little Fox Day School in Lincoln Square Center. It would be too much for her to handle on her own. Because of this program being debated on the floor of the Senate, Tabatha's out-of-pocket costs are now between $250 and $375 a month for this daycare at Little Fox Day School. It is less than half. It is still a sacrifice to come up with $250 to $400 a month, but at least she has a fighting chance to make sure her son has good daycare. More importantly, this program is giving Tabatha the peace of mind to know her son is in the right place when she goes to work every day.

It has been more than 20 years since we started this block grant. We need to update it. The grant program before us on the floor today, the child care and development block grant, would make much-needed updates to the law, expanding access to toddlers and infants and lower income families, strengthening health and safety standards and training, and ensuring the program is meeting the needs of children with disabilities, and expanding background checks for childcare providers.

I want to thank Senators BARBARA MIKULSKI and TOM HARKIN, who have been champions of children and working Americans, for all the work they put into this bill. I want to thank Senator RICHARD BURR on the other side of the aisle and LAMAR ALEXANDER as well for making this a true bipartisan effort.

I hope my colleagues will join me today when this bill comes up for a vote. This is the kind of bipartisan bill we all should support. Working moms and dads need peace of mind knowing their kids are in a safe place that would help their children develop in the right way.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to talk about the child care and development block grant bill that is before us and will be before us soon. I want to congratulate my colleagues, Senator MIKULSKI for her leadership on this bill, and Senator HARKIN, Senator ALEXANDER, and Senator BURR. This is truly a bipartisan effort, and we very much appreciate the child care and development block grant. It is critically important.

The last time we authorized this program was 1996. I know that very well because I was serving in the House of Representatives at the time and had the opportunity to be the ranking member on the Human Resources Subcommittee in the Ways and Means Committee that was considering welfare reform and childcare, and how we could reward families for work, and how our welfare system could become a transitional program rather than a permanent program that would allow people, particularly moms, to be able to get into the workforce, stay in the workforce and climb up the economic ladder.

As part of welfare reform we recognized we had to do things about the major cost concerns of someone, a mom, giving up her welfare in order to go to work. One of those issues was health care. We passed transitional health care for people coming off of cash assistance. We also had to deal with childcare, because childcare is an extremely costly part of being able to get into the workforce.

In 1996 we consolidated many programs that were out there. We coordinated eligibility. There were different eligibility rules for many of these programs. We simplified the rules so we could get maximum dollars of help for people who entered the workforce. The goal was self-sufficiency through education, training, and being able to get a job.

Today, under the CCDBG, under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program, there are 1.6 million eligible children. It is not just a safe environment for those children, because 70 percent of their parents are working—not just a safe environment,

it is early childhood education. These children who are in childcare will do better later in life. There have been many studies that verify this.

This is a win-win situation, providing a safe environment for children so their parents can work and educational opportunity for the children at the same time. It pays off big-time for the workforce. A TANF study showed that parents who had their children in childcare for 2 years or more were more likely to remain in the employment field. So it provides stable employment, help for the child, and a win-win situation.

The eligibility for the program is it cannot exceed 85 percent of the State median income, to give you an idea of the type of people we are talking about who benefit from this program.

In Maryland, for a family of two the maximum income is $24,000 and for a family of four the maximum income is $35,000. In my State, Maryland, the average cost for childcare for an infant is about $12,000 a year. For a child over 4 years of age, it is about $9,000 a year.

We heard about the income levels and how a family is eligible for this program. It is clear that low-wage families cannot afford childcare on their own. We need to help, and that is what this program does, so that they can move up the economic ladder and not be a burden on the cash-assistance program.

Today, as we did prior to 1996, we have combined discretionary and mandatory programs for our childcare. Today discretionary spending is at $2.36 billion and $2.9 billion in mandatory spending.

The legislation before us also makes improvements, as it should. It allows the States to develop 13 specific health and safety standards, such as first aid and CPR, and SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome. It is keeping our children safer in childcare by having safety standards that are developed. It requires the States to do inspections of childcare centers, comprehensive background checks for those who are involved in childcare, online information, more transparency in the program, and additional State flexibility on how they can set priorities within the childcare program. That is exactly what federalism should be.

The Federal Government establishes a broad policy that we want to see families self-sufficient, we want to make sure there is a safe environment for children, and we want to make sure we do this in a way that is consistent with our national priorities. We also need to give flexibility to the State and local governments to be able to set their priorities to meet the needs of their citizens, and that is what this bill does.

I will take a moment now to give real-life examples of how this program is critically important to our community. A great example is the Judy Centers of Maryland. We have 25 Judy Centers in Maryland. They are named after Congressman STENY HOYER's wife Judy, who died of cancer in 1997. Judy was a longtime advocate for quality early childhood education and comprehensive family support services. I knew Judy very well, and she was an incredibly dedicated leader and advocate for our children.

I have a couple of specific examples from the Judy Center as to how the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program is critically important to their existence. According to the testimony given before a committee, Judy Center employees discovered a dad who lost his job and a mom who only worked part time. They could not make ends meet or look for jobs or go on interviews because they had no childcare for their 2- and 3-year-old children. The Judy Center enrolled them in KinderCare, a childcare partner, and provided tuition assistance.

Since they lost their health insurance when their dad became unemployed, they were given an application for the Maryland CHIP program, the health insurance program. The 3-year-old had a behavioral issue and was referred to the Judy Center behavioral specialist, who worked with her extensively. She also received tutoring services.

Dad is now employed full time. Thanks to safe childcare, dad is now employed full time. After much encouragement, mom enrolled in adult education classes and received her GED. She has also completed a medical assistance program and is now enrolled in the College of Southern Maryland to pursue an associates degree. The children are now in elementary school and are doing well in school.

I could give many more examples like this family. I could talk about many other success stories that would not have been possible without the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program, and that is why it is critically important that we reauthorize the program.

I see my colleague from Maryland is on the Senate floor. I congratulate her for her leadership in getting this bill to the floor—not just getting this bill to the floor, which is important, but doing it in a way that we can get it passed in the Senate and accomplish our objectives so we can get women into the workforce and have early childhood education to help children succeed in life. We can help American families and strengthen America.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, before my colleague leaves the floor, I want to express my appreciation for his statement today and in particular when he spoke about the Judy Center, which has meant so much in Maryland to show the way childcare should be addressed. The Judy Center is a family-oriented organization that is focused on children. Their so-called wraparound services help the child not only with all that is necessary in a well-run childcare facility, but they also work with the family, strengthen the family, and help the family by giving them information about other opportunities to improve their life, such as educational benefits. I think it is a national model. If I had my way, I would like to adopt the Judy Center model throughout America.

Again, I thank the Senator for speaking about the Judy Center.

I also thank my friend for his steadfast advocacy for children, the way he has worked for the children's health program, particularly focusing on the dental services for that little boy Deamonte, the child who died. He is a real fighter.

Senator CARDIN is also well known for getting rid of lead paint poisoning in Maryland. So now he wants the lead out of bureaucracy and the lead out of the Senate. Again, I thank him for his comments.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the bill.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT OF 2014

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1086, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1086) to improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Harkin amendment No. 2811, to include rural and remote areas as underserved areas identified in the State plan.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am going to give a recap of where we are and then note the absence of a quorum as we sort through our amendments.

This is the second day of the Senate's consideration of S. 1086, the child care and development block grant reauthorization on which 1.5 million American children depend, including 20,000 children from the State of Maryland. We have been working on this bill for over 2 years, and now it is our second day of moving this legislation.

We have made an impressive amount of progress. Yesterday the Senate agreed to nine amendments—three by rollcall vote and six by voice vote. We had a great group of bipartisan amendments. Of the nine amendments that were adopted, three were sponsored by Republicans, two were sponsored by Democrats, and four amendments were bipartisan. The amendments yesterday improved the underlying bill. They streamlined Federal early learning programs; made sure tribes get the funding they need; required States to develop childcare disaster plans; and ensures that CDBG, as it is known, also

serves an often much-overlooked population—foster care.

We also had a healthy debate on the floor in which women Senators came down to show their support for this bipartisan bill. Today we hope to continue our due deliberation of amendments.

Last night we identified approximately 29 to 30 amendments that remain. It is the hope of the chair and ranking member that sometime today—around 11:30 a.m., before the lunch—we will move to votes. We expect to have voice votes, possibly a rollcall vote, and I will give a further progress report. The timeline for all amendments is closed. We are now sorting through those amendments to see which we can adopt by agreement or adopt by a voice vote so we can move ahead.

I also say to my colleagues, there are many who have excellent ideas about childcare issues, and some are relevant to children but not necessarily relevant to this bill. As we wrap up the legislation, we hope to focus only on germane amendments to the bill today, and those other ideas, as meritorious as they are for consideration, that they either be withdrawn or find another vehicle for discussion and consideration.

We thank our colleagues for the quality of the amendments that have been brought forth. It shows that the Senate—on both sides of the aisle—has been thinking about children and has actually been listening to this compelling need around childcare and its availability and affordability, its safety and helping children get their education. Not all of the amendments—although they are focused on children—are relevant to the block grant, which is a voucher program to help low-income women qualify for childcare.

I will give further updates as the morning progresses and we sort through this. In the meantime, we invite Senators to come to the floor and talk about this very important topic facing American families.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me begin by commending my colleagues Senator MIKULSKI, Senator HARKIN, Senator ALEXANDER, and Senator BURR for their hard work to reauthorize the child care development block grant. This is a modest piece of legislation and I urge my colleagues to support it.

The main point I wish to briefly make this morning is that even if this modest piece of legislation passes, it will not begin to address the very serious problems we face in childcare in our country and, even more importantly, in childhood poverty.

The United States is the wealthiest Nation in the history of the world. Unfortunately, despite our great wealth, we have the most unequal distribution of wealth and income of any major country on Earth. We have more people today living in poverty than at any time in the history of our country. Most significantly, and related to the discussion we are having about childcare today, the United States of America has, by far, the highest rate of childhood poverty of any major country on Earth. In my opinion, we have a moral responsibility to address that issue and we should put our energy and our minds to focusing on how we eliminate childhood poverty in America.

I will be offering an amendment today which is a very simple amendment. My amendment says the President of the United States should submit a plan to Congress which substantially reduces childhood poverty over the next 5 years. That is the amendment—that the President of the United States submit a plan to Congress which substantially reduces childhood poverty over the next 5 years. I hope and expect we would have unanimous support for this amendment.

As the Presiding Officer will recall, not too long ago, during the Winter Olympics at Sochi, Americans there were shouting out to our great athletes: ''USA, USA! We are No. 1.'' That was something I think many of us in America supported. We wanted our athletes in the Winter Olympics to be No. 1.

While we want to be No. 1 in terms of our athletic prowess, while we want to be No. 1 in terms of our scientific and intellectual accomplishments, while we want to be No. 1 in terms of economic growth and prosperity, we surely do not want to be No. 1 in the world in terms of childhood poverty. That is where we are today, with almost 22 percent of our kids living in poverty.

The reason, quite obviously, we do not want to be No. 1 in terms of childhood poverty is not only the moral issue of turning our backs on millions and millions of our most vulnerable people—kids who are 6 months old, kids who are 2 years old, kids who are 8 years old; human beings who cannot fend for themselves—it seems to me, as a caring people, we have the moral responsibility to make sure all of our children receive the basic necessities of life and not live in poverty.

I think there is a moral obligation to make sure we eliminate childhood poverty, but there is also an economic reality as well. I will get to that in a minute. But the first point to be made is that when we look at childhood poverty in America, which is 21.8 percent, we should examine what is going on in other countries.

Is it possible to go forward and significantly reduce or eliminate childhood poverty? The answer is yes. All we have to do is look around the world. In Denmark, child poverty is 3.7 percent. In Finland, it is 3.9 percent; in Norway, it is 5.1 percent; in Iceland, it is 7.1 percent; in Austria, 8.2 percent; Sweden, 8.2 percent; Germany, 9.1 percent; in South Korea, 9.4 percent; in the United Kingdom, 9.4 percent; France, 11 percent; New Zealand, 13 percent; Poland, 13.6 percent; Canada, 14 percent. But in the United States of America, the childhood poverty rate is 21.8 percent.

As I mentioned a moment ago, this is clearly a moral issue. A powerful Nation which, in recent years, has seen huge increases in the number of millionaires and billionaires, we should not be a society in which almost one out of four of our kids gets their nutrition from food stamps. We should not be a society where a significant number of young people are dropping out of high school, standing out on street corners and destroying their lives.

This is not just a moral issue; it is an economic issue. My colleagues, please tell me what kind of economic future we have when we are competing against countries around the world which are doing a better job than we are in providing the intellectual and emotional support their kids need; that are doing a better job than we are in educating their young people. How do we compete against these countries in the very competitive international global economy? Do we say to the young children who are living in poverty: Sorry. We can't afford to provide the preschool education you need; we can't afford to provide the childcare your parents need for you, and we are really sorry the odds are that many of you may drop out of school and that some of you will end up in jail.

We have more people in jail in the United States of America than in any other country on Earth. Clearly, one of the reasons for that has to do with the fact that we have the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world. We pay for these things one way or we pay for them another way. The way we are paying for it is by spending $50,000 or $60,000 a year incarcerating huge numbers of people rather than making sure our kids get the nourishment—intellectual, emotional, nutritional—they need in order to do well in life.

It is important for us to look at what happens around the world, to see what we can learn, and to see what is working well around the world. It is important for us to learn and to understand that in countries such as Denmark, Finland, and Norway, where childhood poverty is very low, childcare is free to all of its workers. Workers in these countries get paid maternity leave. That means when a mom has a baby, she has the opportunity to stay home with her baby during the most important months of a baby's life and not have to worry about going to work and making a living, because those societies have said the right thing—that they want kids and mothers to bond and fathers to bond well, for those kids to do well. In this country, if a person

is low income and working class and they have a baby, they have to get to work right away, because if they don't have that income, how do they take care of their families? Those countries have done the right thing and it is important to learn from them.

In many countries around the world, workers get allowances from their governments to take care of their children. Their workers are guaranteed a 4-week paid vacation. Health care is a right and not a privilege for their citizens. In France, for example, if both parents go back to work after having a child, they are entitled to receive strong childcare benefits. In Germany—hard for us to believe—but if children get sick, their parents get up to 25 days of paid leave to stay home and take care of those children. These are just a few of the many benefits people in other countries—our competitors—receive. Maybe we can learn something from them.

Unfortunately, workers in our country—in this great Nation—have none of those benefits. Here is what has happened as a result. More than one in five children in America lives in households that lack consistent access to adequate food because their parents don't make enough money. In other words, the number of millionaires and billionaires is growing—more and more income in wealth inequality—and millions and millions of families today who are raising kids are wondering how they are going to have enough food on the table to provide basic nutrition to those kids. Should that be happening in the United States of America?

The number of homeless children living in America has gone up by 73 percent since 2006. In every State in the country, including my State of Vermont, there are families living with their kids in cars or in emergency shelters. Is that the way we give kids the opportunity they need to advance in their lives?

The psychologists tell us over and over that the most important years of a human being's life in terms of intellectual and emotional growth are those years between 0 and 4. Yet, in this country today, less than half of 3- and 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool. Ninety-six percent of infants and toddlers living in low-income families don't receive the early education they need through the early Head Start Program. More than 220,000 American children are currently on waiting lists for childcare assistance. And on and on it goes.

What does this mean in English? This is what it means. It means in Vermont, in New Jersey, in Maryland—it means in States all over this country—a mom and dad wake up in the morning with a 3-year-old and they are worried about the quality and affordability of the childcare they can find for that kid. So they go to work and they are saying, what is happening? I have to go to work. I can't stay home with my child. We need to make money. Yet, I cannot find quality, affordable childcare for my child. And in this country that is exactly what we should be providing.

According to a recent study by the Children's Defense Fund, childhood poverty costs this Nation at least $500 billion each and every year in extra education, health and criminal justice expenses, and in lost productivity. In other words, rather than learning what other countries are doing—investing in our kids, nurturing our kids, making sure our kids get the great education they deserve—we turn our backs on millions of kids and then we are shocked—just shocked—that they turn to drugs or crime or self-destructive activity, and we spend a fortune incarcerating them. Think about all of the intellectual and emotional destruction that takes place in this country because we ignore the needs of our children.

We hear our fellow Senators come to the floor and talk about how the United States is the greatest country on Earth, and I share that sentiment. But I do not believe the greatest country on Earth should have, by far, the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world.

The amendment I have offered is a very simple amendment. I hope it is accepted. I hope it will be supported unanimously. I hope it will allow us to go forward.

What the amendment says, again, is very simple. It says the President of the United States should submit a plan to the Congress which allows us to substantially reduce childhood poverty in the next 5 years. That is it.

With that, I yield the floor and hope very much this amendment is adopted. Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, we are in the process of sorting out the amendments that are pending, again, to see what we could accept by UC, what we could accept by voice vote, and those that might require a rollcall vote. The chairman and the ranking member of the committee, Senator HARKIN and Senator ALEXANDER, are discussing this, and we are looking forward to some type of votes on or about 11:30 a.m.

But I see there are a lot of amendments out here about streamlining this and duplicating this and others—very thoughtful—but I wish to clarify exactly what is the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program. This is a program that meets a particular need to help people have access to childcare, and we are strengthening the quality requirements. It does not solve all of the childcare problems in the United States of America.

The overall need of childcare for both poor women and middle-class women or families is well known. It is one of the agonizing choices families need to make.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Program—and this is why we are looking at a variety of other issues. We have on the books the childcare tax credit bill, where many of us hope to expand the deduction. Senator GILLIBRAND has others. But today we are focusing on the child care and development block grant. It is the primary Federal grant program to provide childcare assistance for working families.

It was passed originally in 1990, under George Herbert Walker Bush. Before 1996, there were four childcare programs for low-income families. All of them had different eligibility criteria and work requirements—exactly what we have talked about here, the need to streamline. Three were targeted to families in or at risk of being in the welfare system. One was targeted to low-income families outside of welfare.

But in 1996 under welfare reform, on a bipartisan basis, we created one unified program to serve low-income families with one set of eligibility criteria and work requirements. It was then streamlined. The overarching purpose of the childcare bill in welfare reform was to give parents aid, substantial assistance, so they could go from welfare to work or get the training to go to work.

It has been a very successful program—a very successful program. One and one-half million children in America benefit from it; 20,000 in Maryland alone—a substantial waiting list if we had more vouchers.

What we are doing in this bill is reauthorizing, following the spirit of 1996, streamlining and taking now what we know—new knowledge and best practices of how to help children in childcare be able to be safe, have a sense of security and stability, and then also enhance their ability to learn. We know now—all the research shows—from infancy to age 5 is one of the greatest growth spurts for brain development in a person's life. Vocabulary development and so many other things occur.

So what our bill does is help improve that, but we do not so overmandate to the States that we do not allow for local flexibility. So we are trying to streamline the bill, have a better emphasis on quality, without stringent new Federal mandates, and at the same time streamline this legislative process by moving through our amendment process.

I now look forward to conferring with my colleague. Members should stay tuned. If they would like to speak on this or the matter of childcare, we welcome them. We have had an open amendment process. We have had an open dialogue. We have had an open floor. I think this has been very constructive.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. BURR addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold?

Ms. MIKULSKI. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague for withholding on that quorum call.

We have made tremendous progress. Our joint staffs worked well into the night with Members who have amendments to this bill that they think improve the bill. We have worked aggressively to try to work out as many of those as we possibly can, and I am here to report to our colleagues we have made tremendous progress. We have processed, since we started yesterday, a number of amendments and this bill has become better. We still have several on both sides that we are still working on with our Members to try to accommodate their intent with language that is acceptable and continues to improve this bill, and we will do that.

Let me say to our colleagues who still might have amendments, if you have them, we need you to come to the floor. We need you to offer those amendments. If you have amendments that have yet to be cleared, I would urge you to come to the floor and work with Senator MIKULSKI and myself and our staffs to figure out how we can process those in a timely fashion.

It is our intent that in approximately 1 hour, with agreement from our leaders, we would move to votes—both recorded and voice votes—on all amendments that remain on this bill in the hopes that Members could then leave to go to their caucus lunches, and after returning from those lunches, hopefully, we would be in a position to have final passage on this legislation; again, that is with the chairman's, the ranking member's, and the leaders' blessings, but that is certainly the intent of Senator MIKULSKI and myself.

We can only do that if, in fact, those Members who want to offer amendments offer them and those who still have some to be worked out come and try to work out those differences.

I urge my colleagues now, we have over an hour before we intend to move to a period where we might process the remainder of the amendments. We would like to be in a situation where we can give certainty—at least as it relates to the disposition of this bill—to our Members that we would finish shortly after the lunch. I encourage all of our colleagues, if they have interest in this bill, come to the floor. Work with us.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. I want to give an update. We had originally thought we would be voting around 11:30. We are going to delay that until on or about 12:15—nothing fixed, nothing mandatory. People have said: Well, what are you all doing? Look at the Senate floor. Where is the action? This is a compelling issue.

Actually, there is a lot of action going on in the sense that we are reviewing over 20 amendments that are still outstanding to see what could be accepted by unanimous consent, what could be accepted by a voice vote, and what requires a mandatory rollcall vote. So there is a lot of discussion going on, and Senators and their staffs are talking.

It is not to be debated; it is to be discussed right now. I think it is so healthy. This is one of the first times in a couple of years where we have had an open amendment process. In some ways we are getting adjusted to how that actually works. This is terrific. So just because you do not see Senators in intense debate, there are intense conversations about how we help children, how to not create new bureaucracies, how we have the sense that all this is child focused and yet not creating lots of new mandates or whatever.

So this has been really very good. I compliment Senator HARKIN, who is the chair of the full HELP Committee. It is under his leadership that Senator BURR and I held some hearings. His advocacy for children is so well known. If we can move this bill today, we will have accomplished two major goals. We would have reauthorized the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program, made improvements and new reforms, and refreshed the program.

At the same time I think we have improved the process in the Senate to show we can govern by moving bills, by offering amendments, by discussion and by debate. But we could not have done it had Senator HARKIN not been willing to establish such a great tone with Senator ENZI and Senator ALEXANDER while Senator BURR and I did this.

This is the way the Senate ought to be. There were differences. But differences do not mean that you have to be filled with rancor and ranting all the time. At the end of day, when all is said and done, people want us to get more done and less said.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, a lot of work has gone into this bill. The person who led that whole work for a 2-year period of time was Senator MIKULSKI. I happen to be chair of the committee. But it was Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR, working together, who really have brought this to fruition. It is a good bill.

Senator ALEXANDER always says that our committee probably has the biggest divergence ideologically of any committee in the Senate. Yet we have reported out, I think, 19 bills out of our committee, 10 of which have been signed into law during this Congress. We are able to do that because people work together. We work things out.

That is what has happened with this bill. There are a lot of crosscurrents on this bill. There are a lot of items that Senator MIKULSKI would like to have had in the bill, that I would have liked to have had in the bill, and I am sure I can say the same thing for the Republican side.

But over a 2-year period of time—I know it has been at least that—Senator MIKULSKI has worked on this. We made our agreements, and we worked it out to the point where the bill passed our committee unanimously. We have, as I said, a wide divergence of ideological views on our committee. So, here is a bill that passed unanimously. We will have an open process here of debate, deliberation, and amending.

I think at this time we have a pretty defined universe of the amendments, unless something else pops up that I did not know about.

We are working on those. The staffs are working on those now with the Senators. With any legislation that comes through, let's face it, as Senators we probably would like to change something here or there. I understand that. I have been in the Senate a long time, and I know I have wanted to add an amendment to something to change it, to do something different, maybe, that I cared about.

But in the interests of the broader perspective of the legislation at hand, I didn't offer it. I would wait until some other point in time to offer it or perhaps to offer a different pathway. That is what I am asking Senators on both sides of the aisle to think about.

We have a great bill. It is sorely needed. It updates a law that hasn't been changed. I know Senator MIKULSKI has told us many times, and it bears repeating. We have not addressed this since 1996, and a lot has changed since 1996 in terms of childcare.

This bill updates, modernizes, and does some things that will move us ahead and better this country in terms of the child care and development block grant program.

I know that different people have different ideas, saying: Well, I would like to change this or modify that. I get it; I understand that.

But if there is a problem in terms of bringing an amendment up that might jeopardize the bill, I ask Senators to consider whether their interests, whatever it might be, and I am not saying it is not legitimate, but if it upsets the

balance we have worked out in this committee with this broad, ideological spectrum, I ask them to reconsider whether they would want to jeopardize this bill, which we are so close to passing. I think we could actually pass this bill this afternoon.

I ask Senators, if they have those kinds of amendments, to reconsider maybe the broader implications of this legislation and whether they would want to jeopardize it for their legitimate interests, as I said. I don't deny any Senator the right to offer an amendment and to push an interest that he or she might have. Some of them I might agree with. But if it really jeopardizes the bill, then I would have to say, no, I wouldn't support it because of the broader interests of getting the bill passed.

Senator MIKULSKI and her staff, Senator ALEXANDER, Senator BURR, and my staff, we are working together on this. I still hope we can bring this bill to fruition sometime early this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. I come to the floor today to thank the bipartisan leadership that has brought us to the place where we are considering reauthorizing this important child care and development block grant bill.

In my home State of Washington there is a young woman named Janelle who is a single mom. She lives in southeast Seattle and was looking for opportunities to support her family. But before she could go back to school or participate in a job-training program so she could advance her career, she had to find affordable childcare for two of her children.

Thankfully, with the assistance of this Child Care and Development Block Grant Program, she was able to get some subsidies to help cover the costs. She now works. She works part-time, and she is attending school and becoming a surgical tech.

This Federal grant program expands opportunities to parents such as Janelle and so many families across our country by helping them with the cost of childcare. That is why I support this effort to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program.

We all know the cost of childcare has soared in recent decades. The Census Bureau found that childcare costs have nearly doubled since the 1980s, and that high cost hits low-income families especially hard. For working families who live below the poverty line, the cost of childcare can eat up more than 30 percent of their monthly income. For single parents, if they only have one income, it is an even bigger burden. When low-income parents don't have access to reliable and affordable childcare, they can't work. They can't go back to school. They can't advance their skills with job training. They are stuck.

That, as we know, is particularly problematic for women. Women are more likely than men to cut back their hours at work or quit their jobs all together so they can take care of their children.

In the long run, that puts women on an uneven playing field with their male counterparts, both in terms of earnings and of opportunities to advance in the workplace.

We have to break down those barriers. We need to make sure that working doesn't become cost prohibitive for parents, and we have to strengthen access for low-income families so they can get affordable, quality childcare.

This bipartisan Child Care and Development Block Grant Act is part of the solution. These grants expand opportunities for parents with low income. It allows them to work, to go to school or to get job training—all with the peace of mind that their kids are taken care of in a safe childcare center.

In 1990 President George H. W. Bush signed this grant program, as we know it, into law. Today it helps 1.6 million kids get childcare.

To participate a parent has to have a job or be enrolled in school or in a job training program. That has helped countless parents across our country.

I want to mention a woman who has contacted us. She is a single mom whose name is Star. She lives in Skagit County, a rural part of my State. She wants to advance her skills to support her family, as so many people do today.

With this assistance she is able to go to a community college 1 hour away from home, knowing that her kids are OK in a reliable childcare program. There is nothing more important to a parent than the safety and well-being of their child. I have said many times: You do a better job at work if you know your kids are safe. If you are worried about whether your kids are OK, you can't do a good job at work. Reauthorizing this program is a critical part of this, and it helps parents such as Star feel comfortable when they are away from their kids.

In this reauthorization bill we are looking at ways to improve these grants. We know that stability is critically important for a young child's development. But before kids could lose their spot in childcare, if their parents didn't meet the eligibility requirements, even temporarily, that disruption in care is exactly what we need to work to avoid.

I have seen this a lot in my work on behalf of foster kids, military students, and homeless children. These are highly mobile populations. Now with this legislation and the work that has been done, we have ensured that these kids have a mandatory 12 months to access that care so they don't have that disruption of stability in their lives. That is critically important.

This bill also reduces barriers for homeless families to access childcare and will train more childcare providers in identifying and serving homeless kids and families so they can get the support they need. I truly appreciate the inclusion of those provisions.

For many families it can be very difficult, as we know, to find quality childcare. This legislation authorizes a toll-free hotline and a Web site so parents can get and find good-quality care in their own community. Those provisions are why I am such a strong supporter and so delighted we are at the point where we are able to pass this critical piece of legislation.

Let me end by saying in Washington State there is a young couple named Edward and Constance. They are struggling to make ends meet on a very low income. They are working, and they are studying to ensure that times won't always be as tough as they are today. Because of childcare assistance with this grant money, Edward now works full time. When Constance is not working at her part-time job, she is training to become a dental assistant. Supporting parents such as this couple, giving them these opportunities to make sure their kids are in a safe, quality childcare program is what the grants are about in this program.

I urge our colleagues to support this legislation, and again, I thank the Senators who have participated in making this a strong bipartisan proposal.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Senator from Washington for her comments and her leadership in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, as well. She has been a consistent spokesman for children, especially for homeless children.

I want to make an observation about the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program that the Presiding Officer from New Jersey will especially find of interest because of his work with children and schools in New Jersey. We have heard this morning a great deal of support for the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, which is a very remarkable piece of legislation in terms of the way it is structured, if we think about it.

It has been around for about 20 years, but it takes 5 to 6 billion Federal dollars each year and gives it to States—a block grant with a lot of flexibility. Then the money is distributed as vouchers to individual parents—low-income women, mostly—who then choose among thousands of certified childcare centers. That, I would argue, while it was done 20 years ago, fits the Internet age.

Newt Gingrich—and I have sometimes accused Newt of being Vesuvian in his qualities because he has such a steady flow of new ideas—has done some very interesting work recently. He quotes a computer programmer named Tim O'Reilly who made a suggestion for how the Internet could transform government. Mr. O'Reilly said:

The best way for government to operate is to figure out what kinds of things are

enablers of society and make investments in those things. The same way that Apple figured out, ''If we turn the iPhone into a platform, outside developers will bring hundreds of thousands of applications to the table.''

In a way, the developers of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program in the early 1990s, under the first President Bush, were ahead of their time because, rather than having a big burdensome program run from Washington with lots of rules made here, we have a piece of legislation that survived for more than two decades and that helps 1.5 million children this year.

It enables people such as the mother in Memphis I talked about on the floor yesterday who became eligible for a childcare voucher in Tennessee. She was at LeMoyne-Owen College studying for her business degree and was able to place her infant in a childcare center of her choice. The State gave her $500 to $600 a month for a voucher—infant care is more expensive. She earned her degree and is now an assistant manager at Walmart. She now has a second child in the same childcare center—but she can afford to pay for it herself.

That is a perfect example of enabling her, using taxpayer money, to move up the economic ladder, to reach the American dream and succeed. Rather than making her do it or mandating her to do it, we enabled her to do it.

We also do this—and we have done it very successfully since World War II—with college grants and loans, which also have virtually unanimous support in the Senate on both sides of the aisle.

Beginning with the GI bill for veterans in 1944, we have given vouchers to veterans, and those vouchers follow them to any educational institution of their choice. At the beginning, many of them went to high schools. Some of them went to colleges overseas.

That was the beginning of our current system of Federal Government support for grants and loans, and now half of our college students have a Federal grant or a loan to help pay for college. All of those grants and loans follow them to the institution of their choice. That is a lot of money. It is over $100 billion in loans—new loans—every year. It is $33 billion in Pell grants each year.

We followed Tim O'Reilly's suggestion there as well. We haven't set up a lot of complicated Washington programs and managers. We have simply said this. If you are eligible and go to an accredited institution—whether it is public, private, for-profit, nonprofit, Yeshiva, Notre Dame or Rutgers—the money will follow you to the college of your choice. That is what we have done since World War II with college students—and since the era of George Walker Bush, with children—we have given them tickets to the institutions of their choice.

But what have we done in the middle? We have vouchers for college students and vouchers for very young children, but what about students who go to elementary school? And what about students who go to high school? Especially, what about students who are low-income students who are trapped in failing schools? Our childcare vouchers are for low-income parents, mainly women. Our vouchers for college students are for low-income students. We call those Pell grants. But we give our K–12 money to the schools instead of allowing it to follow students to the schools of their choice.

I have always wondered, if we have had such success with the GI bill and the Pell grant and the student loan and the childcare voucher, why don't we try it with kindergarten through the 12th grade? Many enterprising mayors and Governors have tried that, usually facing a lot of resistance from people who see something un-American about vouchers. It is not very un-American if it is the GI bill, not very un-American if it is a Pell grant, not very un-American if it is a childcare voucher, but something somehow is wrong with it if you are in third grade or the seventh grade or the ninth grade.

So I have introduced something called Scholarships for Kids, which is almost like the child care development block grant for students who are in elementary and secondary schools. It would take 80 Federal education programs that spend about $24 billion a year and say to New Jersey or Tennessee or Iowa: You can take all that money, whatever your share of that is, and create a $2,100 scholarship for every single child in your State below the Federal poverty level, and it can follow that child to whatever school in your State the child attends.

If you live in a city or a State where you want the child to be able to go to any accredited institution, public or private, the way we do with Pell grants, you may do that. If you believe that Federal dollars for elementary and secondary schools should only go to public schools, you may do that. You may design the program however you want to do it in your State. But the idea would be that we would enable low-income children, the ones who are below the Federal poverty level—and there are 11 million of those in our country—we would allow you to pin $2,100 to their shirt to follow that child to school. I think we know what would happen if we were to do that. Those children may need to be in school longer each day. They may need a meal. They may need to be there during vacation time. They may need to be there in the summer. And if the teacher has the extra money and the freedom to use it, that gives that school more autonomy and that helps that child succeed.

Does every school succeed at the same rate? No. Not every college succeeds at the same rate. Not every childcare center succeeds at the same rate. But if we have 70 years of experience with colleges of creating autonomy and choice and letting the money follow the students to the school—and people all around the world tell us we have the best system of colleges in the world—why don't we try it with our schools?

I see the Senator from Oklahoma, and I will wind down so he can wind up. I thank him for his contribution to the debate.

While we are in the middle of so much testimony about what a great thing the child care development block grant is—vouchers to little children who are poor—and while we all believe Pell grants are a great idea—vouchers to college students who are low income—should we not think about doing exactly the same thing with elementary and secondary school students as a way to help them succeed? And not as a Federal mandate but simply giving Governors and State legislators and educators the opportunity to say: Give us that share of our $24 billion. Give every one of our children who is below the Federal poverty level $2,100 each and let us decide how it follows them to the school they attend.

So I wanted to make that observation. And I am delighted to know the Senator from New Jersey is presiding today because of the work he has done in his State in that area.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Oklahoma wish to speak?

Ms. MIKULSKI. Oh, I am sorry, I thought the Senator from Oklahoma was involved in a conversation with the Senator from Iowa.

Mr. COBURN. I was, but I would like to speak, if I might.

Ms. MIKULSKI. No way we want to inhibit the Senator's ability to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I was going to call up amendment No. 2829, but I have chosen not to do that because of the plan of the manager of the bill to table it. So I will talk about what it is and make a few observations.

Four years ago we got the GAO to start a process on duplication, to look at what we are doing in a multitude of areas across the whole Federal Government. That will be finished, and for the first time it will have taken a complete look. We will see it at the end of this month, the first part of the fourth report.

One of their findings was, according to early learning and childcare programs, within 8 different departments there are 45 separate programs—8 different departments within the administration, 45 separate programs, spending $16 billion a year. So the amendment I was going to offer would have forced us to do the metrics to look at what our outcomes are. It would have forced us to consolidate programs, other than major programs such as this one we are debating today, which has been markedly improved and enhanced.

Now, I don't want to put the Senate through a timely vote when I know what the outcome is going to be, so I won't call up that amendment. But I would remind my colleagues that the only way we are really ever going to get control of our budget is to do the hard work of eliminating duplication, so that when we have a program, such as the one the manager of the bill has on the floor today, it is really directed, it is focused, it has metrics, and we know what we are getting for what we are spending.

Most people don't realize we have 45 of these programs in 8 different departments spending $16 billion a year.

So I hope we will consider that this is a great movement on this one particular bill, and I congratulate the people who worked on it—Senator HARKIN and his staff, Senators BURR and ALEXANDER and their staff—because I think they have done a good job. But it is not enough because we are still going to have 44 other programs and we are still going to have programs that don't have a metric on them. We are spending money on them, and we don't know if they are accomplishing what we want them to accomplish.

The whole purpose of the amendment was to force us to do that. I understand that is not going to move, and I am fine with that. I will work in every other way behind the scenes to try to accomplish the same purpose.

Mr. HARKIN. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. COBURN. I yield for a question.

Mr. HARKIN. First of all, I just want to say—and I mentioned it on the floor the other day—that I spent this weekend in Iowa at two early learning centers, and what became clear to me was the number of different conduits of funding and the different programs, qualifications, requirements, and paperwork.

I said at the time: I am confused.

The man at the center said: If you think you are confused, how do you think we feel about it?

That is why I was very supportive of the amendment offered by Senator ENZI. The Enzi amendment was a mandate on HHS, I believe, to take a look at all of these things and have a report back within a certain amount of time—I think it was 1 year—on how we can better coordinate these.

I agree with the Senator. There are way too many conduits into childcare, and it is horribly confusing, and there are all these different requirements that overlap, and this just causes confusion.

I wanted to ask the Senator if he had looked at the Enzi amendment, which gives us some time, and I can assure the Senator that our committee—and I am sure I can speak for Senator BURR on this on the Republican side—will be riding herd on this because I think we all agree with the Senator from Oklahoma that it has to be fixed.

Mr. COBURN. To answer the Senator's question, I supported the Enzi amendment. I don't think it went far enough because you are not going to look at some of the programs that are outside the purview of the Senator's committee. We have eight different Federal departments running these programs. They come from eight different sets of authorizations.

So the point is that I am going to work behind the scenes with Senator BURR and with Senator HARKIN to try to accomplish this.

AMENDMENT NO. 2830

Now I would like to call up amendment No. 2830 and ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Will the Senator yield to me before he offers his amendment?

Mr. COBURN. Yes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Well, actually, I want to comment on how I want to work together with the Senator. Go ahead and offer the amendment, and then I would like to comment and not engage in klutzy conversation by asking questions. I think we are on the same broadband.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to setting aside the pending amendment?

Hearing no objection, the clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. COBURN] proposed an amendment numbered 2830.

Mr. COBURN. I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read.

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

Mr. COBURN. The desk has a modification of that amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the modification?

Hearing no objection, the amendment is so modified.

The amendment (No. 2830), as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: To establish a $1,000,000 asset limit for eligibility for child care assistance)

On page 138, line 8, insert '', and whose family assets do not exceed $1,000,000 (as certified by a member of such family)'' after ''size''.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, what we are trying to accomplish with this amendment—and I have cleared it on our side, and I think it is being cleared on the other side as well—is to make sure the significant amount of money we spend in this area goes to people who really need it. So all this amendment does is require a self-certification when an individual acquires one of these grants that they don't have real assets greater than $1 million. If they do, maybe they should be spending their money rather than taxpayers' money on their kids' childcare.

That is all this amendment does. All we have done is to put in there, in the application process, a box they have to check that says: I don't have real assets in excess of $1 million. This will ensure that we know that at least the vast majority—and by the way, 16 percent of this money has gone to people who are very wealthy, in terms of these vouchers. I have that data. I don't have it with me. Actually, I may have it with me, and I will pull it up and speak about that in a minute.

But the fact is we want this money to help the people who need help, not to help people who don't need the help. So that is the purpose of this amendment. I have agreed, if it becomes acceptable, to have a voice vote.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Before the Senator from Oklahoma leaves the floor and we proceed to a voice vote, et cetera, I wish to thank him for his steadfast advocacy in getting more value out of the taxpayers' dollar for the taxpayers' contribution to the Federal Treasury. He has been a well-known advocate for the consolidation and streamlining of existing programs, and I salute him for that.

Going back to 1996, we actually started this with streamlining childcare bills. In 1996, because I was here during the welfare reform debate and passage, we had four different childcare bills, with four different eligibility requirements, with four different levels of bureaucracy. So the money was going into the bureaucracy's determining eligibility rather than into childcare. In the 1996 welfare reform bill, we consolidated so that we have the child care and development block grant. That is how we got to where we are.

The Senator from Oklahoma talks about how he has data that cuts across eight different Federal agencies. I pledge to him, as the chair of the Appropriations Committee, to actually sit down and look at this data, to put our heads together. And really, with money as tight as it is, the stringent budgets we are under, particularly when it comes to funding the kinds of compelling human needs that are in health and human services and education, we want to get more value for the dollar. We don't want to get more bureaucracy for the dollar.

So I say to the Senator from Oklahoma that we appreciate his withdrawing his amendment. We know the Senator from Wyoming Mr. ENZI has offered an amendment to get a report as well. But as we look at our appropriations for this year, I invite my colleague, with the greatest sincerity—and I pledge to him my word as a Senator—to sit down and review these documents and see how we can put this suggestion he has into action. I look forward to it, and, quite frankly, I am eager to see what we can get done.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wish to join in. One, as the Senator from Maryland said, I recognize he has been out front in trying to get value for the taxpayers' dollar; and, second, he is working in a cooperative way to help us get a result. Those are two

great characteristics in a body of 100 people which operates by unanimous consent. So I am grateful for that.

On the first point, I completely agree with him on the early childhood money. We have about $18 billion from various streams of Federal dollars aimed at children below 5 or 6; then we have State dollars; then we have local dollars; then we have private dollars. We have grappled with ways to try to make sure we spend that money more effectively. One way is to emphasize centers of excellence, like Oklahoma City, Nashville, or Jersey City, where they try to put all that money together.

But I am committed to work with Senator HARKIN and Senator MIKULSKI to take the research which Senator COBURN has done and see if we can consolidate, streamline, and get more value for early childhood.

Second, he has called attention to a problem which I would appreciate his help in solving with his ''Millionaires' Amendment,'' which I think we will be voting on in a little while. Let me give an example, if I may.

The application form students fill out for Federal grants and loans to attend college is ridiculous. If I had it in my hand and held it up here, it would go from up here all the way to the floor. It is 100 questions. We had testimony in our committee that if we just answered two questions, in 95 percent of the cases it would be accurate. One: What was your family income 2 years ago? And, two: How many people are in your family? But the other 5 percent is the problem, because there could be abuse of the kind the Senator is talking about here.

What I would like to do—and I think others here would like to do—is to simplify the application form for Federal grants and loans, but do it in such a way we make sure the money goes where it is supposed to go. When there are 100 complicated questions to fill out, it discourages a lot of low-income people from going to college who we hope would, and it wastes time and money of administrators and families. Many of these families are not families with college degrees and accountants to help them fill out these long forms.

So we need the Senator from Oklahoma's help when we get to that discussion, sometime, of: How do we simplify the form of application for Federal grants and loans? And, with the 5 percent which remains, how do we narrow that down to 4, 3, 2, 1, to make sure almost all the money we are appropriating goes where it is supposed to go?

I salute him for both amendments. I look forward to supporting his amendment on the child care block grants, and hope it is a first step for dealing with the misapplication of Federal dollars aimed to help people move up the economic ladder.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, if I could have the attention of Senator ALEXANDER and Senator BURR. I am about to propose a unanimous consent request.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at 12:15 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to votes in relation to the following amendments in the order listed: Coburn No. 2830, as modified; Portman No. 2827; Tester No. 2834; Thune No. 2838; Warren No. 2842; Bennet No. 2839, as modified; further, that no second-degree amendments be in order to any of these amendments prior to the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. For the information of all Senators, it is our understanding we will need one roll call vote in this sequence and the remaining amendments can be disposed of by voice vote.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the pending amendments be set aside and the following amendments be made pending: Portman No. 2827; Tester No. 2834; Thune No. 2838; Warren No. 2842; and Bennet No. 2839, as modified.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Ms. LANDRIEU. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I realize the Senator is trying to move through this very important bill on the floor, which I fully support and thank him for the amendment.

Does the Senator know what the action of the Senate will be once this bill is completed? And is the intention to do final passage of this bill today?

Mr. HARKIN. I say to my friend I am hopeful we will have final passage today. We are working through it. We are down to just a couple of amendments. I haven't seen any others pop up right now. So I am hopeful we will have this series of votes, people will go to lunch, we will come back, and hopefully we will dispose of maybe a couple more amendments and then we will have final passage.

Ms. LANDRIEU. So final passage could potentially be—is it the Senator's understanding through the Chair—about 3 or so?

Mr. HARKIN. If we don't have any kind of extended debate on the floor, I would say probably at least by 3, I would hope we would be finished. If we work out agreement on a couple amendments, we might be done before that.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the unanimous consent request?

Without objection, the clerk will report the amendments, en bloc.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. HARKIN] proposes amendments numbered 2827, 2834, 2838, 2842, and 2839, as modified.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 2827

(Purpose: To provide for evidence-based training that promotes early language and literacy development)

On page 78, line 9, insert ''and early language and literacy development'' after ''readiness''.

AMENDMENT NO. 2834

(Purpose: To permit the Secretary of Health and Human Services to waive the prohibition on the use of amounts by Indian tribes and tribal organizations for construction or renovation of facilities for child care programs if the use will result in an increase of the level of child care services)

On page 136, strike line 16 and all that follows through page 137, line 7, and insert the following:

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the following:

''(D) LICENSING AND STANDARDS.—In lieu of any licensing and regulatory requirements applicable under State or local law, the Secretary, in consultation with Indian tribes and tribal organizations, shall develop minimum child care standards that shall be applicable to Indian tribes and tribal organizations receiving assistance under this subchapter. Such standards shall appropriately reflect Indian tribe and tribal organization needs and available resources, and shall include standards requiring a publicly available application, health and safety standards, and standards requiring a reservation of funds for activities to improve the quality of child care provided to Indian children.''; and

(B) in paragraph (6), by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following:

''(C) LIMITATION.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in clause (ii), the Secretary may not permit an Indian tribe or tribal organization to use amounts provided under this subsection for construction or renovation if the use will result in a decrease in the level of child care services provided by the Indian tribe or tribal organization as compared to the level of child care services provided by the Indian tribe or tribal organization in the fiscal year preceding the year for which the determination under subparagraph (B) is being made.

''(ii) WAIVER.—The Secretary shall waive the limitation described in clause (i) if—

''(I) the Secretary determines that the decrease in the level of child care services provided by the Indian tribe or tribal organization is temporary; and

''(II) the Indian tribe or tribal organization submits to the Secretary a plan that demonstrates that after the date on which the construction or renovation is completed—

''(aa) the level of child care services will increase; or

''(bb) the quality of child care services will improve.''.

