

deal with real problems that confront the people of Texas or the people of Oklahoma or the people of the United States of America?

Now, that doesn't mean we come up here and leave our principles behind. It is just the opposite. I am not suggesting for a minute, in the interest of compromise, that we leave our principles behind, but there is a lot we can do, consistent with our principles, to help pass legislation which will have a very positive impact on the American people.

The President mentioned issues such as trade as something we can work on together. But little did I imagine that the powers that be would pick on an anti-human trafficking bill in order to try to divide the Senate—in order to peel off the 12 Democratic cosponsors who didn't even vote. Many of them didn't even vote for the bill.

In other words, they were for the bill—enough to cosponsor it—and then this morning they did not vote to see the bill progress to final passage. I don't know how they can explain that or, frankly, how they can reconcile that in their own conscience, recognizing that this legislation was designed to help vulnerable children, by and large, who are victims of what we call modern day slavery—sexual, economic bondage.

This legislation was designed not only to rescue them but to help them heal and begin a path toward a better, more productive life. That is why this morning I said I really felt this was a vote for the soul of the Senate.

I cannot imagine any Senator who does everything they have to do to be elected to get to serve here—the hardship for your family, raising money, and all the stuff you have to do to get here—and then to squander it by refusing to take a step to help the most vulnerable people who exist in our country. It is just beyond my imagination.

But I am afraid this is more than about a piece of legislation. There is an idea here in the Democratic leadership that they really don't want the Senate to be able to function. They don't really want us to be able to pass legislation or solve problems. What they want to do is to have the talking point that after the last election nothing has really changed in the Senate—that it is just as dysfunctional as it was when they were in charge.

I am happy to say I am optimistic—despite this morning's vote—that we will begin to make some progress as soon as next week, when we will, I think, take the first step to pass a budget. It will be the first time a budget has been passed since 2009.

I am grateful to the majority leader, the Senator from Kentucky, for saying that we are going to come back and vote again and again and again on this human trafficking bill until it passes. He is not going to schedule the nomination confirmation vote on the next Attorney General until such time as we get this passed.

Unfortunately, that is what this place has degenerated into—everybody looking for leverage to try to get a little bit more of what they want, and in the process, the very people we are supposed to be trying to work for and trying to help get lost.

I am very disappointed. This is not why I came to the Senate. This is not the kind of Senate I want to serve in. This is not what my constituents—the 26.9 million people I work for in Texas—sent me here to do. They expect more of us. They deserve more of us. I hope, now that this initial vote has been cast—thank goodness for the four Democrats who broke ranks with their leadership on that side of the aisle and decided to vote to advance this legislation, but we still need two more. We still need two more brave Democratic Senators who are going to defy their leadership and not simply follow them off the cliff.

This is what, from a practical political standpoint, I don't understand. One reason why Republicans are in the majority now is because, frankly, the President's policies were repudiated in the last election and the people who ran for reelection as incumbent Senators didn't have a record of accomplishment they could point to. So what they were left with was a referendum on the President's record which they followed down the line, and they had nothing else they could point to that they actually had done on the Senate floor because the Senate had been locked down and no amendments, no good ideas, no votes occurred. We literally had a U.S. Senator from Alaska, for example, who was running for reelection after serving in the Senate for 6 years who could not point to a single bill or amendment that bore his name that had been passed. So when people wondered, What are the issues in this election, they were left with the President of the United States saying: My policies are on the ballot, even though my name is not. Then we had the incumbent U.S. Senator with no record of accomplishments separate and apart from that referendum on the President's policies, and that referendum—the President's policies—lost and the people who enabled them and supported them.

Frankly, I really don't understand the calculation of our colleagues on the other side who have now slavishly voted according to the dictates of their party leadership and said no to the victims of human trafficking who would have benefited from that legislation. I don't know how they reconcile that in their minds. I don't know whether they have had sleepless nights worrying about it or whether their hearts have become so hardened, whether they have become so accustomed to this sort of mindless partisanship that they don't even think about it anymore.

Thanks to the majority leader, we are going to have another opportunity for them to rectify their “no” vote. All we need is two additional Senators who

will vote to progress this legislation given the next opportunity. So I hope our colleagues will reconsider.

RECESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess as under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:04 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you, Mr. President.

