question as to what is the most effective organization we can employ for cyber security should be a focal point of the President's address.

But we should not just place these questions at the President's door. The Senate itself must consider modifying the way it considers cyber security legislation and issues.

Currently, there are at least five separate Senate committees which are responsible for various aspects of cyber security. Therefore, we, too, have a unity-of-effort issue, and the Senate should consider means to concentrate this body's expertise on this critical matter.

In conclusion, there are a myriad of questions which our government must address before we are able to state we have the most effective, efficient, and constitutional cyber security defense possible.

I hope the President fully utilizes the opportunity presented to him in his State of the Union Address to answer these important questions—and if he doesn't, we have to. So we better solve these problems. I presume the President will speak intelligently on these issues and hopefully in a way that will unify the country, unify the Congress, and get us all working in the same way.

We can't afford to let this drag any longer. This is one of the most important sets of issues we have in our country. It may be one of the most important issues or sets of issues in the world at large.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

SAUDI ARABIA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on January 12 in Saudi Arabia a prominent human rights lawyer, Mr. Waleed Abu al-Khair, was handed a 5-year extension to his 10-year prison sentence. Mr. Abu al-Khair, who is the founder and director of the watchdog group Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia, was also fined, banned from travel outside the county for 15 years after his release, and his websites will be shut down. What were the crimes that brought about this sentence? He was charged with harming the kingdom's reputation and insulting judicial authority, among other violations related to his non-violent activism.

This case and others like it certainly have harmed the kingdom's reputation, and insulted its judicial system, but the fault is not Mr. Abu al-Khair's.

After years of defending human rights activists as a legal advocate in Saudi courts, he was called in front of a terrorism tribunal at the end of 2013 for a trial that from its earliest days was declared a farce by human rights organizations. This was not the first time Mr. Abu al-Khair was made a target of the justice system, having first faced trial in 2011 for signing a petition that called for government reform.

During the fifth hearing in front of the terrorism tribunal he was jailed mid-trial under the January 2014 anti-terrorism law, which covers verbal acts that harm the reputation of the state. Mr. Abu al-Khair was eventually sentenced to 10 years for his activism amid growing international condemnation of Saudi repression. His decision not to disavow his beliefs led to this week's further sentencing.

Unfortunately, Mr. Abu al-Khair's case is not unique. As more Saudis have begun to speak out against government repression, the monarchy has responded by escalating its crackdown on dissent, including by using the already dubious terrorism tribunal system to punish human rights defenders.

It is ironic that while Saudi officials condemned the brutal killings of journalists at Charlie Hebdo, and their Ambassador attended the rally in Paris, their Justice Ministry was preparing to carry out the first of 1,000 public lashings of Raif Badawi. Like the cartoonists, Mr. Badawi has been accused of insulting Islam, and like them and his former lawyer, Mr. Abu al-Khair, he was simply exercising his nonviolent right of freedom of expression. Needless to say, his persecution has drawn an international outcry, including by many of those who joined the Saudi government in denouncing the attacks in Paris.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have long been strategic allies, and we want that relationship to continue. But the fundamental right of free expression cannot be a casualty of convenience. The injustices I have described must be addressed. Not only do these actions violate the Saudi government's stated policy and its commitment as a member of the UN Human Rights Council to protect human rights, but they are a flawed strategy for discouraging dissent. Ominously, as we have seen in many countries, they may cause critics of the government to resort to violence to achieve their goals.

I urge the Saudi government to release Mr. Abu al-Khair and Mr. Badawi and dismiss the spurious charges against them. This kind of repression and barbarity have no place in the 21st century.

CORN ETHANOL MANDATE ELIMINATION ACT

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I wish to submit an amendment with my colleagues, Senators TOOMEY and FLAKE to correct a major problem with the current Renewable Fuel Standard: the mandate for corn ethanol. We see two major problems with continuing to mandate the consumption of so much corn ethanol each year. The statute currently mandates more corn ethanol than can be used by the current vehicle fleet and gas stations. Roughly 40 percent of the U.S. corn crop is now used to produce ethanol, artificially pushing up food and feed prices while damaging the environment. This amendment offers a simple fix that addresses both problems: elimination of the corn ethanol mandate.

Also, the amendment leaves in place the requirement that oil companies purchase and use low-carbon advanced biofuels, including cellulosic ethanol and biodiesel. This allows the program to focus on the fuels that best address climate change and do not compete with the food supply.

Let me highlight a few of the unintended consequences of the corn ethanol mandate. The policy has led us to use roughly 40 percent of the U.S. corn crop not for food but for fuel, nearly twice the rate in 2006. Using more and more corn for ethanol—in drought years as well as years with bumper crops—places unnecessary pressure on the price of corn.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated in June 2014 that escalating the volume of corn ethanol as currently required by statute would raise the average price of corn about 6 percent by 2017. That would increase food expenditures by $3.5 billion per year by 2017, the equivalent of about $10 per person, which most directly affects families living on the margin.

Internationally, according to Tufts University researchers, the corn ethanol mandate has cost net corn importing countries $11.6 billion in higher corn prices, with more than half that cost, $6.6 billion, borne by developing countries. Higher corn prices also raise prices throughout the food supply chain by raising the cost of animal feed. For the turkey industry alone, the Renewable Fuel Standard raised feed expenses by $1.9 billion in 2013, according to the President of the National Turkey Federation. For the restaurant industry, a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers study projects that the corn ethanol mandate would increase costs by up to $3.2 billion a year. For the milk industry, the Western United Dairyman reported in 2013 that a combination of high feed costs and low milk prices put 105 dairies out of business in one year alone.

The corn ethanol mandate also has unintended environmental consequences. In 2013, an investigative report from the Associated Press found using government satellite data that 1.2 million acres of virgin land in Nebraska and the Dakotas alone were