AMENDMENT NO. 2838

(Purpose: To specify that child care certificates may be included in State strategies to increase the supply of child care)

On page 88, line 5, insert ''offering child care certificates to parents,'' after ''tions,''.

AMENDMENT NO. 2842

(Purpose: To allow funds reserved under section 658G(a) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 to be used to connect child care staff members with Federal and State financial aid, or other resources, in order to assist the staff members in pursuing relevant training)

On page 111, strike line 17 and insert the following:

early neurological development of children; and

''(L) connecting child care staff members of child care providers with available Federal and State financial aid, or other resources, that would assist child care staff members in pursuing relevant postsecondary training.

AMENDMENT NO. 2839, AS MODIFIED

(Purpose: To expand the requirement that space allotted to child care providers in Federal buildings will be used to provide child care services to children of whom at least 50 percent have 1 parent or guardian employed by the Federal Government)

At the end of the bill, add the following:

SEC. ___. ALLOTMENT OF SPACE IN FEDERAL BUILDINGS FOR CHILD CARE.

Section 590 of title 40, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (a) through (g) as subsections (b) through (h), respectively;

(2) by inserting before subsection (b) (as so redesignated) the following:

''(a) DEFINITION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEE.—In this section, the term 'Federal employee' does not include a person that—

''(1) is not employed by the Federal Government; and

''(2) meets the requirements described in subsection (c)(2)(C)(i)(II).'';

(3) in paragraph (2)(C) of subsection (c) (as so redesignated), by striking clause (i) and inserting the following:

''(i) the space will be used to provide child care services to children of whom at least 50 percent have 1 parent or guardian who—

''(I) is employed by the Federal Government; or

''(II)(aa) has met the requirements for a master's degree or a doctorate degree from an institution of higher education (as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)); and

''(bb) is conducting research in the Federal building under an arrangement between the parent or guardian and a Federal agency.''; and

(4) in subsection (d) (as so redesignated), by striking ''subsection (b)'' each place it appears and inserting ''subsection (c)''.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following disposition of the Bennet amendment, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, en bloc: Calendar Nos. 634, 625, and 550; that the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session; further, that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided in the usual form prior to each vote, and that the votes be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. I am told we expect the amendments we are bringing up to be voice-voted this afternoon.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2830

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is now on agreeing to amendment No. 2830, as modified, offered by the Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. COBURN.

Mr. ALEXANDER. 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.

The result was announced—yeas 100, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 75 Leg.]

YEAS—100

Alexander	Gillibrand	Murphy
Ayotte	Graham	Murray
Baldwin	Grassley	Nelson
Barrasso	Hagan	Paul
Begich	Harkin	Portman
Bennet	Hatch	Pryor
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Blunt	Heitkamp	Reid
Booker	Heller	Risch
Boozman	Hirono	Roberts
Boxer	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Brown	Inhofe	Rubio
Burr	Isakson	Sanders
Cantwell	Johanns	Schatz
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Chambliss	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Coburn	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cochran	Landrieu	Tester
Collins	Leahy	Thune
Coons	Lee	Toomey
Corker	Levin	Udall (CO)
Cornyn	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Crapo	Markey	Vitter
Cruz	McCain	Walsh
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Durbin	McConnell	Warren
Enzi	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Fischer	Mikulski	Wyden
Flake	Moran	
Franken	Murkowski	

The amendment (No. 2830), as modified, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2827

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the Portman amendment No. 2827.

The amendment (No. 2827) was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2834

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the Tester amendment No. 2834.

The amendment (No. 2834) was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2838

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the Thune amendment No. 2838.

The amendment (No. 2838) was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2842

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the Warren amendment No. 2842.

The amendment (No. 2842) was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT 2839, AS MODIFIED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2839, as modified, offered by the Senator from Colorado Mr. BENNET.

The amendment (No. 2839), as modified, was agreed to.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider and then move to lay those motions on the table, for all the voice votes we just considered.

The motions to lay on the table were agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF PUNEET TALWAR TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

NOMINATION OF JOSEPH PIUS PIETRZYK TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

NOMINATION OF DWIGHT L. BUSH, SR., TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Puneet Talwar, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State; Joseph Pius Pietrzyk, of Ohio, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation; and Dwight L. Bush, Sr., of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Morocco.

VOTE ON TALWAR NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the Talwar nomination.

Who yields time? The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. I yield back the remaining time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Puneet Talwar, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON PIETRZYK NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the

usual form prior to a vote on the Pietrzyk nomination.

Who yields time?

Mr. BURR. I yield back the remaining time.

Mr. HARKIN. We yield back our remaining time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Joseph Pius Pietrzyk, of Ohio, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON BUSH NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the Bush nomination.

Who yields time?

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, we yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Dwight L. Bush, Sr., of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Morocco?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate will resume legislative session.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT OF 2014—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I think the end is in sight, hopefully, on this bill. Our staff has been working hard. We have all been working hard to get amendments worked out. I know both sides have conference lunches that are taking place now. So we hope to come back shortly after these luncheons conclude. We will then be able to move ahead.

As I understand it, there are three amendments pending. We don't know whether they will have votes, but we are working on that right now. So I hope we can have final passage on this bill very shortly.

Does my friend, the Senator from North Carolina, concur with that?

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I do concur. I urge those Members who might be the subject of us trying to work out some language on their amendments, if they have not spoken on them, they exercise the opportunity between 1 o'clock and 2 o'clock, while the caucuses are at lunch, to come to the floor and speak on their amendments. But we are confident we have made tremendous progress and we think we can wrap this up shortly after lunch on the remaining amendments, as well as on passage of the bill.

I yield the floor.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. UDALL of New Mexico pertaining to the introduction of S. 2129 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

AMENDMENT NO. 2827

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I rise today to thank my colleagues for adopting a moment ago an important amendment to this underlying bill. It is an amendment to provide for evidence-based training in efforts that promote early language development and literacy development. This is really important for kids to get them ready for kindergarten, and, again, I appreciate the fact that on a voice vote that was adopted earlier this afternoon.

Madam President, I now rise to urge the Senate to support a child safety amendment I have submitted to the child development block grant bill. I thank Senator ALEXANDER, Senator BURR, Senator MIKULSKI, and Senator HARKIN for all their help on this amendment. I appreciate their working with us.

I like the underlying legislation. It is a good bill because it goes a long way to ensuring that our Federal dollars are spent in a way that does keep our children in safe learning environments and care facilities. I believe my amendment makes a good bill even better.

Currently, this legislation prohibits individuals who have been convicted of a felony from working in a childcare facility that is funded through these Federal block grants. That is a good start, but by limiting the prohibition only to felonies, we are leaving other people out. We are leaving a pool of individuals who have been convicted of crimes against children eligible for employment in a setting where they could prey on vulnerable kids.

So the amendment simply expands to ensure that we are covering those people. It ensures the health and safety of children by clarifying that adults who are convicted of misdemeanor violent crimes against children—child abuse, child endangerment, sexual assault—or of a misdemeanor involving child pornography are also identified in criminal background checks and are not permitted to work in a childcare facility that receives support through these child care development block grants.

Let me give a couple examples of crimes that under the bill as currently drafted would not prevent an individual from working in a childcare facility funded by the legislation.

In my home State of Ohio, we just had a terrible example. An Ohio daycare worker was accused of sprinkling drugs on snacks to get children to sleep. She was fined $250 and then had her charges reduced to a misdemeanor count of child endangerment after a plea agreement. So she did not get charged with a felony in the end because she pled it down to a misdemeanor. But certainly you do not want someone like this working in one of these facilities.

There are lots of other examples.

A Utah women pled guilty to two class A misdemeanors recently for child abuse. These charges were reduced from five second-degree felonies for intentionally inflicting serious physical injury on a child. She had been arrested for physically and emotionally abusing her daughter. According to the police report, she hit her daughter with a closed fist and choked her. But she pled, again, guilty to two misdemeanors because of the plea agreement.

These are just a couple cases. There are many more, and these are just ones that have been decided in the last few months.

Under the legislation as currently written, these individuals would be eligible to work in a childcare facility that receives Federal funds.

This amendment is very simple. It only seeks to protect children and to bar individuals who would commit crimes against the most vulnerable among us from receiving these Federal tax dollars. I urge my colleagues to accept the amendment.

Again, I thank the authors of the underlying bill for working closely with us on this amendment to improve legislation that is already a good and is doing a lot to protect our kids.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, as we talk today about passing new laws, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about enforcing the laws the Congress has already passed.

I want to talk today about something that I believe has been pushed to the wayside too many times by the current administration, and that would be the Constitution of the United States.

Article II, section 3 of the U.S. Constitution declares that the President—

coming right out of the Constitution—that the President ''shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed.'' Simply put, constitutional requirements are just that—they are constitutional requirements. They are not constitutional suggestions. This is not something the Constitution does not clearly define. The branches of government in the Constitution are the judicial, the legislative, and the executive. And the job of the executive is, again, to do what? To ''take care that the laws be faithfully executed.''

Yet time and again President Obama has refused to enforce the law and shown a willingness, frankly, to misuse regulations, in my view, to sidestep the Congress, to sidestep what the law intended to do and, more importantly, to step around the Constitution. Whether it is issuing waivers to States from the work requirements contained in the bipartisan Welfare Reform Act of 1996 or announcing yet another change—and we are now at over two dozen changes and delays—in the President's own health care law, the current administration has sought ways, over and over again, to circumvent the Congress by picking and choosing which laws it wants to enforce—clearly not a power given the President in the Constitution.

In fact, there is a reason the legislative branch is article I of the Constitution. Because the Founders clearly saw the legislative branch as the branch that would determine the direction of the country, and the President's job was not to write the law, the President's job was to execute the law, to enforce the law.

People all over America are rightly concerned about government overreach. They are rightly concerned about government dysfunction. They are rightly concerned about a Senate that has not brought the appropriations bills to the floor the way they should come to the floor for over 7 years now, so we are not debating our priorities.

But it is the overreach, the dysfunction, the lack of compliance with the law and the seeming belief that somehow that is the President's job, to decide which laws we comply with as a country and which ones we do not, which laws the government enforces and which ones it does not enforce. That is not the President's job.

I introduced a bill this week to stop this overreach and to force President Obama to uphold the Constitution. The ENFORCE the Law Act, which is cosponsored by more than half of my Republican Senate colleagues, and which passed the House yesterday, permits Congress to authorize a lawsuit against the President if he fails to uphold the constitutional obligation to uphold the law.

Whenever we are asked, all of us as Members of the Senate, by people that we work for: How can the President decide he is not going to enforce the law, one of the responses we all have thoughtfully given to the other question of: What are you going to do about it, is at this point there is no standing of individual Members of Congress or even the entire body of the Senate or the body of the House to go to court and say: We have standing in court to have this law enforced.

This bill would become law, and a law that would give the Congress that standing. It effectively permits the Congress, either House of the Congress, to authorize a lawsuit against the President if he fails to uphold his constitutional obligation to faithfully execute the law.

If the President has a defense, this is a lawsuit. His side can go to court and defend that. But if he does not have a defense, he has sworn, as we have, to uphold the Constitution. This is not a partisan matter. This bill is important because it gives Congress the ability to combat executive disregard for the Congress no matter what party controls the White House or no matter what party controls the Congress.

The courts have ruled that individual Members of Congress lack standing to take the administration to court. We are not considered individually so-called ''aggrieved parties.'' That is why Members, whether it was the National Labor Relations Board case where the President thought he could decide whether the Senate was in session, instead of the Senate deciding whether the Senate was in session—I joined many of my colleagues to file an amicus brief. I am not a lawyer, but I am able to do that as a citizen, to file an amicus brief, a friend-of-the-court brief, saying why we thought the President was wrong and why we thought the people who were challenging the rules that this group created, that were put in power in an unconstitutional way—we could file that but we could not initiate that. We could not go to court and say: We believe the law is not being enforced.

The ENFORCE Act removes that procedural barrier, so that a Member of the House, a Member of the Senate, can be empowered to bring a lawsuit in Federal court challenging the administration's refusal to enforce the law, challenging the administration's belief that on their own they can suspend the law, they can postpone the law, they can delay the law.

If the law gives the President the ability to do that, it is going to be in the clear black-and-white letters of the law. It is not there now. The ENFORCE Act provides an expedited process so that if this lawsuit is initiated this way, by one or both Houses of the Congress against the administration for not faithfully executing the law, it goes immediately to a three-judge panel in the U.S. district court and then goes directly to the Supreme Court if there is an appeal.

This is an a easy way to solve this problem. It is a way that creates standing to define who is constitutionally obligated to do a job that they are not doing. It is time we reestablished the proper limits on the executive branch. The Founders believed in separation of powers. It is the responsibility of the Congress to protect the idea they came up with in a document for the first time that was a governing document, the idea of checks and balances. If you eliminate that idea of checks and balances, you eliminate the miracle of the Constitution.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me and others in supporting this effort to stop executive overreach and encourage the President to enforce the law. The Constitution still matters. The Constitution deserves to be defended. This is a way the Members of the Congress of the United States can give themselves the ability to launch that defense.

Again, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill that the House passed yesterday. All we have to do to do our part is step forward and pass this legislation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that at 2:30 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to Executive Session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 686; that the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session; further, that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to each vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I yield back all time, and ask that the vote start immediately, and all Senators should be advised that we will start the vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CAROLINE DIANE KRASS TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the Krass nomination which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Caroline Diane Krass, of the District of

Columbia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REID. Has the unanimous consent request been approved?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The unanimous consent request has been approved.

All time has been yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Caroline Diane Krass, of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency?

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

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

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 4, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 76 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Alexander	Franken	Murkowski
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murphy
Baldwin	Graham	Murray
Barrasso	Grassley	Nelson
Begich	Hagan	Portman
Bennet	Harkin	Pryor
Blumenthal	Hatch	Reed
Blunt	Heinrich	Reid
Booker	Heitkamp	Risch
Boozman	Hirono	Roberts
Boxer	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Brown	Inhofe	Rubio
Burr	Isakson	Sanders
Cantwell	Johanns	Schatz
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Casey	Kaine	Shaheen
Chambliss	King	Shelby
Coats	Kirk	Stabenow
Coburn	Klobuchar	Tester
Cochran	Landrieu	Thune
Collins	Leahy	Toomey
Coons	Lee	Udall (CO)
Corker	Levin	Udall (NM)
Cornyn	Manchin	Vitter
Crapo	Markey	Walsh
Donnelly	McCain	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Warren
Enzi	McConnell	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Menendez	Wicker
Fischer	Merkley	Wyden
Flake	Mikulski	

NAYS—4

Cruz	Paul
Heller	Scott

NOT VOTING—1

Moran

The nomination was confirmed.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT OF 2014—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Louisiana.

AMENDMENT NO. 2845, AS MODIFIED

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I call up my amendment No. 2845 and ask that it be modified with the changes at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the pending amendment is set aside.

The clerk will report the amendment, as modified.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Louisiana [Mr. VITTER] proposes an amendment numbered 2845, as modified.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary (acting through the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families) to prepare an annual report that contains a determination about whether States have complied with a priority requirement, and to require the Secretary to withhold funds from States that fail to comply with such priority requirement)

On page 99, strike line 19 and insert the following:

''(ii) REPORT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.—

''(I) IN GENERAL.—Not later than September 30 of the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, and September 30 of each fiscal year thereafter, the Secretary (acting through the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services) shall prepare a report that contains a determination about whether each State uses amounts provided to such State for the fiscal year involved under this subchapter in accordance with the priority for services described in clause (i).

''(II) PENALTY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.—For any fiscal year that the report of the Secretary described in subclause (I) indicates that a State has failed to give priority for services in accordance with clause (i), the Secretary shall—

''(aa) inform the State that the State has until the date that is 6 months after the Secretary has issued such report to fully comply with clause (i);

''(bb) provide the State an opportunity to modify the State plan of such State, to make the plan consistent with the requirements of clause (i), and resubmit such State plan to the Secretary not later than the date described in item (aa); and

''(cc) if the State does not fully comply with clause (i) and item (bb), by the date described in item (aa), withhold 5 percent of the funds that would otherwise be allocated to that State in accordance with this subchapter for the first full fiscal year after that date.

''(III) WAIVER FOR EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES.—Notwithstanding subclause (II) the Secretary may grant a waiver to a State for one year to the penalty applied in subclause (II) if the Secretary determines there are extraordinary circumstances, such as a natural disaster, that prevent the state from complying with clause (I). If the Secretary does grant a waiver to a state under this section, the Secretary shall, within 30 days of granting such waiver, submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees on the circumstances of the waiver including the stated reason from the State on the need for a waiver, the expected impact of the waiver on children served under this program, and any such other relevant information the Secretary deems necessary.

''(iii) CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SYSTEM.—''

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I will briefly summarize this amendment, but I first want to thank the chairman and ranking member of the committee for working through this amendment and agreeing to what I think will be a quick consideration and adoption by voice vote.

This amendment is very simple, straightforward, but important. Present law with regard to child care and development block grants—present Federal law—says that States should and must prioritize for two categories of children: low-income kids and children with special needs. I think we all agree with that prioritization. The problem is, as recent reports have indicated, about half of all the States—23 to be exact—do not do that. They just basically ignore that Federal law.

This simple, straightforward amendment would bring accountability to the system and make sure all States follow present Federal law and give that appropriate priority treatment to children with special needs as well as low-income kids. It would do this by saying that there is going to be some accountability; that the Federal Department involved in the program already will annually make sure States follow this aspect of present law and that if a State is not doing that, it gets 6 months to cure the problem, but if it does not cure that within 6 months, then that State would feel the pinch by having 5 percent of its block grant funds withheld until it corrects the situation.

The amendment also gives the Secretary waiver authority for extraordinary circumstances, such as natural disasters and other emergencies.

Again, I appreciate the chairman and ranking member working out this provision. I do think it is important that all States follow Federal law, and we give these children—special needs children, low-income children—the priority treatment they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, the amendment has the admirable goal of prioritizing funds to low-income families who have children with disabilities. I applaud Senator VITTER's efforts and hope this provides significant reinforcement of what has been the law since 1996—that States must prioritize children from very low-income families

who have children with disabilities. This amendment reinforces that by saying the Department of Health and Human Services must meet that promise. There is a provision in there that gives them adequate time to make sure they do that.

Again, I thank the Senator from Louisiana for working with us. As I said when this amendment first came up, yes, as someone who has worked on disability issues for most of my adult life, I agreed with exactly what he wanted to do; there were just some language problems. That is the way we get legislation done around here—we work things out and we find the middle ground on which everybody can agree. I thank the Senator from Louisiana for his willingness to work this out. We support the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I also want to thank my colleague from Louisiana and the chairman of the committee for working out this amendment.

Madam President, I know of no further debate on this amendment, and I would ask us to proceed to a vote on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment, as modified.

The amendment (No. 2845), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. HARKIN. I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

SECTION 8(b)

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I want to first and foremost express my thanks to the chairman, and his colleagues, for this bipartisan bill—a long overdue effort that clearly is the result of a painstaking, patient effort by the committee to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

I wanted to discuss very quickly one provision, section 8(b), that I feel needs additional clarification.

Given that the overall priority of all of us to increase quality while ensuring that States can effectively navigate the federal standards—while maintaining their authority to set their own standards—would the Senator agree that the intent of this law is not to rewrite other existing Federal laws or evade requirements of other Federal laws that might diminish services for children?

Mr. HARKIN. Yes, I would agree. As our committee report explains, it is intended that ''States exercise this provision in an attempt to maximize the effective administration and delivery of Federally subsidized childcare, and not for purposes that have a minor effect on childcare.''

I firmly believe, and I know my colleagues will agree, that this provision is not intended, nor should it be interpreted, as one that can be used to rewrite any other current laws, evade central provisions of other current laws, or undermine the goals and purposes of other laws. Certainly, it is not our intent to allow States to change, undermine or threaten in any way current laws.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the chairman.

HHS RULEMAKING

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I have a question for my friend from Iowa, the chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. The Department of Health and Human Services, HHS, in May 2013 issued a notice of proposed rulemaking to the Child Care and Development Fund, CCDF, that would make several health and safety, quality, background checks, and other related changes. That NPRM is currently in the comment period and has yet to be finalized.

Am I correct in my understanding that HHS has shared with you, as well as with me, their interpretation that, should S. 1086, the Child Care Development Block Grant Reauthorization which we are considering in the Senate today along with any subsequent changes through the legislative process, become law, the proposed rulemaking for the CCDF would be overridden by S. 1086?

Mr. HARKIN. The Senator from North Carolina is correct that HHS has shared with me that S. 1086, and any further congressional changes made to S. 1086, would override the May 2013 notice of proposed rulemaking to the CCDF.

Mr. BURR. I thank the distinguished chairman for this important clarification and for his hard work in developing this important legislation.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, with 20 kids and grandkids, I understand the importance and value of quality, affordable childcare. I applaud those individuals seeking to attain further education and training in order to improve their situations, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program assists them in that pursuit.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Program has been in place since 1990, and as a part of welfare reform in 1996, three other childcare initiatives were consolidated into this program, which provides formula-based block grant funding to States to subsidize childcare and emphasizes work, personal responsibility and parental choice. In my State of Oklahoma, 17,000 families and 28,000 children benefit directly from these funds.

This legislation not only reauthorizes the program for another 5 years, but it also does not add to the deficit and makes some important reforms, while preserving State flexibility in how the funds are used. S. 1086 adds new safety and health standards, calls for annual, unannounced onsite monitoring of licensed providers, requires background checks of childcare staff and providers and expands compliance with child abuse reporting requirements. Additionally, the Senate adopted 18 amendments, which I also supported, including Amendment 2822, which sets aside at least 2 percent of a State's CCDBG funds for Indian tribes and tribal organizations—of significance for Oklahoma. I also co-sponsored two adopted amendments: Amendment 2813, which extends a grace period to foster youth so that they can begin receiving CCDBG services while families compile medical documentation; and Amendment 2814, which requires States to have a plan in place to coordinate existing services and programs for children in foster care. I support S. 1086 and am encouraged by the example of regular order restored to Senate business.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, Americans believe in the power of hard work as the key to getting ahead, the key to prosperity, the key to a better future. We also believe in the importance of family, and in the responsibility we all share for making sure that America's children are cared for and protected.

The legislation before us today furthers both these values the value of hard work and the value of family. It would update and modernize a program that for two decades has helped families pursue rewarding employment or important education and training while obtaining essential care for their children. It is bipartisan legislation, unanimously approved in committee, with support from a broad range of education and child advocacy groups.

For all working parents, but particularly for low-income families, the demands of work and parenting are enormous challenges. Quality childcare can be hard to find and expensive so expensive that, for many families, the cost all but wipes out their paycheck. The Child Care and Development Block Grant Program is designed to help families meet this challenge. The program provides block grants to States so they can provide financial assistance to families coping with childcare expenses. Nationwide, more than 1.5 million children receive care through these grants. In Michigan, these grants helped more than 50,000 children receive the care they needed in Fiscal Year 2013.

The legislation Senators HARKIN and ALEXANDER have brought to the floor reauthorizes the block grant program so this important assistance can continue. The bill also makes important improvements. It requires States to establish education and training requirements for childcare workers, and ensures that States will inspect childcare facilities before they are granted licenses, and at least once a year thereafter. These requirements will improve our ability to ensure that children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. The bill makes important changes to improve care for children with special needs. It makes changes to eligibility requirements to make assistance more stable and dependable for families.

More than 30 national education, child-advocacy, parenting and violence prevention advocacy groups have endorsed this legislation, strongly supporting the reauthorization of the grant program and the changes to make the program more modern and effective. These groups also point out that in addition to authorization, programs require appropriations to be successful. Childcare is one of many important domestic priorities that Congress could more effectively address if we are willing to reach a balanced deficit reduction agreement that eliminates sequestration and provides needed funding. I remain hopeful we can reach such an agreement.

I wish to thank Senator HARKIN, chairman of the HELP Committee, and Senator ALEXANDER, Ranking Member of the HELP Committee, as well as Senators MIKULSKI, BURR, GILLIBRAND, and AYOTTE for sponsoring this important legislation. I support its passage and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I wish to speak today in support of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014.

First, I applaud the hard work of my colleagues on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee—Chairman TOM HARKIN and Ranking Member LAMAR ALEXANDER.

I also commend Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, my predecessor as chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, and Senator RICHARD BURR for their commitment to improving the lives of children and their families as the sponsors of this important legislation.

We can all agree that supporting our children should be a priority of the utmost importance, and I am proud of the bipartisan work done by my colleagues toward that end.

The childcare and development block grant is an invaluable program that provides assistance to low-income working families. In North Carolina 78,000 children are served every month by CCDBG funding. These children and families deserve high quality childcare so that parents, like the ones I hear from in my State every day, can go to work with the knowledge that their children are safe and receiving high quality care.

Last year, I visited Elm Street Day Care Center in Greensboro, NC, where I saw the importance of childcare, and development block grant funding firsthand. I saw how this program is helping working families in North Carolina and noted ways we could update this law to make it to work better and more efficiently.

I am pleased this bill takes a significant step toward providing more information to parents about their children's care and encourages States to follow North Carolina's lead and increase the quality of childcare centers.

Currently, States must spend at least 4 percent of their Federal childcare funds on improving the quality of childcare—including providing professional development for childcare providers, licensing and monitoring childcare facilities, and providing consumer education, so that parents have the information they need to make informed choices.

This reauthorization raises the minimum amount to be spent on quality improvements to 10 percent by 2020. As a result, we can help to ensure that children in all 50 States are receiving quality care by passing this legislation.

I am also particularly pleased to support this bill because it includes key provisions of the Child Care Infant Mortality Prevention Act, which I introduced with Senators DIANNE FEINSTEIN and SUSAN COLLINS in September.

These provisions will allow for the use of Federal funds to train childcare providers in sleep practices, first aid, and CPR for infants.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics, safe sleep practices can reduce by one-half the annual number of cases of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome—a tragedy that touches approximately 100 families in North Carolina each year.

Roughly 20 percent of all cases of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome occur in child care settings, and—with this provision—we can provide child care providers with the resources they need to prevent these unnecessary tragedies.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I am pleased to support the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, and would like to commend the bipartisan work of Senators MIKULSKI and BURR and Chairman HARKIN and Ranking Member ALEXANDER of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in bringing this important legislation to the floor. There have been several previous attempts to reauthorize this critical program in the past, including when I was a member of this committee. It is my hope we can come together and finally carry this important legislation across the finish line to the benefit of children and families across the country.

Access to affordable, high quality, safe and secure childcare is essential for working families. Yet, such care is very hard to find. According to a 2013 Child Care Aware survey, the cost of full-time, center-based care for two children is the highest single household expense in the Northeast, Midwest and South. This high cost often puts fully licensed programs out of reach for low-incomes families.

The child care and development block grant has not been reauthorized since 1996. At that time, the primary focus of the program was to enable people to move from welfare to work. Today, knowing the critical importance of early brain development and the role early education plays in school readiness and successful outcomes for young people, we must work to achieve the dual goals of CCDBG to ensure affordable and quality childcare options for children and families. And we cannot achieve these goals without addressing the issue of payment rates, the level at which states reimburse childcare providers who care for low-income children who receive a child care subsidy.

That is why during previous attempts to reauthorize the child care and development block grant during the 107th, 108th and 109th Congresses, I introduced the Child Care Quality Incentive Act to provide incentives to States to set equitable payment rates so that low-income families would have access to affordable and high quality care for their children. I am pleased that the bill before us today includes some of the key provisions of my legislation, such as requiring States to conduct a statistically valid and reliable survey of market rates for childcare, report the results of the survey publicly, and set the rates based on the survey results, taking into consideration the cost of providing higher quality care. Raising the payment rates for childcare is an integral component to improving quality.

The other essential element to improving quality and affordability is our investment in childcare and early education programs. According the Congressional Research Service, seven percent fewer children were served in fiscal year 2012 than had been served in fiscal year 2011. According to Kids Count Rhode Island, since peaking in 2003, the number of childcare subsidies in the State has decreased by 45 percent. The $154 million increase for childcare that we included in the fiscal year 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act was a step in the right direction. Clearly, we need to do more.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this legislation to expand our support for working families, and ensure that all children have the quality of education and care to reach their full potential.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, for the information of Senators, we are now down to two voice votes on two pending amendments that have been cleared. We will then have a rollcall vote on final passage. I am hopeful that is going to happen within a very short period of time. In maybe 5 minutes or 10 minutes, I hope we will be ready for a final vote on this bill.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENTS NOS. 2847 AND 2846

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, we have no further debate on the two pending amendments—Portman No. 2847 and Sanders No. 2846—and the substitute. I know of—Madam President, I was misinformed. I thought those amendments had already been called up.

Madam President, I would like to call up in order Portman amendment No. 2847 and Sanders amendment No. 2846 and ask for their immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. HARKIN] proposes, en bloc, for Mr. PORTMAN, an amendment numbered 2847, and for Mr. SANDERS an amendment numbered 2846.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 2847

(Purpose: To provide that a child care staff member who has been convicted of a violent misdemeanor against a child or a misdemeanor involving child pornography is ineligible for employment by certain child care providers)

On page 120, strike line 12 and insert the following:

preceding 5 years; or

''(E) has been convicted of a violent misdemeanor committed as an adult against a child, including the following crimes: child abuse, child endangerment, sexual assault, or of a misdemeanor involving child pornography.

AMENDMENT NO. 2846

(Purpose: To express the sense of the Senate on significantly reducing child poverty by calendar year 2019)

On page 141, insert at the end the following:

SEC. 13. SENSE OF THE SENATE ON SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING CHILD POVERTY BY CALENDAR YEAR 2019.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Senate finds that—

(1) the United States has the highest rate of childhood poverty among 34 major countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, including Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Cyprus, Austria, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovenia, Hungary, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Malta, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Estonia, Belgium, New Zealand, Poland, Canada, Australia, Japan, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Spain, and Bulgaria;

(2) a record-breaking 46,496,000 individuals lived in poverty in the United States in 2012, which is an increase of 14,915,000 individuals since 2000;

(3) 16,073,000 children in the United States lived in poverty in 2012, which is an increase of 4,486,000 children since 2000;

(4) more than 7,100,000 children in the United States, 40 percent of children living in poverty in the United States, live in extreme poverty (defined as living in families with an income that is less than half of the poverty level);

(5) nearly 1,200,000 public school students in the United States were homeless in the 2011–2012 school year, an increase of 73 percent since the 2006–2007 school year;

(6) in an average month in fiscal year 2011, 1,200,000 households with children in the United States did not have any cash income and, for food, depended only on benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.);

(7) in 2012, government assistance programs removed from poverty 9,000,000 children, including 5,300,000 children through the earned income tax credit under section 32 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the child tax credit under section 24 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and 2,200,000 children through the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.);

(8) in 2012, child poverty would have been 57 percent higher, and extreme poverty would have been 240 percent higher, without government tax credits and food, housing, and energy benefits;

(9) in 2013, an individual working full-time at the Federal minimum wage could not afford the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom rental unit and have enough money for food, utilities, and other necessities;

(10) in school years 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, less than half of children ages 3 and 4 were enrolled in preschool;

(11) Early Head Start programs carried out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.) served only 4 percent of the 2,900,000 eligible poor infants and toddlers each day in fiscal year 2012, and Head Start programs carried out under such Act served only 41 percent of the 2,000,000 eligible poor children ages 3 and 4;

(12) more than 220,000 children are on waiting lists for child care assistance; and

(13) child poverty costs the United States not less than $500,000,000 each year in additional education, health, and criminal justice costs and in lost productivity.

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that the President should immediately present to Congress a comprehensive plan to significantly reduce child poverty in the United States by calendar year 2019.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, as I said, I know of no further debate on those amendments. We are ready to vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, if the Senator will yield, as we close into the final minutes of this bill, I just want to say that today will be a great victory for America's children because we will pass the child care and development block grant. I think it is a great victory for the Senate to show that we could govern ourselves with an open amendment process. We could do it diligently, we could do it deliberatively, and we could do it with courtesy and civility. This is the way the Senate should be. Within 2 days we have arrived at a great bill, with cooperation and civility on both sides of the aisle. I hope this becomes a model for the way the Senate will conduct itself for the rest of the session.

I have been very proud to be part of this bill. I thank Senator RICHARD BURR of North Carolina, my Republican counterpart on the children's committee, with all of the due diligence we did for a year and a half. I also thank Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER for his steadfast leadership and input, and of course I thank TOM HARKIN, our leader, who, as he wraps up his Senate career, will never wrap up his advocacy for America's children.

I thank all of our staff for the great work they did in the 100 meetings with stakeholders and the 200 meetings with us.

Madam President, I am ready for the vote and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I would like to take this quick opportunity to thank my colleague Senator MIKULSKI for those kind words and, more importantly, for her passion on this issue. I thank the chairman and the ranking member for their help. But more importantly, I would like to thank the committee staff and personal staffs who have been over here for the last several days and late last night trying to work out amendments. I thank the Members who have been very accommodating to changes so we could get this bill up.

I might take a personal privilege to say that part of this bill was done by a former staff member of mine, Celia Sims, and she is one proud woman today because of that being included in this bill and its passage. I look forward to it.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I will not extend this more than 2 minutes, but I think it is instructive to colleagues to note what the Senator from Maryland, the Senator from North Carolina, and the Senator from Iowa have done. We started this bill about 24 hours ago, right after lunch. More than 40 amendments were filed. More than half of them have been considered and disposed of. There was no objection to a motion to proceed. There was no cloture vote filed. There was no filibuster. And on both sides of the aisle, anyone who showed up with an amendment relevant to the childcare discussion had a chance to have it considered without anybody picking their amendment. Finally, on this side and that side of the aisle, many Members showed a lot of restraint and courtesy in adjusting their amendments so that we could get here. We will not be able to do this every time, but it is a modest step in a very good direction toward the way the Senate should work.

I want to especially thank the Senator from Iowa, the Senator from Maryland, and the Senator from North Carolina for their leadership.

I would also like to extend my deep thanks and sincere appreciation to the dedicated staff that worked on this bill for the past year. Without their hard work and tireless effort we wouldn't have been able to reach the successful conclusion on the passage of this important bill.

I would like to thank Senator BURR's staff, Christopher Toppings and Natasha Hickman for working so closely with my staff and working so well together and with our Republican offices.

I would also like to thank Senator MIKULSKI's staff, Brent Palmer and

Jessica McNiece for their hard work and steady support of getting this bill through the Senate.

The Chairman of the committee has an outstanding staff who are all very capable and dedicated, especially Mario Cardona, Mildred Otero, and his new Staff Director, Derek Miller. I thank them for their close working relationship with my staff.

We know that these bills don't just suddenly appear. Legislative Counsel staff work long hours on the bill and then on the amendments, so I would like to especially thank Liz King, Kristin Romero, Katie Grendon, Bill Baird, and Rob Silver.

And we always rely on our experts at the Congressional Research Service to give us good information in a timely manner, so I extend our thanks to Karen Lynch.

Finally I would like to thank my staff. They have put in a lot of time and effort to make this a process the Senate can be proud of, and I appreciate their efforts and late nights on this bill. So my thanks go out to Diane Tran, Bill Knudsen, Marty West, Patrick Murray, Peter Oppenheim, Michael Merrell, David Cleary, Liz Wolgemuth, and Jim Jeffries.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendments en bloc.

The amendments (Nos. 2847 and 2846) were agreed to en bloc.

The Senator from Iowa.

AMENDMENT NO. 2811 WITHDRAWN

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I withdraw my pending amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is withdrawn.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, again, I know of no further amendments or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the adoption of the committee substitute, as amended.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I would like to join my colleagues and thank everyone for getting this bill done. This is a good bill. First, I would again say thanks to both Senator BURR and Senator MIKULSKI. This is really their bill. They spent the better part of 2 years working this out.

I would like to say that we have had a good day here to work this out, as Senator ALEXANDER said. But a lot of that is the preliminary work that goes into developing a bill such as this over a long period of time. So my respect—my great respect—and my thanks to both Senator BURR and Senator MIKULSKI for getting this bill to where we are now.

My thanks to my good friend Senator ALEXANDER and for the great partnership we have working together on the committee. As he said the other day, no other committee has a wider divergence of ideological views than our committee, but I believe, if I am not mistaken, this is the 19th or 20th bill we have gotten through our committee this Congress.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Will my friend yield for a brief comment?

Mr. HARKIN. Yes, of course I will yield.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it would be improper if we did not acknowledge the work MIKE LEE was involved with in this legislation. He should be complimented for working to help get this passed.

Mr. HARKIN. The leader is right. Senator LEE was very accommodating in letting us move forward on this bill. I appreciate that.

We accomplished a lot in the floor process, as Senator ALEXANDER said. I think we can adopt the legislation, making it an even stronger bill. I would not like to thank a lot of the staff. I hope I do not miss anyone. David Cleary, Peter Oppenheim, Patrick Murray, Marty West, and Bill Knudsen of Senator ALEXANDER's staff.

I would like to thank Chris Toppings and Natasha Hickman of Senator BURR's staff.

I would like to commend the work of Jessica McNiece and Brent Palmer of Senator MIKULSKI's staff.

Finally, I would like to thank Pam Smith, who is not here but who worked on this for a long time, Derek Miller, Mildred Otero, Mario Cardona, Soncia Coleman, Michael Gamel McCormick, Leanne Hotek, Brit Moller, and Aissa Canchola of my staff.

I also wish to thank, from the staffs of Senator MURRAY, Sarah Bolton; Senator SANDERS, David Cohen; Senator CASEY, Sara Mabry and Christina Baumgardner; Senator HAGAN, Ashley Eden; Senator FRANKEN, Gohar Sedighi and Maggie Henderson; Senator BENNET, Juliana Herman and Molly Fishman; Senator WHITEHOUSE, Rick Van Buren; Senator BALDWIN, Michael Dinapolo; Senator MURPHY, Yoon Hayne; Senator WARREN, Julie Morgan; Senator ENZI, Kristin Chapman; Senator ISAKSON, Brett Layson; Senator PAUL, Natalie Burkholter; Senator HATCH, Katie Neal; Senator ROBERTS, Joshua Yurek; Senator MURKOWSKI, Karen McCarthy; Senator KIRK, Cabe Clurman; and Senator SCOTT, Elizabeth Simmons.

As I said at the beginning of this bill's consideration, this bill represents a strong, positive shift for working families in America who benefit from the childcare subsidy program. I hope my colleagues will join all of us in voting to give this an overwhelming vote of yes on final passage.

I know of no further debate on the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

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

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 77 Leg.]

YEAS—96

Alexander	Franken	Murphy
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murray
Baldwin	Graham	Nelson
Barrasso	Grassley	Paul
Begich	Hagan	Portman
Bennet	Harkin	Pryor
Blumenthal	Hatch	Reed
Blunt	Heinrich	Reid
Booker	Heitkamp	Risch
Boozman	Heller	Roberts
Boxer	Hirono	Rockefeller
Brown	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Isakson	Sanders
Cantwell	Johanns	Schatz
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Chambliss	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Cochran	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Landrieu	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Thune
Corker	Levin	Toomey
Cornyn	Manchin	Udall (CO)
Crapo	Markey	Udall (NM)
Cruz	McCain	Vitter
Donnelly	McCaskill	Walsh
Durbin	McConnell	Warner
Enzi	Menendez	Warren
Feinstein	Merkley	Whitehouse
Fischer	Mikulski	Wicker
Flake	Murkowski	Wyden

NAYS—2

Coburn	Lee

NOT VOTING—2

Inhofe	Moran

The bill (S. 1086), as amended, was passed as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014''.

SEC. 2. SHORT TITLE AND PURPOSES.

Section 658A of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9801 note) is amended to read as follows:

''SEC. 658A. SHORT TITLE AND PURPOSES.

''(a) SHORT TITLE.—This subchapter may be cited as the 'Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990'.

''(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this subchapter are—

''(1) to allow each State maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within that State;

''(2) to promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care that best suits their family's needs;

''(3) to assist States in providing high-quality child care services to parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance;

''(4) to assist States in improving the overall quality of child care services and programs by implementing the health, safety, licensing, training, and oversight standards

established in this subchapter and in State law (including regulations);

''(5) to improve school readiness by having children, families, and child care providers engage in activities, in child care settings, that are developmentally appropriate and age-appropriate for the children and that promote children's language and literacy and mathematics skills, social and emotional development, physical health and development, and approaches to learning;

''(6) to encourage States to provide consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care services and to promote involvement by parents and family members in the education of their children in child care settings;

''(7) to increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings; and

''(8) to improve the coordination and delivery of early childhood education and care (including child care).''.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 658B of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858) is amended by striking ''subchapter'' and all that follows, and inserting ''subchapter, such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 2015 through 2020.''.

SEC. 4. LEAD AGENCY.

(a) DESIGNATION.—Section 658D(a) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858b(a)) is amended—

(1) by striking ''chief executive officer'' and inserting ''Governor''; and

(2) by striking ''designate'' and all that follows and inserting ''designate an agency (which may be an appropriate collaborative agency), or establish a joint interagency office, that complies with the requirements of subsection (b) to serve as the lead agency for the State under this subchapter.''.

(b) COLLABORATION WITH TRIBES.—Section 658D(b)(1) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858b(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (C), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(E) at the option of an Indian tribe or tribal organization in the State, collaborate and coordinate with such Indian tribe or tribal organization in the development of the State plan.''.

SEC. 5. APPLICATION AND PLAN.

(a) PERIOD.—Section 658E(b) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858c(b)) is amended, by striking ''2-year'' and inserting ''3-year''.

(b) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.—Section 658E(c) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858c(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting ''or established'' after ''designated'';

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in subparagraph (B), by inserting a comma after ''care of such providers'';

(B) by striking subparagraphs (D) through (H); and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(D) MONITORING AND INSPECTION REPORTS.—The plan shall include a certification that the State, not later than 1 year after the State has in effect the policies and practices described in subparagraph (K)(i), will make public by electronic means, in a consumer-friendly and easily accessible format, organized by provider, the results of monitoring and inspection reports, including those due to major substantiated complaints about failure to comply with this subchapter and State child care policies, as well as the number of deaths, serious injuries, and instances of substantiated child abuse that occurred in child care settings each year, for eligible child care providers within the State. The results shall also include information on the date of such an inspection and, where applicable, information on corrective action taken.

''(E) CONSUMER EDUCATION INFORMATION.—The plan shall include a certification that the State will collect and disseminate (which dissemination may be done, except as otherwise specified in this subparagraph, through resource and referral organizations or other means as determined by the State) to parents of eligible children and the general public—

''(i) information that will promote informed child care choices and that concerns—

''(I) the availability of child care services provided through programs authorized under this subchapter and, if feasible, other child care services and other programs provided in the State for which the family may be eligible;

''(II) if available, information about the quality of providers, including information from a Quality Rating and Improvement System;

''(III) information, made available through a State website, describing the State process for licensing child care providers, the State processes for conducting background checks, and monitoring and inspections, of child care providers, and the offenses that prevent individuals and entities from serving as child care providers in the State;

''(IV) the availability of assistance to obtain child care services;

''(V) other programs for which families that receive child care services for which financial assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter may be eligible, including the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families established under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), Head Start and Early Head Start programs carried out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), the program carried out under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.), the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.), the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children established under section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786), the child and adult care food program established under section 17 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1766), and the Medicaid and State children's health insurance programs under titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq., 1397aa et seq.);

''(VI) programs carried out under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.); and

''(VII) research and best practices concerning children's development, including language and cognitive development, development of early language and literacy and mathematics skills, social and emotional development, meaningful parent and family engagement, and physical health and development (particularly healthy eating and physical activity);

''(ii) information on developmental screenings, including—

''(I) information on existing (as of the date of submission of the application containing the plan) resources and services the State can deploy, including the coordinated use of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program under the Medicaid program carried out under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) and developmental screening services available under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.), in conducting developmental screenings and providing referrals to services, when appropriate, for children who receive assistance under this subchapter; and

''(II) a description of how a family or eligible child care provider may utilize the resources and services described in subclause (I) to obtain developmental screenings for children who receive assistance under this subchapter who may be at risk for cognitive or other developmental delays, which may include social, emotional, physical, or linguistic delays; and

''(iii) information, for parents receiving assistance under the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) and low-income parents, about eligibility for assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter.

''(F) COMPLIANCE WITH STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall include a certification that the State involved has in effect licensing requirements applicable to child care services provided within the State, and provide a detailed description of such requirements and of how such requirements are effectively enforced.

''(ii) LICENSE EXEMPTION.—If the State uses funding received under this subchapter to support a child care provider that is exempt from the corresponding licensing requirements described in clause (i), the plan shall include a description stating why such licensing exemption does not endanger the health, safety, or development of children who receive services from child care providers who are exempt from such requirements.

''(iii) REQUESTS FOR RELIEF.—As described in section 658I(d), a State may request relief from a provision of Federal law other than this subchapter that might conflict with a requirement of this subchapter, including a licensing requirement.

''(G) TRAINING REQUIREMENTS.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall describe the training requirements that are in effect within the State that are designed to enable child care providers to promote the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children and that are applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter in the State.

''(ii) REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall provide an assurance that such training requirements—

''(I) provide a set of workforce and competency standards for child care providers that provide services described in clause (i);

''(II) are developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (designated or established pursuant to section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)));

''(III) include an evidence-based training framework that is designed to promote children's learning and development and school readiness and to improve child outcomes, including school readiness and early language and literacy development;

''(IV) incorporate knowledge and application of the State's early learning and developmental guidelines (where applicable), and the State's child development and health standards; and

''(V) to the extent practicable, are appropriate for a population of children that includes—

''(aa) different age groups (such as infants, toddlers, and preschoolers);

''(bb) English learners;

''(cc) children with disabilities; and

''(dd) Native Americans, including Indians, as the term is defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b) (including Alaska Natives within the meaning of that term), and Native Hawaiians (as defined in section 7207 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7517)).

''(iii) PROGRESSION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.—In developing the requirements, the State shall develop a statewide progression of professional development designed to improve the skills and knowledge of the workforce—

''(I) which may include the acquisition of course credit in postsecondary education or of a credential, aligned with the framework; and

''(II) which shall be accessible to providers supported through Indian tribes or tribal organizations that receive assistance under this subchapter.

''(iv) ALIGNMENT.—The State shall engage the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, and may engage institutions of higher education (as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)), and other training providers in aligning training opportunities with the State's training framework.

''(v) CREDENTIALS.—The Secretary shall not require an individual or entity that provides child care services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter to acquire a credential to provide such services. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit a State from requiring a credential.

''(H) CHILD-TO-PROVIDER RATIO STANDARDS.—

''(i) STANDARDS.—The plan shall describe child care standards, for child care for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter, appropriate to the type of child care setting involved, that address—

''(I) group size limits for specific age populations;

''(II) the appropriate ratio between the number of children and the number of providers, in terms of the age of the children in child care, as determined by the State; and

''(III) required qualifications for such providers.