First, let me say Happy St. Patrick's Day to all my friends and family and colleagues in the Senate.

(The remarks of Ms. STABENOW pertaining to the introduction of S. 758 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Ms. STABENOW. I yield the floor.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE FUTURE OF COLORADO AND AMERICA

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, in 1893 Katharine Lee Bates made her way up the slopes of Pikes Peak and first wrote the words to one of America's greatest patriotic hymns, poeticizing “purple mountain majesties” and “amber waves of grain.”

One hundred years ago, Enos Mills helped preserve “mountain scenes of exceptional beauty and grandeur,” giving to the country the crown jewel of American splendor, Rocky Mountain National Park.

For over a century, visionaries such as John Iliff helped to settle the high plains of Colorado, described by Ian Frazier as a “heroic place,” an expanse of splendid isolation with unparalleled sense of space and generations of pioneers.

This is Colorado. From west to east and north to south, the beauty, heritage, and vitality of Colorado calls and beckons across our Nation and the world to those looking and longing for a place to call home, to live and work, to visit and vacation.

Our love for Colorado drives us to be better stewards of the land, to reach for solutions to great challenges, and to find optimism in every vale and valley. For generations, we have challenged our sons and daughters to always look up—look up to that great

Rocky Mountain horizon—as our ever-young State and our ever-hopeful attitude live peak to peak—the honor of living in the west, a land of opportunity and new beginnings.

It is this constant drive for a better future for our great State and Nation that leads me to the floor of the Senate to speak for the first time, where my duties as Colorado's newest Senator begin, walking in the footsteps of Colorado's first Senators, Jerome Chaffee and Henry Teller, and alongside my colleague Senator MICHAEL BENNET. It is an incredible and heavy obligation to fulfill to well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office, defending our Constitution with faith and allegiance to the rights we cherish, but an obligation and duty every person in Colorado expects us not just to fulfill but to excel at—from Beecher Island to the Book Cliffs, from Fisher's Peak to the Pawnee. Somewhere in between is my hometown of Yuma, home to hardy pioneers that have seen the high plains through great success and record harvests, depression and dust bowls, drought and tragedy. Yet through it all, the good times and challenges, it is still called home by generations who would live nowhere else.

It is here in this little eastern plains town, weatherworn and always thirsty, that Jaime and I are raising our children, Alyson, Thatcher, and Caitlyn, in a home that once belonged to their great-great-grandparents and are surrounded in town by family, Lala and Papa, great-grandparents, and more.

No matter where across Colorado's four corners you live or across this great Nation, we all hope for the same thing for our children—to live in a loving community that values every citizen, where they learn the value of hard work and perseverance, where hard work is met with merited reward, and that they find a Nation of liberty and freedom that they help make a little more free and a little more perfect to carry on the tradition of our Founding Fathers, always endeavoring to be better tomorrow than they are today.

Our Nation has always understood that this endeavor is not something that is just passed on, hoping someone else does the work for us. It is something we ourselves have to fight for today. We are responsible for the starting point we hand to the next generation, and we have a moral obligation to make it the best point possible, always advancing.

To accomplish this I have laid out a Four Corners plan representing all areas of Colorado and those issues that matter most to the people of this country: growing our economy and getting this Nation back to work in the kinds of jobs with the kind of salary that allows people to achieve their dreams, to develop North American energy security while enhancing the protection and appreciation of our environment, and making sure that we give our children the tools they need to succeed in a world growing both in its complexity and its interconnectedness.

In rural America we must work not only to keep the generations of families who grew up there on the farm and ranch but to find new ways to bring new families back to the farms, ranches, and small towns throughout our great State. We must revitalize Main Streets that are slowly losing their place as the heart and soul of the community—boarded up and forgotten. To do this I will introduce legislation that will help provide ways to infuse new investments and life into our rural communities, called the Rural Philanthropy Act. It will help struggling businesses to find new private sector partners to serve their community, whether it is a smalltown newspaper or a local clothing store. It will help grow jobs and create more opportunities for startups and innovation.

We must look to reimagine burdensome rules and regulations that tie the hands of people who want to start a business by revitalizing Main Street and breathing new life into a tired city block. Doing good things shouldn't be so difficult, and we need a government that recognizes this.