''(ii) CONSTRUCTION.—The Secretary may offer guidance to States on child-to-provider ratios described in clause (i) according to setting and age group but shall not require that States maintain specific child-to-provider ratios for providers who receive assistance under this subchapter.

''(I) HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that there are in effect within the State, under State or local law, requirements designed to protect the health and safety of children that are applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter. Such requirements—

''(i) shall relate to matters including health and safety topics (including prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma) consisting of—

''(I) the prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunization) and the establishment of a grace period that allows homeless children and children in foster care to receive services under this subchapter while their families (including foster families) are taking any necessary action to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements;

''(II) handwashing and universal health precautions;

''(III) the administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent;

''(IV) the prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and other allergic reactions;

''(V) prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices;

''(VI) sanitary methods of food handling;

''(VII) building and physical premises safety;

''(VIII) emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster, or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1));

''(IX) the handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of biocontaminants;

''(X) identification of and protection from hazards that can cause bodily injury such as electrical hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic;

''(XI) for providers that offer transportation, if applicable, appropriate precautions in transporting children;

''(XII) first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation; and

''(XIII) minimum health and safety training, to be completed pre-service or during an orientation period, appropriate to the provider setting involved that addresses each of the requirements relating to matters described in subclauses (I) through (XII); and

''(ii) may include requirements relating to nutrition, access to physical activity, or any other subject area determined by the State to be necessary to promote child development or to protect children's health and safety.

''(J) COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND LOCAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers within the State, that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter, comply with all applicable State and local health and safety requirements as described in subparagraph (I).

''(K) ENFORCEMENT OF LICENSING AND OTHER REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS.—

''(i) CERTIFICATION.—The plan shall include a certification that the State, not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, shall have in effect policies and practices, applicable to licensing or regulating child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter and the facilities of those providers, that—

''(I) ensure that individuals who are hired as licensing inspectors in the State are qualified to inspect those child care providers and facilities and have received training in related health and safety requirements, child development, child abuse prevention and detection, program management, and relevant law enforcement;

''(II) require licensing inspectors (or qualified inspectors designated by the lead agency) of those child care providers and facilities to perform inspections, with—

''(aa) not less than 1 prelicensure inspection for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards, of each such child care provider and facility in the State; and

''(bb) not less than annually, an inspection (which shall be unannounced) of each such child care provider and facility in the State for compliance with all child care licensing standards, which shall include an inspection for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards (although inspectors may or may not inspect for compliance with all 3 standards at the same time); and

''(III) require the ratio of licensing inspectors to such child care providers and facilities in the State to—

''(aa) be maintained at a level sufficient to enable the State to conduct inspections of such child care providers and facilities on a timely basis in accordance with Federal and State law; and

''(bb) be consistent with research findings and best practices.

''(ii) CONSTRUCTION.—The Secretary may offer guidance to a State, if requested by the State, on a research-based minimum standard regarding ratios described in clause (i)(III) and provide technical assistance to the State on meeting the minimum standard within a reasonable time period, but shall not prescribe a particular ratio.

''(L) COMPLIANCE WITH CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that child care providers within the State will comply with the child abuse reporting requirements of section 106(b)(2)(B)(i) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106a(b)(2)(B)(i)).

''(M) MEETING THE NEEDS OF CERTAIN POPULATIONS.—The plan shall describe how the State will develop and implement strategies (which may include the provision of compensation at higher payment rates and bonuses to child care providers, the provision of direct contracts or grants to community-based organizations, offering child care certificates to parents, or other means determined by the State) to increase the supply and improve the quality of child care for—

''(i) children in underserved areas;

''(ii) infants and toddlers;

''(iii) children with disabilities, as defined by the State; and

''(iv) children who receive care during non-traditional hours.

''(N) PROTECTION FOR WORKING PARENTS.—

''(i) MINIMUM PERIOD.—

''(I) 12-MONTH PERIOD.—The plan shall demonstrate that each child who receives assistance under this subchapter in the State will be considered to meet all eligibility requirements for such assistance and will receive such assistance, for not less than 12 months before the State redetermines the eligibility of the child under this subchapter, regardless of a temporary change in the ongoing status of the child's parent as working or attending a job training or educational program or a change in family income for the child's family, if that family income does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size.

''(II) FLUCTUATIONS IN EARNINGS.—The plan shall demonstrate how the State's processes for initial determination and redetermination of such eligibility take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings.

''(ii) REDETERMINATION PROCESS.—The plan shall describe the procedures and policies that are in place to ensure that working parents (especially parents in families receiving assistance under the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)) are not required to unduly disrupt their employment in order to comply with the State's requirements for redetermination of eligibility for assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter.

''(iii) PERIOD BEFORE TERMINATION.—At the option of the State, the plan shall demonstrate that the State will not terminate assistance provided to carry out this subchapter based on a factor consisting of a parent's loss of work or cessation of attendance at a job training or educational program for

which the family was receiving the assistance, without continuing the assistance for a reasonable period of time, of not less than 3 months, after such loss or cessation in order for the parent to engage in a job search and resume work, or resume attendance at a job training or educational program, as soon as possible.

''(iv) GRADUATED PHASEOUT OF CARE.—The plan shall describe the policies and procedures that are in place to allow for provision of continued assistance to carry out this subchapter, at the beginning of a new eligibility period under clause (i)(I), for children of parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program and whose family income exceeds the State's income limit to initially qualify for such assistance, if the family income for the family involved does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size.

''(O) COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall describe how the State, in order to expand accessibility and continuity of quality early childhood education and care, and assist children enrolled in prekindergarten, Early Head Start, or Head Start programs to receive full-day services, will efficiently coordinate the services supported to carry out this subchapter with—

''(I) programs carried out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), including the Early Head Start programs carried out under section 645A of that Act (42 U.S.C. 9840a);

''(II) programs carried out under part A of title I, and part B of title IV, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311 et seq., 7171 et seq.);

''(III) programs carried out under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.);

''(IV) the maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting programs authorized under section 511 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 711), as added by section 2951 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Public Law 111–148);

''(V) State, Indian tribe or tribal organization, and locally funded early childhood education and care programs;

''(VI) programs serving homeless children and services of local educational agency liaisons for homeless children and youths designated under subsection (g)(1)(J)(ii) of section 722 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii));

''(VII) State agencies and programs serving children in foster care and the foster families of such children; and

''(VIII) other Federal programs supporting early childhood education and care activities, and, where applicable, child care programs funded through State veterans affairs offices.

''(ii) OPTIONAL USE OF COMBINED FUNDS.—If the State elects to combine funding for the services supported to carry out this subchapter with funding for any program described in subclauses (I) through (VII) of clause (i), the plan shall describe how the State will combine the multiple sets of funding and use the combined funding.

''(iii) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in clause (i) shall be construed to affect the priority of children described in clause (i) to receive full-day prekindergarten or Head Start program services.

''(P) PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.—The plan shall demonstrate how the State encourages partnerships among State agencies, other public agencies, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and private entities to leverage existing service delivery systems (as of the date of the submission of the application containing the plan) for early childhood education and care and to increase the supply and quality of child care services for children who are less than 13 years of age, such as by implementing voluntary shared services alliance models.

''(Q) PRIORITY FOR LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS.—The plan shall describe the process the State proposes to use, with respect to investments made to increase access to programs providing high-quality early childhood education and care, to give priority for those investments to children of families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and that do not have such programs.

''(R) CONSULTATION.—The plan shall include a certification that the State has developed the plan in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care designated or established pursuant to section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)).

''(S) PAYMENT PRACTICES.—The plan shall include a certification that the payment practices of child care providers in the State that serve children who receive assistance under this subchapter reflect generally accepted payment practices of child care providers in the State that serve children who do not receive assistance under this subchapter, so as to provide stability of funding and encourage more child care providers to serve children who receive assistance under this subchapter.

''(T) EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall include an assurance that the State will develop or implement early learning and developmental guidelines that are appropriate for children from birth through entry into kindergarten, describing what such children should know and be able to do, and covering the essential domains of early childhood education and care and early childhood development for use statewide by child care providers. Such child care providers shall—

''(I) be licensed or regulated under State law; and

''(II) not be a relative of all children for whom the provider provides child care services.

''(ii) ALIGNMENT.—The guidelines shall be research-based, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with State standards for education in kindergarten through grade 3.

''(iii) PROHIBITION ON USE OF FUNDS.—The plan shall include an assurance that funds received by the State to carry out this subchapter will not be used to develop or implement an assessment for children that—

''(I) will be the sole basis for a child care provider being determined to be ineligible to participate in the program carried out under this subchapter;

''(II) will be used as the primary or sole basis to provide a reward or sanction for an individual provider;

''(III) will be used as the primary or sole method for assessing program effectiveness; or

''(IV) will be used to deny eligibility to participate in the program carried out under this subchapter.

''(iv) EXCEPTIONS.—Nothing in this subchapter shall preclude the State from using a single assessment (if appropriate) for children for—

''(I) supporting learning or improving a classroom environment;

''(II) targeting professional development to a provider;

''(III) determining the need for health, mental health, disability, developmental delay, or family support services;

''(IV) obtaining information for the quality improvement process at the State level; or

''(V) conducting a program evaluation for the purposes of providing program improvement and parent information.

''(v) NO FEDERAL CONTROL.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize an officer or employee of the Federal Government to—

''(I) mandate, direct, or control a State's early learning and developmental guidelines, developed in accordance with this section;

''(II) establish any criterion that specifies, defines, or prescribes the standards or measures that a State uses to establish, implement, or improve—

''(aa) early learning and developmental guidelines, or early learning standards, assessments, or accountability systems; or

''(bb) alignment of early learning and developmental guidelines with State standards for education in kindergarten through grade 3; or

''(III) require a State to submit such standards or measures for review.

''(U) DISASTER PREPAREDNESS.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall demonstrate the manner in which the State will address the needs of children in child care services provided through programs authorized under this subchapter, including the need for safe child care, during the period before, during, and after a state of emergency declared by the Governor or a major disaster or emergency (as such terms are defined in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122)).

''(ii) STATEWIDE CHILD CARE DISASTER PLAN.—Such plan shall include a statewide child care disaster plan for coordination of activities and collaboration, in the event of an emergency or disaster described in clause (i), among the State agency with jurisdiction over human services, the agency with jurisdiction over State emergency planning, the State lead agency, the State agency with jurisdiction over licensing of child care providers, the local resource and referral organizations, the State resource and referral system, and the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care as provided for under section 642B(b) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)).

''(iii) DISASTER PLAN COMPONENTS.—The components of the disaster plan, for such an emergency or disaster, shall include—

''(I) guidelines for the continuation of child care services in the period following the emergency or disaster, including the provision of emergency and temporary child care services, and temporary operating standards for child care providers during that period;

''(II) evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, and lock-down procedures, and procedures for communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, and accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions; and

''(III) procedures for staff and volunteer training and practice drills.''.

(3) in paragraph (3)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''as required under'' and inserting ''in accordance with'';

(B) in subparagraph (B)—

(i) by striking ''The State'' and inserting the following:

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The State'';

(ii) by striking ''and any other activity that the State deems appropriate to realize any of the goals specified in paragraphs (2) through (5) of section 658A(b)'' and inserting ''activities that improve access to child care services, including use of procedures to permit immediate enrollment (after the initial eligibility determination and after a child is

determined to be eligible) of homeless children while required documentation is obtained, training and technical assistance on identifying and serving homeless children and their families, and specific outreach to homeless families, and any other activity that the State determines to be appropriate to meet the purposes of this subchapter (which may include an activity described in clause (ii))''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

''(ii) REPORT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.—

''(I) IN GENERAL.—Not later than September 30 of the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, and September 30 of each fiscal year thereafter, the Secretary (acting through the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services) shall prepare a report that contains a determination about whether each State uses amounts provided to such State for the fiscal year involved under this subchapter in accordance with the priority for services described in clause (i).

''(II) PENALTY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.—For any fiscal year that the report of the Secretary described in subclause (I) indicates that a State has failed to give priority for services in accordance with clause (i), the Secretary shall—

''(aa) inform the State that the State has until the date that is 6 months after the Secretary has issued such report to fully comply with clause (i);

''(bb) provide the State an opportunity to modify the State plan of such State, to make the plan consistent with the requirements of clause (i), and resubmit such State plan to the Secretary not later than the date described in item (aa); and

''(cc) if the State does not fully comply with clause (i) and item (bb), by the date described in item (aa), withhold 5 percent of the funds that would otherwise be allocated to that State in accordance with this subchapter for the first full fiscal year after that date.

''(III) WAIVER FOR EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES.—Notwithstanding subclause (II) the Secretary may grant a waiver to a State for one year to the penalty applied in subclause (II) if the Secretary determines there are extraordinary circumstances, such as a natural disaster, that prevent the State from complying with clause (i). If the Secretary does grant a waiver to a State under this section, the Secretary shall, within 30 days of granting such waiver, submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees on the circumstances of the waiver including the stated reason from the State on the need for a waiver, the expected impact of the waiver on children served under this program, and any such other relevant information the Secretary deems necessary.

''(iii) CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SYSTEM.—

''(I) IN GENERAL.—A State may use amounts described in clause (i) to establish or support a system of local or regional child care resource and referral organizations that is coordinated, to the extent determined appropriate by the State, by a statewide public or private nonprofit, community-based or regionally based, lead child care resource and referral organization.

''(II) LOCAL OR REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.—The local or regional child care resource and referral organizations supported as described in subclause (I) shall—

''(aa) provide parents in the State with consumer education information referred to in paragraph (2)(E) (except as otherwise provided in that paragraph), concerning the full range of child care options, analyzed by provider, including child care provided during nontraditional hours and through emergency child care centers, in their political subdivisions or regions;

''(bb) to the extent practicable, work directly with families who receive assistance under this subchapter to offer the families support and assistance, using information described in item (aa), to make an informed decision about which child care providers they will use, in an effort to ensure that the families are enrolling their children in high-quality care;

''(cc) collect and analyze data on the coordination of services and supports, including services under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.), for children with disabilities (as defined in section 602 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1401));

''(dd) collect and analyze data on the supply of and demand for child care in political subdivisions or regions within the State and submit such data and analysis to the State;

''(ee) work to establish partnerships with public agencies and private entities to increase the supply and quality of child care services in the State; and

''(ff) as appropriate, coordinate their activities with the activities of the State lead agency and local agencies that administer funds made available in accordance with this subchapter.'';

(C) in subparagraph (D)—

(i) by striking ''1997 through 2002'' and inserting ''2015 through 2020''; and

(ii) by striking ''families described in paragraph (2)(H)'' and inserting ''families with children described in clause (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) of paragraph (2)(M)''; and

(D) by adding at the end the following:

''(E) DIRECT SERVICES.—From amounts provided to a State for a fiscal year to carry out this subchapter, the State shall—

''(i) reserve the minimum amount required to be reserved under section 658G, and the funds for costs described in subparagraph (C); and

''(ii) from the remainder, use not less than 70 percent to fund direct services (provided by the State) in accordance with paragraph (2)(A).'';

(4) by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following:

''(4) PAYMENT RATES.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The State plan shall certify that payment rates for the provision of child care services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter are sufficient to ensure equal access for eligible children to child care services that are comparable to child care services in the State or substate area involved that are provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive assistance under this subchapter or to receive child care assistance under any other Federal or State program and shall provide a summary of the facts relied on by the State to determine that such rates are sufficient to ensure such access.

''(B) SURVEY.—The State plan shall—

''(i) demonstrate that the State has, after consulting with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care designated or established in section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)), local child care program administrators, local child care resource and referral agencies, and other appropriate entities, developed and conducted (not earlier than 2 years before the date of the submission of the application containing the State plan) a statistically valid and reliable survey of the market rates for child care services in the State (that reflects variations in the cost of child care services by geographic area, type of provider, and age of child);

''(ii) demonstrate that the State prepared a detailed report containing the results of the State market rates survey conducted pursuant to clause (i), and made the results of the survey widely available (not later than 30 days after the completion of such survey) through periodic means, including posting the results on the Internet;

''(iii) describe how the State will set payment rates for child care services, for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter—

''(I) in accordance with the results of the market rates survey conducted pursuant to clause (i);

''(II) taking into consideration the cost of providing higher quality child care services than were provided under this subchapter before the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014; and

''(III) without, to the extent practicable, reducing the number of families in the State receiving such assistance to carry out this subchapter, relative to the number of such families on the date of enactment of that Act; and

''(iv) describe how the State will provide for timely payment for child care services provided in accordance with this subchapter.

''(C) CONSTRUCTION.—

''(i) NO PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.—Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to create a private right of action.

''(ii) NO PROHIBITION OF CERTAIN DIFFERENT RATES.—Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prevent a State from differentiating the payment rates described in subparagraph (B)(iii) on the basis of such factors as—

''(I) geographic location of child care providers (such as location in an urban or rural area);

''(II) the age or particular needs of children (such as the needs of children with disabilities and children served by child protective services);

''(III) whether the providers provide child care during weekend and other nontraditional hours; or

''(IV) the State's determination that such differentiated payment rates are needed to enable a parent to choose child care that is of high quality.''; and

(5) in paragraph (5), by inserting ''(that is not a barrier to families receiving assistance under this subchapter)'' after ''cost sharing''.

(c) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 658F(b)(2) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858d(b)(2)) is amended by striking ''section 658E(c)(2)(F)'' and inserting ''section 658E(c)(2)(I)''.

SEC. 6. ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE.

Section 658G of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858e) is amended to read as follows:

''SEC. 658G. ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE.

''(a) RESERVATION.—

''(1) RESERVATION FOR ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE SERVICES.—A State that receives funds to carry out this subchapter for a fiscal year referred to in paragraph (2) shall reserve and use a portion of such funds, in accordance with paragraph (2), for activities provided directly, or through grants or contracts with local child care resource and referral organizations or other appropriate entities, that are designed to improve the quality of child care services and increase parental options for, and access to, high-quality child care, provided in accordance with this subchapter.

''(2) AMOUNT OF RESERVATIONS.—Such State shall reserve and use—

''(A) to carry out the activities described in paragraph (1), not less than—

''(i) 6 percent of the funds described in paragraph (1), for the first and second full fiscal years after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014;

''(ii) 8 percent of such funds, for the third and fourth full fiscal years after the date of enactment; and

''(iii) 10 percent of such funds, for the fifth full fiscal year after the date of enactment and each succeeding fiscal year; and

''(B) in addition to the funds reserved under subparagraph (A), 3 percent of the funds described in paragraph (1), for the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment and each succeeding fiscal year, to carry out the activities described in paragraph (1) and subsection (b)(4), as such activities relate to the quality of care for infants and toddlers.

''(b) ACTIVITIES.—Funds reserved under subsection (a) shall be used to carry out not fewer than 2 of the following activities:

''(1) Supporting the training, professional development, and professional advancement of the child care workforce through activities such as—

''(A) offering child care providers training and professional development that is intentional and sequential and leads to a higher level of skill or certification;

''(B) establishing or supporting programs designed to increase the retention and improve the competencies of child care providers, including wage incentive programs and initiatives that establish tiered payment rates for providers that meet or exceed child care services guidelines, as defined by the State;

''(C) offering training, professional development, and educational opportunities for child care providers that relate to the use of developmentally appropriate and age-appropriate curricula, and early childhood teaching strategies, that are scientifically based and aligned with the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children, including offering specialized training for child care providers who care for infants and toddlers, children who are English learners, and children with disabilities (as defined in section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401));

''(D) providing training concerning the State early learning and developmental guidelines, where applicable, including training concerning early mathematics and early language and literacy development and effective instructional practices to support mathematics and language and literacy development in young children;

''(E) incorporating effective use of data to guide instruction and program improvement;

''(F) including effective behavior management strategies and training, including positive behavioral interventions and supports, that promote positive social and emotional development and reduce challenge behaviors;

''(G) at the option of the State, incorporating feedback from experts at the State's institutions of higher education, as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002), and other early childhood development experts and early childhood education and care experts;

''(H) providing training corresponding to the nutritional and physical activity needs of children to promote healthy development;

''(I) providing training or professional development for child care providers to serve and support children with disabilities;

''(J) providing training and outreach on engaging parents and families in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to expand their knowledge, skills, and capacity to become meaningful partners in supporting their children's learning and development;

''(K) providing training or professional development for child care providers regarding the early neurological development of children; and

''(L) connecting child care staff members of child care providers with available Federal and State financial aid, or other resources, that would assist child care staff members in pursuing relevant postsecondary training.

''(2) Supporting the use of the early learning and developmental guidelines described in section 658E(c)(2)(T) by—

''(A) developing and implementing the State's early learning and developmental guidelines; and

''(B) providing technical assistance to enhance early learning for preschool and school-aged children in order to promote language and literacy skills, foster school readiness, and support later school success.

''(3) Developing and implementing a tiered quality rating system for child care providers, which shall—

''(A) support and assess the quality of child care providers in the State;

''(B) build on licensing standards and other State regulatory standards for such providers;

''(C) be designed to improve the quality of different types of child care providers;

''(D) describe the quality of early learning facilities;

''(E) build the capacity of State early childhood education and care programs and communities to promote parents' and families' understanding of the State's early childhood education and care system and the ratings of the programs in which the child is enrolled; and

''(F) provide, to the maximum extent practicable, financial incentives and other supports designed to help child care providers achieve and sustain higher levels of quality.

''(4) Improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers through activities, which may include—

''(A) establishing or expanding neighborhood-based high-quality comprehensive family and child development centers, which may serve as resources to child care providers in order to improve the quality of early childhood education and care and early childhood development services provided to infants and toddlers from low-income families and to help eligible child care providers improve their capacity to offer high-quality care to infants and toddlers from low-income families;

''(B) establishing or expanding the operation of community or neighborhood-based family child care networks;

''(C) supporting statewide networks of infant and toddler child care specialists, including specialists who have knowledge regarding infant and toddler development and curriculum and program implementation as well as the ability to coordinate services with early intervention specialists who provide services for infants and toddlers with disabilities under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.);

''(D) carrying out initiatives to improve the quality of the infant and toddler child care workforce, such as providing relevant training, professional development, or mentoring opportunities and linking such opportunities to career pathways, developing career pathways for providers in such workforce, and improving the State credentialing of eligible providers caring for infants and toddlers;

''(E) if applicable, developing infant and toddler components within the State's quality rating system described in paragraph (3) for child care providers for infants and toddlers, or the development of infant and toddler components in a State's child care licensing regulations or early learning and developmental guidelines;

''(F) improving the ability of parents to access information about high-quality infant and toddler care; and

''(G) carrying out other activities determined by the State to improve the quality of infant and toddler care provided in the State, and for which there is evidence that the activities will lead to improved infant and toddler health and safety, infant and toddler development, or infant and toddler well-being, including providing training (including training in safe sleep practices, first aid, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

''(5) Promoting broad child care provider participation in the quality rating system described in paragraph (3).

''(6) Establishing or expanding a statewide system of child care resource and referral services.

''(7) Facilitating compliance with State requirements for inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety, and with State licensing standards.

''(8) Evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care programs and services offered in the State, including evaluating how such programs and services may improve the overall school readiness of young children.

''(9) Supporting child care providers in the pursuit of accreditation by an established national accrediting body with demonstrated, valid, and reliable program standards of high quality.

''(10) Supporting State or local efforts to develop or adopt high-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development and providing resources to enable eligible child care providers to meet, exceed, or sustain success in meeting or exceeding, such standards.

''(11) Carrying out other activities determined by the State to improve the quality of child care services provided in the State, and for which measurement of outcomes relating to improved provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or school readiness is possible.

''(c) CERTIFICATION.—Beginning with fiscal year 2015, at the beginning of each fiscal year, the State shall annually submit to the Secretary a certification containing an assurance that the State was in compliance with subsection (a) during the preceding fiscal year and a description of how the State used funds received under this subchapter to comply with subsection (a) during that preceding fiscal year.

''(d) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Each State receiving funds under this subchapter shall prepare and submit an annual report to the Secretary, which shall include information about—

''(1) the amount of funds that are reserved under subsection (a);

''(2) the activities carried out under this section; and

''(3) the measures that the State will use to evaluate the State's progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State.

''(e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall offer technical assistance, in accordance with section 658I(a)(3), which may include technical assistance through the use of grants or cooperative agreements, to States for the activities described in subsection (b).

''(f) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as providing the Secretary the authority to regulate, direct, or dictate State child care quality activities or progress in implementing those activities.''.

SEC. 7. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 658G the following:

"SEC. 658H. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—A State that receives funds to carry out this subchapter shall have in effect—

''(1) requirements, policies, and procedures to require and conduct criminal background checks for child care staff members (including prospective child care staff members) of child care providers described in subsection (c)(1); and

''(2) licensing, regulation, and registration requirements, as applicable, that prohibit the employment of child care staff members as described in subsection (c).

''(b) REQUIREMENTS.—A criminal background check for a child care staff member under subsection (a) shall include—

''(1) a search of each State criminal and sex offender registry or repository in the State where the child care staff member resides and each State where such staff member resided during the preceding 10 years;

''(2) a search of State-based child abuse and neglect registries and databases in the State where the child care staff member resides and each State where such staff member resided during the preceding 10 years;

''(3) a search of the National Crime Information Center;

''(4) a Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint check using the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System; and

''(5) a search of the National Sex Offender Registry established under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (42 U.S.C. 16901 et seq.).

''(c) PROHIBITIONS.—

''(1) CHILD CARE STAFF MEMBERS.—A child care staff member shall be ineligible for employment by a child care provider that is licensed, regulated, or registered by the State or for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter, if such individual—

''(A) refuses to consent to the criminal background check described in subsection (b);

''(B) knowingly makes a materially false statement in connection with such criminal background check;

''(C) is registered, or is required to be registered, on a State sex offender registry or repository or the National Sex Offender Registry established under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (42 U.S.C. 16901 et seq.); or

''(D) has been convicted of a felony consisting of—

''(i) murder, as described in section 1111 of title 18, United States Code;

''(ii) child abuse or neglect;

''(iii) a crime against children, including child pornography;

''(iv) spousal abuse;

''(v) a crime involving rape or sexual assault;

''(vi) kidnaping;

''(vii) arson;

''(viii) physical assault or battery; or

''(ix) subject to subsection (e)(4), a drug-related offense committed during the preceding 5 years; or

''(E) has been convicted of a violent misdemeanor committed as an adult against a child, including the following crimes: child abuse, child endangerment, sexual assault, or of a misdemeanor involving child pornography.

''(2) CHILD CARE PROVIDERS.—A child care provider described in paragraph (1) shall be ineligible for assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter if the provider employs a staff member who is ineligible for employment under paragraph (1).

''(d) SUBMISSION OF REQUESTS FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—A child care provider covered by subsection (c) shall submit a request, to the appropriate State agency designated by a State, for a criminal background check described in subsection (b), for each child care staff member (including prospective child care staff members) of the provider.

''(2) STAFF MEMBERS.—Subject to paragraph (4), in the case of an individual who became a child care staff member before the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, the provider shall submit such a request—

''(A) prior to the last day described in subsection (i)(1); and

''(B) not less often than once during each 5-year period following the first submission date under this paragraph for that staff member.

''(3) PROSPECTIVE STAFF MEMBERS.—Subject to paragraph (4), in the case of an individual who is a prospective child care staff member on or after that date of enactment, the provider shall submit such a request—

''(A) prior to the date the individual becomes a child care staff member of the provider; and

''(B) not less often than once during each 5-year period following the first submission date under this paragraph for that staff member.

''(4) BACKGROUND CHECK FOR ANOTHER CHILD CARE PROVIDER.—A child care provider shall not be required to submit a request under paragraph (2) or (3) for a child care staff member if—

''(A) the staff member received a background check described in subsection (b)—

''(i) within 5 years before the latest date on which such a submission may be made; and

''(ii) while employed by or seeking employment by another child care provider within the State;

''(B) the State provided to the first provider a qualifying background check result, consistent with this subchapter, for the staff member; and

''(C) the staff member is employed by a child care provider within the State, or has been separated from employment from a child care provider within the State for a period of not more than 180 consecutive days.

''(e) BACKGROUND CHECK RESULTS AND APPEALS.—

''(1) BACKGROUND CHECK RESULTS.—The State shall carry out the request of a child care provider for a criminal background check as expeditiously as possible, but in not to exceed 45 days after the date on which such request was submitted, and shall provide the results of the criminal background check to such provider and to the current or prospective staff member.

''(2) PRIVACY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The State shall provide the results of the criminal background check to the provider in a statement that indicates whether a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) is eligible or ineligible for employment described in subsection (c), without revealing any disqualifying crime or other related information regarding the individual.

''(B) INELIGIBLE STAFF MEMBER.—If the child care staff member is ineligible for such employment due to the background check, the State will, when providing the results of the background check, include information related to each disqualifying crime, in a report to the staff member or prospective staff member.

''(C) PUBLIC RELEASE OF RESULTS.—No State shall publicly release or share the results of individual background checks, however, such results of background checks may be included in the development or dissemination of local or statewide data related to background checks, if such results are not individually identifiable.

''(3) APPEALS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The State shall provide for a process by which a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) may appeal the results of a criminal background check conducted under this section to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in such member's criminal background report.

''(B) APPEALS PROCESS.—The State shall ensure that—

''(i) each child care staff member shall be given notice of the opportunity to appeal;

''(ii) a child care staff member will receive instructions about how to complete the appeals process if the child care staff member wishes to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in such member's criminal background report; and

''(iii) the appeals process is completed in a timely manner for each child care staff member.

''(4) REVIEW.—The State may allow for a review process through which the State may determine that a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) disqualified for a crime specified in subsection (c)(1)(D)(ix) is eligible for employment described in subsection (c)(1), notwithstanding subsection (c). The review process shall be consistent with title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.).

''(5) NO PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to create a private right of action if the provider is in compliance with State regulations and requirements.

''(f) FEES FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS.—Fees that a State may charge for the costs of processing applications and administering a criminal background check as required by this section shall not exceed the actual costs to the State for the processing and administration.

''(g) CONSTRUCTION.—

''(1) DISQUALIFICATION FOR OTHER CRIMES.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent a State from disqualifying individuals as child care staff members based on their conviction for crimes not specifically listed in this section that bear upon the fitness of an individual to provide care for and have responsibility for the safety and well-being of children.

''(2) RIGHTS AND REMEDIES.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter or otherwise affect the rights and remedies provided for child care staff members residing in a State that disqualifies individuals as child care staff members for crimes not specifically provided for under this section.

''(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

''(1) the term 'child care provider' means a center-based child care provider, a family child care provider, or another provider of child care services for compensation and on a regular basis that—

''(A) is not an individual who is related to all children for whom child care services are provided; and

''(B) is licensed, regulated, or registered under State law or receives assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter; and

''(2) the term 'child care staff member' means an individual (other than an individual who is related to all children for whom child care services are provided)—

''(A) who is employed by a child care provider for compensation;

''(B) whose activities involve the care or supervision of children for a child care provider or unsupervised access to children who are cared for or supervised by a child care provider; or

''(C) who is a family child care provider.

''(i) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—A State that receives funds under this subchapter shall meet the requirements of this section for the provision of criminal background checks for child care staff members described in subsection (d)(1) not later than the last day of the second full fiscal year after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014.

''(2) EXTENSION.—The Secretary may grant a State an extension of time, of not more than 1 fiscal year, to meet the requirements of this section if the State demonstrates a good faith effort to comply with the requirements of this section.

''(3) PENALTY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.—Except as provided in paragraphs (1) and (2), for any fiscal year that a State fails to comply substantially with the requirements of this section, the Secretary shall withhold 5 percent of the funds that would otherwise be allocated to that State in accordance with this subchapter for the following fiscal year.''.

SEC. 8. REPORTS AND INFORMATION.

(a) ADMINISTRATION.—Section 658I of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858g) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by inserting a comma after ''publish''; and

(ii) by striking ''and'' at the end;

(B) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

''(3) provide technical assistance to States (which may include providing assistance on a reimbursable basis), consistent with (as appropriate) scientifically valid research, to carry out this subchapter;''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(4) disseminate, for voluntary informational purposes, information on practices that scientifically valid research indicates are most successful in improving the quality of programs that receive assistance with this subchapter;

''(5) after consultation with the Secretary of Education and the heads of any other Federal agencies involved, issue guidance, and disseminate information on best practices, regarding use of funding combined by States as described in section 658E(c)(2)(O)(ii), consistent with law other than this subchapter.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(c) PROHIBITION.—Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed as providing the Secretary the authority to permit States to alter the eligibility requirements for eligible children, including work requirements that apply to the parents of eligible children.''.

(b) REQUESTS FOR RELIEF.—Section 658I of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, as amended by subsection (a), is further amended by adding at the end the following:

''(d) REQUEST FOR RELIEF.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The State may submit to the Secretary a request for relief from any provision of Federal law (including a regulation, policy, or procedure) affecting the delivery of child care services with Federal funds, other than this subchapter, that conflicts with a requirement of this subchapter.

''(2) CONTENTS.—Such request shall—

''(A) detail the provision of Federal law that conflicts with that requirement;

''(B) describe how modifying compliance with that provision of Federal law to meet the requirements of this subchapter will, by itself, improve delivery of child care services for children in the State; and

''(C) certify that the health, safety, and well-being of children served through assistance received under this subchapter will not be compromised as a result.

''(3) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall consult with the State submitting the request and the head of each Federal agency (other than the Secretary) with responsibility for administering the Federal law detailed in the State's request. The consulting parties shall jointly identify—

''(A) any provision of Federal law (including a regulation, policy, or procedure) for which a waiver is necessary to enable the State to provide services in accordance with the request; and

''(B) any corresponding waiver.

''(4) WAIVERS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and after the joint identification described in paragraph (3), the head of the Federal agency involved shall have the authority to waive any statutory provision administered by that agency, or any regulation, policy, or procedure issued by that agency, that has been so identified, unless the head of the Federal agency determines that such a waiver is inconsistent with the objectives of this subchapter or the Federal law from which relief is sought.

''(5) APPROVAL.—Within 90 days after the receipt of a State's request under this subsection, the Secretary shall inform the State of the Secretary's approval or disapproval of the request. If the plan is disapproved, the Secretary shall inform the State, in writing, of the reasons for the disapproval and give the State the opportunity to amend the request.

''(6) DURATION.—The Secretary may approve a request under this subsection for a period of not more than 3 years, and may renew the approval for additional periods of not more than 3 years.

''(7) TERMINATION.—The Secretary shall terminate approval of a request for relief authorized under this subsection if the Secretary determines, after notice and opportunity for a hearing, that the performance of a State granted relief under this subsection has been inadequate, or if such relief is no longer necessary to achieve its original purposes.''.

(c) REPORTS.—Section 658K(a) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858i(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(B)—

(A) in clause (ix), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(B) in clause (x), by inserting ''and'' at the end; and

(C) by inserting after clause (x), the following:

''(xi) whether the children receiving assistance under this subchapter are homeless children;''; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking ''1997'' and inserting ''2014''; and

(B) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''section 658P(5)'' and inserting ''section 658P(6)''.

(d) REPORT BY SECRETARY.—Section 658L of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858j) is amended—

(1) by striking the section heading and inserting the following:

''SEC. 658L. REPORTS, HOTLINE, AND WEB SITE.'';

(2) by striking ''Not later'' and inserting the following:

''(a) REPORT BY SECRETARY.—Not later'';

(3) by striking ''1998'' and inserting ''2016''; and

(4) by striking ''to the Committee'' and all that follows through ''of the Senate'' and inserting ''to the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate''; and

(5) by adding at the end the following:

''(b) NATIONAL TOLL-FREE HOTLINE AND WEB SITE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall operate a national toll-free hotline and Web site, to—

''(A) develop and disseminate publicly available child care consumer education information for parents and help parents access safe, affordable, and quality child care in their community; and

''(B) to allow persons to report (anonymously if desired) suspected child abuse or neglect, or violations of health and safety requirements, by an eligible child care provider that receives assistance under this subchapter.

''(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall ensure that the hotline and Web site meet the following requirements:

''(A) REFERRAL TO LOCAL CHILD CARE PROVIDERS.—The Web site shall be hosted by 'childcare.gov'. The Web site shall enable a child care consumer to enter a zip code and obtain a referral to local child care providers described in subparagraph (B) within a specified search radius.

''(B) INFORMATION.—The Web site shall provide to consumers, directly or through linkages to State databases, at a minimum—

''(i) a localized list of all State licensed child care providers;

''(ii) any provider-specific information from a Quality Rating and Improvement System or information about other quality indicators, to the extent the information is publicly available and to the extent practicable;

''(iii) any other provider-specific information about compliance with licensing, and health and safety, requirements to the extent the information is publicly available and to the extent practicable;

''(iv) referrals to local resource and referral organizations from which consumers can find more information about child care providers, and a recommendation that consumers consult with the organizations when selecting a child care provider; and

''(v) State information about child care subsidy programs and other financial supports available to families.

''(C) NATIONWIDE CAPACITY.—The Web site and hotline shall have the capacity to help families in every State and community in the Nation.

''(D) INFORMATION AT ALL HOURS.—The Web site shall provide, to parents and families, access to information about child care 24 hours a day.

''(E) SERVICES IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.—The Web site and hotline shall ensure the widest possible access to services for families who speak languages other than English.

''(F) HIGH-QUALITY CONSUMER EDUCATION AND REFERRAL.—The Web site and hotline shall ensure that families have access to child care consumer education and referral services that are consistent and of high quality.

''(3) PROHIBITION.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to allow the Secretary to compel States to provide additional data and information that is currently (as of the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014) not publicly available, or is not required by this subchapter.''.

(e) PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.—Section 658K(a)(1) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858i(a)(1)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(E) PROHIBITION.—Reports submitted to the Secretary under subparagraph (C) shall not contain individually identifiable information.''.

SEC. 9. RESERVATION FOR TOLL-FREE HOTLINE AND WEB SITE; PAYMENTS TO BENEFIT INDIAN CHILDREN.

Section 658O of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858m) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by striking ''The Secretary'' and inserting the following:

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary'';

(ii) by striking ''1 percent, and not more than 2 percent,'' and inserting ''2 percent''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

''(B) LIMITATIONS.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall only reserve an amount that is greater than 2 percent of the amount appropriated under section 658B, for payments described in subparagraph (A), for a fiscal year (referred to in this subparagraph as the 'reservation year') if —

''(i) the amount appropriated under section 658B for the reservation year is greater than the amount appropriated under section 658B for fiscal year 2014; and

''(ii) the Secretary ensures that the amount allotted to States under subsection (b) for the reservation year is not less than the amount allotted to States under subsection (b) for fiscal year 2014.''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

''(3) NATIONAL TOLL-FREE HOTLINE AND WEB SITE.—The Secretary shall reserve not less than $1,000,000 of the amount appropriated under this subchapter for each fiscal year for the operation of a national toll-free hotline and Web site, under section 658L(b).''; and

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the following:

''(D) LICENSING AND STANDARDS.—In lieu of any licensing and regulatory requirements applicable under State or local law, the Secretary, in consultation with Indian tribes and tribal organizations, shall develop minimum child care standards that shall be applicable to Indian tribes and tribal organizations receiving assistance under this subchapter. Such standards shall appropriately reflect Indian tribe and tribal organization needs and available resources, and shall include standards requiring a publicly available application, health and safety standards, and standards requiring a reservation of funds for activities to improve the quality of child care provided to Indian children.''; and

(B) in paragraph (6), by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following:

''(C) LIMITATION.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in clause (ii), the Secretary may not permit an Indian tribe or tribal organization to use amounts provided under this subsection for construction or renovation if the use will result in a decrease in the level of child care services provided by the Indian tribe or tribal organization as compared to the level of child care services provided by the Indian tribe or tribal organization in the fiscal year preceding the year for which the determination under subparagraph (B) is being made.

''(ii) WAIVER.—The Secretary shall waive the limitation described in clause (i) if—

''(I) the Secretary determines that the decrease in the level of child care services provided by the Indian tribe or tribal organization is temporary; and

''(II) the Indian tribe or tribal organization submits to the Secretary a plan that demonstrates that after the date on which the construction or renovation is completed—

''(aa) the level of child care services will increase; or

''(bb) the quality of child care services will improve.''.

SEC. 10. DEFINITIONS.

Section 658P of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858n) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following:

''(3) CHILD WITH A DISABILITY.—The term 'child with a disability' means—

''(A) a child with a disability, as defined in section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401);

''(B) a child who is eligible for early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.);

''(C) a child who is less than 13 years of age and who is eligible for services under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794); and

''(D) a child with a disability, as defined by the State involved.

''(4) ELIGIBLE CHILD.—The term 'eligible child' means an individual—

''(A) who is less than 13 years of age;

''(B) whose family income does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size, and whose family assets do not exceed $1,000,000 (as certified by a member of such family); and

''(C) who—

''(i) resides with a parent or parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program; or

''(ii) is receiving, or needs to receive, protective services and resides with a parent or parents not described in clause (i).'';

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (5) through (9) as paragraphs (6) through (10), respectively;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (4), the following:

''(5) ENGLISH LEARNER.—The term 'English learner' means an individual who is limited English proficient, as defined in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801) or section 637 of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832).'';

(4) in paragraph (6)(A), as redesignated by paragraph (2)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''section 658E(c)(2)(E)'' and inserting ''section 658E(c)(2)(F)''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking ''section 658E(c)(2)(F)'' and inserting ''section 658E(c)(2)(I)'';

(5) in paragraph (9), as redesignated by paragraph (2), by striking ''designated'' and all that follows and inserting ''designated or established under section 658D(a).'';

(6) in paragraph (10), as redesignated by paragraph (2), by inserting '', foster parent,'' after ''guardian'';

(7) by redesignating paragraphs (11) through (14) as paragraphs (12) through (15), respectively; and

(8) by inserting after paragraph (10), as redesignated by paragraph (2), the following:

''(11) SCIENTIFICALLY VALID RESEARCH.—The term 'scientifically valid research' includes applied research, basic research, and field-initiated research, for which the rationale, design, and interpretation are soundly developed in accordance with principles of scientific research.''.

SEC. 10A. PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Section 658Q of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858o) is amended—

(1) by inserting before ''Nothing'' the following:

''(a) IN GENERAL.—''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(b) PARENTAL RIGHTS TO USE CHILD CARE CERTIFICATES.—Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed in a manner—

''(1) to favor or promote the use of grants and contracts for the receipt of child care services under this subchapter over the use of child care certificates; or

''(2) to disfavor or discourage the use of such certificates for the purchase of child care services, including those services provided by private or nonprofit entities, such as faith-based providers.''.

SEC. 11. STUDIES ON WAITING LISTS.

(a) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct studies to determine, for each State, the number of families that—

(1) are eligible to receive assistance under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858 et seq.);

(2) have applied for the assistance; and

(3) have been placed on a waiting list for the assistance.

(b) REPORT.—The Comptroller General shall prepare a report containing the results of each study and shall submit the report to the appropriate committees of Congress—

(1) not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act; and

(2) every 2 years thereafter.

(c) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ''State'' has the meaning given the term in section 658P of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858n).

SEC. 12. CONFORMING AMENDMENT.

Section 319C–1(b)(2)(A)(vii) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d–3a(b)(2)(A)(vii)) is amended by inserting ''or established'' after ''designated''.

SEC. 13. REVIEW OF FEDERAL EARLY LEARNING AND CARE PROGRAMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, shall conduct an interdepartmental review of all early learning and care programs in order to—

(1) develop a plan for the elimination of duplicative and overlapping programs, as identified by the Government Accountability Office's 2012 annual report (GAO–12–342SP); and

(2) make recommendations to Congress for streamlining all such programs.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretary of Education and the heads of all Federal agencies that administer Federal early learning and care programs, shall submit to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives, a detailed report that outlines the efficiencies that can be achieved by, as well as specific recommendations for, eliminating duplication, overlap, and fragmentation among all Federal early learning and care programs.

SEC. 14. SAFE CHILD CARE ACT.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the ''Safe Child Care Act of 2014''.

(b) BACKGROUND CHECKS.—Section 231 of the Crime Control Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 13041) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking ''subsection (b)(3)'' and inserting ''paragraph (3)''; and

(B) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (4);

(2) by moving paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (b) to subsection (a), and inserting them after paragraph (1) of that subsection;

(3) in subsection (a)(3), as redesignated by paragraph (2) of this subsection, by striking ''subsection (a)(1)'' and inserting ''paragraph (1)'';

(4) in subsection (b), by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

''(1) A background check required by subsection (a) shall be initiated through the personnel programs of the applicable Federal agencies.

''(2) A background check for a child care staff member under subsection (a) shall include—

''(A) a search, including a fingerprint check, of the State criminal registry or repository in—

''(i) the State where the child care staff member resides; and

''(ii) each State where the child care staff member previously resided during the longer of—

''(I) the 10-year period ending on the date on which the background check is initiated; or

''(II) the period beginning on the date on which the child care staff member attained 18 years of age and ending on the date on which the background check is initiated;

''(B) a search of State-based child abuse and neglect registries and databases in—

''(i) the State where the child care staff member resides; and

''(ii) each State where the child care staff member previously resided during the longer of—

''(I) the 10-year period ending on the date on which the background check is initiated; or

''(II) the period beginning on the date on which the child care staff member attained 18 years of age and ending on the date on which the background check is initiated;

''(C) a search of the National Crime Information Center database;

''(D) a Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint check using the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System;

''(E) a search of the National Sex Offender Registry established under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (42 U.S.C. 16901 et seq.); and

''(F) a search of the State sex offender registry established under that Act in—

''(i) the State where the child care staff member resides; and

''(ii) each State where the child care staff member previously resided during the longer of—

''(I) the 10-year period ending on the date on which the background check is initiated; or

''(II) the period beginning on the date on which the child care staff member attained 18 years of age and ending on the date on which the background check is initiated.

''(3) A child care staff member shall be ineligible for employment by a child care provider if such individual—

''(A) refuses to consent to the background check described in subsection (a);

''(B) makes a false statement in connection with such background check;

''(C) is registered, or is required to be registered, on a State sex offender registry or the National Sex Offender Registry established under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006; or

''(D) has been convicted of a felony consisting of—

''(i) murder, as described in section 1111 of title 18, United States Code;

''(ii) child abuse or neglect;

''(iii) a crime against children, including child pornography;

''(iv) spousal abuse;

''(v) a crime involving rape or sexual assault;

''(vi) kidnapping;

''(vii) arson;

''(viii) physical assault or battery; or

''(ix) subject to paragraph (5)(D), a drug-related offense committed during the preceding 5 years.

''(4)(A) A child care provider covered by paragraph (3) shall submit a request, to the appropriate State agency designated by a State, for a background check described in subsection (a), for each child care staff member (including prospective child care staff members) of the provider.

''(B) In the case of an individual who is hired as a child care staff member before the date of enactment of the Safe Child Care Act of 2014, the provider shall submit such a request—

''(i) prior to the last day of the second full fiscal year after that date of enactment; and

''(ii) not less often than once during each 5-year period following the first submission date under this subparagraph for that staff member.

''(C) In the case of an individual who is a prospective child care staff member on or after that date of enactment, the provider shall submit such a request—

''(i) prior to the date the individual becomes a child care staff member of the provider; and

''(ii) not less often than once during each 5-year period following the first submission date under this subparagraph for that staff member.

''(5)(A) The State shall—

''(i) carry out the request of a child care provider for a background check described in subsection (a) as expeditiously as possible; and

''(ii) in accordance with subparagraph (B) of this paragraph, provide the results of the background check to—

''(I) the child care provider; and

''(II) the current or prospective child care staff member for whom the background check is conducted.

''(B)(i) The State shall provide the results of a background check to a child care provider as required under subparagraph (A)(ii)(I) in a statement that—

''(I) indicates whether the current or prospective child care staff member for whom the background check is conducted is eligible or ineligible for employment by a child care provider; and

''(II) does not reveal any disqualifying crime or other related information regarding the current or prospective child care staff member.

''(ii) If a current or prospective child care staff member is ineligible for employment by a child care provider due to a background check described in subsection (a), the State shall provide the results of the background check to the current or prospective child care staff member as required under subparagraph (A)(ii)(II) in a criminal background report that includes information relating to each disqualifying crime.

''(iii) A State—

''(I) may not publicly release or share the results of an individual background check described in subsection (a); and

''(II) may include the results of background checks described in subsection (a) in the development or dissemination of local or statewide data relating to background checks if the results are not individually identifiable.

''(C)(i) The State shall provide for a process by which a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) may appeal the results of a background check required under subsection (a) to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in the criminal background report of the staff member.

''(ii) The State shall ensure that—

''(I) the appeals process is completed in a timely manner for each child care staff member;

''(II) each child care staff member is given notice of the opportunity to appeal; and

''(III) each child care staff member who wishes to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information in the criminal background report of the child care staff member is given instructions about how to complete the appeals process.

''(D)(i) The State may allow for a review process through which the State may determine that a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) disqualified for a crime specified in paragraph (3)(D)(ix) is eligible for employment by a child care provider, notwithstanding paragraph (3).

''(ii) The review process under this subparagraph shall be consistent with title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.).

''(E) Nothing in this section shall be construed to create a private right of action against a child care provider if the child care provider is in compliance with this section.

''(F) This section shall apply to each State that receives funding under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858 et seq.).

''(6) Fees that the State may charge for the costs of conducting a background check as required by subsection (a) shall not exceed the actual costs to the State for the administration of such background checks.

''(7) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prevent a Federal agency from disqualifying an individual as a child care staff member based on a conviction of the individual for a crime not specifically listed in this subsection that bears upon the fitness of an individual to provide care for and have responsibility for the safety and well-being of children.

''(8) In this subsection—

''(A) the term 'child care provider' means an agency of the Federal Government, or a unit of or contractor with the Federal Government that is operating a facility, described in subsection (a); and

''(B) the term 'child care staff member' means an individual who is hired, or seeks to be hired, by a child care provider to be involved with the provision of child care services, as described in subsection (a).''; and

(5) by striking subsection (c) and inserting the following:

''(c) SUSPENSION PENDING DISPOSITION OF CRIMINAL CASE.—In the case of an incident in which an individual has been charged with an offense described in subsection (b)(3)(D) and the charge has not yet been disposed of, an employer may suspend an employee from having any contact with children while on the job until the case is resolved.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on October 1 of the second full fiscal year after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 15. ALLOTMENT OF SPACE IN FEDERAL BUILDINGS FOR CHILD CARE.

Section 590 of title 40, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (a) through (g) as subsections (b) through (h), respectively;

(2) by inserting before subsection (b) (as so redesignated) the following:

''(a) DEFINITION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEE.—In this section, the term 'Federal employee' does not include a person that—

''(1) is not employed by the Federal Government; and

''(2) meets the requirements described in subsection (c)(2)(C)(i)(II).'';

(3) in paragraph (2)(C) of subsection (c) (as so redesignated), by striking clause (i) and inserting the following:

''(i) the space will be used to provide child care services to children of whom at least 50 percent have 1 parent or guardian who—

''(I) is employed by the Federal Government; or

''(II)(aa) has met the requirements for a master's degree or a doctorate degree from an institution of higher education (as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)); and

''(bb) is conducting research in the Federal building under an arrangement between the parent or guardian and a Federal agency.''; and

(4) in subsection (d) (as so redesignated), by striking ''subsection (b)'' each place it appears and inserting ''subsection (c)''.

SEC. 16. SENSE OF THE SENATE ON SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING CHILD POVERTY BY CALENDAR YEAR 2019.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Senate finds that—

(1) the United States has the highest rate of childhood poverty among 34 major countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, including Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Cyprus, Austria, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovenia, Hungary, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Malta, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Estonia, Belgium, New Zealand, Poland, Canada, Australia, Japan, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Spain, and Bulgaria;

(2) a record-breaking 46,496,000 individuals lived in poverty in the United States in 2012, which is an increase of 14,915,000 individuals since 2000;

(3) 16,073,000 children in the United States lived in poverty in 2012, which is an increase of 4,486,000 children since 2000;

(4) more than 7,100,000 children in the United States, 40 percent of children living in poverty in the United States, live in extreme poverty (defined as living in families with an income that is less than half of the poverty level);

(5) nearly 1,200,000 public school students in the United States were homeless in the 2011–2012 school year, an increase of 73 percent since the 2006–2007 school year;

(6) in an average month in fiscal year 2011, 1,200,000 households with children in the United States did not have any cash income and, for food, depended only on benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.);

(7) in 2012, government assistance programs removed from poverty 9,000,000 children, including 5,300,000 children through the earned income tax credit under section 32 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the child tax credit under section 24 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and 2,200,000 children through the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.);

(8) in 2012, child poverty would have been 57 percent higher, and extreme poverty would have been 240 percent higher, without government tax credits and food, housing, and energy benefits;

(9) in 2013, an individual working full-time at the Federal minimum wage could not afford the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom rental unit and have enough money for food, utilities, and other necessities;

(10) in school years 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, less than half of children ages 3 and 4 were enrolled in preschool;

(11) Early Head Start programs carried out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.) served only 4 percent of the 2,900,000 eligible poor infants and toddlers each day in fiscal year 2012, and Head Start programs carried out under such Act served only 41 percent of the 2,000,000 eligible poor children ages 3 and 4;

(12) more than 220,000 children are on waiting lists for child care assistance; and

(13) child poverty costs the United States not less than $500,000,000 each year in additional education, health, and criminal justice costs and in lost productivity.

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that the President should immediately present to Congress a comprehensive plan to significantly reduce child poverty in the United States by calendar year 2019.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, on rollcall vote 77 I voted ''aye.'' It was my intention to vote ''nay.'' I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome.

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

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order).

SUPPORTING SOVEREIGNTY AND DEMOCRACY IN UKRAINE—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 329, S. 2124, which is the bill to support sovereignty and democracy in Ukraine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 329, S. 2124, to support sovereignty and democracy in Ukraine, and for other purposes.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3370 AND S. 2137

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 317, H.R. 3370, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act; that there be up to 45 minutes of debate prior to a vote on passage of the bill, with the majority controlling 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling 15 minutes; further, that upon disposition of H.R. 3370, the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 2137, introduced earlier today by Senator LEE; that the bill be read a third time and the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill; that each bill be subject to a 60 affirmative vote threshold, with all of the above occurring with no intervening action or debate; finally, that there be 2 minutes equally divided in between the votes; and that Senator COBURN be recognized for up to 30 minutes following the votes for his remarks relative to the flood insurance bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following disposition of S. 2137, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following two nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 647 and 551; that the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session; further, that there be 2 minutes for debate equally divided in the usual form prior to each vote, and that the votes be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

HOMEOWNER FLOOD INSURANCE AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3370.

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3370) to delay the implementation of certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are now 45 minutes for debate.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, this particular bill has not been examined in committee—not in the Senate, not even in the House. It was rushed to the floor of the House without amendment, and it is rushed to the floor here without amendment. This is not how the legislative process is supposed to work—especially not here in the Senate.

My opponents may say we already had our chance to impact this policy, but what we have before us now is a different bill—a bill which we have never seen before. This bill is not a conference report. It takes zero cues from the Senate bill. Not a single representative of the American people has been given the opportunity to offer even a single amendment to this legislation.

All I have been asking for is a vote on an amendment which eliminates certain insurance rebates for second homes. My amendment would not change homeowners' flood insurance policies or even reduce the new taxpayer subsidy we are going to give them. It simply removes a retroactive reimbursement for second homes. Essentially we ask that working families around the country, including taxpayers in my State, not have to cut an additional check to the owners of coastal vacation houses. I know of no one who objects to my provision on policy grounds. Let me repeat that. I don't know of anyone, not one person who has raised a policy objection to

the amendment I have offered. It is an objective improvement to the underlying policy and this is what the Senate is supposed to do. Yet the supporters of the bill have been blocking any amendments that may garner bipartisan support to hold together a deal that has been negotiated in a backroom, written in secret by only a few Members, perhaps with the influence of a few people who may be interested in that. These ''masters of the universe'' as my friend Senator SESSIONS has sometimes referred to them, are shutting the American people out of the process.

I asked for 10 minutes and a vote on a single unobjectionable germane amendment to a bill the public has never before seen, but it seems this may be a bridge too far for the ''masters of the universe,'' as my friend from Alabama likes to call them.

So in an effort hopefully to change one of the more offensive policies in the bill, one that provides a refund of premiums paid under the law to homeowners of second vacation homes from a program that is already $24 billion in the hole, I agree to a vote on my amendment as a stand-alone bill. I have assurances from the House majority leader that he will work to get the policy considered in the House and I take him at his word.

I urge my colleagues to support my bill to protect the American people from being asked to fund—to refund premiums paid under current law to owners of second homes and vacation homes.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am opposed to H.R. 3370 because it abandons the much-needed reforms to the National Flood Insurance Program, NFIP, that were instituted in the Biggert-Waters Reform Act of 2012. That bill set the NFIP on a course to quickly remove Federal subsidies from the program and make it actuarially sound. If these policies had been fully implemented, it would have allowed the development of a private insurance marketplace for flood insurance, which does not currently exist. H.R. 3370 prevents flood insurance policies from being written at an actuarially sound rate when homes are sold to a new buyer or when a flood insurance policy lapses. New purchasers of homes in areas that require flood insurance should not be subsidized for making that decision. H.R. 3370 puts in doubt the hope that NFIP's subsidies are eliminated.

Thank you, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to urge a ''yes'' vote for final passage of the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, the legislation we are here to consider. I will say the Senate went through a considerate, deliberate process where amendments were openly considered. I believe at the end of the process there was a 67-to-32 vote. We don't normally get two-thirds of the Senate agreeing on major issues, but we did at that time in a bipartisan effort.

My understanding is the legislation that ultimately we are considering today, which is basically foundationally what we agreed to here with some changes in the House, for which there was vigorous back-and-forth negotiation, passed by over 300 votes of the House of Representatives. So it seems to me it has a broad bipartisan support and was vigorously debated in that Chamber.

We have an opportunity to once again, after the bill we just passed, show this body can work. We had a respectable debate on good-faith amendments that were germane to the bill, lived up to the ideals of the Senate when it was before us. We were able to have bipartisan negotiations to improve the House-passed version of our bill so it would provide the levels of relief that are necessary. As a result, we are now poised to pass some critical legislation with overwhelmingly bipartisan support which provides real relief to millions of American families.

Just very briefly, because I hope to basically not use all the time so we can come to a vote and get our Members on their way, this new legislation is first of all budget neutral. It does not add a dime to the deficit, nor does it hurt the solvency of the National Flood Insurance Program. It prevents skyrocketing rate increases by implementing the following measures: One, it creates a firewall on annual rate increases. It repeals the property sales trigger that was depressing the values of homes. It repeals the new policy sales trigger. It reinstates grandfathering. It refunds homeowners who overpaid. It has something that I thought was critically important, that I thought was so important when we passed Biggert-Waters that I included it by amendment in the banking committee—an affordability goal.

Let us have the ability to ensure the solvency of the National Flood Insurance Program, but let us have an affordability mechanism which FEMA was, under the law that exists today, required to report to the Congress so we could ultimately come up with an affordability mechanism that would ensure that we have a solvent program and that we have an affordable program.

At the end of the day, insurance is about spreading risk over a wide pool and in doing so keeping rates affordable. With rates that I heard from homeowners in New Jersey that went from $1,000 to $10,000 or $15,000, not only is that not affordable but you are going to ultimately reduce the size of the risk pool in the National Flood Insurance Program. That means that is going to continue to drive up the cost, and we have a self-fulfilling cycle that ultimately does not provide for solvency.

So we have kept some of the most important reforms under Biggert-Waters, but we created a window of opportunity to make sure we get to affordability, that we help the real estate market, at a time when it desperately needs help, to be able to continue to prosper. The people's most significant asset in their life was built over a lifetime to buy a home, and that is where they ultimately have their greatest asset. It is where they leverage for their kid's education or emergency in health care and a whole host of plans for retirement.

So for millions of people in my State and across the country who ultimately did the right thing, followed rules, paid their premiums, met the higher standards, now to be told that in addition to—in New Jersey's case the consequences of Hurricane Sandy, and throughout the Northeast, flooding in Colorado or the Mississippi or a whole host of other places—but despite the fact they did everything right, through no fault of their own and having paid their fees, they are now in rate shock, an inability to keep flood insurance, which sometimes triggers a default on the mortgage, if they have a mortgage, or makes it impossible to sell their home.

That is what we are rectifying. It is our collective purpose. I urge a strong ''yes'' vote.

Finally, I wish to thank my colleagues who have worked with me on a bipartisan basis: My lead cosponsor Senator ISAKSON. I don't believe there is anybody in the Senate who has a greater depth of knowledge in the real estate industry and how this legislation affects that but also understands the consequences of individual families and is working in an incredibly strong way so we can get to this bipartisan moment. I appreciate all of his work.

Also, I have to say the tenaciousness and the ability to bring us to this point is that of Senator LANDRIEU, who has become an expert out of necessity from what happens in her State with Hurricane Katrina. The people of Louisiana are extraordinarily fortunate to have her as one of their Senators. She has been a guiding light throughout this process, tremendously helpful in getting us to today.

Lastly, I appreciate the leadership on both sides to get us to this moment so we could have this vote.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. I am going to be very brief in the interest of time. I wish to thank Senator MENENDEZ for his leadership, Senator LANDRIEU for her leadership. Without their work this would not happen.

Let me tell you what this does. This bill corrects the unintended consequence of denying liquidity to coastal Americans in their housing and causing the unintended consequence of people not buying insurance and putting themselves and this country at greater risk in those areas that are

prone to floods. It aggressively addresses the need we have to make this system more solvent and make it work better.

The Senate today will be solving a greater problem for coastal American residents and those in flood areas. They will be doing the right thing at the right time to correct an unintended consequence of an action of the Congress. I am honored to be a part of it.

I commend Senator MENENDEZ and Senator LANDRIEU and thank them for their effort.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. First, I thank my colleague from Louisiana for letting me butt in a little bit.

I also praise the three people who are on the floor, one can say without each of whom this would not have happened. I don't think we can say that about anyone else here, myself included, but you can say that about these three. Senator MENENDEZ, our lead sponsor on the bill, who is indomitable and smart about crafting legislation; JOHNNY ISAKSON, who was able to make this a bipartisan bill and in his gentle, friendly, and persuasive way brought many people on board, prevented people from blocking it; and the dynamo—we would all agree—the dynamo of this operation, Senator MARY LANDRIEU, who did not quit. I would say MARY LANDRIEU and I have had probably 200 phone calls in the last month about flood insurance—three or four a day. Whenever there was a blockage, she was like a jackhammer getting through it. So I thank her.

I am going to be very brief as well—not quite as brief as my colleague from Georgia, but brief for me and brief for the Senate.

This is a very important day for the people of New York. We have thousands of homeowners who either have had their flood insurance rise or are fearful of their flood insurance rising. Most of them are middle-class people in places such as Staten Island, Brooklyn, Queens, the Rockaways, out to the southern shore of Long Island and up the Hudson River. To be a homeowner is to have your little piece of the rock if you are a middle-class person. Basically, it is all you own. To have that taken away from you by an irrational Washington force called Biggert-Waters made no sense. Yet, when people's flood insurance bills would go up from $500 to $4,000, when they were told if they sold their house it might go up to $10,000, their piece of the rock—their home—was in true jeopardy.

We all know there is an increase in flooding. We all know the huge damage Katrina and Sandy caused. But to put it on the backs of homeowners, as FEMA was doing by both increasing rates and expanding flood maps beyond what flood zones should be made no sense.

We had so many people in New York who were damaged—I know this is true of my colleague from New Jersey as well—who were damaged by Sandy, who painstakingly rebuilt their home, getting some money from insurance and some money from FEMA and some money from Sandy and going to relatives and friends. After their home was finally rebuilt to be told, now here is your $5,000 flood insurance bill, when these people are in debt, it was awful, a double whammy.

This bill isn't perfect, but it will stop all of that. It grandfathers homes in so people who sell their homes will not see the price go way up, and because of the efforts we made in the Senate, the bill the House is sending us has an individual limit on how much flood insurance can go up. Eighteen percent is still not as low an amount as we would like—and we may be able to revisit that down the road—but it certainly is not a 700-, 2,000- or 5,000-percent increase, which is what people were getting.

So this is a good day. It is a good day for the shorefront areas of New York which contain close to 1 million people. It is a good day for the coastal areas throughout America, the areas by rivers throughout America. Do you know what it means? It means that the American dream of working hard, buying a home, and having your little piece of the rock will not be destroyed by some unknown, misunderstood, and irrational force from Washington on flood insurance. Flood insurance will now be a friend once again rather than a foe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I wish to speak on this for 2 minutes now, because I know people are anxious to vote on final passage of this important bill, and I will speak at length after the vote.

I just wish to say thank you to the two leaders who are on the floor, Senator MENENDEZ from New Jersey, Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON from Georgia. They were the team who brought the coalition together when it was very hard—and still is difficult—to build a coalition on any subject. This subject is complicated. It is difficult. There are very strong feelings on all sides. There are different parts of the country that look at this in different ways, and there are debts that need to be paid attached to this program. So this was not an easy negotiation, and the leaders both did an extraordinary job keeping us on track.

No. 2, this compromise—and that is what it represents—the best of the compromise was, in fact, debated at length on this Senate floor; it was debated at length in the House of Representatives; and it was voted on 67 to 32 in the Senate favorably and 306 to 91 in the House favorably. The minority view—represented by the Senator from Utah, which would throw this bill into a conference committee right now—is not what the American people want, and it is not what the majority of Republicans or the majority of Democrats want, as demonstrated by the vote I just put into the RECORD.

We could all take this bill and rewrite sections of it that would work better for our home State, but that is not what this place is about. This place is not about perfection. It is about the art of the possible, and it is about listening to our constituents and responding to them when they have a great need.

In the State of Louisiana, I have 400,000 people who are afraid they will lose their homes. For many of these families, that is the greatest asset they have, and they are close to losing it. They don't want us to go to the conference committee and perfect this bill. They want us to pass it today, right now, and that is what I think we are going to do.

I know the Senator from Utah is disappointed. He may know the masters of the universe, but I am still looking for them. I could use a lot more wisdom and strength. If they are around here, I would like them to present themselves. All we have right now is each other—human beings trying to do the very best we can with a difficult circumstance. It may not be a perfect bill, but the concept of this bill got 67 votes in the Senate and 306 votes in the House. We have passed it in record time, given the pace around here. I am very proud.

I see the Senator from Florida. I know he would like to say a word.

Mr. NELSON. Will the Senator yield?

Ms. LANDRIEU. Yes.

Mr. NELSON. I thank the Senator from Louisiana, who has been the sparkplug behind this bill. As a result of her hard work, there are a lot of people in Florida who will be saved unconscionable increases.

Again, my thanks to the Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I yield and turn the floor over to the leader, Senator MENENDEZ. I believe the time will be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I understand we are going to be able to act on the Lee bill with a voice vote. As a result, I ask consent that the order with respect to a 60-affirmative-vote threshold with respect to S. 2137 be vitiated with all of the provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, in the interest of getting this bill to the President's desk and giving relief to flood victims across the country, and many other homeowners, we yield back the remainder of our time and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) and the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL).

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

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 22, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 78 Leg.]

YEAS—72

Ayotte	Grassley	Portman
Baldwin	Hagan	Pryor
Begich	Harkin	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Reid
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Rockefeller
Blunt	Hirono	Rubio
Booker	Hoeven	Sanders
Brown	Isakson	Schatz
Burr	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Scott
Cardin	Kirk	Sessions
Casey	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Chambliss	Landrieu	Stabenow
Coats	Leahy	Tester
Cochran	Levin	Toomey
Collins	Manchin	Udall (CO)
Coons	Markey	Udall (NM)
Cruz	Menendez	Vitter
Donnelly	Merkley	Walsh
Durbin	Mikulski	Warner
Feinstein	Murkowski	Warren
Franken	Murphy	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murray	Wicker
Graham	Nelson	Wyden

NAYS—22

Alexander	Enzi	McCain
Barrasso	Fischer	McConnell
Boozman	Flake	Risch
Carper	Hatch	Roberts
Coburn	Johanns	Shelby
Corker	Johnson (SD)	Thune
Cornyn	Johnson (WI)	
Crapo	Lee	

NOT VOTING—6

Boxer	Inhofe	Moran
Heller	McCaskill	Paul

The bill (H.R. 3370) was passed.

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I was unable to attend the roll call vote on passage of H.R. 3370, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014. Had I been present for this vote, I would have voted yea.•

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, when Hurricane Betsy roared ashore in Grand Isle on September 9, 1965, it wrought havoc in Louisiana and Mississippi and became the first natural disaster to cost American taxpayers more than $1 billion. It fundamentally changed the way our nation prepared for and responded to disasters. Private insurers fled the market, making it necessary for the federal government to step in and help communities rebuild and recover. The National Flood Insurance Program established building standards for flood prone areas to limit communities' exposure to flooding and rewarded responsible homeowners with affordable flood insurance that was no longer available in the private market.

In response, Congress, led by Hale Boggs, passed the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 with the explicit goal of making ''. . . flood insurance available on reasonable terms and conditions . . .''

Affordability was one of the primary goals of the National Flood Insurance Program when it was created, and it remains an essential priority today. Unfortunately, affordability was virtually eliminated by the 2012 NFIP reform legislation known as Biggert-Waters, and we had to fight to get it reinstated in the compromise bill that cleared the House last Wednesday, March 5 with a strong, bipartisan vote of 306–91.

On January 16, Speaker BOEHNER flatly refused to consider comprehensive flood insurance reform legislation in the House, telling an AP reporter bluntly: ''We're not going to do that.'' The decisive 67–32 Senate vote to pass the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act on January 30 demonstrated the breadth and depth of our coalition and provided the necessary momentum for House leadership to get engaged and support this strategy.

Senior leaders of both parties worked closely with Rep. MAXINE WATERS, Rep. CEDRIC RICHMOND, Majority Leader ERIC CANTOR and Rep. MICHAEL GRIMM to reach a fair, bipartisan, bicamercal compromise that can get to the President's desk, and we owe it to our constituents to act as soon as possible with an up or down vote.

The National Flood Insurance Program is one of the earliest examples of large scale community planning in America. It made community based mitigation a requirement for rebuilding. In order to be eligible for federally subsidized, low-cost flood insurance, communities had to pass ordinances restricting future development in floodplains. Taxpayers for Common Sense, the National Wildlife Federation and others would have you believe that NFIP encourages development in flood plains, but the reality is that it does the exact opposite.

By removing affordability from the core of the National Flood Insurance Program, Biggert-Waters put every policyholder on the path to Full Risk Rates whatever they may be. Speaking in support of the compromise bill, STEVE SCALISE, my colleague from Louisiana and Chair of the conservative Republican Study Committee, explained the problem clearly and directly saying:

''Sending somebody a $10,000 or a $20,000-a-year bill on a $200,000 house that never flooded is not an actuarially sound rate. It's a death sentence.''

Whether it takes 2 years or 20 years to get there, full risk rates of $20,000 or more will continue to freeze the housing market, depress property values, and prevent responsible homeowners from purchasing flood insurance. Program participation is already anemic with just over half—60 percent—of those required by law to have flood insurance in compliance and even less market penetration in low-risk areas where we want people to purchase voluntary flood insurance policies to grow and diversify the risk pool. The Senate bill delayed the worst rate increases until FEMA completed the affordability study and proposed an affordability framework to protect people from impossibly high premiums.

This indiscriminate march to Full Risk Rates is further complicated by a fundamentally flawed mapping process that wipes local levees off the maps and excludes impacted communities from the mapping process. At my request last summer, David Miller, Association Administrator for the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration—the man in charge of the National Flood Insurance Program, stood on top of a $450 million levee in Lafourche Parish that was completely wiped off the map when FEMA released their new flood map in 2008. Their map remains under appeal to this day.

The parish was one of 25 sites nationally included in the pilot program for FEMA's new Levee Analysis and Mapping Procedures, LAMP, that were designed to fix this problem, but that process only began last summer and has a long way to go before it is ready for prime time. The Senate bill delayed rate increases based on new flood maps until FEMA certified that their maps were accurate and reliable.

Whereas the Senate sought to delay the worst parts of Biggert-Waters until maps were accurate and the affordability study was complete, the House took a different approach by repealing these provisions and replacing them with other annual fees and rate increases. We had a healthy discussion and debate about our two approaches and eventually arrived at a compromise we could all live with that will protect people from the most aggressive rate hikes included in Biggert-Waters.

I commend Rep. WATERS and Rep. RICHMOND for the leadership in reinstating affordability as an essential element of this program. Since Representative CANTOR unveiled his bill on February 21, we successfully amended it to include an 18 percent annual cap on individual premium increases and an overall affordability target of 1 percent of the value of the policy.

While I would have preferred lower annual premium increases and stricter standards on overall affordability, this bill is a decent compromise that will address the most pernicious pieces of Biggert-Waters and attract the bipartisan support necessary to get it to the President's desk. This is another important step in our ongoing efforts to provide affordable, accessible and sustainable flood insurance to middle class Americans, but this bill is not the

end of the battle. Nothing is perfect. Nothing is permanent.

After nearly 2 years of arduous work and steadfast determination by a broad coalition of individuals, business groups and community leaders, the most pernicious provisions and draconian rate increases of Biggert-Waters have successfully been stopped and affordability has been returned as the centerpiece of the National Flood Insurance Program. The passionate debate we had during the last 2 years—one that will continue—has shown that affordable flood insurance is about more than just actuarial numbers on a page. It is about protecting our unique culture, our treasured way of life, and preserving the historic coastal communities that built this nation and continue to drive its economy today.

As Chair of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Committee, I will hold FEMA accountable for implementing this bill in a timely and transparent manner that provides homeowners and housing markets with the immediate relief they need to recover from these draconian rate hikes. Over the course of the past week, we were able to improve the original Cantor bill by removing onerous and unnecessary bureaucratic provisions, but I am not confident that FEMA will execute this either efficiently or effectively.

The great coalition of home builders, realtors, bankers, insurance agents, mayors, local governments and individual homeowners that fought to make flood insurance reform a national priority must remain vigilant and engaged. The National Flood Insurance Program expires in 2017, and we will need to include strict affordability language to protect responsible homeowners from impossible premiums.

The compromise bill that passed the House last week with a vote of 306–91 has the support of the coalition that helped secure the strong 67–32 vote in the Senate earlier this year. Some of the key industry groups behind the bill are:

Greater New Orleans Inc—GNO Inc,
National Association of Realtors,
National Home Builders Association,
National Association of Counties—NACo,
National League of Cities,
American Bankers Association,
Independent Community Bankers of America, and the
Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America—Big ''I''.

Biggert-Waters was built backwards and upside down. It authorized immediate rate increases on responsible homeowners without any understanding of how they would impact individual policyholders or the program at large and before FEMA was able to certify that their maps are accurate and reliable.

Lafourche Parish has been appealing their new map since 2008 because FEMA cannot figure out how to give them credit for local levees, including an 8–16 foot, 40 mile ring levee that was authorized by Congress in 1965—the Larose to Golden Meadow Hurricane Protection Project. To date, $450 million has been invested in this project, including $200 million from the Federal government. This past summer, FEMA began a pilot program that is supposed to solve the problem, but it will be another 2–3 years before that process is complete. FEMA needs to get their flood maps right the first time.

Currently, only 60 percent of the homeowners and businesses that are REQUIRED to have flood insurance actually do, and the aggressive rate increases authorized under Biggert-Waters threaten to make that problem a whole lot worse. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that every 10 percent increase in premiums leads to a 3 percent drop in overall program participation.

Katherine in Houma, LA cannot sell her home because a pernicious provision in Biggert-Waters that immediately increases premiums hundreds or thousands of dollars when you sell your house. When the young couple that was trying to buy her house went to closing, they learned that the flood insurance would go from $1,400 to $8,000 and could no longer afford the house. Katherine is stuck with a house she cannot sell and insurance she cannot afford.

Biggert-Waters threatens the very foundation of home ownership, the cornerstone of the American Dream. Fixing this flawed legislation is about protecting people's homes and equity and preserving the American dream that if you work hard and play by the rules you can have a secure future.

Our bill structures NFIP in an affordable, comprehensive and sustainable way. For decades, the program was sustainable until the 2005 storm season resulted in an unprecedented $17 billion in claims. Prior to that, it had an annual average deficit of just $19 million per year.

This is not just a Louisiana or coastal issue. Fifty-five percent of our nation's population lives within 50 miles of the coast—and that doesn't include those living along inland waterways. Ten percent of the homes in the United States have a one-in-four chance of flooding in the lifetime of their mortgage.

In 2010, the 15 percent of U.S. counties that are located directly on open ocean, the Great Lakes, major estuaries or coastal flood plains contributed $8.3 trillion—55 percent—to the Nation's Gross Domestic Product, and these communities proved more resilient during the 2007 recession, actually growing employment by 1.4 percent while the national employment rate fell by 2.3 percent.

This is not about millionaires in mansions on the beach. This is about middle class Americans who need affordable flood insurance so they can live where they need to work to harvest fresh seafood, produce domestic energy, and manufacture and transport the goods we need to maintain America's competitive advantage in the 21st century.

In response to all the concern I have heard from my constituents, I launched ''My Home, My Story'' to show you, literally, show some of the people and properties facing these rate increases that we are aiming to help. These aren't mansions, these aren't millionaires. These are middle class, working people living in normal, middle class houses doing their best to raise their kids, contribute to their communities and make a living.

I received over a hundred pictures and stories from my constituents.

Cody put his home on the market for less than its value and still couldn't sell it because of the high premium on his flood insurance.

Rachel lives in a 1,000 square foot elevated home with no central air or heat, one small bathroom, a quaint front porch and a beautiful sycamore tree. Three months after moving in, her flood insurance increased by $750 per year, and she's is struggling to make payments.

Maggie is a 66-year-old woman who has lived in the same house since 1974 and plans to stay there for the remainder of her life. She lives on a very strict budget and just received her first Social Security payment. If the law is not changed, it will be impossible for her to stay in her home or sell her home.

It provides basic consumer protections to responsible homeowners who built to code and played by the rules are struggling to stay in the NFIP.

It protects home equity. In St. Charles Parish, LA, the Assessor is reducing home values up to 30 percent because of the dramatic rate hikes that take effect overnight when a person goes to sell their home.

Based on the average mortgage, every $1,000 increase in annual flood insurance premiums reduces an individual's purchasing power by $20,000.

This provision affects 20 percent of all NFIP policyholders—1.1 million properties nationwide.

It ensures FEMA Flood Maps are Accurate. In 2011, FEMA acknowledged the failings of its ''without levees'' policy that resulted in local levees being literally wiped off the map, but it took them over two years to develop a new policy—the Levee Analysis and Mapping Procedures, LAMP. A pilot program for 25 sites nationwide—including 5 in Louisiana—Lafourche, Terrebonne, St. Charles, Plaquemines and St. Tammany—began in July, but it will be another 2–3 years before that process will be complete.

It allows FEMA to Complete the Affordability Study. FEMA must complete the affordability study mandated by Biggert-Waters and propose solutions for Congressional review. Our bill creates an expedited process for Congress to take action on these recommendations while maintaining critical checks and balances on FEMA's authority.

Provides Fair Credit for Local Levees—Removes the penalty on locally-financed flood protection projects and ensures that local and state investments in mitigation are accurately factored into the flood mapping process.

I thank the following Senate cosponsors for all their hard work throughout this process:

ROBERT MENENDEZ, JOHNNY ISAKSON, MARY L. LANDRIEU, THAD COCHRAN, JEFF MERKLEY, DAVID VITTER, JOHN HOEVEN, TIM SCOTT, ROGER WICKER, HEIDI HEITKAMP, CHUCK SCHUMER, KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, ED MARKEY, BILL NELSON, MARK BEGICH, ELIZABETH WARREN, AL FRANKEN, JOE MANCHIN, ROBERT CASEY, AMY KLOBUCHAR, CORY BOOKER, KAY HAGAN, LINDSEY GRAHAM, BRIAN SCHATZ, RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, JACK REED, SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, LISA MURKOWSKI, RON WYDEN, SUSAN COLLINS and DEBBIE STABENOW.

This bill does not incentivize unsustainable development—In order to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program, communities have to adopt national building codes governing new development in flood prone areas. Our bill provides basic consumer protections to homeowners that build to code and played by the rules. It does not alter or amend any rules governing new construction. The National Flood Insurance Program is one of the earliest examples of federal land use planning.

It does not put American Taxpayers on the hook for a small sub-set of NFIP policyholders. Prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, NFIP was basically self-sustaining with an average annual deficit under $20 million over that 26-year span. The $24 billion debt incurred as a result of 2005 and 2008 storm seasons was the driving force behind the rate reforms in Biggert-Waters which required NFIP policyholders, not American taxpayers, to pay down that debt and establish a reserve fund for future catastrophic events. Our bill does not change that, it merely gives responsible policyholders a little more time to adjust to the higher premiums they have to pay as a result of Biggert-Waters.

FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate estimates that the NFIP saves taxpayers $1.6 billion every year in avoided flood losses and disaster response costs due to the national building codes each participating community and policyholder were required to adopt and adhere to.

I would also like to thank the following staff members for their hard work throughout this process: Jason Tuber, Kirby Mayo, Karissa Willhite and Tim Del Monico in Senator MENENDEZ' office; Zack Rosenblum and Meghan Tiara in Senator SCHUMER's office; Joan Kirchner in Senator ISAKSON's office; Adam Telle in Senator COCHRAN's office; Travis Johnson in Senator VITTER's office; Claire O'Rourke, Liz Craddock, Matt Lehner and Wes Kungel in my office; Lisa Lederberger in MAXINE WATERS' office; Zach Butterworth in CEDRIC RICHMOND's office; Dill Dauster and Alex McDunah in Senator REID's office and all of the exceptional floor staff. On behalf of myself, the Senate cosponsors, and the entire flood insurance reform coalition, thank you.

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM PREMIUM REFUNDS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of S. 2137, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2137) to ensure that holders of flood insurance policies under the National Flood Insurance Program do not receive premium refunds for coverage of second homes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on S. 2137.

Who yields time?

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, we yield back the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

The bill (S. 2137) was passed, as follows:

S. 2137

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. NO REFUNDS UNDER NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM FOR COVERAGE OF SECOND HOMES.

(a) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ''National Flood Insurance Program'' means the program established under the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4001 et seq.).

(b) NO REFUNDS FOR COVERAGE OF SECOND HOMES.—Notwithstanding section 3(a)(4) of the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014 or any other provision of law, in the case of flood insurance coverage under the National Flood Insurance Program for a residential property that is not the primary residence of an individual (as that term is used in section 1307(a)(2)(A) of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4014(a)(2)(A))), the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency may not refund any premium for such coverage collected in excess of the rates required under the provisions of, and amendments made by, section 3 of the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF ARUN MADHAVAN KUMAR TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES AND FOREIGN COMMERCIAL SERVICE

NOMINATION OF TIMOTHY M. BROAS TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Arun Madhavan Kumar, of California, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service; and Timothy M. Broas, of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

VOTE ON KUMAR NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Kumar nomination.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask that all time be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Arun Madhavan Kumar, of California, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON BROAS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Broas nomination.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I yield back that time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Timothy M. Broas, of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of the Netherlands?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid

upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SUPPORTING SOVEREIGNTY AND DEMOCRACY IN UKRAINE—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The Senator from Oklahoma.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Mr. COBURN. I will try to make my remarks short. I know several of my colleagues have places they need to be and have a time schedule they are on. I was involved in a committee hearing this afternoon and could not contribute to the debate on the floor on the Flood Insurance Program.

I have about 8 months left in the Senate. I just want to remind us of what we have just done. We have solved a very short-term problem and made a long-term problem significantly worse. We did not really do our work because we were in such a hurry to take the political pressure off of the increases in the flood insurance rate.

Addressing that issue was important, and I agree that we needed to make some adjustments. But what we did is we chose politicians to win and the future to lose when it comes to flood risk mitigation and flood risk cost for the American public. Are there some positive things in the bill? Yes. But what we did once again is we put our political positions ahead of the best interests of this country.

The Biggert-Waters bill was a great reform bill. What happened is when we passed it, we did not recognize the tremendous rate increases many people would have. In the last 5 years in this country, we spent $1.6 billion at FEMA reevaluating all of the flood plains in this country. The whole purpose behind that was to really put a risk of what is out there based on what we have and slowly get to a point where we are actually measuring the risk.

What have we actually done when we just passed this bill and sent it to the President? What you did is you asked everybody in the future to continue to pay an exorbitant amount of money for their insurance so people who are at risk will not have to pay ultimately what is due them. The only time we are going to see that actually happens now is when a property sells. That is when we are going to see it. Vacation homes are excepted. I understand that. We are not going to give rebates to people. I understand that. But the big problem is we undermined the incentive to mitigate for risk. We undermined it.

So we now have a new flood insurance program. We have $18 billion worth of problems. We are getting ready to go to $26, $28 billion worth of problems, and that is on the heads of our kids. So we once again chose a position that put our kids at risk so we politically can be better off because we are going to alleviate the parochial scream. Rather than actually fix the scream, we are going to alleviate it, and we have eliminated all of that.

So my disappointment is not that we responded to parochial requests; it is that we did not do the hard work of actually fixing the problem and addressing some of the parochial problems and anecdotal notes of massive increases in flood insurance. We could have done both, but we chose not to.

It is so heartbreaking to me and to this country that we continually choose the politically expedient path that will bury our kids when we do not have to. That is a function of a lack of real leadership, of solving the real problems rather than treating the symptoms of the problems, which is what we did. We have wasted $1.6 billion now, essentially. We might recover it 30 years from now. But the Flood Insurance Program is now not in any better shape and will not be in any better shape 20 years from now than it is today.

So I hope we are happy that we have solved the parochial problems, but when you go to sleep tonight think about who is going to pay that bill. It is not the people who are getting the benefit from the very large subsidized flood insurance. It is the kids of this country and what is not going to be provided for them. It is those on the really low rung of the ladder economically. We are not going to have the finances to actually care for those who need the care from us the most. Really, it is the well-healed or the more well-healed and the more well-connected. They won again. The builders and the developers won. The real estate firms won. Less than two-tenths of 1 percent of this whole thing, without even modifying Biggert-Waters, applied to people in the lower 40 percent of income in this country. Less than two-tenths of 1 percent. Seventy percent applied to the top 20 percent of the people. So we gave a break to the most well off people. Those are the numbers. You cannot dispute those numbers. So because they screamed and do not want to pay their fair share, we have now damaged the future potential for our children.

I would say congratulations. We continue to do the same thing. No wonder the American people say: What is up with Congress? They do not have the courage to make a difficult, tough decision. What they do is they always make the politically expedient one.

That is exactly what we did today. That is what the House did today. To me, it is sickening.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, what now is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to proceed to S. 2124 is the pending business.

Mr. REID. What is the subject matter of that bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Ukraine bill.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by me, after consultation with Senator MCCONNELL, the motion to proceed be agreed to; that there be 1 hour of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the bill be read a third time and passed, with all of the above occurring with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Reserving the right to object—I will not object—Madam President, the majority leader has asked that we move and pass this legislation which was considered in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It was open for amendment. Several amendments were adopted. Several were rejected. By a vote of 14 to 3, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported out this bill.

Why should we care about this legislation? I will try to be as brief as possible, but I urge my colleagues' attention to the latest New York Times report today: ''Russia Massing Military Forces Near Border With Ukraine.'' Russian forces are massing near the border with Ukraine. Airborne; ground capabilities; the parachute drop was on a scale not seen since the collapse of the Soviet Union; the units involved artillery batteries, assault helicopters, and at least 10,000 soldiers.

In other words, right now as we speak, Vladimir Putin is either planning on or contemplating an invasion of eastern Ukraine. We have seen the movie before: provocateurs, people having to come and restore order, and there is no order, so then we see military intervention, and then there is going to be another referendum such as is supposed to take place on Sunday in the Crimea, which I predict 80 percent of the vote will do so when that is clearly not what the will of the people of Crimea is.

So, incredibly, incredibly, there will be an objection from this side to this legislation when the people of the Ukraine are crying out for our help and our assistance.

My friend Senator BARRASSO will now be proposing the House bill that has not one single sanction in it—not one sanction. I am surprised that the Senator would want to propose a bill that does not have any punishment for the Russians for what they are doing right now.

Then another one of my colleagues will probably come out and object to us taking up and passing the bill that was put through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—open to amendments—in a process that could not be criticized by anyone.

So what is the message we are sending to the Ukrainian people? What is the message we are sending them? That we have a problem with a fix for the IMF.

Then also there are some who are demanding changes in the regulation by

the Treasury Department concerning campaign contributions. What has happened? Where are our priorities? Is the IMF—no matter whether it is fixed or not fixed with this legislation—more important than the lives of thousands of people? Is that what we are talking about?

You know, I will say to my friends who are objecting to this—and there are a number of them on my side—you can call yourself Republicans—that is fine—because that is on your voter registration. Do not call yourself Reagan Republicans. Ronald Reagan would never—would never—let this kind of aggression go unresponded to by the American people.

We are not talking about troops on the ground. We are talking about responses that impose sanctions and punishment for Vladimir Putin, who clearly has said that his goal—the greatest disaster of the 20th century was the dissolution, the collapse of the then-Soviet Union. We know what Vladimir Putin is all about. We know what he understands.

So now because of an IMF fix or a campaign finance fix, we are now going to reject a piece of legislation that was done on a bipartisan basis with the leadership of the chairman, whom I see on the floor, of which I am proud, and with the ranking member, Senator CORKER of Tennessee. We are going to say no.

Do you know what the most ridiculous thing about all of this is? That the majority leader has filed cloture. We have well over 60 votes. So we are going to be back in about 11 or 12 days, whatever it is, and cloture will have expired. We have well over 60 votes. We will pass this.

Instead, our signal to the people of Ukraine today, as Russian military forces are massing on their border: Wait a minute. It is more important that we get our campaign finance regulations fixed. It is more important that we have the IMF fix as a higher priority than the lives of the men and women in the Ukraine.

I have been embarrassed before on the floor of the Senate, I will tell the Presiding Officer, but I have not been embarrassed this way about Members of my own party. One of the proudest aspects I have always felt of our Republican Party and the leadership of Ronald Reagan is we stood up for people. We stood up for people when the Iron Curtain was there. We stood up for Natan Sharansky. We said, ''Tear down this wall.'' Now we have a guy who is trying to reinstate the old Russian Empire, which he has said himself, and what are we saying? No. A shameful day. I will not object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, reserving the right to object—and it is not my ultimate intention to object but hopefully to persuade my colleagues not to object.

I have been watching my colleagues on television, in committee, and on the Senate floor rail about what is happening in Ukraine and about the lack of action from their perspective. We are at a moment—that after a very considered process in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which I am privileged to chair, working alongside the ranking member Senator CORKER and with Senator MCCAIN, another distinguished member of the committee—with a very strong bipartisan vote on a major piece of legislation, that, in fact, when it comes time to act, we have those who say no, even though they go on TV and bemoan the lack of action.

I find it incredibly difficult to suggest that what the House passed can be the only response to what is happening in Ukraine. Yes, it is a loan guarantee which we include in our legislation, but everything we do we pay for. So for those who are fiscally conservative and are concerned about it, we have paid for what we seek to do. That cannot be said about the House.

Secondly, we go beyond a loan guarantee. As important as that loan guarantee is to making an expression to the Ukrainian Government, to the Ukrainian people, to our partners in Europe and in NATO, we say there has to be responsibility taken for those who corrupted the Ukrainian Government, for those who undermined its sovereignty, for those who undermined its security.

We have provisions, both permissive and mandatory, to sanction individuals who have been found to have, in fact, corrupted the circumstances and/or affected the territorial integrity or sovereignty of Ukraine. One of them was sponsored by Senator MCCAIN, which was adopted unanimously, a mandatory provision.

If we want to be doing something about Russia, we can't do it with the House bill, we can only do it with the Senate bill. Then, yes, the IMF. I respect people who for some reason have an ideological difference about international monetary institutions, but if we want to talk about security, we will not have security in Ukraine if we cannot stabilize it economically, and a $1 billion loan guarantee isn't enough to make that happen.

It is the IMF that is going to be the singular force to create the opportunity for economic stability inside of Ukraine, which is fundamental to meeting our security challenge as well.

To hold IMF reform hostage to the question of whether unlimited campaign money can go into our elections without deciding whether that is being done appropriately under the law as it exists is outrageous.

There is a reason we care about Ukraine. It is not simply because we want to do the right thing by a country that has been invaded in the Crimea and for which thousands of Russian troops and equipment are amassing along its border in Eastern Ukraine, it is because this has a global consequence.

If the West doesn't act what will China say when it is looking at its territorial desires in the South China Sea? What will Iran say as we are negotiating with them about nuclear weapons?

What will others in the world, in North Korea—whose march to nuclear weapons on a greater scale is in play—all of them will be looking at what we and the West do as it relates to Ukraine and making a decision: How far can I go? What can I get away with?

To be able to stabilize Ukraine, we need to ultimately have the International Monetary Fund. To hold that hostage because of investigations going on—wherever they may lead and however they may lead to the question of campaign finance moneys may be inappropriately, ultimately, being used in violation of law—is outrageous.

What is at play is our national interests, our national security, the sovereignty of the people of the Ukraine, the message that we will send across the world about what we stand ready to do. That should not be hostage to political interests that have nothing to do with those issues.

For all those who have been standing and making speeches, for all those who have been going on TV with plenty of criticism, this is your opportunity to act and act now. There is no reason we cannot do that at this moment.

I withdraw my reservation and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. I will be brief. I wish to say first to the leader, we certainly have had some discussions regarding operations on the Senate floor and the speed with which we deal with things and the amount of debate, but I thank him for trying to bring this issue to a vote today.

I thank him for what he is going to do in a moment; that is, to file cloture on this piece of legislation that passed out of our committee with strong bipartisan support, so that immediately when we get back we will take up the bill.

I wish we could do it tonight. We have a group of seven or eight Senators on their way to Ukraine. Nothing would be better than for them to know we passed this strong piece of legislation this week, while there is going to be a referendum that is going to take place early next week in Crimea, while we have Russian troops on the border, while we have a Prime Minister who was here last night showing extreme courage, as a 39-year-old young man, in dealing with the issues he is facing today.

I lament the fact that we are not going to have the opportunity as a body—the most deliberative body in the world, some say—to take action on this issue.

I do wish to say that whenever we bring up the bill—it appears it will not be tonight; hopefully it will be as soon as we get back—this is a strong piece of legislation. It deals both with giving Ukraine a bridge to the future while

they are dealing with economic issues internally; it deals with sanctions to isolate Russia, which is what we all know needs to happen to keep them from continuing this activity; and it puts in place reforms our country has already agreed to that Congress has not taken action on—and that makes the IMF more fully able to deal with this issue, which is a poster child for why we would want the IMF to operate in a responsible and strong manner.

I strongly support this legislation. I thank the chairman for working with us the way he did. I thank Senator MCCAIN for his leadership on these issues.

Again, I thank the majority leader for placing this in an urgent manner before the Senate today. I lament the fact that we will not vote on it today, but hopefully we will pass it broadly when we return.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object, I am going to be brief, but I wish to make this point, that it is rare we take an action in the Senate that is watched around the world, and that is happening tonight. That is happening tonight because the crisis in Ukraine and in the Crimea has focused the attention of the world on Russian aggression, aggression by a country which hosted the Sochi Olympics—a charm offensive so we could see the new Russia—and then the final day of the ceremonies they sent their troops into Crimea.

That isn't the new Russia. That is the old Russia. It is a Russia many of us are familiar with, a Russia for those of us who have Lithuanian blood. My mother was born there and remembered full well what the Soviets did in the Baltics and what it meant to those poor people for such a long time.

We remember and we know that the ambitions of Vladimir will only be stopped with the resolve of the West. The resolve of the West starts in this Chamber tonight. It is an opportunity for Members on both sides of the aisle to stand and approve the measure which passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday 14 to 4, with the great leadership of Senator MENENDEZ of New Jersey and Senator CORKER of Tennessee.

It was a bipartisan effort to say that what the Russians have done is wrong; that if they continue this course we will initiate political and economic sanctions; and that we will join the international community in strengthening the Ukrainian economy so it can prosper, embrace democracy, and the Western values which we treasure. That is what is at stake with this request this evening.

To hear people say let's not do it because we should debate the future of the IMF—for goodness' sake. Can't we save that for another day.

For the people in Ukraine, for those in America of Ukrainian descent who have family in Ukraine, can't we say we will save the debate on the IMF for another day.

Others have suggested there is another course of action. They say if we want to help Ukraine, we have to say the U.S. Department of Treasury cannot investigate violations of 501(c)(4) organizations.

What does that have to do with Ukraine? Nothing.

This is what it boils down to. Those who are making that demand are saying we cannot protect Ukraine unless we are prepared to protect the Koch brothers from the possibility of investigation and prosecution for wrongdoing. That is what it comes down to. That is an outrage. If we submitted that as a plot line to ''House of Cards,'' they would reject it and say nothing could be so outlandish. We have heard it not once but many times.

Let's stand tonight in the Senate and send a message to Russia and to Ukraine that we stand behind those people whose lives are at stake as they try to move forward toward democracy and as they move forward toward a free election. Let's stand behind them tonight and not hide behind some procedural effort.

I object to this measure and I hope the unanimous consent request is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, reserving the right to object, today Russia's Defense Ministry announced new military operations in regions along the Ukrainian border, a disturbing development that comes 1 day after Ukraine's interim Prime Minister visited President Obama and met with Members of this body.

We are now faced with the inescapable reality that the Senate is about to enter a recess week, having taken no meaningful action to aid the interim government in Kiev. We are left with one option, taking up and passing the House-passed bill, which authorizes $1 billion in loan guarantees. We can pass that measure now by unanimous consent and assure our friends in Ukraine that they are not forgotten.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee bill contains provisions related to the International Monetary Fund that are unrelated to the crisis in Ukraine and not needed immediately and must be debated by this body.

The bill also contains sanctions, cuts to the Department of Defense, and other appropriations provisions.

The Foreign Relations Committee bill touches the jurisdiction of several committees and is certain to be met with opposition and perhaps a protracted conference with the House where, were we to take it up today, in the face of Russian armored vehicles, we are offering rhetoric, despite the fact that the committee bill addresses jurisdiction within the Armed Services Committee, the Appropriations Committee, and cuts Defense Department spending.

The chairman of the committee refused yesterday to allow me to offer amendments concerning the export of natural gas to markets in Europe. The Senate should debate whether helping Ukrainians through the export of natural gas is in our interest, as dozens of newspapers around the country talk about Moscow tightening the squeeze on Ukraine over energy.

The Washington Post says: ''Europe needs an alternative to Russian natural gas.''

The Wall Street Journal: ''West Tries to Loosen Russia's Gas Grip.''

The New York Times: ''U.S. Hopes Boom in Natural Gas Can Curb Putin.''

The Senate should debate whether helping the Ukrainians through the export of natural gas is in our interest. It should have that debate and pass sanctions, but none of those matters can be addressed today—none of them.

The only bill that can get to the President quickly is the House-passed bill, and we should pass it now.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 4152

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 328, H.R. 4152.

I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I was talking to my friend, the senior Senator from Arizona, a little while ago. He and I came to the Senate together many years ago from the House of Representatives.

We came to the Senate together. We were separated because Arizona has more people and Nevada seniority. During those many years that we have been together, we have had some experiences in the Senate that are memorable. I don't know as much—and that is an understatement—about military preparedness and the military as JOHN MCCAIN does. That is a gross understatement. He is somebody we should listen to when it comes to things dealing with aggression and military operations.

Ukraine is kind of personal to me. A baby was born. His parents named him Israel Goldfarb. He, with his parents, came to the United States. His name was changed. That man is my wife's dad, my father-in-law. He was born in Ukraine. My wife Landra and I have been to Ukraine. But this is dealing with more than someone's father-in-law, may he rest in peace; it deals with 45 million freedom-loving people who are being threatened by the big bear wanting to return to the days of the Soviet Union.

So for my friend, the Senator from Wyoming, to come here and say there is nothing we can do about this today, that is absolutely wrong. There is plenty we can do about it today. But we are not going to do that. Why? Well, my friend says there are committees who are concerned about jurisdiction.

How do the people in Ukraine feel about that one? How do they feel about that—that the bipartisan heavy vote we got out of the markup in the Foreign Relations Committee may have stepped on someone's toes dealing with the jurisdiction of a committee? This is much more important than that.

The International Monetary Fund is very much related to Ukraine, and my friend from Wyoming knows that. He is on the committee. He knows about the importance of the IMF.

But 45 million people are desperate for help. They are afraid. They are afraid. Russia has deployed paratroopers to the border with Ukraine. They didn't drive in; they were dropped from the air. These are Russian Cold War tactics.

I want to make a suggestion to President Putin, and that is this. He is going to have this plebiscite on Sunday in Crimea. Why doesn't he have one in Chechnya? What would happen there? Would they support Russia? No. They are an oppressed people because of Vladimir Putin. If he wants to have a vote on what the people of the Russian Federation want to do, let him have a vote in Chechnya and see how that vote would turn out. This is so transparent what he is doing—illegally.

These are Cold War tactics to try to intimidate the 45 million people in Ukraine. That is just what it is—intimidation. The entire world condemns what he has done with rare exception, and they are going to condemn it even more if he goes further because action will have to be taken to isolate Russia and its economy. This robust bill which was passed by the Foreign Relations Committee and sent to the floor is important.

I don't throw around a lot of accolades, especially for my Republican colleagues. I should do more, but I don't, and I have to get better at that. But I have told him personally, and I tell the people of Tennessee and the people of this country and the people around the world that the speech that was given yesterday by the ranking member of that committee, the junior Senator from Tennessee, was historic. It was a wonderful speech that set aside all partisanship and directed its attention to what is going on in a part of the world that must concern us.

This measure that comes from the House of Representatives, I can't do better than what the senior Senator from Arizona said. How could we send eight of our Senators to Ukraine and say: Yes, we decided to do something, but we are not going to do anything to suggest in any way that what Russia has done is wrong. There is not a sanction that would cause anything to happen with what the House has done. I can't imagine—I can't imagine—how anyone in good conscience, after what has gone on in the last few days—how anyone could agree that our great country should go to Ukraine and tell them that we have passed something that helps you, although we don't condemn Russia in any fashion in the resolution. We are being asked to agree to that? I don't think so.

The role of the IMF in stabilizing Ukraine's economy and keeping Ukraine free is important. But it is important not only for the Ukrainians; it is important for this country. It is a part of our national security interests.

So we know people are upset about committee jurisdiction, and we know because it is out in public. I have kept this to myself for quite some time because it was done when we were doing other things, such as the omnibus. Efforts were made at that time to give up on the investigations of the Koch brothers and all the others. Remember, Treasury is not investigating only Republican super PACs. They are investigating super PACs, as they should—Republican super PACs, tea party super PACs, libertarian super PACs—all of them. If that isn't something that should be investigated, I don't know what is.

I have talked about Senator MCCAIN's efforts in recognizing and identifying for us, and we listen because of his experience in the military. But we should also listen to what he says about campaign spending. I am sorry to take so long. I know people are wanting to leave, but I want to say this. I have been a part of raising money here in Washington for a long time—more than three decades. When I first came here, for the only money you could get you listed where they worked, their address, and everything about them. Then we all will remember both parties found a way to sneak stuff through. We did it through corporations. We funneled the money through State parties, and I remember that. I felt so unclean, for lack of a better description. People would give you these big checks to give to the State party. Then McCain-Feingold passed. For the next election it was as if I had taken a bath—a bath after having run a marathon.

JOHN MCCAIN understands why we need to investigate all this soft money—the super PAC money. When he says it, we should listen. Maybe our colleagues don't want to listen to me, but they should listen to JOHN MCCAIN because he has a record of substantiating his efforts in that regard.

So this thing is being objected to—what we are trying to do here to protect the 45 million in Ukraine—because of this investigation of the Koch brothers and others. I am not going to get into the details about social welfare organizations and all that, but we all know they are political front groups that spend millions of dollars in misleading ads, and it is unfortunate.

So it is too bad we have this. It is hard to believe that some are so wedded to the Koch brothers and others that they would torpedo a bill that is vital to the national security of this country and the freedom of tens of millions of Ukrainians and the birthplace of my wife's dad. This is wrong, and I am very disappointed in my friend from Wyoming that he would come forward and do this. I have to tell you it takes a lot of courage because there isn't a lot of academic integrity in that. Strike the word integrity. There isn't a lot of foundation for what he has done. It is unreasonable. It is unfair and it is without substantiation, and I object.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. I know the Senator from Alabama wants to speak, and I assure him I will not remain on the floor to hear it because I know what the Senator from Alabama is going to say that has something to do with paying for it out of defense spending. I will match my record with the Senator from Alabama on defense spending anytime, day or night.

The fact is, this money is taken out of programs that were already canceled and were going to be returned to the Treasury. If they had been used for defense, then it would have busted the budget agreement the Senator from Alabama has so stoutly defended time after time. So in a bit of preemption of the Senator from Alabama, his argument is wrong that this is taking money out of defense. He is dead wrong.

So all I would say to my colleagues is that the Senator from Wyoming came down and wants us to take up and pass a bill passed by the House of Representatives which has not a single binding sanction in it—not one. Not one binding sanction in it. Not one strong message to the people of Ukraine that we are supporting them.

Russia's defense ministry announced: New military operations in several regions near the Ukrainian border on Thursday. Even as Chancellor Angela Merkel warned the operations came as Ukraine's Acting President Oleksandr V. Turchynov—the Acting President of the Ukraine was quoted by Ukrainian news media as saying Russian forces amassed near the border were ready to invade.

So we now have Russian forces ready to invade a sovereign nation, and what are we talking about? An IMF fix. Suppose the Senator from Alabama was right and this sum of money is being taken out of national defense. How much money are we going to have to spend on national defense if Vladimir Putin goes unchecked throughout Europe?

The next target, by the way, will be the Baltic countries because they have Russian speaking populations as well, and we may have to have provocations

there; Moldova, where Russia occupies Transnistria; Georgia, where Russia occupies Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But what are we arguing about? Whether the IMF fix is appropriate or not. What are we arguing about? Whether it is in dispute as to whether this is actually some reduction in defense spending. Where in the world are our priorities? Where in the world is our sympathy and our concern and our need to support the people of Ukraine in this hour of need?

I don't want to go on too long, but the issue of natural gas, we all know that is the way out of it long term. Does anybody think including a provision on natural gas is going to have any effect whatsoever on events that are now happening and will happen in the next few days? Of course not. I am a strong supporter of getting natural gas to these countries, but it is not going to happen in the next days, weeks, months or maybe even years. So to use that is an excuse, of course, again.

I have watched in the last few months two fool's errands. One was when we shut down the government. We were all so proud we shut down the government, turned away 600,000 people from our national parks, took $27 million out of the economy of my State on a fool's errand that was not going to succeed. Now we see another fool's errand because the majority leader will file cloture and there will be well over 60 votes, and 10 or 11 or however many days from now we will pass it and these sanctions will be enacted.

In the meantime—in the meantime—the first message to the people of Ukraine, who have Russians—in the view of the Ukrainian President—ready to invade, is that we are telling them no, because we don't agree with an IMF fix or we think the money may be or may not be coming out of defense.

Mr. MURPHY. Will the Senator yield for a brief question?

Mr. MCCAIN. I will be glad to.

Mr. MURPHY. I thank the Senator.

Senator MCCAIN and I were in Ukraine at the end of last year. We had the privilege to speak on the Maidan in front of about half a million people, maybe even a million people who were there protesting the current government, the corruption that had reined free, their decision to move away from an orientation towards Europe. After Senator MCCAIN's remarks, the crowd rose up with the chant of ''Thank you, USA. Thank you, USA.''

Wherever we went during that trip, as we heard also from the new prime minister yesterday, they were desperate for the help of the United States. They are grateful for the fact that both the House and the Senate are moving forward on the issue of providing loan guarantees—loan guarantees that aren't nearly enough. That is why we need to have the IMF reforms, so they can deliver the bulk of the assistance. But they feel as though they are standing virtually alone as Russia marches across their borders, and desperately want the United States to lead an international consensus to make it clear to the Russians there is a price to be paid.

The Russians marched into Crimea in large part because they didn't believe the United States and Europe would enact the crippling sanctions which would have otherwise caused them to make a different decision. What this moment could be about, right now on the floor of the Senate, as we head back over to Ukraine to again express our support, is there is bipartisan consensus in the Senate and the House that we are not only going to stand with them on the question of economic support, but we are going to enact a set of sanctions which will make Russia consider a different decision.

My question to Senator MCCAIN is: As important as economic support is, that is not what they are asking for here. They are not asking for passage of the House bill. They are asking for the United States, as we have time and time again, to lead an international consensus to send a strong message to Russia. We are going to go over there and I believe have a good series of meetings this weekend, but we could have had a much stronger message brought to them if we had answered their call ultimately to provide them economic support and stand with our partners in Europe, sending a strong message to the Russians.

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank my friend from Connecticut. I say if we take up and pass the House bill, it does one thing: It gives them loan guarantees for $1 billion. There is not one other single binding provision in the House bill which my colleague from Wyoming wanted to take up and pass, instead of this bill, which went through the committee—with the input, by the way, of the administration. There is bipartisan and administration cooperation on it.

I urge my colleagues to read the provisions of this bill. They are tough. They are tough, enforceable provisions which will make Vladimir Putin and his kleptocratic oligarchy uncomfortable.

And, by the way, one of the reasons why Vladimir Putin is doing what he is doing is he is afraid a free, independent, and noncorrupt Ukraine on his border might send a message to the Russian people who are sick and tired of him anyway.

Sanctions on persons in the Russian Federation, complicit in or responsible for significant corruption, are a major provision of this bill; Sanctions on persons responsible for violence or undermining the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity of Ukraine. There are many other provisions in this bill which are binding which will make life very uncomfortable.

Instead, my dear friend—and he is my dear friend—from Wyoming wants to take up and pass a bill which has one thing, and one thing only, and that is a $1 billion loan guarantee. By the way, the EU has just given them $15 billion.

So all I can say is we will pass this legislation, and we will go and we will assure our Ukrainian friends that this bill will be passed and we will act.

I hope people at home who know Ukraine and know the people of Ukraine and know the friends and relatives and others will make it known to their elected representatives that for us to sit by and not help these people would be writing a disgraceful chapter in American history.

I thank my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, if I could add to the comments of Senator MCCAIN.

Last night we all met with the Prime Minister. They don't even need this economic aid today. They have to sign an IMF agreement first. It is weeks before they even need what the Senator from Wyoming wished to pass.

On the other hand, what we are trying to do is push Russia back. As the leader mentioned, this bill has tough sanctions. And, by the way, Europe is meeting on Monday to begin looking at the sanctions they want to put in place. So if we were to pass the sanctions which we have in this bill—which are tough sanctions, sanctions which we have never imposed before, sanctions on economic extortion, sanctions on corruption—what that would do is help boost the European community along to do the same thing, and our goal here is to isolate Russia to keep them from continuing to put pressure on Ukraine.

So I couldn't agree more. Why would we pass a bill which does no good as it relates to trying to push Russia back and isolate them, when we have an opportunity right now to pass a bill which shows we are willing to isolate Russia and actually give strength to what the European community is getting ready to do hopefully this next week.

So I agree. I wish we were taking up the bill which we all worked on together and passed by a huge bipartisan majority, and I wish we could send you all with the sanctions in hand, passed out of the Senate, to show the people of Ukraine that while militarily there may not be involvement, we stand together with them to do everything we can to isolate Russia, to isolate Putin, and to make sure economically they pay a huge price if they try to take any other actions in this area. So I agree with the Senator.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, there has been an objection. I think unfairly, there has been an objection. Everyone should understand, the first legislative matter we will take up when we get back here is going to be this. There is nothing I know of at this time that is more important.

So Senators should be aware, this is nothing we are going to run from. We are going to act on it as soon as we get back. It is really too bad we haven't been able to move forward. We should have. We could have. We are not going to. But we are going to move to it as soon as we get back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, what has happened in Ukraine is a real disaster. It should never have happened. It is so bad, and it reflects a weakness in American foreign policy which goes deep. The American people understand that. I think the whole world is baffled at the lack of clarity in American foreign policy. I would say, if JOHN MCCAIN had been elected President and were President today, we would have never had this invasion by the Soviet Russians into Ukraine and Crimea.

This is a big problem. It is not going away. It is a very deep and serious problem.

The fundamental thing we can do today—and we should do today—is move forward with what the United States can contribute to this situation, which is to pass the $1 billion loan fund. The European Union is doing their $15 billion through the IMF. Why don't we do that? Why don't we do that?

The reason is, this leadership is determined to push forward a policy change in the International Monetary Fund which has been up here before the Congress since 2010 and has not been passed and does not have to be passed today. They have insisted on that.

They have placed Ukraine in second place through their reforms which they have been pushing for with the IMF, and there are serious problems with that. It gives Russia more clout, among other things; not a lot, but it gives them more clout in the International Monetary Fund. And it costs money and violates the budget.

I am the ranking member on the Budget Committee. It is subject to a budget point of order. There is no doubt about that. Anybody can suggest otherwise if they want to, but it violates the budget, and we ought not to be doing this in violation of the budget. We don't have to.

But this administration negotiated with Senator MCCAIN and Senator CORKER and the Democratic leadership in the Senate and they agreed this would be the policy. Not what the House passed. But they would add more to it, they would reform the IMF, and then we are all just supposed to accept it.

I told the Senator from Tennessee—a very fine Senator—I am ranking member on the Budget Committee. He knows that. We have worked together to try to adhere to the spending limits Congress has imposed on ourselves. We just voted on this. Ten weeks ago the President signed this reform which raised the spending but limited it, and they want to spend more in a way which is not legitimate. So I am baffled.

Why in the world would we not take advantage of the—yes, what the House has sent to us, pass this legislation, and allow us to make our individual contribution of $1 billion? And, by the way, we are scoring it at about $350 million because it is unlikely we will be fully paid back.

So why don't we do that? Is it pride? Is it pique? Is it politics? I can't imagine. So you don't get everything you want, colleagues. Take what you can get. It is really the only thing which amounts to anything now. The IMF has put up $15 billion. They don't need this reform to do their loan, their aid to Ukraine. They don't need this legislation for that. Why is it so important?

Senator DURBIN said: Well, why can't we debate this another day. Right. Why can't we debate the IMF another day? But if his bill were to pass, the debate is over; the law the President wants to pass would pass, without congressional involvement in it.

Members of Congress have been dealing with these issues for a long time. It is a serious question. It does not need to be here today on this legislation. It just does not.

I have warned our colleagues that we do not need to be passing legislation which is not paid for in this fashion, and I would object to it. They had time here to fix it, but no attempt was made to fix it.

It is a little disturbing to me to see our colleagues, who have themselves decided what the best solution is, come to the floor and attack those of us who have a good-faith objection to it, when we are perfectly prepared to support the fundamental thing which needs to be done—and that is the $1 billion loan package the United States has agreed to fund, the House has agreed to support, I support, virtually every Member of Congress supports. But not this big reform package of IMF which is not justified.

I feel deeply this is a big mistake. Why in the world we wouldn't act today and take yes for an answer, I can't imagine. It goes beyond what I think is realistic.

I would conclude by saying again, something is very wrong with the foreign policy of the United States of America. Whether we reform the IMF is not going to send a message to Russia. The idea that somehow we are going to affect them by exactly what has passed here today I believe is incorrect. I believe fundamentally this package is what we can do, what we should do, and we should do it today. Then we should come back and be prepared to impose serious sanctions or whatever the President asks for.

Finally, I am disappointed the President of the United States is not more consultative with Congress in order to determine what legislation we need to pass and would continue to insist on passing reform legislation of the International Monetary Fund, which, in all likelihood, will be rejected by the House.

I feel as though we are through the looking glass here. I hate that tensions are so high. But if we would take yes for an answer, pass this House bill, come back and have a full evaluation of reform of IMF, and pass sanctions as we go forward, that would be the right thing for us to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I commend the Senator from Alabama and the Senator from Wyoming for their leadership on this important issue.

The crisis in Ukraine has riveted our attention for the last 4 months as we have seen brave men and women standing in freezing cold, standing for freedom, standing for their desire to stand with the West, to stand with Europe, to stand with America, and to be free from the domination of Putin's Russia.

We all strongly support the efforts of the Ukrainian people to choose a different path from subjugation to Russia, to choose a path toward economic and political liberty and toward a close friendship with the West.

Madam President, all of us on both sides of the Chamber are united in decrying the military aggression of Russian strongman Vladmir Putin, as he has invaded a sovereign nation with military force, committing an act of war. No one should be confused as to what Mr. Putin is attempting to do. Indeed, acting Ukraine Prime Minister Yatsenyuk said very clearly that Putin is trying to reestablish the borders of the old Soviet Union. He is expanding, sadly, into a vacuum of leadership the United States has not been filling. Russia is filling that vacuum, and the seizure of Crimea is only the beginning of Putin's aggressiveness. He will continue, I would predict, to be aggressive unless and until he meets significant resistance.

We are also united in believing there is an important role for the United States to play in responding to this crisis. I believe we should take concrete actions to respond to Russia's invasion of Crimea.

No. 1, we should press to expel Russia from the G8.

No. 2, the administration should immediately begin enforcing the Magnitsky Act—which he has failed to do up to this point—designed to punish human rights atrocities by Russian Government officials. Indeed, we should expand it to include Ukranian human rights abusers.

No. 3, we should immediately install the ballistic missile batteries in Eastern Ukraine that were scheduled to go in that President Obama mistakenly canceled in an effort to appease Mr. Putin. That effort did not succeed, and we should go forward with allowing eastern Europe to defend itself.

Additionally, there is a great deal we can do to aid the people of Ukraine.

The President should immediately offer the Government of Ukraine a free-trade agreement indicating that their goods are welcome in the United States and our goods in their country.

We should explore other options to assist them in economic recovery consistent with free market principles, including moving as expeditiously as possible to allow them access to U.S. energy exports and in particular liquidified natural gas. Russia uses natural gas and energy as a tool of economic blackmail. It is critical to the source of Russia's power not just over Ukraine but over much of Europe. The United States is blessed with abundant supplies of natural gas. It is only foolhardy government policy that stands in the way of our exporting that natural gas, meeting the need and helping Ukraine be free of the economic blackmail. We should move immediately in that regard not just because it would help Ukraine, not just because it would represent a serious blow to Russia when Russia relies on the revenue from those energy exports—if the United States steps up and provides it to them instead, that would be a serious economic blow to Russia—not just that but because it makes perfect sense from the perspective of the United States of America, our economic interests at a time when we have the lowest labor rate participation since 1978. When millions of people are out of work and hurting, we should be developing and expanding our resources, and energy provides an opportunity to transform the geopolitical playing field, to use our abundant resources in a free market manner to respond and help liberate the people of Ukraine.

There is also a financial component of the assistance for—Ukraine that it makes a world of sense should come from the International Monetary Fund, to which the United States is a contributor. That is what the IMF was created to do, and the IMF today stands fully capable of meeting that need.

My friend from Arizona has an admirable passion on this issue for the people of Ukraine and for standing up to Mr. Putin, and I commend my friend from Arizona for his passion in this regard. However, the reason this bill has not passed today is because the majority of this Chamber—the majority leader made a decision, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee made a decision to inject into the aid and sanctions plan for Ukraine an extraneous issue, an issue of the IMF that has nothing to do with the underlying issue. That was a mistake. That was a mistake.

I would suggest that the so-called IMF reforms are misguided policy. They don't make sense for four separate reasons.

No. 1, they are unnecessary. There is no need whatsoever for these reforms. Indeed, the IMF is perfectly capable of managing the task on hand, and estimates have shown that Ukraine aid would cost no more than 5 percent of its current resources. So the IMF portions are unnecessary, extrinsic. I agree with the Speaker of the House, JOHN BOEHNER, who says these so-called IMF reforms are unnecessary and extrinsic to this bill.

No. 2, these IMF provisions, if passed into law, would dramatically expand the financial exposure of the United States of America, effectively doubling our contribution, expanding our exposure. If that is good policy, that should be debated on its merits. We should not be opening the U.S. taxpayers to billions in additional financial liability without a debate on the merits. It shouldn't be just tied to Ukranian aid and forced through the Senate. That is the wrong approach.

No. 3, most inexplicably, these so-called reforms, if passed, would diminish U.S. influence on the IMF; would reduce our ability to control the decisions of the IMF; indeed, would move the funds from a fund in which we have veto authority into one in which we no longer have veto authority. We would have a smaller portion of influence over the IMF.

Astonishingly, No. 4, this bill would expand Russia's influence and control over the IMF. Let me repeat that. A bill that is being ostensibly introduced to punish Russia for their acts of war and aggression would expand Russia's influence over the IMF and decrease the influence of the United States of America.

I agree with my friend from Alabama who suggested moments ago that this is ''Through the Looking Glass.'' This makes no sense. I would challenge any of my friends here to stand here and explain why a sensible response to what Russia has done is to expand Russia's influence in the IMF and to diminish America's influence. That makes no sense whatsoever.

Madam President, I wish to close with two points. No. 1, we could pass aid for the people of Ukraine right now—today. The Senator from Wyoming rose and asked for unanimous consent to pass the bill that has already passed the House. Had the majority leader not stood up and objected on behalf of Senate Democrats, that bill would have passed into law. It would be already headed to the President's desk for signature. It is only because the majority leader objected that we are not sitting here today having already passed aid for the people of Ukraine.

I would note, by the way, that the majority leader had extended commentary about two businessmen, the Koch brothers, who I am beginning to think are characters almost out of ''Dr. Seuss'' in the majority leader's mind. They are the grinch who stole Christmas in his telling. I would note that the majority leader focuses on the IRS rules—not focusing on the abuse of power by the IRS, the Treasury inspector general chronicles, but instead on the need for a vote to regulate the IRS's abuse of power.

Let me say very simply that the House bill on Ukraine doesn't mention the IRS at all, doesn't mention P4s at all. So when the majority leader stood on the floor, this is all because of the nefarious Koch brothers. Set aside the impropriety of the majority leader of the U.S. Senate picking two private citizens—individuals engaged in political speech, standing up for what they believe, and the majority leader using his position of political power to lambaste them, to target them.

Interestingly enough, the majority leader does not seem to have a problem with the California billionaire who has publicly pledged to put $100 million behind Democrats to press them to pass climate change legislation that would cost millions of jobs across this country from blue-collar workers, from hard-working Americans. That billionaire, in the majority leader's view, is perfectly free to spend $100 million in the election, but the Koch brothers, because the two of them have stood and expressed their views, are subjected to vilification and personal attack from the majority leader.

The Senate rules allow a Member of this body, if his or her integrity is impugned, to raise an objection. Let me ask you something, Madam President. What Senate rule allows a private citizen to raise an objection when his integrity is impugned by the majority leader?

Those two brothers are not Members of this body, so they can have their reputation dragged through the mud. Yet they are denied a point of personal privilege to come and defend themselves. That is not the job of the U.S. Senate, to vilify private citizens.

I would note that the provision he is talking about is not in the House bill, which means when the Senator from Wyoming stood and asked for consent to pass the House bill, if the majority leader had simply refrained from objecting, we would have passed aid to Ukraine tonight. It has nothing to do with the Koch brothers, nothing to do with the IRS. That is not in the House bill. The reason the majority leader objected is that he wants to hold aid to Ukraine hostage to force through these misguided IMF reforms. That is the wrong decision.

One final point I wish to make. The world should understand, Russia should understand, the people of Ukraine should understand, and Mr. Putin should understand that all of us are united in standing with the people of Ukraine, that the United States will act. I am convinced it will act decisively to impose sanctions and serious consequences on Russia for this unprovoked act of war. We will act decisively to stand with the people of Ukraine. There should be no doubt in any observer's mind that this will unify both parties. We will stand together. We would have done so tonight had the majority leader not made the cynical decision to hold aid for Ukraine hostage to force a partisan bill that does not enjoy sufficient support in this body to pass otherwise. Politics

should end at the water's edge, and I think it is unfortunate to see the majority leader trying to use the crisis in Ukraine for political advantage. That is a mistake.

But there should be no ambiguity. We will impose sanctions. We will stand with Ukraine. And the people of America understand that Mr. Putin's aggression is reliving the days when the Soviet Union was an evil empire. It is reliving those days Mr. Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union ''the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of modern times.'' Well, all of us surely hope he does not succeed in his intentions of restoring the Soviet Union, restoring that evil empire, restoring the cloud of oppression across Europe and across the world, and we stand united with the people of Ukraine and with the people surrounding Russia in support of freedom and against his unconscionable act of war.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the Senator from Texas for his comments and for his eloquence. I believe he has touched on the right issues.

I would just add one thing. I was in Ukraine about 3 years ago; a delegation was there. We met with State Department people. We met with Tymoshenko, the fabulous leader of the Orange Revolution. She had those beautiful braids in her hair like peasants in the Ukraine wear, and she was concerned that she would be put in jail. I just couldn't believe it. The Ambassador told us she hadn't committed any crime, but she was placed in jail and served 2½ years. They have released her now. She was in a wheelchair, and you could tell she suffered from that.

I truly believe the people of Ukraine did a fabulous, wonderful thing when they stood for their country, for democracy. We need to stand with them. I stand with them just as I stood with and defended the people of Georgia when the Russians invaded Abkhazia and Ossetia.

I want to say unequivocally, bipartisanly, that this Congress—House and Senate—stands firmly with the people of the Ukraine. We want to help them. The one thing substantively we can do today that would make a difference for the people of Ukraine is to pass this bill that provides $1 billion in help to them. I truly believe we should do that. I am deeply disappointed that the majority insists that unless they get their reform of the International Monetary Fund that they want to see happen, which is unrelated directly to the needs of Ukraine, that they won't accept the legislation the House has already passed. I think that would be a mistake.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

UKRAINE

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I return to the floor because I can't let some of what has been said go unchallenged.

First of all, as it relates to the majority leader, the issue of the connection that has been made between IMF reform and the C–4 investigation—the unlimited, undefined, not-known secret money that goes into these entities in elections—was not first raised by the majority leader. It was first raised by Senator CORKER in an article. It was subsequently raised today on the floor by Senator MCCAIN. So casting aspersions upon the majority leader and suggesting he is ultimately impugning the reputation of anyone is pretty outrageous when the Members of his own side of the aisle recognize that it was simply wrong to connect IMF reform and the ability to help Ukraine in the most powerful way now with some C–4 investigation.

Secondly, only in Washington could someone have you believe that IMF reforms we are promoting means more power for Russia. Yes, we are rushing in this Chamber—JOHN MCCAIN and BOB CORKER are rushing into this Chamber to give more power to Russia. Only in Washington could anybody believe that.

Only in Washington could someone have you believe that our other colleagues on the committee who voted for the legislation to have IMF reform were actually voting—our Republican colleagues were voting—to give Russia more power so they could continue to oppress people. It stretches the incredulous nature of that argument.

On the contrary, why are we in the mess we are in? Because when Ukraine was having serious economic challenges, it was Putin and Russia that were coming with their money, not the IMF which—in a way—might have ultimately been important because the IMF needs the resources and the leveraging we create by virtue of this legislation.

You can't divorce it. If you really want to help Ukraine, you need to have the resources of the IMF that ultimately guarantees the full ability to bring Ukraine back into economic order, and from that, build on all the other elements of security as well.

Thirdly, the budget point of order: The ranking member on our committee made it very clear when he said, I want to be supportive, but we have to have this paid for, and we did. People can disagree with the pay-for, but it is paid for, which is something the House of Representatives didn't do. Let me tell you what else the House of Representatives didn't do. They didn't do anything about sanctions—nothing, zero, nada.

The bottom line is, we would send a message that, yes, we want to partially help Ukraine, but not in the most significant way we can, which is with IMF reform and the leveraging of the resources and our voice that we would bring to them in determining their future and the next crisis in the world, which is unfortunately around the corner.

So for those who claim they are all for helping Ukraine and national security, they should have allowed us to have this vote tonight.

Lastly, with reference to my dear friend and colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect, Senator BARRASSO, who said I didn't permit his amendment on LNG to move forward, his amendment was ruled out of order because it was not within the jurisdiction of the committee. The reality is on the merits of it, it is not about helping Ukraine right now. Ukraine doesn't have the infrastructure for LNG. They obviously don't have the resources to build the infrastructure for LNG.

Turkey, which controls the Bosphorus Strait, has said they are not going to let the LNG go through because of their concerns for security. So the bottom line is that is not about helping Ukraine today. If all of that can be accomplished—infrastructure, the resources to build it, and getting Turkey on board—then maybe in the future that is part of a further, longer term solution, but it is not about right now.

What it is about right now is the loan guarantees. It is about the sanctions to make sure the Russians and those in Ukraine understand they are going to be subject to real consequences by virtue of corrupting Ukraine and undermining its territorial integrity. Lastly, having the long-term ability through the IMF to achieve the goals of stabilizing Ukraine economically and also preparing for the next emergency, that is what was at stake tonight.

We will get there, but when you see movements of Russian troops and the circumstances that are unfolding, and I hear colleagues say, ''We are not doing enough,'' and then just want to do a fraction of what is necessary to help the Ukraine, I begin to seriously wonder.

I hope the majority leader will have this as the first order of business when we return. I think there is bipartisan support for the package the way it is now. It is unfortunate that as our colleagues travel to Ukraine, they can't go with the final message that this was passed today, but it will pass.

As I said to the Prime Minister of Ukraine yesterday—an extraordinary individual who met with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—in the long history of the world, only a few are called upon to answer the call of freedom in some of its most dangerous moments in history. He has been called upon to do that on behalf of his country at this time. We are called upon to stand against the aggression and to help a country be able to do so.

I hope we will be able to get past this issue of linking IMF reform with the whole question of campaign finance issues so we can achieve that goal.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

DEFENSE BUDGET

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I very much appreciate the importance of the discussion going on, but I would like to talk about another very important issue that is facing us. One of the

biggest problems our country faces at the current time is one Washington has created—the out-of-control spending and our lack of fiscal discipline to put our country back on a path to fiscal responsibly.

Last week President Obama released his budget proposal for fiscal year 2015. That proposal continues Washington's reckless spending. It offers little in the way of real help to the millions of Americans struggling to get by in this very stagnant economy, which has not been helped by the President's policies.

What is worse is that the President finds a way to support the projects and priorities of his base but can't continue our country's commitment to our men and women who served and are serving our Nation in uniform.

The defense budget proposes to slash even more benefits our military families need. The Military Officers Association of America is rightfully highlighting these proposed cuts to military compensation and health care benefits.

The Washington Times published a story on this topic yesterday, saying retired servicemembers weighed in with frustration and anger, and rightfully so.

The proposal again caps the military pay raise at 1 percent, although the private sector wage growth is 1.8 percent. MOAA, the Military Officers Association, calculated what these cuts would mean to the bottom line of our active-duty military. An Army sergeant stands to lose nearly $5,000 in benefits annually and an Army captain will lose nearly $6,000 in benefits annually. This is certainly the wrong message to send to our men and women who put their lives on the line for this country.

When the President was elected, he promised to go through the budget with a scalpel; however, the only thing he seems capable of dissecting is military pay and benefits.

I am here today to say that these cuts on our military families are unacceptable. I will fight to preserve the benefits our military families were promised. Fortunately, as has been the case with the President's budgets from the past few years, this proposal will likely never see the light of day. Even the majority in the Senate doesn't have the desire to bring that proposal up for a vote. But this does not excuse those who continue to propose savings that come at the expense of our men and women in uniform or those who have served us in the past.

Our military members, their families, and our veterans should not have to bear the burden for Washington's irresponsible spending. Taking away benefits from our servicemembers has become a recurring problem. This is very troubling.

I stood here less than 2 months ago talking about our need to restore military retiree cuts that were unjustly taken away to help rein in spending. I opposed the budget agreement that cut the retirement benefit of our veterans and reducing the cost-of-living adjustment because it unfairly aimed to balance the budget on the backs of our retired military. Now the President seems determined to continue down that path.

We were able to restore most of those misguided military retirement cuts, but these benefits should have never been a target. Now the President wants to target servicemembers again. It is unconscionable considering he is intent on interjecting the Federal Government into private sector labor issues. He wants to force private entities to raise wages and increase benefits in a poor economy that his policies have created. When it comes to our men and women in uniform, he is all for stripping away their hard-earned benefits so he can continue to redistribute wealth, raise taxes, and increase Federal spending another $1 trillion.

We need to keep the promise we made to our servicemembers and maintain these benefits. Washington needs to find savings somewhere else. It can and must be done.

With that, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I come to the Senate floor today to discuss an issue of enormous importance to my State, our country, and future generations.

I thank my colleagues for bringing attention to the critical issue of climate change earlier this week. This is a pressing problem that needs to be addressed and too often gets pushed to the back burner.

As a Senator from North Carolina, I represent a State that is home to some of our country's most treasured landmarks and most precious natural resources—from the Great Smoky Mountains in the west to the Uwharrie National Forest in the Piedmont to Cape Hatteras National Seashore in the east.

Like so many North Carolinians, my family and I love spending time together outdoors whether it is hiking, fishing, biking, or just enjoying the views and being outside.

Visitors from across the country travel to North Carolina to experience the Blue Ridge Parkway in the fall or to take a vacation on the Outer Banks in the summer. Tourism is an important part of our State's economy—generating $25 billion in economic activity and supporting over 390,000 jobs in my State. However, rising temperatures and extreme weather are putting those landmarks and resources at risk.

In 2012, North Carolina experienced a total of 40 broken heat records, 4 broken snow records, 13 broken precipitation records, and 19 large wildlifes.

Since 2000, North Carolina has issued 14 disaster declarations from severe storms and flooding. This extreme weather doesn't just jeopardize the beauty of our coastline or put our forest at risk for wildfires, it also affects our economy and impacts people's everyday daily lives.

In 2011 Hurricane Irene ravaged our coast and affected approximately 1.3 million North Carolinians. Roads and highways were destroyed, homes and businesses were left inaccessible. The damage left some families with no other option but to live in tents.

The storm decimated tourism for the eastern part of our State at the height of the tourist season. The region got back on its feet only to be hit again a year later by Hurricane Sandy, which totally sliced through Highway 12, which is the lifeline of the Outer Banks. It cut it right down the middle.

This changing weather impacts another key part of North Carolina's economy, agriculture, which is our State's biggest industry. Agriculture generates $77 billion in economic activity and employs nearly one-fifth of our workforce.

Last year record rainfall flooded several counties in North Carolina, and our farmers lost tens of millions of dollars' worth of food crops. Tomatoes were wrought with disease. In some fields half of all of the sweet corn had been destroyed. Experts predicted losses could double for producers, some of whom are thinking twice before they plant a crop next year.

We are seeing the very real impact climate change is having on my State and its economy today. In the absence of action, this extreme weather is here to stay. Recent reports have shown that by 2099 climate change could increase temperatures by as much as 10.5 degrees Fahrenheit and cause over 1,000 more heat-related deaths just in my hometown of Greensboro. By midcentury, Greensboro is expected to increase from a historical average of 8 heat-excessive days in the summer to 59 and to reach a total of 70 days by the end of the century. This current path is unsustainable, and we must take steps now to slow and stop the effects of climate change.

This is a challenge that will need to be addressed from many different directions, but I am proud of the steps we took in North Carolina when I was in the State senate to invest in energy innovation. A bill I worked on in 2007 made North Carolina the only Southeastern State with a mandatory renewable energy standard, requiring electrical utilities to meet up to 12.5 percent of their energy needs through renewable sources by 2021. We also enacted the Clean Smokestacks Act in 2012, which made significant emission reductions from coal-fired powerplants in North Carolina and Tennessee.

I am proud of those accomplishments, but we must do more. I believe North Carolina and the United States are well positioned to lead and to take advantage of opportunities in the 21st-century energy economy.

I look at North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, which has become an international model for bringing together industry, research institutions,

and government to help develop clean energy technologies that reduce carbon emissions and make our country less dependent on fossil fuels. Companies and institutions across North Carolina are developing ways to reduce energy more efficiently, harnessing smart grid technologies and using renewables to provide new, power-intensive data centers in my State.

While addressing carbon emissions presents new economic opportunities, we must also be sure to minimize any economic burdens on the least fortunate and make efforts to ensure that we do not harm our global economic competitiveness.

The challenge before us is great, but if we come together, Democrats and Republicans, we can move forward with commonsense measures that reduce emissions, increase our energy independence, and put the United States back on a sustainable path, all while getting the people of this great country back to work.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, as we wrestle with the Ukraine situation, I hope we can—I wish we could have gotten together to be able to pass the core responsibility of this Congress, which would be to allow the loan program to go through—a $1 billion loan program that I think everybody in the House and the Senate agrees on, Republicans and Democrats. It was, in fact, complicated and made impossible tonight because the majority insisted that IMF reform, which is opposed and is unrelated to the Ukraine, be a part of this legislation. The House has not passed it. I don't think the House will pass it. So why were they insisting on that and refusing to take the money we were able to give tonight? It is just baffling to me.

I appreciate Senator MENENDEZ. He has shown real leadership and insight into international relations. He chairs the Foreign Relations Committee. I don't mean to attack his integrity or anything of that nature, but he is incorrect in saying this bill is paid for or doesn't violate the budget. It absolutely violates the budget. The Congressional Budget Office has analyzed the numbers, and they have concluded just what my Budget Committee staff has concluded, which is that it violates the budget. The numbers are plain.

Look, a lot of things around here are not perfect, but the idea that we would insist on passing International Monetary Fund reform that does not have to be a part of this bill and is not related to this situation, is going to cost $315 million to fund that program, that reform, which is very controversial, and half of the money explicitly comes from the Defense Department—Air Force missiles and Army procurement and aviation—at a time when the Russian army is occupying the Crimea in the Ukraine, we want to now cut the Defense Department and the Army of the United States even more.

The Budget Control Act has really tightened the military's defense budget. They are doing all they can do to meet that budget. I have tried to support the budget. I believe all of us need to tighten our belts. But I will just say this: We don't need to take more money out of the Defense Department budget at a time when we are already asking them to take unprecedented reductions. I feel strongly about that. It is disturbing to me that we have not reached that agreement.

In fact, what has happened is the Defense Department was forced to make some tough decisions, so they rescinded some of the money they had, and they intended to use it on other priorities, things they need to spend the money on. They made tough choices. What has Congress come in here now to do? Reach in there and take the money the Defense Department was trying to save so they can move it to something of high priority and spend it on this program. There is $4 trillion in U.S. Government spending. We can't find some other place to find this money? Aren't there legitimate offsets that don't violate the budget?

For the most part, all of these offsets for both programs are not legitimate. They are basically gimmes. We need to get away from that. We need honesty in budgeting. We really do need it. When we have a priority we want to act on, such as this Ukraine situation, there are plenty of opportunities for us to identify lesser priority spending and take that money and spend it. That is what the Defense Department was doing when they executed rescissions. They were making choices, setting priorities.

We should not do this. It is not a little bitty matter. Frankly, the House needs to be more careful about how they do their business. The bill they sent over here has problems with it. But to take another whack at a controversial program—$315 million—and take half the money from the military is really unacceptable.

I warned people about this in advance, but they persisted. They thought they could get to the last minute and they would stand here on the floor and emotionally argue that our objection had something to do with not caring about or being supportive of the people of the Ukraine, that we would just fold and give it to them. Well, that day is becoming a day of the past.

Somebody needs to stand here and say we are going to do these things right or we are going to have real problems on the floor of the Senate. If I have to do it, I will do it.

I am proud of the Senator from Wyoming, who sought to pass the House bill. We just have to accept it. That is something we could do and get it done tonight, and I would be willing to support that. I certainly want to help the Ukraine, and we can do it and do it in the right way.

I thank the Chair for the opportunity to speak tonight. I know we all love the country, and we are going to have to wrestle now with serious questions about Russia—what their agenda is, what kind of actions they may be taking. There needs to be no doubt that this Senator has no intention of standing idly by while Russia attempts to take over independent, sovereign nations on its border. It is absolutely unacceptable. We cannot accept it. It should not have happened. I believe if this President had been more firm and clear in his policies, it likely would not have happened, but it has.

The whole world now has to confront this crisis and deal with it. It is not going to be easy. I think all of us need to work hard to put our politics aside on this question and try to do what is in the national interests.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to proceed to S. 2124.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk that I would ask the Chair to report.

I have to sign it and send it there first.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 329, S. 2124, a bill to support sovereignty and democracy in Ukraine, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Robert Menendez, Debbie Stabenow, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Joe Donnelly, Christopher A. Coons, Jack Reed, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CHRISTOPHER REID COOPER TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 581.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Christopher Reid Cooper, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Christopher Reid Cooper, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Bernard Sanders, Joe Donnelly, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I move to proceed now to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF M. DOUGLAS HARPOOL TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 582.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of M. Douglas Harpool, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Missouri.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk on this nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of M. Douglas Harpool, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Missouri.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Bernard Sanders, Joe Donnelly, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF GERALD AUSTIN McHUGH, JR. TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 583.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Gerald Austin McHugh, Jr., of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Gerald Austin McHugh, Jr., of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Bernard Sanders, Joe Donnelly, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF EDWARD G. SMITH TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 584.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Edward G. Smith, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of M. Edward G. Smith, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Bernard Sanders, Joe Donnelly, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent we proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

CORINTHIAN COLLEGES

Mr. DURBIN. Last December I spoke about a news article that revealed another disturbing scam perpetuated by the for-profit college industry. The article reported that Corinthian Colleges, Incorporated, a publicly-traded corporation, that owns for-profit schools in the United States and Canada, has engaged in deceptive job placement practices in order to artificially boost job placement rates and avoid scrutiny by its creditors.

It turns out Corinthian schools were paying employers what they called an onboarding fee of $2,000 per student so the companies would hire their graduates temporarily so that could be counted as an official permanent job placement.

Corinthian college subsidiary schools have been criticized in the past for having high dropout rates, high tuition, and some of the highest loan default rates in the Nation. Nearly 40 percent of Corinthian college students who should have begun to pay their Federal student loans in 2008 were defaulting on their student loans. This is the highest rate of any publicly-traded company in that sector. Yet, over the last 10 years Corinthian Colleges has been rewarded for its poor performance with $10 billion in Federal student aid. On an annual basis American taxpayers fund more than 80 percent of Corinthian Colleges' total revenue. This includes the salary of Corinthian's CEO, Jack Massimino, who received compensation of $3.1 million in 2012, thanks to the taxpayers. This was seven times the average compensation for presidents of public universities, which is about $440,000.

Corinthian also spent $400 million on marketing and admissions in 2013, about $3,700 for each newly admitted student. How could they afford it? Because the taxpayers are subsidizing this for-profit college. Corinthian's marketing strategy has come under scrutiny recently because it targets low-income people. Why? If you are a low-income new student at Corinthian you automatically qualify for a Pell grant and a college student loan. They can't wait for you to come through the door, sign the papers, and then watch what happens next. Most of these students falter, fail, drop out, or if they were, I guess, lucky—and I use that word advisedly—they end up with a worthless diploma. These students attracted by the prospect of a better life and the dream of a college education end up far worse off, deeply in debt with nothing to show for it.

Eric Parms, an Everest college grad, completed a 9-month heating, ventilation, and air conditioning repair program. What he ended up with at the end of it was a $17,000 student loan for a 9-month program on HVAC and no job. After he graduated he had to beg the career counselors at Everest to set up some interviews. Frankly, Eric wasn't worth that much to them after he graduated. They wanted him to sign up for the loans. He did it and they lost interest in him.

Finally, he was set up by career services to work in a contract position laying electric wires. However, after less than 2 months on the job he was laid off and cut off from any career service counseling at Everest College, part of the Corinthian operation.

The school had effectively placed Eric in a short-term internship program, and once it was over, there was no incentive for that company to hire him when they could vacate a space for another graduate who would get a $2,000 Corinthian subsidy, so their numbers would look better to the public and to the Federal Government. Then Everest could shuttle in another graduate for a part-time position leading nowhere.

Eric lost out on the deal with a $17,000 student loan for a worthless education at Everest College, part of the Corinthian family of schools. To get a Georgia HVAC contractor license he needed to have significant work experience and references. No one would hire him with a degree from Everest. Everest College, part of Corinthian, gave him a worthless degree.

After reading the December article and stories like Eric's, I sent four letters. One letter was to the CEO of Corinthian, asking him to explain these practices and to outline steps the company is going to take to put an end to it. His response to me was not surprising but disappointing. Corinthian's CEO Jack Massimino, the multimillion dollar CEO defended the school's policies and practices. He did admit that at one time three Everest campuses provided incentives to employees.

This is a scandal that has to come to an end. I tell folks repeatedly, if you want to know about for-profit schools and universities in America, remember three numbers: 10 percent of high school grads end up in for-profit colleges; 20 percent of all the Federal aid to education goes to these colleges; 46 percent of all the student loan defaults come out of these colleges. These are worthless, by and large. There are some exemptions, but most of them are worthless, and we as taxpayers are being taken to the cleaners by this industry.

When we don't have enough money to do the important things in America such as medical research and assistance for education at good, worthwhile schools, we ought to say shame on ourselves for not taking a look at this for-profit college industry which is fleecing the American taxpayers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. First let me thank Senator DURBIN for his commitment on this issue. We know education is a great equalizer in America. We know there are major concerns on access to higher education because of costs, and that we have to do a better job to make college education affordable. We also have to have accountability in higher education, to make sure those institutions are providing quality products to their students and are doing it in a cost-effective way, particularly when taxpayers are providing a lot of the aid.

Mr. DURBIN. If I could ask the Senator from Maryland to yield for a moment.

Mr. CARDIN. I would be glad to.

Mr. DURBIN. I just had a meeting with people from the Pentagon and we talked about military education, members of the military who are seeking education while in the military through the GI bill and such. We talked about some of the worst examples of for-profit schools. The best example I could come up with of a worthy education through the military is the University of Maryland. They have been doing it for decades. I steer all my friends in the military and their families to the flagship university in the Senator's State of Maryland. Maryland does a good job.

Mr. CARDIN. I am glad I yielded to my colleague. We are very proud of the University of Maryland and the programs for the Department of Defense. We believe it is a cost-effective way and a quality education, exactly what the Senator from Illinois is talking about; and that is we have to get value for our dollars and we have to get accountability. I appreciate the Senator bringing that to our attention.

FILING CLOTURE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the majority leader, the Senator from Nevada, came to the floor last night to take exception to my criticisms of how the Senate operates these days.

I have criticized the actions of the current majority leadership, of which he is the head.

However, I would like to point out that I have tried to avoid singling him out personally because it is not my intention to engage in personal attacks or name calling.

Still, the fact that he takes my criticisms of the Senate's dysfunction so personally should tell us something.

Yesterday, I criticized the abuse of same-day cloture motions.

In response, Senator REID said, ''He claims that I file too many cloture motions.''

Well, it often is the majority leader who files the cloture motions, but sometimes it is other members of the majority leadership, and on rare occasions, other Senators.

The fact is, this majority leader has instigated more of the cloture motions than any leader in recent times.

Senator Frist filed about 72 percent of all cloture motions when he was Majority Leader, Senator Daschle filed about 32 percent during his leadership, Senator Lott about 69 percent, and Senator Dole about 50 percent.

Senator REID has personally filed 94 percent of all the cloture motions since he became majority leader.

And, that is 94 percent of a much bigger number since cloture filings have more than doubled under this majority leadership.

So if the Senator from Nevada takes my criticism of cloture abuse personally, perhaps there is a reason he does.

He also blames Republicans for the fact that he has abused the cloture process, just as I predicted in my speech, which struck such a nerve.

However, I want to be absolutely clear that my criticisms were focused on same-day cloture filings related to legislative business.

In other words, I was specifically criticizing the practice of moving to end consideration of a legislative matter that is subject to amendment before there has been an opportunity for any debate or amendments.

The majority leader went off on a tangent complaining about how many nominees are waiting for confirmation. I don't need to remind anybody that the ability of the minority party to block nominees was eliminated using the nuclear option. Besides, the focus of my speech was on the legislative process.

We can argue about how much debate is too much and how many amendments are too many. But no one can claim that same-day cloture motions were in response to Republican obstruction when there hasn't been any deliberation whatsoever before they are filed.

The majority leader can criticize me and stoop to petty name-calling, but the data I cited was from the non-partisan Congressional Research Service.

This data on same-day cloture speaks for itself. His excuse, ''The Republicans made me do it'' won't fly. In fact, Senator REID has been caught before trying to blame Republicans for his cloture motions.

The Washington Post Fact Checker gave him two Pinocchios for his claim that Republicans were to blame for a record number of cloture motions.

He tried to claim that every cloture motion represented a Republican filibuster. However, the source he cited was a report by the Congressional Research Service containing a long section under the heading ''Cloture Motions Do Not Correspond With Filibusters.''

That heading pretty much says it all, but it contains about a page and a half of explanation as to why it is erroneous to claim that all cloture motions are in response to filibusters.

Certainly, cloture motions which are filed before there has been one word of debate cannot possibly be in response to a filibuster. Those are the cloture motions my criticism was directed at yesterday.

This is also the problem addressed by the Stop Cloture Abuse Resolution which I introduced yesterday with 25 of my colleagues.

The majority leader did not even attempt to defend the practice of same-day cloture, and understandably so. There is no justification for it.

The majority leader's refusal to acknowledge such a blatant problem, much less put a stop to it, just confirms the need for the Stop Cloture Abuse Resolution.

I should add that the deliberative process can work if it is allowed to, and the bill we have been debating yesterday and today is evidence of that.

It isn't just Republicans who would prefer to go back to the way we did things when the Senate functioned as a deliberative body as it was designed to.

The manager of S. 1086, Senator MIKULSKI, said earlier today, ''This is one of the first times in a couple of years where we have had an open amendment process, and in some ways we're getting adjusted to how that actually works. This is terrific.''

So even prominent Members of the majority party acknowledge an open amendment process is the way things should work. I have offered a constructive idea along with 25 colleagues to make that the norm again.

Instead of criticizing me, the majority leader should join me and become part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, the issue of climate change is a pressing issue and so I wish to commend the work of my colleagues, and to reiterate my concerns.

Climate change is real. Unfortunately, while so many of my colleagues across the aisle talk about the need to address our debt to avoid burdening future generations, too many of these same Senators refuse to take action to address the climate debt we are passing on. Most frustrating of all, we know what can be done to fix this problem.

We know the solutions to reduce pollution and emissions that cause climate change create good-paying jobs. Jobs that put money back in families' pockets through low-cost energy sources and increased efficiencies in homes. These solutions make our Nation more energy independent, and our businesses more globally competitive. They give us cleaner air and water, and protect the health of our children and grandchildren.

I know that we can take these steps because I have seen it in my home State of Washington. In Washington, our biodiesel producers are replacing imported oil with clean, renewable, home-grown fuels. Companies like McKinstry, who have made a home in the Northwest, are leaders in helping cities, hospitals, and others create energy efficient, sustainable buildings.

In the past, the United States has led the world in innovative ways to create energy, but recently we have ceded our clean energy leadership to countries like China and Germany because too many have stood in the way of making necessary investments. When we passed the Bipartisan Budget Act this past December, we proved that Democrats and Republicans can put ideology aside and work together to make progress on our Nation's challenges.

Climate change is no less a challenge than any of the other issues we face, and we have a moral obligation to address it. As I have said, addressing this challenge will create good-paying jobs here at home in fields like pollution management, energy efficiency, and renewable energy goods. And best of all, we can pass a healthier planet on to our children.

I'm hopeful that Republicans and Democrats can find common ground and come together to move us forward.

TRIBUTE TO JOAN BARRON

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, at a small desk on the third floor of the Wyoming State Capitol sits Joan Barron. For 48 years, Joan has served as a reporter for the Casper Star Tribune, sharing Wyoming's government with Wyoming's people. On March 21, 2014, Joan is retiring.

Joan started her career in Rock Springs, WY. She was a nurse, but answered an ad to freelance for the Casper Star Tribune in 1966. The editors were impressed with Joan's work, and asked her to move to Cheyenne. Armed with a notebook and a typewriter, she became the capitol bureau reporter in 1969—a position she has held to this day.

Historians will undoubtedly use Joan's work to understand the State of Wyoming. She covered seven governors, 50 legislative sessions, three boom and bust cycles. She knows the issues, she knows the players, she does her homework. Throughout her career, Joan has been a trusted source, delivering the news of the day to the people of Wyoming. When an article has the byline, Joan Barron, Star-Tribune capitol bureau, a reader can be assured of fact-based, comprehensive reporting.

While Joan says she never wanted to be the story, she has had a tremendous impact on how those in Wyoming government conduct business. She was integral to the creation of the Wyoming Open Meetings Law in 1973. Due in part to Joan's observations, questions and perseverance, the Wyoming legislature passed ethics legislation. She held people accountable—and our State is better for it.

Just last week, Joan quietly announced her retirement—not wanting any fanfare. That is typical of her. She is always the observer, never the center of attention.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Joan Barron for 48 years of reporting. She has recorded over one-third of Wyoming's history—and her perspective will be missed. Wyoming owes her a great debt of gratitude.

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO PREVENTIVE SERVICES

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, the U.S. Supreme Court will soon hear arguments on the Tenth Circuit's overly expansive decision to allow a secular, for-profit corporation's owners or shareholders to impose their religious beliefs on employees by denying female employees access to preventive health care, including insurance coverage for contraception.

As detailed in the amicus brief filed by myself and 18 fellow Senators in January, Congress never intended such a broad and unprecedented expansion of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, RFRA, to deny women access to health care benefits. We urged the Court to clarify that RFRA does not allow for-profit companies to deny health coverage to employees based on the religious objections of the company's owners.

It should be clear that the Tenth Circuit's decision runs counter to a plain-text reading of RFRA and the law's extensive and informative legislative history. Congress passed RFRA to advance a single, limited purpose: to restore the compelling-interest test to government actions that burden the free exercise of religion. But the test only extended free-exercise rights only to individuals and religious, non-profit organizations. No Supreme Court precedent had extended free-exercise rights to secular, for-profit corporations.

Congress enacted the Affordable Care Act with full understanding of RFRA—and of its limited purpose. Congress also recognized the need to balance the government's compelling interest in extending women's access to preventive health care with respect for the traditional free-exercise rights of individuals and religious organizations, which is why Congress included the Affordable Care Act's religious exemptions for individuals and religious organizations. These exemptions strike such a balance precisely and accurately, and appropriately recognize the free-exercise rights Congress intended for RFRA to protect.

It's unacceptable and inappropriate for bosses at for-profit corporations to pick and choose which health care services their employees can receive. So far, 360,000 Oregon women have benefited from expanded access to preventive services, including contraceptives. Women's health choices should be made between them and their doctors—not their bosses.

TAIWAN RELATIONS ACT

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Madam President, I wish to speak about U.S.-Taiwan relations. In just a few weeks, on April 10, 2014, we will recognize the 35th anniversary of the enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act, TRA. This important legislation has served as the legal basis for our relations with Taiwan and has been critical in defining our diplomatic, economic, and strategic relationship.

Although I was not yet a Member of Congress in 1979 when this legislation was passed, I have had the pleasure over the past 28 years to be active in U.S.-Taiwan matters and have seen the benefits of the TRA.

Over the past several decades we have seen our relationship with Taiwan grow. Taiwan's innovative and expanding economy has led to significant trade opportunities for both of our countries. Particularly in the area of agriculture—which is South Dakota's No. 1 industry—Taiwan has grown to be a key trading partner, representing one of the most significant consumers of South Dakota corn, soybeans, and wheat. Our trade relationship has only strengthened over the years, and I am hopeful that market opportunities will continue to expand.

While we mark this important milestone in U.S.-Taiwan relations, I would also like to say farewell to Representative King Pu-tsung, Taiwan's chief envoy to the United States. Ambassador King was recently appointed to be the Secretary-General of the Republic of China (Taiwan)'s National Security Council, a position equivalent to our National Security Advisor to the President. I congratulate him on this new opportunity and trust that in his new role we will continue to work together to further strengthen close ties between our two countries.

The people of Taiwan have proven to be true friends of the United States, and I look forward to continuing this friendship well into the future.

SUPPORTING JOSH HARDY

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I would like to take a moment to express sincere gratitude to the students, faculty and staff of Hugh Mercer Elementary School and the entire Fredericksburg, VA region—for the way the community has rallied together to support one of their own: seven-year-old Josh Hardy.

Josh is at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis recovering from a life-threatening virus following a bone marrow transplant in January. This week, I am pleased our office had an opportunity to work with Josh's family and Josh's friends and fans in Fredericksburg to get this young fighter access to an experimental medication that could save his life.

Since Josh was an infant, he has battled cancer—successfully. While he was undergoing chemotherapy—in kindergarten, mind you—Josh and his two brothers worked to raise almost $5,000 to help other sick children who were being treated at St. Jude Children's Hospital.

Doctors at St. Jude Children's Hospital believe the only drug that can help Josh is still in the testing phase by its manufacturer, Chimerix. And unfortunately, it appeared that policies of the FDA and Chimerix would prevent Josh from receiving the drug.

Upon hearing that news, family, friends, Mercer teachers and classmates, local businesses, and nonprofit groups across the Fredericksburg region rallied together to make sure that Josh's voice was heard, here on Capitol Hill and across the country.

They used social media to enlist the support of tens of thousands of people from across the country and around the world. Josh's family and friends contacted our office to see if we might be able to help.

That is when we reached out both to the FDA and the drug manufacturer to try to expedite the process to allow Josh to get access to this potentially life-saving medication. We got the good news Tuesday night, directly from the CEO of Chimerix. By the following morning, Josh was undergoing treatment with this new drug. It is still too soon to know if this experimental medication will help, but we are all pulling for this remarkable boy.

Today I want to salute Josh's teachers and classmates at High Mercer Elementary School for all that they have done to rally around this family. The commitment of Josh's teachers to advocate on behalf of the Hardy family is a testament to their dedication to public service and to creating stronger communities and a better Virginia.

And I am grateful and proud of the Fredericksburg community, where folks truly came together in a good cause on behalf of Josh and his family. Their persistence and dedication exemplifies what we call ''the Virginia spirit.''

I also want to publicly thank the executives and employees of Chimerix, and officials at the Food and Drug Administration, for moving so quickly to look for a way to be helpful to the Hardy family. My staff is already in conversation with the FDA about ways we might streamline the process to allow families in the Hardy's situation to have easier access to potentially life-saving drugs even as these drugs are being evaluated by the FDA.

We are all pulling for Josh Hardy. We are praying for his family and his medical team, and we are so grateful for the tremendous support Josh Hardy is receiving from his Hugh Mercer teachers and classmates and the entire Fredericksburg community.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

OUR ENERGY FUTURE

• Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask that a copy of my remarks to the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners be printed in the RECORD.

The remarks follow.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGULATORY UTILITY COMMISSIONERS

Five years ago, all the talk in the United States was about a cap-and-trade program and deliberately raising the price of energy as a way of achieving clean energy independence. Two years ago, I visited Germany—a country that has adopted such a policy—and what I found was an energy mess.

The Germans are subsidizing wind and solar, and closing their nuclear plants—but because they are a big manufacturing country they still need nuclear, coal and natural gas for reliable electricity. So to meet those needs, the Germans are buying nuclear power from France, and gas from an unreliable partner, Russia. They're even building their own new coal plants in order to have enough reliable electricity.

The end result of this bizarre policy is that Germany has among the highest household electricity prices in the European Union. When I asked an economic minister what he would say to a manufacturer concerned about energy costs in Germany, he said, ''I would suggest he go somewhere else.''

This concern in Germany is spreading across Europe. A recent headline in the New York Times reads ''Europe, Facing Economic Pain, May Ease Climate Rules.'' The accompanying article stated that ''the European Union proposed an end to binding national targets for renewable energy production after 2020.''

Europeans may end some of their climate targets to avoid throwing a big, wet regulatory blanket over their economies. The point is: in a competitive world, energy policies have a lot to do with a country's economic well-being.

When you compare our country's energy needs with the example of Germany, you can see that we are at a fork in the road on our national energy policy. Which path we take will help determine how well the United States competes in a 21st-century economy.

The surest path toward cheap, clean, reliable energy is to end Washington's obsession with wasteful energy subsidies and to instead rely on free enterprise and government-sponsored research.

Or, we can take the path of Germany, which is where we are headed if we continue to waste tax dollars on subsidies that prop up one type of energy over another.

In the United States today, production of electricity from natural gas has grown to 28 percent of total production. This is at the expense of coal, which is down to 39 percent. Nuclear power holds relatively steady at 19 percent. Hydro is 7 percent. Wind, solar, biomass and geothermal make up only 6 percent, of which 4 percent is wind.

In Washington and in state capitols, there are debates about whether to push this 6 percent of electricity by renewables to a much higher number by forcing a so-called national renewable energy standard, or by further subsidizing an energy source because it's deemed ''clean,'' or by implementing carbon regulations even though Congress has never approved carbon regulations. To avoid the path of Germany and maintain our competiveness, I suggest four grand principles for the United States' energy future: 1) cheaper, not more expensive, energy; 2) clean, not just renewable, energy; 3) research and development, not government mandates; and 4) free market, not government picking ''winners and losers.''

The first step on the right path to our energy future—and a prime example of how to apply these principles—is to not extend the massive wind production tax credit that expired on January 1. I believe energy companies basically should enjoy the same tax benefits non-energy companies receive, which is largely the case today with traditional forms of energy.

I believe that through tax reform we should simplify the tax code and eliminate most preferences for specific types of energy production. This would save a lot of money, which could be better spent on doubling energy research and reducing the federal debt.

The worst culprit for wasteful energy subsidies is Big Wind. Under current law, the wind production tax credit will have provided an estimated $22 billion to wind producers between 1992 and 2022, according to the Congressional Research Service. And that doesn't include the $12.9 billion that wind received from President Obama's federal stimulus bill.

I've been fighting against this subsidy for years because I think it is a bad deal for American taxpayers, a bad deal for rate payers, and a bad deal for U.S. competitiveness. And if we want to see what the result of those policies would be let's look again at Germany, and other parts of Europe.

Just last week energy expert Daniel Yergin wrote that one of the biggest themes at this year's World Economic Forum in Davos was ''competitiveness.'' ''This particular rivalry [competitiveness] pits the United States head-on against Europe,'' he said.

Yergin says that energy is one way to measure competitiveness, and that was the focus at Davos. He went on to say, ''European industrial electricity prices are twice as high as those in some countries and are much higher than those in the United States. To a significant degree, this is the result of a pell-mell push toward high-cost renewable electricity (wind and solar), which is imposing heavy costs on consumers and generating large fiscal burdens for governments.'' A January 2014 New York Times article entitled ''German Energy Official Sounds a Warning'' reports that, ''The minister, Sigmar Gabriel, in his first major policy speech, said at an annual energy conference organized by the publication Handelsblatt in Berlin that annual consumer costs for renewables of about 24 billion euros, or about $32.5 billion, were already pushing the limits of what the German economy, Europe's most powerful, could handle.'' In a BBC News article, ''Can Germany afford its energy bender' shift to green power?'' a minister for economics in Germany says that Germany's ''law on renewable energy will not only lead to increased electricity prices, but it is also a non-market, planned system that endangers the industrial base of'' the German economy.

This doesn't sound like the path down which America should go to build a 21st-century economy. And yet, forces in Congress are preparing to renew the expired wind subsidy and continue to take us down the path that's currently causing problems in Germany. The problem here is not being ''for or against renewable'' energy or just wasting taxpayers' tax dollars. The problem is that these huge subsidies are propping up renewable energy at the expense of reliable energy. In the case of wind, this increases the occurrence of negative pricing.'

Government subsidies are so generous that in some markets wind developers can give away electricity and still make a profit. Such negative pricing' rewards expensive, unreliable power like wind and undercuts and punishes cheap, reliable power from nuclear and coal plants. This is a growing problem in the U.S. The more wind we subsidize and the more we build, the bigger the problem becomes. For a snapshot of where we are going, let's take another look at Europe.

A Wall Street Journal opinion piece by Rupert Darwall entitled ''Europe's Stark Renewables Lesson'' reports that ''the European Commission acknowledges that, because member states over-incentivized investment in renewables, they compounded the challenges'' posed by non-dispatchable electricity generation like wind.

The same threat applies to some markets here in the U.S., according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Negative pricing' caused by wind power tied to energy subsidies undercuts the operation of nuclear plants and could contribute to closing as many as 25 percent of our nuclear plants by 2020.

So, these subsidies are putting at risk our largest source of clean, cheap, reliable electricity—nuclear—and more importantly, putting at risk energy diversity.

This audience understands more than most the importance of energy diversity to help reduce price spikes and have a more reliable grid.

The recent polar vortex cold wave reminded us of the importance of diversity. When natural gas prices spiked, and demand was unusually high, nuclear and coal generations saved the day. You can't put a price on diversity, but when you need the lights to come on and the heater to kick in, diversity can be lifesaving, and wind subsidies are threatening that.

We need to go down a path to cheap, clean, reliable electricity.

That path would provide a pro-growth, pro-jobs energy policy that puts us more firmly on the path toward a competitive future and protects households and business across the country, especially during extreme conditions.

To start, the best way to achieve cheap, clean, reliable energy is through market-driven solutions. Some will say, well what about oil and gas, what about nuclear subsidies? The president in his State of the Union address called for an end to tax policy that gives ''$4 billion a year to fossil fuel industries.'' To begin with, fossil fuels contribute 67 percent of our electricity. ''Big Wind'' received $1.4 billion through the wind production tax credit last year but only produces 4 percent of America's electricity.

The president often likes to cite the billions of dollars in subsidies for the oil and gas industry. But here's the catch: many of these ''Big Oil'' subsidies the president likes to highlight are the same or similar to tax provisions that benefit other industries.

For example, Xerox, Microsoft and Caterpillar all benefit from tax provisions like the manufacturing tax credit, amortization, or depreciation of used equipment that the president is counting as ''Big Oil'' subsidies. And, of course, wind energy companies also benefit from many similar tax provisions—but the production tax credit for wind is in addition to regular tax code provisions that benefit many companies.

We should end wasteful, long-term special tax breaks, both for ''Big Oil'' and ''Big Wind.'' We should use the money we save from ending wasteful subsidies to reduce the federal debt and double energy research. Then we can let the free market determine the course forward, rather than the government picking ''winners and losers.''

In addition to supporting research, I believe it is appropriate for the government to jumpstart new technologies to allow time for the free enterprise system to take the reins, but these should be narrowly defined and temporary.

For example: Unconventional gas benefited from government research and a temporary tax credit—that expired in 1992. The full tax credit for plug-in electric cars was capped at 200,000 vehicles per manufacturer. The government provided research and licensing support for small modular reactors—but that ends after five years. There is a production

tax credit for nuclear power plants but it's limited to 6,000 megawatts.

On the other hand, we have the temporary wind production tax credit that was enacted in 1992 to jumpstart an industry, and according to the Congressional Research Service will cost taxpayers a total of $22 billion from 1992 through 2022. The most recent one-year extension—which gives wind developers 10 years of subsidies—would cost $12 billion over 10 years, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation. This is for what President Obama's former energy secretary called a ''mature technology'' that produces only 4 percent of our electricity and only works when the wind blows.

President Reagan used to say ''the nearest thing to eternal life we'll ever see on this Earth is a government program'' and that's too often the case with energy subsidies. The most glaring example is the more than 20-year-old subsidy for wind power, a technology that has matured. The United States uses 20 percent of all the electricity produced in the world for our computers, our businesses, our homes and our national defense. To rely on unreliable wind power when nuclear, coal and natural gas are available is the energy equivalent of going to war in sailboats. Those who oppose the path I am suggesting like to say that nuclear and coal aren't clean forms of electricity.

While this path isn't without its challenges, I'll take that argument on. Nuclear power is our largest source of air-pollution-free electricity, 60 percent. Then people opposing nuclear power will say, ''what about the waste?'' This is an issue of great concern to many of you. To address this challenge, I have cosponsored legislation with Senators Wyden, Murkowski and Feinstein that would implement the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future.

The bill would create a new federal agency to oversee the nuclear waste program, and ensure that progress on consolidated storage sites and repositories moves along parallel tracks. The federal government should not be collecting fees without keeping its promise to dispose of the nuclear waste now sitting in your states. The D.C. Court of Appeals opinion in your case has made this point clear.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has held two hearings on the legislation, and we are working toward having the committee hold a markup and favorably report the bill so it can move to the Senate floor.

We know how to control mercury, smog and soot, and many utilities are leading the way in installing these technologies, including the Tennessee Valley Authority.

So in order to burn coal in a clean way, the only remaining obstacle is carbon emissions from coal plants. The best way to solve that problem is not through a cap-and-trade system, which would raise prices, but instead through research and development, which could lower them. Finding a way to capture carbon from coal plants and turn it into a product that can be sold is the Holy Grail of energy research—and we are working on solutions that will do just that.

ARPA-E, a small energy research agency, is working with private companies to take the carbon from coal plants and feed it to microbes that with electricity can produce liquid transportation fuels. Such a solution might even make coal cheaper than it is today.

When you think about it that way, this crossroads I'm talking about—this fork in the road between clean, cheap, reliable energy and the mess of Germany and other European countries—is not just a challenge, but an opportunity.

It's true that our energy needs are great, and that there are obstacles to meeting them. But we also have an opportunity to get Washington out of the way and to liberate our free enterprise system. If we do, the path toward cheap, clean, reliable energy is full of possibility.●

TRIBUTE TO MITCH FOX

● Mr. HELLER. Madam President, today I wish to honor Nevadan Mitch Fox for his dedication to journalistic fairness and quality of character.

With almost 39 years of experience working for Las Vegas PBS, Mitch has come to be recognized as a journalist of integrity. Facilitating debate over a multitude of topics, Mitch has shown nothing but respect to his guests, always appreciating and inviting differences of opinion. Whether moderating a debate or a roundtable interview, the respect that Mitch commands encourages quality conversation and civil dialogue.

Mitch's legacy of nonpartisan journalism has made him a go-to source for news coverage. He serves as a shining example within his profession.

I will remember Mitch's welcoming and professional demeanor fondly, and I wish him luck on the next phase of his already distinguished career.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this respectable Nevada journalist.●

TRIBUTE TO WILLIE McTEAR

● Mr. HELLER. Madam President, I wish to honor long-time Las Vegas resident and veteran, Willie McTear, who served our Nation in Vietnam.

Our Nation's veterans—the very men and women who put themselves in harm's way—protect the freedoms that Americans enjoy every day. I am grateful to these brave men and women in the Armed Forces, as well as their families, who make significant sacrifices in service to our Nation.

I am humbled to honor Mr. McTear for his dedication while serving in the military as a Rifleman/90mm Specialist. Mr. McTear is a veteran of Charlie Company, which was one of the last combat infantries of 160 men to be drafted, trained, and sent to fight in Vietnam. Despite significant risks and challenges, the men of the 4th Battalion of the 47th Infantry saw their service as a rite of passage. However, it did not come without the wounds of war and the loss of close comrades, and for that, our Nation is indebted to these servicemembers.

Serving on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I recognize that Congress has a responsibility not only to honor these brave individuals, but to ensure they are cared for when they return home. I remain committed to upholding this promise for our veterans and servicemembers in Nevada and throughout the Nation.

Today, we commend Mr. McTear for his acts of valor and the continuous sacrifices made by all of our servicemembers to ensure the safety and security of our Nation. We owe them and their families a great deal of gratitude for their commitment to America. I am proud to join the citizens of Nevada in recognizing Mr. McTear, and I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring him for his service on behalf of this great Nation.●

2014 PARALYMPIANS

● Mr. HELLER. Madam President, today I wish to extend a well-deserved congratulations to Amy Purdy, a Nevadan who has earned the unique distinction of being named to the 2014 United States Paralympic Team. Amy is the only double amputee competing in snowboard cross. Ranking internationally as the No. 2 athlete in the sport in her field, I am proud to recognize her and some of our Nation's greatest athletes as members of Paralympic Team USA.

A Las Vegas native, Amy embodies the epitome of battle born having defeated a number of setbacks after contracting a deadly strain of meningitis at only 19 years of age. Amy overcame this significant challenge without hesitation and stands stronger than ever today. Just 3 months after her release from the hospital in 2001, Amy was back on her snowboard, shredding all statistics that said she should not have been alive.

The snow is not the only place where Amy showcases her talents. Upon her return from Sochi, Amy will compete on season 18 of Dancing with the Stars, where she hopes to raise awareness for the Paralympic movement.

In addition to challenging herself athletically, Amy champions all unique levels of abilities through her founding work with Adaptive Action Sports, an action sport development program for youth, young adults, and wounded veterans, all with permanent, physical disabilities.

I wish Amy the best of luck on her trip in Sochi. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating this remarkable athlete and Silver State citizen as we show support for the entire U.S. Paralympic Team.●

TRIBUTE TO ED VOGEL

● Mr. HELLER. Madam President, I wish to honor Nevadan Ed Vogel for his longtime dedication to journalistic integrity and for providing Nevadans with quality reporting. Working 35 years with the Las Vegas Review-Journal, Ed has covered the gamut of news stories as the RJ's Capital Bureau Chief.

My fondest memories of Ed go as far back as when I served as secretary of state. It was with great pleasure that Ed and I operated with an open-door policy. Whenever he walked into my office, I knew I should settle in for an interesting story or an entertaining

anecdote. I look back on those conversations fondly. Ed is a true character, and one that will be greatly missed in the halls of our Nation's Capitol.

Well-known throughout Nevada for his endless curiosity, Ed was introduced to the Nevada Newspaper Hall of Fame in 2012. His experience spans the better part of four decades, beginning back in 1971, he serves as an example within his profession. Committed to the story, truth above all, his words' worth today is immeasurable.

As Ed announces his retirement, I reflect fondly upon our interviews together and wish him the best of luck in his new era of life.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing this upstanding Nevada journalist.●

TRIBUTE TO LAWRENCE SELLERS

● Mr. KIRK. Madam President, on the afternoon of January 29, 2013, Lawrence D. Sellers, Jr. and his friends were relaxing in Chicago's Vivian Gordon Harsh Park after finishing their high school final exams. Shots rang out. Lawrence pushed his girlfriend out of harm's way. A bullet struck his left leg below the calf. And as the group tried to run away, Lawrence heard a scream and turned around to see his friend, Hadiya Pendleton, falling to the ground.

Hadiya's murder has become a rallying cry in Chicago to give law enforcement the tools they need to reduce gang and gun violence. I remain committed to passing legislation that bears her name to stop the straw purchasing and trafficking of guns that can end up in the hands of dangerous gangs like the Gangster Disciples. I will continue working with Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy to ensure additional Federal resources are promptly delivered to implement a holistic, all-of-government strategy to make our communities safer.

But today I wish to recognize Lawrence for his bravery and heroism—because inside this tragedy, we can find a spark of hope to restore our faith in what is possible when good people are not afraid to do the right thing. Lawrence is that spark.

A senior at King College Prep in North Kenwood with aspirations of becoming a math teacher, Lawrence is an Eagle Scout, and, just last month, he received the Honor Medal from the Boy Scouts of America.

''Doing the right thing, you shouldn't get an award for it,'' Lawrence said with great humility. ''But I am honored to receive it, of course; I just feel like it's just the right thing.''

In a community torn apart by gang violence, it is not always easy to do the right thing—or to always know what the right thing is in the first place. That is what makes groups like the Boy Scouts and other community youth groups so important in a holistic antigang violence strategy.

I am proud to join the Boy Scouts of America in honoring Lawrence Sellers. Lawrence is a role model to his peers and a reminder that supporting civic-minded youth organizations like the Boy Scouts must be a part of our antiviolence, antigang strategy.●

TRIBUTE TO PATRICK SULLIVAN

● Mr. KIRK. Madam President, I wish to recognize and thank Mr. Patrick Sullivan, the retiring director of the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center—FHCC—in North Chicago, IL. Lovell Hospital is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense—DoD,—integrating all medical care into the Nation's first truly joint Federal health care facility with a single combined VA and Navy mission. The men and women of Lovell Hospital serve approximately 67,000 servicemembers, veterans, and their families through a network of eight facilities in Illinois and Wisconsin.

Mr. Sullivan served as the facility's first director when it was formally established in October 2010. As director, he took on the daunting task of integrating the North Chicago VA Medical Center and Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes and combining the missions of caring for active duty military members, their families, military retirees and veterans.

Mr. Sullivan has skillfully led a VA/DoD team of over 3,000 as they have developed a national model for integrated Federal health care.

Mr. Sullivan had a long and successful career caring for our Nation's heroes. He served as the director of the North Chicago VA Medical Center before its integration into the Lovell FHCC. He has worked at VA Medical Centers across the country, including centers in Prescott, AZ, Portland; OR, Martinez, CA and Poplar Bluff, MO. Mr. Sullivan also extends his leadership skills to his community, serving on the board of several community organizations in Lake County, Ill.

I wish to personally thank Pat Sullivan for his service to our country and its veterans. His tireless efforts to make the Lovell Hospital vision a reality will not be forgotten. His work was ahead of its time and stands as a model for the future.●

● Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I rise today to honor GEN Robert Cone, commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. After 35 years of service, General Cone has announced he will retire from the Army on March 17, 2014, and it is my pleasure to celebrate General Cone's career and express the pride that all New Hampshire citizens feel in recognizing his accomplishments. As one of only 10 4-star generals in the U.S. Armed Forces, General Cone has reached the pinnacle of success for a professional soldier. Perhaps more importantly, he has left an indelible mark on the character of the U.S. Army and the young men and women who comprise the heart and soul of it.

Born and raised in Manchester, NH, General Cone is a graduate of Memorial High School, where as a member of the football team he was inspired by his coach to pursue an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. After successfully completing his studies at West Point, General Cone was commissioned as an armor officer and began a career that would take him around the United States and the world in a range of leadership roles, including Afghanistan as the commander of the Combined Security Transition Command and Iraq as commander of the III Corps.

In addition to his role as an Army officer, General Cone embraced the role of scholar, earning a master's degree in sociology from the University of Texas, Austin, which he leveraged as an instructor and assistant professor at West Point in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership. General Cone also earned advanced degrees from the Command and General Staff College and the Naval War College. Fully engaged in the Army's efforts to improve training and leadership development, General Cone was appointed military director of the Joint Advanced Warfighting Program at the Institute of Defense Analysis, and also led the Joint Forces Command's Lessons Learned Team in Iraq. During his command of the Army's National Training Center at Fort Irvin, General Cone oversaw a shift in training towards counterinsurgency operations at a crucial time in the War on Terror.

In 2011 General Cone assumed command of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, TRADOC, placing him at the forefront of planning for the future of the Army. He has approached each challenge with the fundamental understanding that war is a human endeavor dependent on a person's will just as much as equipment and machinery. Just one of many examples of the leadership and foresight exhibited by General Cone, he has served as an articulate proponent of ''Soldier 2020'', a service-wide effort to maximize combat effectiveness by casting aside gender constructs. General Cone leaves behind a well-established legacy as commander of TRADOC.

The U.S. Army will no doubt continue to benefit from General Cone's leadership and vision for years to come. I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in thanking GEN Robert Cone for his service to our country and wish him the best in his retirement.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:31 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 4138. An act to protect the separation of powers in the Constitution of the United States by ensuring that the President takes care that the laws be faithfully executed, and for other purposes.

At 4:34 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following joint resolution, without amendment:

S.J. Res. 32. Joint resolution providing for the reappointment of John W. McCarter as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

At 7:38 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 93. Concurrent resolution directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make technical corrections in the enrollment of H.R. 3370.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 4138. An act to protect the separation of powers in the Constitution of the United States by ensuring that the President takes care that the laws be faithfully executed, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 2122. A bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare sustainable growth rate and to improve Medicare and Medicaid payments, and for other purposes.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

H.R. 3474. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

H.R. 3979. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

S. 2148. A bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–4927. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Oranges and Grapefruit Grown in Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas and Imported Oranges; Change in Size Requirements for Oranges'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–14–0009; FV14–906–1 IR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 13, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4928. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Oranges and Grapefruit Grown in Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas; Change in Size and Grade Requirements for Oranges'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–14–0015; FV14–906–2 IR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4929. A communication from the Regulatory Specialist, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Base III Conforming Amendments Related to Cross-References, Subordinated Debt and Limits Based on Regulatory Capital'' (RIN1557–AD73) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 11, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4930. A communication from the Secretary of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 2013 report (covering trade in calendar year 2012) relative to the impact of the Andean Trade Preference Act on U.S. trade and employment; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4931. A communication from the Chief of the Trade and Commercial Regulations Branch, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Extension of Import Restrictions on Archaeological and Ecclesiastical Ethnological Materials from Honduras'' (RIN1515–AE00) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4932. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Application of Section 871(m) to Specified Equity-Linked Instruments'' (Notice 2014–14) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 11, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4933. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Information Reporting of Minimum Essential Coverage'' ((RIN1545–BL31) (TD 9660)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 11, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4934. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report certifying for fiscal year 2014 that no United Nations agency or United Nations affiliated agency grants any official status, accreditation, or recognition to any organization which promotes and condones or seeks the legalization of pedophilia, or which includes as a subsidiary or member any such organization; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–4935. A communication from the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Benefits Payable in Terminated Single-Employer Plans; Interest Assumptions for Valuing and Paying Benefits'' (29 CFR Part 4022) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2014; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–4936. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Strategic Plan for the Department of Health and Human Services for fiscal years 2014–2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–4937. A communication from the Members of the Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's Congressional Justification of Budget Estimates Report for fiscal year 2015; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–4938. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''General Services Administration Acquisition Regulation; Electronic Contracting Initiative (ECI)'' (RIN3090–AJ36) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–4939. A communication from the Director, Office of Government Ethics, transmitting, pursuant to law, the strategic plan for the Office of Government Ethics for fiscal years 2014 through 2018; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–4940. A communication from the President of the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Foundation's Annual Report for the year ending September 30, 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–4941. A communication from the Deputy Associate Director for Management and Administration and Designated Reporting Official, Office on National Drug Control Policy, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Director of National Drug Control Policy, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2014; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–4942. A communication from the Deputy Director of the Regulation Policy and Management Office of the General Counsel, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Disclosures to Participate in State Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs'' (RIN2900–AO45) received in the Office of the

President of the Senate on March 12, 2014; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC–4943. A communication from the Chairwomen of the Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Federal Trade Commission Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014–2018''; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4944. A communication from the Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Administration's decision to enter into a contract with a private security screening company to provide screening services at Kansas City International Airport; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4945. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Houma Navigation Canal, Mile Marker 35.5 to 36.5, and Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Mile Marker 59.0 to 60.0, West of Harvey Locks, bank to bank; Houma, Terrebonne Parish, LA'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2012–0880)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4946. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Bone Island Triathlon, Atlantic Ocean; Key West, FL'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2013–0905)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4947. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Vessel Movement, Christina River; Wilmington, DE'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2013–1002)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4948. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; BWRC Southwest Showdown Three; Parker, AZ'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2013–1034)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4949. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone for Ice Conditions; Baltimore Captain of the Port Zone'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2013–0509)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4950. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Olympus Tension Leg Platform'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2013–0070)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4951. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Potomac and Anacostia Rivers; Washington, D.C.'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2013–1050)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4952. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Security Zone; On the Water in Kailua Bay, Oahu, HI'' ((RIN1625–AA87) (Docket No. USCG–2013–0934)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4953. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Security Zone; North American International Auto Show; Detroit River, Detroit, MI'' ((RIN1625–AA87) (Docket No. USCG–2013–0034)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4954. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Security Zone; Mississippi River, New Orleans, LA'' ((RIN1625–AA87) (Docket No. USCG–2013–0994)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4955. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Special Local Regulations; Eleventh Coast Guard District Annual Marine Events'' ((RIN1625–AA08) (Docket No. USCG–2013–0361)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4956. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Anchorage Grounds and Safety Zone, Delaware River; Marcus Hook, PA'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2013–1014)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4957. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Anchorage Regulations: Pacific Ocean at San Nicolas Island, CA; Restricted Anchorage Areas'' ((RIN1625–AA01) (Docket No. USCG–2012–0967)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4958. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Alaska Marine Highway System Port Valdez Ferry Terminal, Port Valdez; Valdez, AK'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2012–0365)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4959. A communication from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, an annual report related to the Colorado River System Reservoirs for 2014; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–4960. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Annual Report to Congress on the Medicare and Medicaid Integrity Programs Report for Fiscal Year 2012''; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4961. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Review Group, Farm Service Agency, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Farm Storage Facility Loan Program; Security Requirements'' (RIN0560–AI19) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2013; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4962. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel (OSS–2014–0271); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. CARPER for the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

*L. Reginald Brothers, Jr., of Massachusetts, to be Under Secretary for Science and Technology, Department of Homeland Security.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE—TREATIES

The following executive reports of committee were submitted:

By Mr. MENENDEZ, from the Committee on Foreign Relations:

Treaty Doc. 112–4: Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing with 1 declaration (Ex. Rept. 113–1);

Treaty Doc. 113–1: Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean with 1 declaration (Ex. Rept. 113–2);

Treaty Doc. 113–2: Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean with 1 declaration (Ex. Rept. 113–3); and

Treaty Doc. 113–3: Amendment to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries with 1 declaration (Ex. Rept. 113–4)

The text of the committee-recommended resolutions of advice and consent to ratification are as follows:

[Treaty Doc. 112–4 Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing]

RESOLUTION OF ADVICE AND CONSENT TO RATIFICATION OF THE PORT STATE MEASURES AGREEMENT

Resolved, (two-thirds of the Senators present concurring therein),

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration.

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing, done at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in Rome, Italy, November 22, 2009, and signed by the United States November 22, 2009 (the ''Agreement'') (Treaty Doc. 112–4), subject to the declaration of section 2.

SEC. 2. Declaration.

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration: The Agreement is non self-executing.

[Treaty Doc. 113–1 Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean]

RESOLUTION OF ADVICE AND CONSENT TO RATIFICATION OF THE HIGH SEAS FISHERIES CONVENTION—SOUTH PACIFIC

Resolved, (two-thirds of the Senators present concurring therein),

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration.

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean, done at Auckland, New Zealand, November 14, 2009, and signed by the United States January 31, 2011 (the ''Convention'') (Treaty Doc. 113–1), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Sec. 2. Declaration.

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration: The Convention is not self-executing.

[Treaty Doc. 113–2 Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean]

RESOLUTION OF ADVICE AND CONSENT TO RATIFICATION OF THE HIGH SEAS FISHERIES CONVENTION—NORTH PACIFIC

Resolved, (two-thirds of the Senators present concurring therein),

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration.

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean, done at Tokyo February 24, 2012, and signed by the United States May 2, 2012 (the ''Convention'') (Treaty Doc. 113–2), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Sec. 2. Declaration.

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration: The Convention is not self-executing.

[Treaty Doc. 113–3 Amendment to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries]

RESOLUTION OF ADVICE AND CONSENT TO RATIFICATION OF THE AMENDMENT TO HIGH SEAS FISHERIES CONVENTION—NORTH ATLANTIC

Resolved, (two-thirds of the Senators present concurring therein),

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration.

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Amendment to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries, adopted at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) (the ''Amendment'') in Lisbon, Portugal, September 28, 2007 (Treaty Doc. 113–3), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Sec. 2. Declaration.

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration: The Amendment is not self-executing.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota:

S. 2125. A bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to ensure the integrity of voice communications and to prevent unjust or unreasonable discrimination among areas of the United States in the delivery of such communications; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mr. KIRK):

S. 2126. A bill to launch a national strategy to support regenerative medicine through the establishment of a Regenerative Medicine Coordinating Council, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. LEE (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2127. A bill to amend the Inspector General Act of 1978 relative to the powers of the Department of Justice Inspector General; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 2128. A bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Waco, Texas, as the ''Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center''; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. UDALL of New Mexico:

S. 2129. A bill to amend the Department of Energy Organization Act to improve technology transfer at the Department of Energy by reducing bureaucratic barriers to industry, entrepreneurs, and small businesses, as well as ensure that public investments in research and development generate the greatest return on investment for taxpayers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. FRANKEN):

S. 2130. A bill to direct the Secretary of Transportation to temporarily waive certain vehicle weight limits for covered logging vehicles, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. BEGICH (for himself and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 2131. A bill to amend the statutory authorities of the Coast Guard to strengthen Coast Guard prevention and response capabilities in the Arctic, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. ENZI):

S. 2132. A bill to amend the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act of 2005, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. WARREN, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. FRANKEN):

S. 2133. A bill to amend title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other statutes to clarify appropriate liability standards for Federal antidiscrimination claims; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MANCHIN:

S. 2134. A bill to withdraw approval for the drug Zohydro ER and prohibit the Food and Drug Administration from approving such drug unless it is reformulated to prevent abuse; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Mr. LEVIN):

S. 2135. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify that products derived from tar sands are crude oil for purposes of the Federal excise tax on petroleum, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MARKEY:

S. 2136. A bill to ensure that oil transported through the Keystone XL pipeline into the United States is used to reduce United States dependence on Middle Eastern oil; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2137. A bill to ensure that holders of flood insurance policies under the National Flood Insurance Program do not receive premium refunds for coverage of second homes; considered and passed.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN:

S. 2138. A bill to provide a payroll tax holiday for newly hired veterans; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. TOOMEY):

S. 2139. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the exclusion for small business stock, to provide incentives for small business high technology research investment, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. HEINRICH (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. UDALL of New Mexico):

S. 2140. A bill to improve the transition between experimental permits and commercial licenses for commercial reusable launch vehicles; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. ISAKSON):

S. 2141. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to provide an alternative process for review of safety and effectiveness of nonprescription sunscreen active ingredients and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. NELSON, and Mr. KIRK):

S. 2142. A bill to impose targeted sanctions on persons responsible for violations of human rights of antigovernment protesters in Venezuela, to strengthen civil society in Venezuela, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN:

S. 2143. A bill to increase access to capital for veteran entrepreneurs to help create jobs; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mrs. MCCASKILL:

S. 2144. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to apply Medicare competitive bidding to vacuum erection systems and to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to implement a national mail order program for such devices; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. REID, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 2145. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs to be designated as voter registration agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. COBURN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. FLAKE):

S. 2146. A bill to establish a United States Patent and Trademark Office Innovation Promotion Fund, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. HAGAN (for herself, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. NELSON):

S. 2147. A bill to amend Public Law 112–59 to provide for the display of the congressional gold medal awarded to the Montford Point Marines, United States Marine Corps, by the Smithsonian Institution and at other appropriate locations; considered and passed.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. HELLER, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. BROWN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. KIRK):

S. 2148. A bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes; read the first time.

By Mr. ENZI (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, and Mr. BARRASSO):

S.J. Res. 34. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to give States the right to repeal Federal laws and regulations when ratified by the legislatures of two-thirds of the several States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. WALSH):

S. Res. 383. A resolution designating March 2014 as ''National Middle Level Education Month''; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. CARDIN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. CASEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. WARNER, Mr. KIRK, Mr. KING, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. Res. 384. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate concerning the humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighboring countries, resulting humanitarian and development challenges, and the urgent need for a political solution to the crisis; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself and Mr. ENZI):

S. Res. 385. A resolution expressing the Sense of the Senate regarding the use of electronic devices on the floor of the Senate; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Ms. STABENOW (for herself, Mr. BEGICH, Mr. COONS, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. LEVIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota):

S. Res. 386. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of National Professional Social Work Month and World Social Work Day; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself and Mr. BEGICH):

S. Res. 387. A resolution celebrating the 2014 Arctic Winter GAmes, in Fairbanks, Alaska; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CHAMBLISS (for himself and Mr. CASEY):

S. Res. 388. A resolution designating March 22, 2014, as ''National Rehabilitation Counselors Appreciation Day''; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. Res. 389. A resolution designating the week of March 9, 2014, through March 15, 2014, as ''National Youth Synthetic Drug Awareness Week''; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. HATCH):

S. Res. 390. A resolution designating March 11, 2014, as ''World Plumbing Day''; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. REID (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. HATCH):

S. Res. 391. A resolution designating Jean M. Manning as Chief Counsel for Employment Emeritus of the United States Senate; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. REID (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL):

S. Res. 392. A resolution to authorize document production and representation in Care One Management LLC, et al. v. United Healthcare Workers East, SEIU 1199, et al; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 15

At the request of Mr. PAUL, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 15, a bill to amend chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, to provide that major rules of the executive branch shall have no force or effect unless a joint resolution of approval is enacted into law.

S. 56

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 56, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the credit for employers establishing workplace child care facilities, to increase the child care credit to encourage greater use of quality child care services, to provide incentives for students to earn child care-related degrees and to work in child care facilities, and to increase the exclusion for employer-provided dependent care assistance.

S. 132

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) were added as cosponsors of S. 132, a bill to provide for the admission of the State of New Columbia into the Union.

S. 375

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 375, a bill to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form.

S. 557

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 557, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve access to medication therapy management under part D of the Medicare program.

S. 772

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 772, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to clarify the Food and Drug Administration's jurisdiction over certain tobacco products, and to protect jobs and small businesses involved in the sale, manufacturing and distribution of traditional and premium cigars.

S. 842

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 842, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for an extension of the Medicare-dependent hospital (MDH) program and the increased payments under the Medicare low-volume hospital program.

S. 895

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 895, a bill to improve the ability of the Food and Drug Administration to study the use of antimicrobial drugs in food-producing animals.

S. 933

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 933, a bill to amend title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to extend the authorization of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program through fiscal year 2018.

S. 987

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 987, a bill to maintain the free flow of information to the public by providing conditions for the federally compelled disclosure of information by certain persons connected with the news media.

S. 1011

At the request of Mr. JOHANNS, the names of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1011, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the centennial of Boys Town, and for other purposes.

S. 1086

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

S. 1114

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1114, a bill to provide for identification of misaligned currency, require action to correct the misalignment, and for other purposes.

S. 1174

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1174, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.

S. 1188

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1188, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the definition of full-time employee for purposes of the individual mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

S. 1256

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1256, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to preserve the effectiveness of medically important antimicrobials used in the treatment of human and animal diseases.

S. 1406

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the names of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) were added as cosponsors of S. 1406, a bill to amend the Horse Protection Act to designate additional unlawful acts under the Act, strengthen penalties for violations of the Act, improve Department of Agriculture enforcement of the Act, and for other purposes.

S. 1410

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 1410, a bill to focus limited Federal resources on the most serious offenders.

S. 1456

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) were added as cosponsors of S. 1456, a bill to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Shimon Peres.

S. 1462

At the request of Mr. JOHANNS, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1462, a bill to extend the positive train control system implementation deadline, and for other purposes.

S. 1507

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1507, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify the treatment of general welfare benefits provided by Indian tribes.

S. 1622

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1622, a bill to establish the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children, and for other purposes.

S. 1708

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1708, a bill to amend title 23, United States Code, with respect to the establishment of performance measures for the highway safety improvement program, and for other purposes.

S. 1729

At the request of Mr. KAINE, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1729, a bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to provide further options with respect to levels of coverage under qualified health plans.

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1729, supra.

S. 1737

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1737, a bill to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend increased expensing limitations and the treatment of certain real property as section 179 property.

S. 1956

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1956, a bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to review the discharge characterization of former members of the Armed Forces who were discharged by reason of the sexual orientation of the member, and for other purposes.

S. 2013

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2013, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal of Senior Executive Service employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs for performance, and for other purposes.

S. 2037

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) were added as cosponsors of S. 2037, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to remove the 96-hour physician certification requirement for inpatient critical access hospital services.

S. 2058

At the request of Mr. BEGICH, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2058, a bill to establish a loan guarantee program for natural gas distribution grids to be installed in areas with extremely high energy costs.

S. 2059

At the request of Mr. BEGICH, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2059, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit for the purchase of heating and cooling equipment which meets the Energy Star program requirements and is used in certain high-cost energy communities, and for other purposes.

S. 2066

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2066, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit the intentional discrimination of a person or organization by an employee of the Internal Revenue Service.

S. 2067

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2067, a bill to prohibit the Department of the Treasury from assigning tax statuses to organizations based on their political beliefs and activities.

S. 2068

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2068, a bill to provide for the development and use of technology for personalized handguns, to require that, within 3 years, all handguns manufactured or sold in, or imported into, the United States incorporate such technology, and for other purposes.

S. 2069

At the request of Mr. KAINE, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2069, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand and modify the credit for employee health insurance expenses of small employers.

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2069, supra.

S. 2082

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the names of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2082, a bill to provide for the development of criteria under the Medicare program for medically necessary short inpatient hospital stays, and for other purposes.

S. 2086

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 2086, a bill to address current emergency shortages of propane and other home heating fuels and to provide greater flexibility and information for Governors to address such emergencies in the future.

S. 2091

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms.

MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2091, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the processing by the Department of Veterans Affairs of claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2105

At the request of Mr. COCHRAN, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2105, a bill to prohibit the Federal funding of a State firearms ownership database.

S. 2118

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2118, a bill to protect the separation of powers in the Constitution of the United States by ensuring that the President takes care that the laws be faithfully executed, and for other purposes.

S. CON. RES. 33

At the request of Mr. COCHRAN, the names of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL) and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. Con. Res. 33, a concurrent resolution celebrating the 100th anniversary of the enactment of the Smith-Lever Act, which established the nationwide Cooperative Extension System.

S. RES. 377

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 377, a resolution recognizing the 193rd anniversary of the independence of Greece and celebrating democracy in Greece and the United States.

AMENDMENT NO. 2807

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2807 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2808

At the request of Mr. MURPHY, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2808 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2810

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2810 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2822

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2822 proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2834

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2834 proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2835

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2835 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2839

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2839 proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2842

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2842 proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2843

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2843 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota:

S. 2125. A bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to ensure the integrity of voice communications and to prevent unjust or unreasonable discrimination among areas of the United States in the delivery of such communications; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss a widespread problem affecting rural communities in South Dakota and across our country. This issue represents both a public safety and economic issue for rural America.

For far too long, rural communities have experienced problems with long-distance or wireless telephone calls that are not being properly connected. The call completion problem extends beyond South Dakota and has affected telephone customers in dozens of states. These call failures create frustration and concern for family members trying to connect with friends and family, as well as small businesses losing business because they miss calls from customers. The problem also poses a serious public safety threat, such as when a police dispatcher cannot reach law enforcement or when a doctor cannot call a patient regarding follow-up care. Rural telephone customers affected by this problem are rightfully frustrated and demand a solution.

I first learned about this issue from the manager of a rural health clinic in Canistota, SD. The clinic has experienced a decline in business as a result of the call completion problems. Incoming calls regularly do not reach the clinic and therefore go unanswered. Additionally, some patients have heard misleading messages about the clinic's number being disconnected, which leads them to believe the clinic has closed. This is just one example of the negative impact this problem is having on communities and Main Street businesses across rural America.

To be honest, I could barely believe it when I first learned about this issue. Today, we should be worried about narrowing the digital divide not worrying whether rural communities have access to basic telephone service. While many factors could be at play, the Federal Communications Commission believes the use of third-party ''least cost routers'' to connect calls is a leading cause of the problem. It appears that some of these intermediate providers are failing to properly complete calls to avoid the higher access charges associated with rural telephone networks. It is particularly challenging to resolve the problem because calls are often dropped before they reach the rural telephone network, making it difficult for rural providers to pinpoint when and where problems occur.

Over the past few years, I have worked with many of my Senate colleagues, the FCC, telephone providers, and consumers to fix this problem and hold those causing this problem accountable. I would like to say a special thank you to Senators AMY KLOBUCHAR and DEB FISCHER for joining me in introducing a Sense of the Senate resolution last May that directed the FCC to take action to end these discriminatory practices. Since our resolution

was introduced, the commission unanimously approved rules to strengthen its ability to monitor and enforce the delivery of calls to rural areas. Although the commission's rulemaking and ongoing investigation represent a step in the right direction, a more immediate resolution is needed.

Today, I introduced the Public Safety and Economic Security Communications Act. This legislation takes immediate action to stop the bad actors that are failing to complete calls to rural areas. The bill includes common sense reforms that will help end the discriminatory delivery of calls by requiring voice providers to register with the FCC and comply with basic service quality standards. The legislation will help ensure that small businesses, families, and emergency responders in every corner of South Dakota and across our country can once again rely upon connection of their incoming telephone calls.

I invite my colleagues to join me in stopping this problem by cosponsoring the Public Safety and Economic Security Communications Act.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 2128. A bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Waco, Texas, as the ''Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center''; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2128

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) On October 12, 1919, Doris Miller was born in Waco, Texas.

(2) On September 16, 1939, Miller enlisted in United States Navy as mess attendant, third class at Naval Recruiting Station, Dallas, Texas to serve for a period of six years.

(3) On February 16, 1941, Miller received a change of rating to mess attendant, second class.

(4) On June 1, 1942, Miller received a change of rating to mess attendant, first class.

(5) On June 1, 1943, Miller received a change of rating, to cook, third class.

(6) On November 25, 1944, Miller was presumed dead by the Secretary of the Navy a year and a day after being carried as missing in action since November 24, 1943 while serving aboard U.S.S. Liscome Bay when that vessel was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean.

(7) Miller was awarded the Navy Cross Medal, Purple Heart Medal, American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and World War II Victory Medal.

(8) Miller's citation for the Navy Cross said ''for distinguished devotion to duty, extraordinary courage and disregard for his own personal safety during the attack on the Fleet in Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, by Japanese forces on December 7, 1941. While at the side of his Captain on the bridge, Miller, despite enemy strafing and bombing and in the face of a serious fire, assisted in moving his Captain, who had been mortally wounded, to a place of greater safety, and later manned and operated a machine gun directed at enemy Japanese attacking aircraft until ordered to leave the bridge.''.

(9) On June 20, 1973, the U.S.S. Miller (FF-1091), a Knox-class frigate, was named in honor of Doris Miller.

SEC. 2. NAME OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER, WACO, TEXAS.

The Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Waco, Texas, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the ''Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center''. Any reference to such medical center in any law, regulation, map, document, record, or other paper of the United States shall be considered to be a reference to the Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

By Mr. UDALL of New Mexico:

S. 2129. A bill to amend the Department of Energy Organization Act to improve technology transfer at the Department of Energy by reducing bureaucratic barriers to industry, entrepreneurs, and small businesses, as well as ensure that public investments in research and development generate the greatest return on investment for taxpayers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, New Mexico is blessed with some of the world's finest scientists. Each day, brilliant researchers at our universities and national labs go to work, and the results are amazing. At the same time, entrepreneurs in New Mexico and across the country are looking for opportunities to leverage innovation and to create new high-tech products and applications.

I rise to introduce the Accelerating Technology Transfer to Advance Innovation for the Nation—what we are calling the ATTAIN Act. That is a long title and an important goal: to improve the Department of Energy's technology transfer mission and to move innovation from the lab to the market. This grows our economy and creates a greater impact from our research and development dollars.

But before I talk to my colleagues about what the bill does, I wish to explain why it is so important. Tech transfer may seem to be just some technical issue, affecting bureaucratic rules or regulations, but it is more. It is how innovation in the lab today helps create jobs tomorrow.

In the 21st century, our national labs are the birthplace of innovation that creates new products and businesses and entire industries. Scientists are developing cutting-edge ways to power computers, to transmit new information, to heal the body. These innovations have great market potential in aviation, the military, medicine. They can be spun into high-tech businesses, changing the world, putting people to work.

In New Mexico, many companies have been formed as a result of discoveries at Los Alamos and Sandia National Labs. For example, Mustomo, Inc., a startup using technology developed at LANL, provides 3D ultrasound tomography for the detection of breast cancer, and technology from Sandia, used by TEAM Technologies, has created a device that can disable improvised explosive devices. Since 2010 over 4,000 units have been deployed and are saving lives in war zones right now.

But despite these amazing successes, we are operating at just a fraction of the potential. My home State could do so much more. New Mexico has all the ingredients to become a high-tech powerhouse. There are great minds at our national labs and military bases. We have fantastic universities and a booming energy industry. We need to create an environment to allow it to reach that potential. This is a major initiative of mine to help create the right formula to help industry take off in New Mexico. That is the purpose of my bill.

Almost a decade ago Congress created a Department of Energy Technology Transfer Coordinator to move innovation from the lab bench to the marketplace, to spur businesses and cutting-edge product development in New Mexico and across the Nation, to help entrepreneurs outside of the big-city powerhouses on the coasts get access to capital, to help them find partners in industry. But the Department has not come close to meeting its potential. A recent inspector general's report tells the story. It cited numerous deficiencies at DOE. The Department is over 7 years delinquent in finalizing its Technology Transfer Execution Plan, nor has DOE implemented a forward-looking process for its commercialization fund—over 2 years after being directed to do so by the former Secretary. In addition, the Technology Transfer Coordinator post at the Department has been vacant since April 2013. That is nearly 1 year after the previous Coordinator's departure. This position should be filled as quickly as possible with a qualified and motivated candidate.

Technology transfer is important in New Mexico and to the Nation, and the Department's failure to perform is unacceptable. My bill addresses these shortfalls. We can do better, and we have to. The first step is to make tech transfer a priority. Our goals are clear: consolidate bureaucracy, streamline contracting, and use models that have proven successful.

There are three key elements to my legislation.

First, it permanently authorizes new tools for the Secretary of Energy's new Department-wide technology transfer office to enable DOE and DOE's new Tech Transfer Coordinator to meet their responsibilities and to measure and report their progress. Better coordination is absolutely crucial so we can reduce barriers and efficiently use

the limited resources available. My bill requires that this office be accountable and responsible, that it work with the national labs and with industry in the right way at the Department and fully implement the EPACT Energy Technology Commercialization Fund—something DOE has yet to do according to Congress's original intent.

Second, the bill authorizes a new tech transfer corps, modeled on the National Science Foundation's Innovation Corps, to support investments in entrepreneurs, mentors, scientists, and engineers. It authorizes technology commercialization challenges that push—getting innovative technologies into the market—and also pull—enabling partnerships with industry to identify and focus on common challenges. It will also improve coordination of technology transfer and entrepreneurship priorities with universities, foundations, and nonprofits, both regionally and nationally.

Third, we adapt an existing public-private partnership model used by the Small Business Administration and apply it to technology transfer to increase access to capital for promising startup companies.

We are not asking for more money. We need to do more with what we have. We are not asking—and I want to emphasize that—we are not asking for more money. We need to do more with what we have. The bill requires DOE and SBA to work together, to use the strengths of each agency—DOE's innovative technology and SBA's financial acumen—and it increases investment in new technologies via the SBIC Impact and Early Stage Initiatives. The Impact Initiative includes SBA matching funds of up to $1 billion, and the Early Stage Initiative includes $1 billion more.

This collaboration addresses an important concern. Since 2008 less than 6 percent of these venture capital funds have been invested in seed funds and tech maturation, and 70 percent of that went into just three States—California, New York, and Massachusetts. There are great opportunities outside these three States. This bill will help those funds find them. States such as New Mexico have a surplus of innovative ideas and a lack of investment dollars. With this bill we can balance that equation.

The benefits are clear: new technology, new partnerships, and new opportunities. Cutting-edge research today means high-paying jobs tomorrow. American inventions and intellectual property fuel our economy. Mr. President, 75 U.S. industries are classified as intellectual property intensive. They added $5.8 trillion to U.S. output last year. They are 38 percent of our GDP. They directly or indirectly supply over 55 million jobs—jobs that on average pay 30 percent higher wages. These IP companies account for 74 percent of our exports.

We need to do all we can to support innovation and to improve technology transfer—the bridge between new discovery and new opportunity—to grow our economy, to create high-paying jobs. I believe this is something we can all support.

Last August I cohosted a tech transfer conference in Santa Fe. I met with nearly 200 of New Mexico's most successful entrepreneurs, innovators, and investors. We talked about the challenges and opportunities of technology transfer and how important it is to the future.

We have always succeeded by being one step ahead of the competition. American innovation has led the world in industry, in health care and transportation, in science and technology. The ATTAIN Act will help move that innovation from the lab to the marketplace, helping businesses grow, creating jobs, and keeping us competitive in a global marketplace.

For a student with a bright idea, for an entrepreneur with the drive to chase their dream, it can be a long road. Fortunately, they do not give up easily. They are as tough as they come. They are already giving so much with hard work, with taking risks. They do their part. DOE needs to do its part as well.

We all want to move innovation forward and to better coordinate the handoffs. I am committed to working with the Department of Energy to make this a reality. This is an important goal, and it should be an equally important priority. That is why I am introducing this bill today.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. ENZI):

S. 2132. A bill to amend the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act of 2005, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce S. 2132, the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2014.

In recent years, the Committee on Indian Affairs has received concerns from Indian tribes and the energy industry that the Federal laws governing the development of tribal energy resources are complex and often lead to significant costs, delays, and uncertainty for all parties. These costs, delays, and uncertainties discourage development of tribal energy resources and drive investments away from tribal lands.

According to the National Congress of American Indians, Indian tribes hold nearly a quarter of American onshore oil and gas reserves. Yet, existing tribal energy production represents less than 5 percent of the current national production. If we can remove the costs and delays of developing energy on Indian lands, we could potentially see the country's energy production, and thus energy independence, increase significantly.

Over 8 years ago, Congress passed the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act. This act created a new, alternative process for Indian tribes to take control of developing their energy resources on their own lands without the burdens of administrative review, approval, and oversight. This approach gives Indian tribes the option to enter into tribal energy resource agreements with the Secretary of the Interior. Once an Indian tribe enters into this agreement, it has the authority to enter into subsequent leases, business agreements, and rights-of-way affecting energy development, without further review and approval by the Secretary—a significant departure from the standard laws, and consequent bureaucracy, applicable to tribal contracts. That approach was a step in the right direction.

However, the agreements and process authorized under the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act have not been utilized to the extent that they could be, primarily because the implementation of the act has been made more complex than it should be. It is time we make key improvements to the law so that Indian tribes can take advantage of these agreements and significantly reduce bureaucratic burdens to energy development. Years of consultation and outreach to Indian tribes have produced targeted solutions to address the concerns about the process for entering these agreements.

The bill that I am introducing today, S. 2132, would streamline the process for approving the tribal energy resource agreements and make it more predictable for Indian tribes.

I would like to highlight some of the key provisions in this bill. This bill includes a number of amendments to improve the review and approval process for the tribal energy resource agreements. For example, the bill provides clarity regarding the specific information required for tribal applications for these agreements. In addition, the bill sets forth specific timeframes for Secretarial determinations on the agreement applications. Moreover, if an application is disapproved, this bill would require the Secretary of the Interior to provide detailed explanations to the Indian tribe and steps for addressing the reasons for disapproval.

This bill also has various provisions that would improve technical assistance and consultation with Indian tribes during their energy planning and development stages. The bill also includes an amendment to the Federal Power Act that would put Indian tribes on a similar footing with States and municipalities for preferences when preliminary permits or original licenses for hydroelectric projects are issued.

Additionally, S. 2132 would allow Indian tribes and third parties to perform appraisals to help expedite the Secretary's approval process for tribal agreements for mineral resource development. This bill does not focus on only traditional resource development,

but includes renewal resource development components as well. For example, the bill would create tribal biomass demonstration projects to provide Indian tribes with more reliable and potentially longterm supplies of woody biomass materials.

My bill is intended to provide Indian tribes with the tools to develop and use energy more efficiently. In passing this bill, Congress will enhance the ability of Indian tribes to exercise self-determination over the development of energy resources located on tribal lands, thereby improving the lives and economic well-being of Native Americans.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank Senators ENZI, THUNE, HOEVEN, and MCCAIN for joining me in cosponsoring the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2014. I urge my colleagues to join me in advancing S. 2132 expeditiously.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. REID, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 2145. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs to be designated as voter registration agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise to reintroduce the Veteran Voting Support Act, which is cosponsored by Senators LEAHY, DURBIN, and REID.

Almost 7 years ago, during the previous administration, I learned that a Department of Veterans Affairs facility in California had barred voter registration groups from accessing veterans in the facility. Similar reports emerged in other parts of the country.

This was unacceptable. Therefore, then-Senator Kerry and I worked with the VA to establish a fair, nonpartisan policy to facilitate voter registration and voting for veterans who receive services at VA facilities.

We held a hearing in the Rules Committee on a previous version of this bill on September 15, 2008, when I was Chairman of that committee.

One week before that hearing, the VA issued a directive that created a new and substantially improved policy to permit state and local election officials, as well as nonpartisan groups, to access VA facilities.

Yet many expressed concerns that it did not go far enough. For example, the Brennan Center for Justice, American Association for People with Disabilities, Common Cause, Demos, and the League of Women Voters sent me a letter stating that the directive was ''an important step in the right direction'' but stressed ''that the VA's recent directive will not be sufficient to protect the voting rights of the men and women served by the VA.''

Paul Sullivan, then Executive Director of Veterans for Common Sense, said: ''There is a veteran voting rights crisis. As many as 100,000 of our veterans living in VA facilities may not be able to vote in our November 4 election.''

Mr. Sullivan also explained a key problem facing veterans who live at a VA facility: ''When a veteran moves into a VA facility, the veteran's old registration becomes invalid. The veteran must re-register before he or she can vote again.''

In short, while many believed the VA's directive was not perfect, they also acknowledged it was an improvement.

I am sad to report that the 2008 voting assistance directive expired at the end of September 2013. That means no voting assistance directive is in place at the VA, with the mid-term elections only a few months away.

This is unacceptable. There is no justification for it. Veterans' voting rights, like the voting rights of others, do not have an expiration date.

There is no question about the continuing need for VA action in this area.

While the VA's directive was in place, from 2008 to 2012, veteran voter registration ticked up only slightly, from 77 to 78 percent, according to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

But during the same period, actual voting by veterans dropped as a percentage of the veteran population—from 70.9 percent to 70.3 percent.

In raw numbers, there remain over 4.6 million veterans who either are unregistered or for whom the Census Bureau's data reports no response.

In the 2012 election, there were over 6.2 million veterans who either did not vote or for whom the Census data reports no response.

Thus, there is much more to do to help our veterans register and cast their ballots.

The VA is the agency best suited to do the job because it comes into contact with several million veterans each year.

In fact, in 2013, according to the VA's latest statistics, there were over 6.41 million unique patients in the VA health care system, up from 5.65 million in 2008, a 15 percent increase.

Today, I am reintroducing the Veteran Voting Support Act, which, unlike a VA directive, cannot be rescinded by the VA and would not expire.

This bill would take important steps to improve veterans' ability to register and vote.

First, the bill would require the VA to provide a veteran seeking to enroll in the VA health care system with a mail-in voter registration form. Such a form would also have to be provided to currently enrolled veterans upon a change of address or enrollment status.

The VA would be required to send such forms to the appropriate state election official within 10 days, or within five days if the form is received within five days before a registration deadline.

Second, the VA would be required to provide assistance to veterans seeking to register to vote using the mail-in form. Such assistance would be nonpartisan.

Third, the bill would require the director of a VA community living center, domiciliary, or medical center to provide assistance to veterans with respect to voting by absentee ballot, consistent with state and local laws. This section is limited to residents of a community living center or domiciliary and inpatients of a medical center.

Fourth, the bill would ensure that the VA provides access for nonpartisan organizations to provide voter registration and assistance at VA facilities.

This is subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions, including limiting activities to regular business hours and requiring advance notice to the facility.

Fifth, the bill would prevent the VA from prohibiting access to VA facilities by election administration officials at the state and local levels, as long as the officials provide only nonpartisan information about voting, such as voter registration, voting systems, absentee balloting, and polling locations. This is also subject to reasonable, time, place, and manner restrictions.

Finally, the bill would require the VA to report annually on the number of veterans helped by this bill.

We owe our veterans a great debt. That debt includes a promise we will not deny them the right to vote and will commit to involving them in the process of choosing leaders who may send Americans into harm's way. This bill would help veterans register to vote, and it would help veterans living in VA facilities cast their ballots.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Veteran Voting Support Act.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. COBURN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. FLAKE):

S. 2146. A bill to establish a United States Patent and Trademark Office Innovation Promotion Fund, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to protect and secure the user fees paid by America's inventors and businesses to the Patent and Trademark Office, and to stabilize that Office's funding, by introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act. I want to thank my co-sponsors on this bill, Senators COBURN, KLOBUCHAR, and FLAKE.

Throughout most of its history, taxpayers supported the operations of the Patent and Trademark Office, or PTO, through appropriations from general funds. However, in 1990, Congress established a 69 percent user fee ''surcharge,'' so that the PTO became funded entirely through fees paid by its users, the American inventors who make our country the world's technological leader.

Unfortunately, almost immediately, Congress began using the funds that inventors paid to protect their inventions for other purposes. In 1992, $8.1

million in user fees were diverted. In 1993, $12.3 million was diverted. In 1994, $14.7 million. So it continued, growing each year, until what started as a trickle became a flood in 1998, with $199 million in PTO user fees diverted.

PTO user fees continued to be diverted in most of the following years, at varying levels. In fiscal year 2011, as Congress was finishing its work on major patent reform, a new fee diversion record was set, a staggering $209 million in user fees diverted from the PTO that year.

Meanwhile, at the same time that these fees were being taken away, the length of time that it took to get a patent out of the Patent Office steadily increased. In fiscal year 1991, average patent pendency was 18.2 months. By fiscal year 1999, it had increased to 25 months. By fiscal year 2010, average patent pendency had increased all the way to 35.3 months.

These are not just numbers. This is innovation being stifled from being brought to market. The longer it takes to get a patent approved, the longer a new invention, a potential technological breakthrough, sits on the shelf, gathering dust instead of spurring job growth and scientific and economic progress.

Ultimately, this dulls our country's competitive edge in the global economy. America's record of innovation is the envy of the world; it has provided us a marked competitive edge over the decades and even centuries. When we stifle the progress of our innovation within the PTO, we lose some of this competitive advantage, and the jobs and other economic benefits that accompany it.

Obviously, there is a direct relationship between fee diversion and patent pendency. The more fees that are diverted away from the PTO, the fewer patent examiners they can hire, the more patents each examiner has to process, and the longer it takes them to get to any individual patent—a longer patent pendency.

But it is not just the time that it takes to get a patent that is hurt by diversion of resources. The quality of the patents issued is harmed as well.

As members of this body know, the Senate Judiciary Committee is actively considering legislation to address abuses of the patent system, and the House of Representatives passed its own legislation on the subject by a strong bipartisan vote of 325–91.

A variety of businesses all over the country are being sued and subjected to letters demanding payment, often based on very questionable patents that should never have been issued by the Patent Office in the first place.

Businesses and lawyers have asserted patents for, by way of example: Scanning and e-mailing a document; completing a purchase on a website with one click, as opposed to multiple clicks; and e-mailing a press release, something that I think it's safe to say that every member of this body does many times each month.

When there aren't enough patent examiners to give patent applications sufficient attention, bad patents get issued.

As the President and CEO of the Internet Association, which represents leading Internet companies like Amazon, eBay, Expedia, Facebook, Hotels.com, Netflix, Twitter, and Yahoo!, puts it: ''the Patent Fee Integrity Act . . . would provide the Patent and Trademark Office with adequate funding and resources to improve overall patent quality. Improving patent quality is an essential step in improving the entire patent ecosystem by shutting off the supply of low-quality patents that fuel litigation by patent trolls.'' The Coalition for Patent Fairness, which includes such major companies as Blackberry, Cisco, Dell, Google, Oracle, and Verizon, notes that ''When patent quality suffers, innovation throughout America's economy is stymied, and patent trolls are able to prosper.''

To make sure the Patent and Trademark Office has the resources it needs to issue patents in a timely manner and to improve patent quality, in 2011, in the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act, we gave the PTO the authority to increase its user fees.

Some of us fought at that time to end the practice of fee diversion, led by my co-sponsor Senator COBURN, to make sure that the users got the full benefit of their increased fees. Unfortunately, our colleagues on the other side of the Capitol watered down the language that the Senate passed to accomplish this purpose.

One of the sponsors defended that language when it came back to the Senate, arguing that the bill ''creates a PTO reserve fund for any fees collected above the appropriated amounts in a given year—so that only the PTO will have access to these fees.''

I warned then that the House's changes provided no assurance that that is what would actually happen.

So what happened? Well, the PTO went ahead and raised its fees, as expected.

Did it get to keep all those new fees?

Unfortunately, the government wasted little time in diverting the new fees. In fiscal year 2013, $121 million in PTO user fees were diverted, due to sequestration. This pushed the total of PTO user fees diverted since PTO was made self-sufficient in 1990 to over $1 billion, $171 million, to be exact.

Requiring the payment of higher patent fees which are then used for general government purposes really amounts to a tax on innovation which is the last thing we should be burdening in today's technology-driven economy.

The fact that this latest round of fee diversion occurred through sequestration provides another reason why the legislation we are introducing today is needed. PTO never should have been subject to sequestration in the first place. As I have described, it is not supported at all by taxpayer funds—it is completely funded by user fees. These users pay for a service when they send in their fees: the timely consideration and processing of their patent or trademark application or renewal. They are entitled to have the benefit of what they paid for. These funds should not be sequestered, to pay for other government services, for which there is a deficit. The PTO does not contribute at all to the deficit, and that has been the case for more than 20 years.

As a result of PTO's budgetary shortfall, in which sequestration played a significant part: information technology modernization was scaled back significantly; the process of opening new PTO satellite offices, called for in the America Invents Act, was frozen; hiring of most support personnel was stopped; and travel and training was virtually eliminated.

Last fall brought another unfortunate budgetary disruption: the shutdown of the federal government. Fortunately, the PTO was able to keep operating for that limited time, with the balances it had in its account. However, had the shutdown continued, PTO, too, would have been forced to close up—despite the fact that it collects fees that make it self-sustaining.

There is no good reason why PTO should be subject to sequestration and shutdown. As the Business Software Alliance states in their supporting letter, ''This bill would ensure the USPTO can continue conducting self-funded operations that produce tremendous economic and social value for the United States.''

The Patent Fee Integrity Act strikes current language that makes PTO subject to the appropriations process, which has been the principal avenue through which its funding has been diverted, and ensures that it can keep its funding. However, we also include measures to maintain accountability for the agency; the bill: requires the PTO Director to submit an annual report and operations plan to Congress; requires the PTO Director to submit an annual spending plan to the Appropriations Committees; and requires an annual independent financial audit.

This bill is supported across the width and breadth of the patent user community. It is endorsed by: Bayer Corporation; Biocom; The Biotechnology Industry Organization; BSA, The Software Alliance; The Coalition for Patent Fairness; The Coalition for 21st Century Patent Reform, which represents a broad group of nearly 50 global corporations who employ hundreds of thousands of Americans in a variety of sectors, including 3M, Caterpillar, General Electric, General Mills, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Medtronic, and Northrop Grumman; Fallbrook Technologies; The Innovation Alliance, which includes innovative small, medium, and large businesses, including Dolby Laboratories and QUALCOMM; the Intellectual Property Owners Association, which

represents more than 200 companies and 12,000 individuals in the U.S. who own intellectual property; The Internet Association; Mattel; Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association; National Association of Manufacturers; Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America; and Xerox.

Many of these groups disagree vehemently with each other about patent reform. However, they all come together to unite in support of the bill we are introducing today, the Patent Fee Integrity Act.

BSA, The Software Alliance aptly observes, ''with their funds constantly under attack, the USPTO faces an endless and unnecessary challenge to provide the services for which American innovators have already paid. The Patent Fee Integrity Act will help the USPTO continue to increase patent quality, provide critical, time-sensitive services, and guarantee continuity of its operations independent of continually-shifting political considerations.''

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this critical bill. As the Coalition for 21st Century Patent Reform and others observed in the letter they sent to me in support of this bill: ''Your legislation would empower the USPTO to fully support America's innovators without adding a single penny to the deficit.''

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that letters of support be printed in the RECORD.

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

BSA/THE SOFTWARE ALLIANCE,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2013.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: On behalf of BSA/The Software Alliance and its members, which are among the world's most innovative companies, I write to express strong support for the Patent Fee Integrity Act, which would remove the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) from the congressional appropriations process. This bill would ensure the USPTO can continue conducting self-funded operations that produce tremendous economic and social value for the United States.

The USPTO plays an indispensable role in sparking the growth of America's economy by protecting intellectual property (IP) and promoting innovation. Over the last two decades, however, the federal government has withheld, diverted, or sequestered more than $1 billion in USPTO user fee collections. This bill recognizes that with their funds constantly under attack, the USPTO faces an endless and unnecessary challenge to provide the services for which American innovators have already paid.

The Patent Fee Integrity Act will help the USPTO continue to increase patent quality, provide critical, time-sensitive services, and guarantee continuity of its operations independent of continually-shifting political considerations. Moreover, it will protect against reducing the USPTO's operating capacity at a time when it needs to expand to enable American businesses to bring new innovations to market.

We commend you for your leadership in introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act and look forward to working with you and others to ensure it garners the broad bipartisan support it deserves.

Sincerely,

VICTORIA A. ESPINEL,
President and CEO.

MARCH 13, 2014.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: We commend you for introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act and we offer our full support.

America's economic future depends on our continued ability to innovate and commercialize new products and processes. American businesses are among the most dynamic and innovative in the world. We develop the technology that creates jobs and stimulates our economy. Our nation's universities partner with business to conduct the ground-breaking research, as well as educate the creative people, that fuel the innovative dynamism of the business sector. Such investment is not without risk, which is why the Patent Fee Integrity Act has never been more critical.

U.S. innovators rely on patents to protect their investment in the research and development of breakthrough innovations such as manufacturing and product technologies and life-saving drugs. Valid and enforceable patent rights are essential in this process and enable the United States to maintain its competitive edge. An adequately funded United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is vital in ensuring that high quality patent rights are promptly granted. Yet, the precarious funding situation of the USPTO makes the realization of this essential mission impossible.

Over the last two decades, the government has withheld, diverted, or sequestered hundreds of millions of USPTO user fee dollars. With uncertain and insufficient funding, the USPTO faces an endless and unnecessary challenge in providing the services for which American innovators have requested and paid. The Patent Fee Integrity Act would end this problem by removing the USPTO from the Congressional appropriations process and allow all of its user fees to fund its operations. Your legislation would empower the USPTO to fully support America's innovators without adding a single penny to the deficit.

Our innovation based economy demands a fully-funded USPTO. The USPTO needs predictability and certainty in its budgeting so that it can provide the patent protection needed champion America's innovators. We support quick passage of the Patent Fee Integrity Act.

American Intellectual Property Law Association (AIPLA); Bayer Corporation; Biocom; Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO): Boston Scientific Corporation; Bristol-Myers Squibb Company; Caterpillar Inc.; Corning Incorporated; The Cummins Allison Corporation; Cummins Inc.; DuPont; Eli Lilly and Company; Greatbatch, Inc.; IBM Corporation; Illinois Tool Works (ITW); International Test Solutions Inc.; Johnson & Johnson; Leggett & Platt; The Manitowoc Company, Inc.; Mattel, Inc.; Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association; National Association of Manufacturers (NAM); Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America; PPG Industries, Inc.; The Procter & Gamble Company; Smiths Group; United Technologies Corporation; Xerox Zimme.

COALITION FOR
PATENT FAIRNESS
Washington, DC, March 13, 2014.

Statement on the Patent Fee Integrity Act,

The Coaliton for Patent Fairness (CPF) thanks Senator Dianne Feinstein (D–CA) for introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act.

As patent holders, CPF members recognize the importance of an adequately funded U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO). We applaud Senator Feinstein for taking steps to ensure that the PTO has the resources it needs to fulfill its essential mission and to maintain patent quality.

Improving patent quality is a vital piece of the patent puzzle. When patent quality suffers, innovation throughout America's economy is stymied, and patent trolls are able to prosper. Quite clearly, patent reviews conducted today will have a lasting impact in the future; by helping to establish adequate funding of the PTO, the Patent Fee Integrity Act will support innovation.

The U.S. patent system plays an important role in helping America's economy flourish, and abuses of that system pose a significant threat to innovation and economic growth. We thank Senator Feinstein for her leadership and will continue to work with her and her colleagues toward the passage of patent litigation reform.

FALLBROOK TECHNOLOGIES,
Cedar Park, TX, March 13, 2014.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: As CEO of an emerging technology company with roots in California, I write to enthusiastically endorse your effort to introduce patent legislation that is critically important to America's innovation ecosystem and the U.S. economy, the Patent Fee Integrity Act. Although Fallbrook Technologies cautions the Senate to tread extremely cautiously with other proposed patent legislation, the Patent Fee Integrity Act represents the only patent reform bill which advances the one issue that unifies intellectual property stakeholders across the innovation spectrum and thus should be advanced by the Senate without delay.

Fallbrook is an emerging manufacturing and technology development company dedicated to improving the flexibility of power transmission within a wide variety of mechanical devices. Currently, Fallbrook is located in Texas, but we have California ties as our technology was invented in Fallbrook, California, a large number of our investors are in California and some key employees currently reside in San Diego. Our core technology is the patented and award-winning NuVinci® continuously variable planetary (CVP) transmission system. Fallbrook's NuVinci CVP technology is a standard component on more than 60 major bicycle brands throughout Europe, and can improve the performance and efficiency of products that use a transmission, such as automobiles, agricultural equipment, light electric vehicles, outdoor power equipment and wind turbines. Fallbrook employs over 130 people in the U.S. (as of the date of this letter), including about 30 of the best engineers in the transmission sector. We currently hold over 600 patents and pending applications worldwide and are working with our key automotive licensees to bring gas-saving vehicles to the marketplace.

As you are aware, for more than a decade, American innovators like Fallbrook have had our U.S. Patent and Trademark Office user fees diverted by Congress for other purposes. Essentially, such fee diversion has worked as an innovation tax which slows the technology development process and hinders job creation. The Patent Fee Integrity Act will repeal this innovation tax and is long overdue. Full USPTO funding will provide the USPTO the resources it needs to improve patent quality while Congress determines whether further actions may be needed to improve the patent system.

We applaud you and your bipartisan cosponsors for introducing the bill and stand ready to assist you in any way necessary.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM KLEHM,
Chairman and CEO.

INNOVATION ALLIANCE,
MARCH 13, 2014.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: The Innovation Alliance, a coalition of research and development-focused companies, thanks you and your cosponsors for introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act, which will put an end to fee diversion once and for all. We have long maintained that ending fee diversion, and thereby giving the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (''USPTO'') all of the fees it is paid by patent applicants, is the single most important change policymakers can make to improve the U.S. patent system.

Over the last 20 years, approximately $1 billion in fees paid by patent applicants has been diverted from its proper use at the USPTO. This unwarranted diversion of fees has resulted in more than 600,000 unexamined patent applications and more than 28 months in the average patent pendency time. Ending this tax on innovation is perhaps the one change to the patent law that unites stakeholders from all parts of the innovation ecosystem in the United States.

The Innovation Alliance thanks you for your leadership on this critically important issue for the patent system. We look forward to working with you and your cosponsors to pass the Patent Fee Integrity Act into law as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

BRIAN POMPER,
Executive Director.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
OWNERS ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, March 12, 2014.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senate, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: Intellectual Property Owners Association (IPO) writes to express its strong support for the Patent Fee Integrity Act, to provide for the permanent funding of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

IPO is a trade association representing companies and individuals in all industries and fields of technology who own or are interested in intellectual property rights. IPO's membership includes more than 200 companies and more than 12,500 individuals who are involved in the association either through their companies or as inventor, author, law firm, or attorney members. Our members all agree that the United States needs a fully-funded USPTO to keep our nation competitive, encourage innovation and create new jobs.

Over the last two decades the government has withheld, diverted or sequestered about $1 billion in USPTO user fee collections. Removing the USPTO from the congressional appropriations process is the most promising approach we know for stopping the hemorrhaging of USPTO fees. We hope the Senate will move ahead with the bill as soon as possible.

Thank you for your help in securing full, permanent funding for the USPTO. We stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,

HERBERT C. WAMSLEY,
Executive Director.

THE INTERNET ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2014.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BECKERMAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE INTERNET ASSOCIATION, ON SENATOR FEINSTEIN'S INTRODUCTION OF THE PATENT FEE INTEGRITY ACT

The Internet Association commends Senator Feinstein's introduction of the Patent Fee Integrity Act, which would provide the Patent and Trademark Office with adequate funding and resources to improve overall patent quality. Improving patent quality is an essential step in improving the entire patent ecosystem by shutting off the supply of low-quality patents that fuel litigation by patent trolls. That is why The Internet Association also supports an expanded review of the covered business method patent program to eliminate patents that never been granted in the first instance. An expanded review program, coupled with strong fee shifting and discovery provisions, make up the necessary components of a meaningful response to the patent troll epidemic. We look forward to working with Senator Feinstein and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee as they prepare to address these important issues in the coming weeks.

ABOUT THE INTERNET ASSOCIATION

The Internet Association, the unified voice of the Internet economy, represents the interests of the leading Internet companies including Airbnb, Amazon, AOL, eBay, Expedia, Facebook, Gilt, Google, IAC, Linkedln, Lyft, Monster Worldwide, Netflix, Practice Fusion, Rackspace, reddit, Salesforce.com, SurveyMonkey, TripAdvisor, Twitter, Uber Technologies, Inc., Yelp, Yahoo!, and Zynga. The Internet Association is dedicated to advancing public policy solutions to strengthen and protect Internet freedom, foster innovation and economic growth, and empower users. http://www.internetassociation.org.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 383—DESIGNATING MARCH 2014 AS ''NATIONAL MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION MONTH''

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. WALSH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 383

Whereas the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Association for Middle Level Education, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have declared March 2014 as ''National Middle Level Education Month'';

Whereas schools that educate middle level students are responsible for educating nearly 24,000,000 young adolescents between the ages of 10 and 15, in grades 5 through 9, who are undergoing rapid and dramatic changes in their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development;

Whereas young adolescents deserve challenging and engaging instruction, knowledgeable teachers and administrators who are prepared to provide young adolescents with a safe, challenging, and supportive learning environment, and organizational structures that banish anonymity and promote personalization, collaboration, and social equity;

Whereas the habits and values established during early adolescence have a lifelong influence that directly affects the future health and welfare of the United States;

Whereas research indicates that the academic achievement of a student in eighth grade has a larger impact on the readiness of that student for college at the end of high school than any academic achievement of that student in high school; and

Whereas in order to improve graduation rates and prepare students to be lifelong learners who are ready for college, a career, and civic participation, the people of the United States must have a deeper understanding of the distinctive mission of middle level education: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 2014 as ''National Middle Level Education Month'';

(2) honors and recognizes the importance of middle level education and the contributions of the individuals who educate middle level students; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to observe National Middle Level Education Month by visiting and celebrating schools that are responsible for educating young adolescents in the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 384—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE CONCERNING THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SYRIA AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, RESULTING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES, AND THE URGENT NEED FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS

Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. CARDIN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. CASEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. WARNER, Mr. KIRK, Mr. KING, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. CRUZ) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 384

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 2139, adopted on February 22, 2014, expresses grave alarm at the significant and rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, in particular the dire situation of hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in besieged areas, most of whom are besieged by the Syrian armed forces and some by opposition groups, as well as the dire situation of over 3,000,000 people in hard-to-reach areas, and deplores the difficulties in providing, and the failure to provide, access for the humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need inside Syria;

Whereas widespread and systematic attacks on civilians, schools, hospitals, and other civilian infrastructure, in violation of international humanitarian law, continue in Syria, and parties to the conflict are blocking humanitarian aid delivery, including food and medical care from many civilian areas;

Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 70 percent of Syria's health professionals, up to 80,000 people, have fled the country, cases of typhoid, tuberculosis, polio and other diseases are rampant and increasing, and medical personnel inside Syria are deliberately targeted by parties to the conflict;

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered

more than 2,500,000 Syrian refugees, nearly 80 percent of whom are women and children, and by the end of this year, the United Nations estimates the number of refugees will increase to 4,000,000;

Whereas nearly 500,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict are children under the age of five, and more than 11,000 children have been killed and thousands more have suffered severe injuries, including burns, shrapnel wounds, the severing of limbs, and spinal cord injuries;

Whereas over 5,000,000 children affected by the conflict desperately need food, clean water, shelter, medical care and psychosocial support;

Whereas, since 2011, nearly 3,000,000 Syrian children have been forced to quit their education as fighting has destroyed classrooms, left children too terrified to go to school, and forced families to flee the country;

Whereas the refugee crisis threatens the stability of the Middle East, putting immense burdens on Syria's neighbors, most notably Lebanon and Jordan, as well as Turkey and Iraq; and

Whereas the United States Government has played a leading role in addressing the Syria crisis, providing $1,700,000,000 in humanitarian assistance to those suffering inside Syria, as well as to refugees and host communities in the neighboring countries: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) strongly condemns the unlawful use of violence against civilians by all parties to the conflict in Syria, particularly the ongoing violence and widespread human rights violations perpetrated against the people of Syria by the Government of Syria;

(2) urges all parties to the conflict to immediately halt indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure;

(3) affirms the neutrality of medical professionals providing humanitarian assistance and health care on a non-political basis, and condemns attacks against such personnel or interference in the provision of medical care;

(4) urges all parties in Syria to allow for and facilitate immediate, unfettered access to humanitarian aid throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, respecting the safety, security, independence, and impartiality of humanitarian workers and ensuring freedom of movement to deliver aid;

(5) supports the immediate and full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2139 (2014), which calls for unimpeded access of humanitarian assistance to all Syrians to addresses the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, in particular the dire situation of hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in besieged areas, most of whom are besieged by the Syrian armed forces and some by opposition groups, as well as the dire situation of over 3,000,000 people in hard-to-reach areas;

(6) calls on the international community to assist the people of Syria, especially internally displaced persons and refugees, in meeting basic needs, including access to food, health care, shelter, and clean drinking water;

(7) calls on the international community to support civilians and innocent victims of the conflict in Syria, particularly women and children who are displaced and vulnerable to physical and psychological exploitation;

(8) calls on the international community to implement steps that prevent gender-based violence, and assure the protection of women and girls against sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and rape;

(9) calls on the international community to continue to support neighboring countries and host communities who are generously supporting refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria;

(10) calls on the international community to increase investment for education in host communities to expand learning opportunities for refugee children and to support programs that help children gain access to quality education, protect them from violence and abuse, and provide counseling and psychosocial support;

(11) calls on countries that are hosting refugees in the region to support refugee self-reliance and dignity by expanding employment opportunities for refugees;

(12) calls on international donors and aid agencies to integrate humanitarian relief and longer term development programs through a comprehensive regional strategy to address the protracted crisis in Syria; and

(13) calls on the President to develop and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress within 90 days from adoption of this resolution a strategy for United States engagement in addressing the Syrian humanitarian crisis, to include assistance and development, and protecting human rights inside Syria and in the region.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, today, along with Senator RUBIO, I am submitting a bipartisan resolution to coincide with the third anniversary of the Syria crisis.

We are witnessing one of history's greatest humanitarian catastrophes unfolding before our eyes. The numbers are staggering. Nearly 3 million Syrians have fled to neighboring countries. Syrians are about to pass Afghans as the world's biggest refugee population.

The UN released a report this week stating Syria has become the world's most dangerous place for children. This is truly heartbreaking. More than 5.5 million children are in need of desperate humanitarian assistance and three million are out of school. 40,000 babies have been born as refugees.

Conditions inside are even Syria worse. There are nearly 7 million internally displaced persons and over 9 million in need of humanitarian assistance. Nearly 250,000 remained besieged, mostly at the hands of the Assad regime, and are suffering from disease and starvation.

The Syria Humanitarian Resolution of 2014 strongly condemns the unlawful use of violence against civilians by all parties to the conflict in Syria, particularly the ongoing violence and widespread human rights violations perpetrated against the people of Syria by the Government of Syria.

The resolution urges all parties to the conflict to immediately halt indiscriminate attacks on civilians and to allow for immediate, unfettered access to humanitarian aid throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, respecting the safety, security, independence, and impartiality of humanitarian workers and ensuring freedom of movement to deliver aid. We call on the international community to assist the people of Syria, especially internally displaced persons and refugees, in meeting basic needs, including access to food, health care, shelter, and clean drinking water. Finally we call for the full implementation of UN Security Council 2139 and call on the President to submit to the appropriate committees of Congress within 90 days a strategy for United States engagement in addressing the Syrian humanitarian crisis, to include assistance and development, and protection of human rights inside Syria and in the region.

The solution to the Syrian conflict will be complicated. But the people of Syria should not continue to suffer in the interim. I refuse to accept that there is nothing more we can do to end the suffering. Humanitarian relief and access are fundamental principles all parties should adhere to. History will harshly judge those who do not.

SENATE RESOLUTION 385—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES ON THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself and Mr. ENZI) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 385

Resolved, That it is the Sense of the Senate that—

(1) certain uses of electronic devices by Senators on the floor of the Senate are necessary and proper in the conduct of official Senate business, would not distract, interrupt, or inconvenience the business of Members of the Senate, and should therefore be permissible, including—

(A) delivering floor remarks from text displayed on personal digital assistant devices and tablet computers;

(B) reviewing and editing documents on personal digital assistant devices and tablet computers while seated or standing at a desk, except when the Senator who wishes to use the device holds the floor or seeks to be recognized; and

(C) sending email and other data communication using personal digital assistant devices and tablet computers while seated or standing at a desk, except when the Senator who wishes to use the device holds the floor or seeks to be recognized;

(2) necessary and proper uses of electronic devices on the floor of the Senate do not include—

(A) transmitting sound for any purpose other than through earphones or in such a manner as would not disturb proceedings on the floor of the Senate for the purpose of assisting a person with a disability;

(B) using telephones or other devices for voice communication; or

(C) using desktop computers, laptop computers, or other large devices;

(3) the Committee on Rules and Administration should consider an amendment to the Rules for the Regulation of the Senate Wing consistent with the principles stated above; and

(4) any amendment to the Rules for the Regulation of the Senate Wing should take into account possible future changes in technology.

SENATE RESOLUTION 386—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH AND WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY

Ms. STABENOW (for herself, Mr. BEGICH, Mr. COONS, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs.

FEINSTEIN, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. LEVIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 386

Whereas the social work profession has been instrumental in achieving advances in civil and human rights in the United States and across the world for more than a century;

Whereas the primary mission of social work is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people, especially the people who are most vulnerable;

Whereas the programs and services provided by professional social workers are essential elements of the social safety net in the United States;

Whereas social workers have a critical impact on adolescent and youth development, aging, family caregiving, child protection and family services, health care navigation, mental and behavioral health treatment, assistance to members and veterans of the Armed Forces, nonprofit management and community development, and poverty reduction;

Whereas social workers function as specialists, consultants, private practitioners, educators, community leaders, policymakers, and researchers;

Whereas social workers influence many different organizations and human service systems and are employed in a wide range of workplaces, including private and public agencies, hospices and hospitals, schools, clinics, businesses and corporations, military units, elected offices, think tanks, and foundations;

Whereas social workers seek to improve social functioning and social conditions for people in emotional, psychological, economic, or physical need;

Whereas social workers are experts in care coordination, case management, and therapeutic treatment for biopsychosocial issues;

Whereas social workers have roles in more than 50 different fields of practice;

Whereas social workers believe that the strength of a country depends on the ability of the majority of the people to lead productive and healthy lives;

Whereas social workers help people, who are often navigating major life challenges, find hope and new options for achieving their maximum potential; and

Whereas social workers identify and address gaps in social systems that impede full participation by individuals or groups in society: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of National Professional Social Work Month and World Social Work Day;

(2) acknowledges the diligent efforts of individuals and groups who promote the importance of social work and observe National Professional Social Work Month and World Social Work Day;

(3) encourages the people of the United States to engage in appropriate ceremonies and activities to promote further awareness of the life-changing role that social workers play; and

(4) recognizes with gratitude the contributions of the millions of caring individuals who have chosen to serve their communities through social work.

SENATE RESOLUTION 387—CELEBRATING THE 2014 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES, IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself and Mr. BEGICH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation:

S. RES. 387

Whereas the Arctic Winter Games, held every 2 years, is a premier sporting and cultural event and a true celebration of athletic competition, friendship, and cooperation among individuals living in the Arctic;

Whereas the Arctic Winter Games, as envisioned over 40 years ago by Alaska Governor Wally Hickel and commissioners from the Northwest Territories and Yukon, continues to promote the core values of its creation: athletic competition, cultural exhibition, and social interchange;

Whereas the Fairbanks North Star Borough has a uniquely qualified community to welcome the vast cultural benefits that accompany serving as the host of the 2014 Arctic Winter Games;

Whereas the 2014 Arctic Winter Games welcomes more than 1,400 athletes from 9 contingents, representing nations that include the United States, Canada, Greenland, and Russia;

Whereas the State of Alaska is proud to contribute to the Arctic Winter Games 287 Alaskan athletes, ages 13 to 24; and

Whereas the 2014 Arctic Winter Games marks the fifth Arctic Winter Games hosted in Alaska since the first competition in 1970: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the dedicated athletes, coaches, volunteers, leaders, and staff who contribute to the mission and success of the 2014 Arctic Winter Games;

(2) welcomes the return of the Arctic Winter Games to Fairbanks, Alaska, for the first time since 1988; and

(3) celebrates the continuing friendly competition among northern circumpolar countries and the great cultural exchange that keeps northern traditions alive.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today in support of a resolution I submitted in recognition and celebration of the 2014 Arctic Winter Games. This year's games are being held in Fairbanks, AK, and run for one week, from this Saturday to next. I feel honored that I am able to attend. In fact, I will be attending the opening ceremony with the honorable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, and Chair of the Arctic Council. I am excited to be able to show her Fairbanks and cheer on our respective teams.

The Arctic Winter Games was envisioned over 40 years ago by Alaska Governor Wally Hickel and commissioners from the Northwest Territories and Yukon to provide an opportunity for athletic competition for northern athletes and coaches. Today, the games have grown to be an important opportunity to share cultural values from northern regions around the world, and have some good old fashioned fun.

The 2014 games welcome more than 2,100 athletes from 9 contingents, from the United States, Canada, Greenland, and Russia, including 287 Alaskans. Twenty different sports are included, both winter and summer—from dog mushing to hockey to gymnastics to soccer to wrestling. I wish the best of luck to all the athletes. I thank Fairbanks for hosting the event, as well as the 2,600 volunteers who will contribute to the success of this year's games.

I hope you will join me in supporting this resolution.

SENATE RESOLUTION 388—DESIGNATING MARCH 22, 2014, AS ''NATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS APPRECIATION DAY''

Mr. CHAMBLISS (for himself and Mr. CASEY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 388

Whereas rehabilitation counselors conduct assessments, provide counseling, support families, and plan and implement rehabilitation programs for individuals in need of rehabilitation;

Whereas the purpose of professional organizations for rehabilitation counseling and education is to promote the improvement of rehabilitation services available to individuals with disabilities through quality education for counselors and rehabilitation research;

Whereas various professional organizations have vigorously advocated up-to-date education and training and the maintenance of professional standards in the field of rehabilitation counseling and education, including—

(1) the National Rehabilitation Association;

(2) the Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Association;

(3) the National Council on Rehabilitation Education;

(4) the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association;

(5) the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association;

(6) the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification;

(7) the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation; and

(8) the Council on Rehabilitation Education;

Whereas, on March 22, 1983, Martha Walker of Kent State University, who was President of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education, testified before the Subcommittee on Select Education of the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives, and was instrumental in bringing the need for qualified rehabilitation counselors to the attention of Congress; and

Whereas the efforts of Martha Walker led to the enactment of laws that require rehabilitation counselors to have proper credentials, in order to provide a higher quality of service to those in need of rehabilitation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 22, 2014, as ''National Rehabilitation Counselors Appreciation Day''; and

(2) commends—

(A) rehabilitation counselors, for the dedication and hard work rehabilitation counselors provide to individuals in need of rehabilitation; and

(B) professional organizations, for the efforts professional organizations have made to assist those who require rehabilitation.

SENATE RESOLUTION 389—DESIGNATING THE WEEK OF MARCH 9, 2014, THROUGH MARCH 15, 2014, AS ''NATIONAL YOUTH SYNTHETIC DRUG AWARENESS WEEK''

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 389

Whereas around the United States, there have been many incidents of violent acts, some leading to serious injury and death, committed by people under the influence of synthetic drugs;

Whereas the effects of synthetic drugs on their users include elevated heart rate and blood pressure, hallucinations, seizures, and extreme agitation;

Whereas a lack of public understanding of the potential harm of synthetic drugs makes raising public awareness about the dangers posed by such drugs extremely important;

Whereas deceptive marketing by sellers of synthetic drugs and easy access to synthetic drugs online and in many convenience stores create a false perception, particularly among youth, that synthetic drugs are legal and safer than street drugs;

Whereas in 2010, 18-year-old David Rozga of Indianola, Iowa committed suicide shortly after ingesting a synthetic drug called ''K2'', making his death one of the first in the United States linked to synthetic drugs;

Whereas March 17, 2014, marks the third anniversary of the tragic death of 19-year-old Trevor Robinson, who overdosed on a synthetic drug called ''2C-E'' at a house party in Blaine, Minnesota;

Whereas in addition to Trevor Robinson, 10 other teens and young adults at the same house party had to be rushed to hospitals after snorting the same drug, illustrating the urgent need to raise awareness among youth about the dangers of synthetic drugs;

Whereas according to the 2012 Monitoring the Future survey of youth drug-use trends, 1 in every 9 United States high school seniors surveyed admitted to using synthetic marijuana in the past year;

Whereas according to a 2013 report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration Drug Abuse Warning Network, there were 28,531 emergency department visits involving a synthetic cannabinoid product and 22,904 emergency department visits involving bath salts in 2011; and

Whereas educating the public, and especially our youth, on the dangers of synthetic drugs and promoting prevention of synthetic drug abuse are critical components of what must be a multi-pronged effort to curb synthetic drug abuse: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week of March 9, 2014, through March 15, 2014, as ''National Youth Synthetic Drug Awareness Week''; and

(2) urges communities to carry out appropriate programs and activities to educate parents and youth about the dangers associated with synthetic drug abuse.

SENATE RESOLUTION 390—DESIGNATING MARCH 11, 2014, AS ''WORLD PLUMBING DAY''

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. HATCH) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 390

Whereas the plumbing industry plays an important role in safeguarding the public health of the people of the United States and the world;

Whereas 780,000,000 people around the world do not have access to safe drinking water;

Whereas 2,500,000,000 people around the world live without adequate sanitation facilities;

Whereas the lack of water and sanitation is the largest barrier to childhood survival, public health, education, and economic productivity;

Whereas in the developing world, 24,000 children under the age of 5 die every day from preventable causes, such as diarrhea contracted from unclean water;

Whereas safe and efficient plumbing saves money and reduces future water supply costs and infrastructure costs;

Whereas the installation of modern plumbing systems must be accomplished in a specific, safe manner by trained professionals in order to prevent widespread disease, which can be crippling and deadly to the community;

Whereas the people of the United States rely on plumbing professionals to maintain, repair, and rebuild the aging water infrastructure of the United States;

Whereas Congress and plumbing professionals across the United States and the world are committed to safeguarding public health; and

Whereas the founding organization of World Plumbing Day, the World Plumbing Council, is actively supported by organizations in the United States such as the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate designates March 11, 2014, as ''World Plumbing Day''.

SENATE RESOLUTION 391—DESIGNATING JEAN M. MANNING AS CHIEF COUNSEL FOR EMPLOYMENT EMERITUS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE

Mr. REID (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. HATCH) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 391

Whereas Jean M. Manning will retire from the United States Senate after having served with distinction as the Senate's first Chief Counsel for Employment from 1993 to 2014;

Whereas Jean M. Manning has dedicated her Senate service to providing legal representation, legal advice and legal training to all senators and their management staff with respect to all matters arising under the Government Employee Rights Act of 1991, and the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995;

Whereas Jean M. Manning has represented Senate offices with distinction before the federal courts;

Whereas Jean M. Manning has upheld the high standards and traditions of the Senate with abiding devotion and has performed her Senate duties in an impartial, professional manner; and

Whereas Jean M. Manning has earned the respect, affection and esteem of the United States Senate: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That, upon her retirement on March 19, 2014, as a token of the appreciation of the Senate for her long and faithful service, Jean M. Manning is hereby designated as Chief Counsel for Employment Emeritus of the United States Senate.

SENATE RESOLUTION 392—TO AUTHORIZE DOCUMENT PRODUCTION AND REPRESENTATION IN CARE ONE MANAGEMENT LLC, ET AL. V. UNITED HEALTHCARE WORKERS EAST, SEIU 1199, ET AL

Mr. REID (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 392

Whereas, in the case of *Care One Management LLC, et al. v. United Healthcare Workers East, SEIU 1199, et al.*, No. 2:12–cv–06371, pending in the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, the plaintiffs have issued a subpoena for testimony and production of documents from Senator Richard Blumenthal;

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(a) and 704(a)(2) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. §§288b(a) and 288c(a)(2), the Senate may direct its counsel to represent Members of the Senate with respect to any subpoena, order, or request for testimony relating to their official responsibilities;

Whereas, by the privileges of the Senate of the United States and Rule XI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, no evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may, by the judicial or administrative process, be taken from such control or possession but by permission of the Senate; and

Whereas, when it appears that evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may promote the administration of justice, the Senate will take such action as will promote the ends of justice consistent with the privileges of the Senate: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Senator Blumenthal is authorized to provide documents in the case of *Care One Management LLC, et al. v. United Healthcare Workers East, SEIU 1199, et al.*, except concerning matters for which a privilege or objection is asserted.

SEC. 2. The Senate Legal Counsel is authorized to represent Senator Blumenthal in this matter.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2844. Mr. COBURN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2845. Mr. VITTER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, supra.

SA 2846. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, supra.

SA 2847. Mr. PORTMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, supra.

SA 2848. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2849. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2850. Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. TESTER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2851. Mr. REID (for Mr. BENNET) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 1456, to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Shimon Peres.

SA 2852. Mr. REID (for Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. KIRK, and Mr. LEE)) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 376, supporting the goals of International Women's Day.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2844. Mr. COBURN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 138, line 8, insert ''and whose family assets do not exceed $1,000,000'' after ''size''.

SA 2845. Mr. VITTER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 99, strike lines 16 through 20 and insert the following:

tivity described in clause (iii)).'';

(iii) by striking '', with priority'' and all that follows through the period and inserting the following: ''. In using those amounts for child care services, the State shall give priority for services first to children with disabilities from low-income families (whose family income does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size), then to children of families with very low family incomes (taking into consideration family size), and then to children with disabilities.''; and

(iv) by adding at the end the following:

''(ii) REPORT BY INSPECTOR GENERAL.—

''(I) IN GENERAL.—Not later than September 30 of the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, and September 30 of each fiscal year thereafter, the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services shall prepare and submit to the Secretary a report that contains a determination about whether each State uses amounts provided to such State for the fiscal year involved under this subchapter in accordance with the priority for services described in clause (i).

''(II) PENALTY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.—For any fiscal year that the report of such Inspector General described in subclause (I) indicates that a State has failed to give priority for services in accordance with clause (i), the Secretary shall—

''(aa) inform the State that the State has until the date that is the last day of such fiscal year, or 6 months after the Inspector General has issued such report, whichever is later, to fully comply with clause (i); and

''(bb) if the State does not so comply, by the date described in item (aa), withhold 5 percent of the funds that would otherwise be allocated to that State in accordance with this subchapter for the first full fiscal year after that date.

''(iii) CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SYSTEM.—''

SA 2846. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 141, insert at the end the following:

SEC. 13. SENSE OF THE SENATE ON SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING CHILD POVERTY BY CALENDAR YEAR 2019.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Senate finds that—

(1) the United States has the highest rate of childhood poverty among 34 major countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, including Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Cyprus, Austria, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovenia, Hungary, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Malta, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Estonia, Belgium, New Zealand, Poland, Canada, Australia, Japan, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Spain, and Bulgaria;

(2) a record-breaking 46,496,000 individuals lived in poverty in the United States in 2012, which is an increase of 14,915,000 individuals since 2000;

(3) 16,073,000 children in the United States lived in poverty in 2012, which is an increase of 4,486,000 children since 2000;

(4) more than 7,100,000 children in the United States, 40 percent of children living in poverty in the United States, live in extreme poverty (defined as living in families with an income that is less than half of the poverty level);

(5) nearly 1,200,000 public school students in the United States were homeless in the 2011–2012 school year, an increase of 73 percent since the 2006–2007 school year;

(6) in an average month in fiscal year 2011, 1,200,000 households with children in the United States did not have any cash income and, for food, depended only on benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.);

(7) in 2012, government assistance programs removed from poverty 9,000,000 children, including 5,300,000 children through the earned income tax credit under section 32 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the child tax credit under section 24 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and 2,200,000 children through the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.);

(8) in 2012, child poverty would have been 57 percent higher, and extreme poverty would have been 240 percent higher, without government tax credits and food, housing, and energy benefits;

(9) in 2013, an individual working full-time at the Federal minimum wage could not afford the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom rental unit and have enough money for food, utilities, and other necessities;

(10) in school years 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, less than half of children ages 3 and 4 were enrolled in preschool;

(11) Early Head Start programs carried out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.) served only 4 percent of the 2,900,000 eligible poor infants and toddlers each day in fiscal year 2012, and Head Start programs carried out under such Act served only 41 percent of the 2,000,000 eligible poor children ages 3 and 4;

(12) more than 220,000 children are on waiting lists for child care assistance; and

(13) child poverty costs the United States not less than $500,000,000 each year in additional education, health, and criminal justice costs and in lost productivity.

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that the President should immediately present to Congress a comprehensive plan to significantly reduce child poverty in the United States by calendar year 2019.

SA 2847. Mr. PORTMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 120, strike line 12 and insert the following:

preceding 5 years; or

''(E) has been convicted of a violent misdemeanor committed as an adult against a child, including the following crimes: child abuse, child endangerment, sexual assault, or of a misdemeanor involving child pornography.

SA 2848. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 98, strike line 15 and insert the following:

view.

''(U) IDENTIFICATION.—The plan shall contain an assurance that the State will—

''(i) require, as a condition of eligibility for assistance for child care services under this subchapter, that each parent who applies for the assistance with respect to a child furnish to the State the child's social security account number (or numbers, if the child has more than one such number); and

''(ii) check the number before providing the assistance.'';

SA 2849. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 98, strike line 15 and insert the following:

view.

''(U) IDENTIFICATION.—The plan shall contain an assurance that the State will—

''(i) require, as a condition of eligibility for assistance for child care services under this subchapter, that each parent who applies for the assistance with respect to a child furnish each number for the child that is required under section 1137(a)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320b–7(a)(1)); and

''(ii) check the number furnished before providing the assistance for child care services.'';

SA 2850. Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. TESTER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 136, strike lines 16 and 17 and insert the following:

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

''(1) GENERAL AUTHORITY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—From amounts reserved under subsection (a)(2), the Secretary may make grants to or enter into contracts with Indian tribes or tribal organizations that submit applications under this section, for the planning and carrying out of programs or activities consistent with—

''(i) the purposes of this subchapter; and

''(ii) the goals of the Native American Languages Act (25 U.S.C. 2901 et seq.).

''(B) EFFECT.—Nothing in subparagraph (A) affects any grant made or contract entered into under that subparagraph before the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014.''; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the following:

SA 2851. Mr. REID (for Mr. BENNET) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 1456, to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Shimon Peres; as follows:

On page 4, line 18, strike ''in honor of'' and insert ''to''.

SA 2852. Mr. REID (for Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. KIRK, and Mr. LEE)) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 376, supporting the goals of International Women's Day; as follows:

Strike the twelfth whereas clause of the preamble.

NOTICES OF HEARINGS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Senate Committees on Energy and Natural Resources. The hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 25, 2014, at 10 a.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of this oversight hearing is importing energy, exporting jobs. Can it be reversed?

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify be invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record may do so be sending it to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510–6150, or by e-mail to John__Assini@energy.senate.gov.

For further information, please contact Todd Wooten at (202) 224–3907, Abigail Campbell at (202) 224–4905, or John Assini (202) 224–9313.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I would like to announce that the Committee on Indian Affairs will meet on Wednesday, March 26, 2014, in room SD–628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''the President's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget for Tribal Programs.''

Those wishing additional information may contact the Indian Affairs Committee at (202) 224–2251.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 9:30 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 10 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 11 a.m. in room SR–253 of the Russell Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled, ''The U.S. Aviation Industry and Jobs: Keeping American Manufacturing Competitive.''

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 10 a.m. in room SD–215, Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled, ''Innovative Ideas to Strengthen and Expand the Middle Class.''

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 11:15 a.m., to hold a hearing entitled, ''Keystone XL and the National Interest Determination.''

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 9:30 a.m. in room SD–430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled, ''Protecting the Public Health: Examining FDA's Initiatives and Priorities.''

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled ''The Homeland Security Department's Budget Submission for Fiscal Year 2015.''

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

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, in room SD–628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''Tribal Transportation: Pathways to Infrastructure and Economic Development in Indian Country.''

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 9:30 a.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 2 p.m.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Emergency Management, Intergovernmental Relations, and the District of Columbia of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 13, 2014, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled ''The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Budget Submission for Fiscal Year 2015.''

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

AWARDING CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO SHIMON PERES

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1456, and the Senate proceed to its consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1456) to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Shimon Perez.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I know the day is long; I feel it as much, if not more, than anyone else. But before consent is granted, I can't let the night go by and this about to pass without saying something about this good man.

I have had the good fortune to travel the world meeting Kings, Presidents, Prime Ministers, and many people, but I have never met anyone more impressive than this man. He is a visionary. What he has done for the small country of Israel, which is so important to us, is something the history books will report for generations to come.

I spoke with him earlier this week about another matter. I haven't been to Israel a lot of times, but I have been there a few times. Every time I go, I make sure to take my delegation to visit him. I always tell them this is my favorite. I think so much of this man. It is the least we can do for someone who has done so much for world peace and so much for our country.

I will be fairly quick. I was a Member of the House of Representatives and was on a delegation led by the late Tom Lantos, a Hungarian Jew who escaped the Holocaust because of Raoul Wallenberg. There have been a lot of Members of Congress there and a number of delegations, but Tom Lantos said to him in that beautiful speaking voice he had in that Hungarian accent: Here is our delegation, Mr. Prime Minister. We are so sorry to bother you. We know how busy you are, how many difficult situations you have in your country.

I will never forget this. He said: You don't understand. I am never too busy to meet with the delegation from the Congress of the United States. They have done so much for my country.

He said a few other things. I have said—and I want the RECORD to so reflect—this is something we need to do as quickly as possible.

AMENDMENT NO. 2851

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the Bennet amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read three times and passed, and the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The amendment (No. 2851) was agreed to, as follows:

On page 4, line 18, strike ''in honor of'' and insert ''to''.

The bill (S. 1456) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 1456

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Shimon Peres was born in Poland in 1923.

(2) The Peres family emigrated to Tel Aviv in 1934, and all of the family members of Shimon Peres who remained in Poland were murdered during the Holocaust.

(3) Before Israel gained independence, Shimon Peres earned the respect of senior leaders in the independence movement in Israel, most notably David Ben-Gurion.

(4) The founding generation of Israel was central to the development of Israel, and Shimon Peres is the only surviving member of that founding generation.

(5) Shimon Peres has served in numerous high-level cabinet positions and ministerial posts in Israel, including head of the Israeli Navy, Minister of Defense, Foreign Minister, Prime Minister, and President, among many others.

(6) Shimon Peres has honorably served Israel for over 70 years, during which he has significantly contributed to United States interests and has played a pivotal role in forging the strong and unbreakable bond between the United States and Israel.

(7) By presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to Shimon Peres, the first to be awarded to a sitting President of Israel, Congress proclaims its unbreakable bond with Israel and reaffirms its continual support for Israel as we commemorate the 65th anniversary of the independence of Israel and the 90th birthday of Shimon Peres, which are both significant milestones in Israeli history.

(8) Maintaining strong bilateral relations between the United States and Israel has been a priority of Shimon Peres since he began working with the United States in the days of John F. Kennedy. The strong bond is exemplified by the following:

(A) President Reagan said to Shimon Peres upon his visit to the United States, ''Mr. Prime Minister, I thank you very much for your visit. It's been an occasion to renew a friendship and to review and enhance the strength of our unique bilateral relationship.''

(B) At another point President Reagan said of Shimon Peres, ''His vision, his statesmanship and his tenacity are greatly appreciated here.''

(C) While visiting with Shimon Peres at the Residence of the President in Jerusalem, President Obama described Shimon Peres as ''. . . a son of Israel who's devoted his life to keeping Israel strong and sustaining the bonds between our two nations''.

(D) On March 20, 2013, Shimon Peres reaffirmed his belief in the relationship between the United States and Israel, stating, ''America stood by our side from the very beginning. You support us as we rebuild our ancient homeland and as we defend our land. From Holocaust to redemption.''

(E) On March 21, 2013, Shimon Peres stated, ''. . . America is so great and we are so small. But I learned that you don't measure us by size, but by values. When it comes to values, we are you and you are us. . . . As I look back, I feel that the Israel of today has exceeded the vision we had 65 years ago. Reality has surpassed our dreams. The United States of America helped us to make this possible.''

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall make appropriate arrangements for the award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold medal of appropriate design to President Shimon Peres.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purpose of the award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions to be determined by the Secretary.

SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

Under such regulations as the Secretary of the Treasury may prescribe, the Secretary may strike duplicate medals in bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 2 and sell such duplicate medals at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.

Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

SEC. 5. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF SALE.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF CHARGES.—There is authorized to be charged against the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund, such amounts as may be necessary to pay for the costs of the medals struck pursuant to this Act.

(b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 3 shall be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund.

PROVIDING FOR THE DISPLAY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 2147, introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2147) to amend Public Law 112–59 to provide for the display of the congressional gold medal awarded to the Montford Point Marines, United States Marine Corps, by the Smithsonian Institution and at other appropriate locations.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the bill be read three times and passed and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (S. 2147) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 2147

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DISPLAY OF CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

Section 2 of the Act entitled ''An Act to grant the congressional gold medal to the Montford Point Marines'', approved November 23, 2011 (31 U.S.C. 5111 note), is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the gold medal in honor of the Montford Point Marines, United States Marine Corps, under subsection (a), the gold medal shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it will be displayed as appropriate and made available for research.

''(2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should make the gold medal received under paragraph (1) available for display elsewhere, particularly at other appropriate locations associated with the Montford Point Marines, United States Marine Corps.''.

HHEATT ACT OF 2014

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to H.R. 4076, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4076) to address shortages and interruptions in the availability of propane and other home heating fuels in the United States, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and

passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 4076) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time and passed.

ALLOWING LEASE OR TRANSFER OF CERTAIN LAND

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Indian Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2650 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2650) to allow the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in the State of Minnesota to lease or transfer certain land.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (H.R. 2650) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

CONCERNING CRISIS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 324, S. Res. 375.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 375) concerning the crisis in the Central African Republic and supporting United States and international efforts to end the violence, protect civilians, and address root causes of the conflict.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment and an amendment to the preamble, as follows:

(Insert the part printed in italic.)

(Strike the preamble and insert the part printed in italic.)

S. RES. 375

Whereas, for more than 50 years, successive governments in the Central African Republic have struggled to build a durable system of democratic institutions, to effectively secure and control the country's territory and borders, and to ensure a basic level of socio-economic development for the country's people;

Whereas, despite its natural resource wealth, the Central African Republic remains one of the poorest countries in the world and one of the lowest ranking countries in terms of human development according to the United Nations Development Program;

Whereas, in January 2013, regional leaders brokered the Libreville Agreements between the government of then-President Francois Bozizé and the loosely allied rebel militia known as Séléka, which resulted in the formation of a government of national unity;

Whereas, despite the Libreville Agreements, President Bozizé was ousted in March 2013 by the Séléka coalition, and the Séléka leader, Michel Djotodia, declared himself president;

Whereas, in April 2013, regional leaders issued the N'djamena Declaration in an effort to pursue a return to constitutional order based on the Libreville Agreements;

Whereas an influx of foreign fighters, especially from Chad and Sudan, has been a major factor in the increased number of Séléka fighters, from approximately 5,000 in March 2013, to an estimated 20,000 as of December 2013;

Whereas both Séléka forces and armed militia groups known as ''anti-balakas'', some of which formed initially as a means of protecting communities against Séléka, have been implicated in ethnically-motivated violence and grave and systemic human rights abuses against civilians;

Whereas, over the course of the crisis, Séléka and anti-balaka groups have displayed weak control and command structures, and committed crimes against humanity with impunity;

Whereas, according to UNICEF, thousands of child soldiers are involved in armed groups in the Central African Republic, amid the near-total collapse of the country's primary education system;

Whereas interethnic, intercommunal, and interreligious tensions and violence have risen to alarming levels and led to systematic human rights abuses in the Central African Republic, including targeted killings, rapes, acts of torture, looting, and arbitrary detention;

Whereas the United States Embassy in Bangui suspended operations on December 28, 2012, and the ordered departure of country team staff has temporarily suspended the diplomatic presence and consular services of the United States in the Central African Republic;

Whereas more than 700,000 civilians have been internally displaced; another 290,000 have sought refuge in neighboring countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Cameroon, and South Sudan; 2,600,000 people, or over half of the population of the Central African Republic, are in need of humanitarian assistance; and 60 percent of households have no available food stocks;

Whereas a failure of the international community to appropriately respond to and address the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Central African Republic could result in further atrocities, mass displacement, and protracted instability with significant repercussions for regional and international security;

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 2127 (2013) called for urgent and increased international assistance to the African Union International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) to ensure that the force can fulfill its mandate to restore security and protect civilians, and placed an arms embargo on the Central African Republic;

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 2127 requested the Secretary-General to establish an international commission of inquiry to investigate reports of human rights abuses in the Central African Republic in order to ensure accountability for perpetrators of violence;

Whereas the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic has been hindered by a lack of resources and constrained by insecurity;

Whereas, consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2127, the Government of France launched a stabilization operation, Operation Sangaris, in the Central African Republic to assist MISCA in fulfilling its mandate;

Whereas, on March 3, 2014, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recommended to the United Nations Security Council a transition to a United Nations peacekeeping mission with a primary mandate to protect civilians; and

Whereas the United States Government has provided crisis and humanitarian assistance commitments totaling $182,500,000 in response to instability in the Central African Republic, including support for conflict resolution efforts, humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons, and assistance to troop contributing countries to MISCA such as airlift, non-lethal equipment, military logistics, and training, as well as logistical support for French forces: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the violence, atrocities, abuses, and human rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict in the Central African Republic;

(2) commends the efforts of religious and community leaders in the Central African Republic condemning violence and engaging in conflict prevention and conflict resolution activities;

(3) welcomes the mobilization of international peacekeeping, conflict mitigation, humanitarian, and diplomatic resources, and encourages continued efforts to help address humanitarian needs, bring an end to the violence, and develop sustainable democratic institutions in the Central African Republic;

(4) welcomes the January 2014 decision of the Transitional National Council on the election of Catherine Samba-Panza as the Central African Republic's new transitional president;

(5) commends the African Union and its troop and police contributing countries for their work establishing and supporting MISCA;

(6) recognizes the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAS) for its leadership in the political transition process;

(7) commends France for its swift intervention under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2127, and for its contributions to stabilization efforts and other forms of assistance;

(8) welcomes the United Nations Security Council support for MISCA and the Department of Peacekeeping Operation's ongoing contingency planning for a possible transition to a United Nations peacekeeping operation;

(9) affirms support for multilateral peacekeeping and policing capacities and recognizes the important contributions these efforts have made in protecting civilians in the Central African Republic and promoting international peace and stability;

(10) calls on the President to work with international partners to develop a short-term strategy to support a full and immediate cessation of armed conflict in the Central African Republic, including attacks targeting civilians and the recruitment of child soldiers;

(11) calls on the President to develop a long-term United States strategy, in support of international and domestic efforts, to establish a durable peace and greater security for the Central African Republic and to enhance regional stability, including—

(A) engagement and coordination with the international community, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations, and other partners;

(B) appropriate assistance to help provide emergency relief and *support* reconciliation for the people of the Central African Republic;

(C) technical, logistical and other forms of assistance, as appropriate, in support of effective disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of fighters; and

(D) support for appropriate mechanisms to ensure accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses and violence; and

(12) urges the Secretary of State to consider the expeditious reestablishment of a United States diplomatic presence in the Central African Republic.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I further ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment to the resolution be agreed to, the resolution, as amended, be agreed to, the committee-reported amendment to the preamble be agreed to, the preamble, as amended, be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The committee-reported amendment to the resolution was agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 375), as amended, was agreed to.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute to the preamble was agreed to.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 325, S. Res. 376.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 376) supporting the goals of International Women's Day.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the amendment to the preamble, which is at the desk, be agreed to; the preamble, as amended, be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 376) was agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2852) to the preamble was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To strike the quotation from the United States Agency for International Development regarding educated women)

Strike the twelfth whereas clause of the preamble.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

193RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF GREECE

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 326, S. Res. 377.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 377) recognizing the 193rd anniversary of the independence of Greece and celebrating democracy in Greece and the United States.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I further ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, that the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 377) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of March 10, 2014, under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration en bloc of the following resolutions which were submitted earlier today: S. Res. 388, S. Res. 389, S. Res. 390, S. Res. 391, and S. Res. 392.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

S. RES. 392

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this resolution concerns a subpoena for documents and deposition testimony in a civil action pending in New Jersey Federal District Court. Plaintiffs in the case own and manage five assisted-living facilities in Connecticut and are in a labor dispute with the employees of those facilities. They have sued the union representing those employees for allegedly criminal and fradulent tactics in this labor dispute.

Plaintiffs have sent a subpoena to Senator BLUMENTHAL seeking testimony and documents involving a broad scope of matters beyond merely the underlying labor dispute. Senator BLUMENTHAL has agreed to seek Senate authorization to provide written communications between his office and the union regarding the underlying labor dispute. However, the Senator believes this subpoena presents an undue burden as it is overly broad in scope and seeks material that is not relevant to the lawsuit, and also encroaches on areas subject to privilege, and therefore objects to producing other documents and to the request for deposition testimony.

This resolution would authorize the production of documents from Senator BLUMENTHAL's office except where a privilege or objection is asserted. The resolution also authorizes the Senate Legal Counsel to represent Senator BLUMENTHAL in this matter.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

PROVIDING FOR TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS IN THE ENROLLMENT OF H.R. 3370

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to H. Con. Res. 93.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 93) directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make technical corrections in the enrollment of H.R. 3370.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 93) was agreed to.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2122

Mr. REID. I understand S. 2122 is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2122) to amend titles XVII and XIX of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare sustainable growth rate and to improve Medicare and Medicaid payments, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME—H.R. 3474, H.R. 3979, AND S. 2148

Mr. REID. I am told there are three bills at the desk and I ask for their first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2148) to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 3474) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

A bill (H.R. 3979) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mr. REID. Have all three titles been read, Madam President?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. They have.

Mr. REID. I now ask for a second reading of each of the bills but object to my own request, en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will receive their second reading on the next legislative day.

APPOINTMENT AUTHORIZATION

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the upcoming recess or adjournment of the Senate, the President of the Senate, the President pro tempore, and the majority and minority leaders be authorized to make appointments to commissions, committees, boards, conferences, or interparliamentary conferences authorized by law, by concurrent action of the two Houses, or by order of the Senate.

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

SIGNING AUTHORIZATION

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that during the adjournment or recess of the Senate from Thursday, March 13 through Monday, March 24, Senators KING, REED, ROCKEFELLER, and CASEY be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills or joint resolutions.

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

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have a brief statement that I know everyone is excited to hear, but everyone should be advised that when we return after next week, there is so much, so much to do. We need to pass the Ukrainian bill that Foreign Relations reported yesterday. We have a new bipartisan unemployment insurance compromise introduced today that was put together by a group of bipartisan Senators. We have the SGR, the so-called doc fix, to prevent a 24-percent cut in Medicare payments to doctors, which would be extremely hurtful to patients. We have to do that. We have a backlog of nominations we have to do.

Everyone should understand—I hope it is not necessary—because of the enormous amount of work we have to do this month, Senators should be on notice—all Senators—that there is a high probability that we need to be in session on the weekend of March 29 and 30, before the end of the month.

ORDERS THROUGH MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2014

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn and convene for pro forma sessions only with no business conducted on the following dates and times; and that following each pro forma session, the Senate adjourn until the next pro forma session: Friday, March 14, at 10:30 a.m.; Tuesday, March 18, at 10:30 a.m.; and Friday, March 21, at 9 a.m.; and that the Senate adjourn on Friday, March 21 until 2 p.m. on Monday, March 24, 2014; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; and that following any leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2124; that at 5:30 p.m. the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 2124.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Madam President, the next rollcall vote will be on Monday, March 24, at 5:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. REID. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 8:15 p.m., adjourned until Friday, March 14, 2014, at 10:30 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

THE JUDICIARY

JOHN W. DEGRAVELLES, OF LOUISIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA, VICE JAMES J. BRADY, RETIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DEIRDRE M. DALY, OF CONNECTICUT, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE DAVID B. FEIN, RESIGNED.

JAMES WALTER FRAZER GREEN, OF LOUISIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE DONALD J. CAZAYOUX, JR., RESIGNED.

RONALD LEE MILLER, OF KANSAS, TO BE UNITED STATES MARSHAL FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE WALTER ROBERT BRADLEY, RETIRED.

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

JUDITH M. DAVENPORT, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING FOR A TERM EXPIRING JANUARY 31, 2020, VICE DAVID H. PRYOR, TERM EXPIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

BRADFORD RAYMOND HUTHER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, VICE DOUGLAS A. CRISCITELLO.

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS VICE COMMANDANT OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AND TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 47:

To be vice admiral

VICE ADM. PETER V. NEFFENGER

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

LT. GEN. BRADLEY A. HEITHOLD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be brigadier general

COL. ROBERT I. MILLER

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. BENNET S. SACOLICK

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS, UNITED STATES NAVY, AND APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 5142:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) MARGARET G. KIBBEN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. MICHELLE C. SKUBIC

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. DAVID A. LANE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. BRENT W. SCOTT

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

RANDOLPH S. WARDLE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

RODNEY E. GARFIELD

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate March 13, 2014:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DWIGHT L. BUSH, SR., OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO.

TIMOTHY M. BROAS, OF MARYLAND, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS.

LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

JOSEPH PIUS PIETRZYK, OF OHIO, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION FOR A TERM EXPIRING JULY 13 , 2014.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

PUNEET TALWAR, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (POLITICAL–MILITARY AFFAIRS).

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

ARUN MADHAVAN KUMAR, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES AND FOREIGN COMMERCIAL SERVICE.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

CAROLINE DIANE KRASS, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.