Colorado's economy will also benefit from value-added trade opportunities with the passage of new trade agreements opening up new markets and eliminating barriers to growing markets. I will work to ensure that small businesses have the resources they need to participate in trade, making sure the benefit of new markets doesn't just stop at the biggest corporations.

Through my First in Space Initiative, we will focus on policies that promote and grow Colorado's leading aerospace economies, launching new jobs in space, engineering, and aeronautics.

A healthy economy means that everyone benefits—not just those who already have found success. That is why I will work to expand the earned-income tax credit. By eliminating the waste, fraud, and abuse all too common within the EITC, we can save billions of dollars and then use that money to expand the credit, making a program that has already lifted millions of people out of poverty to do even more good for people throughout Colorado and in our urban centers. Measuring a successful economy shouldn't simply be a matter of looking to see whether the haves have more but about what policies we have put in place to actually help the poor lift themselves out of poverty.

We are living in a veneered economy. While the numbers on Wall Street look good and profits are looking up, scratch the surface and too many people continue to suffer, endlessly searching for jobs they desperately need and earning the kinds of salary they need to help achieve their family's goals. While parts of Colorado may be succeeding, others are struggling. True success means that every part of our State's economy flourishes.

Thanks to our State's energy economy, parts of the State that seem to have been left behind are now thriving.

A national policy geared towards North American energy independence will not only boost jobs and provide abundant and affordable energy upon which our economy relies, but it will boost our national security by providing to our allies abroad the energy partner they need that presents an alternative to nations such as Russia and Iran.

I look forward to continuing my push for an expedited export process for LNG, allowing Mesa and La Plata County energy producers the opportunity to play a leading role in national security while creating jobs at home.

Commonsense Colorado energy solutions also means focusing on renewable energy as well. Harnessing the winds in Weld, the sun in San Luis, and the power of water in the West, we can lessen pollution and help clean up the air. Working across the aisle with Senator CHRIS COONS from Delaware, I will focus on energy-savings performance contracts, an often overlooked private sector tool that has the potential to create thousands of jobs and save the taxpayer billions of dollars while helping to reduce pollution.

Reducing pollution and protecting our environment is a cornerstone of Colorado. I look forward to working with Congressman SCOTT TIPTON on legislation to help preserve and restore our great forest lands and to protect Colorado landscapes. Whether it is healthy forest legislation, reducing the maintenance backlog in our national parks or finding collaborative solutions to challenging land conflicts, we owe it to future generations of Coloradans to pass on an environment that is cleaner when they receive it than the one which we inherited.

Future generations of Coloradans also deserve the opportunity to receive an education. Whether that is fighting to restore local control to States, school districts, and parents or working to make the dream of a college degree a reality, our future depends on our ability to provide the skills and training for the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs.

I will continue work on my legislation called the Making College Affordable Act. This will help families save for college and meet expenses in primary and secondary education. I look forward to promoting STEM education opportunities and transforming our immigration system from one that sends the best and brightest students back home to compete against us to one that allows them the opportunity to stay here in the United States to create jobs and innovation that we will continue to benefit from.

There is no doubt in the next 6 years many issues will arise that fall outside these Four Corner issues, and I look forward to meeting every single one of these challenges by finding new opportunities that will help make Colorado a better place.

I look forward to working with Congressman MIKE COFFMAN to finish the

VA hospital in Aurora, a hospital earned through sacrifice but tarnished by delay. When it is completed, it will give veterans a far better place for the care they deserve. That always must be our focus, making Colorado and the United States a better place, giving the people of this country the confidence that we can work together to achieve common goals, to strive for brighter horizons, to deliver to the American people a government they can be proud of again. I will work with Senator BENNET and anyone who is committed to these common goals.

Too many people believe that government can no longer address the great challenges of our time—an \$18 trillion debt, mounting entitlement costs, a health care crisis that continues into the next century, and seemingly overwhelming policy challenges. Some leaders would have us believe they can't do anything about it, that a managed decline is better than a rapid decline.

The American people know better. They don't have to—and indeed, they will not—accept second best. A government that we can be proud of is one that solves the greatest challenges of our time, balances our budget, and puts in place solutions that rise above the rhetoric. A government we can be proud of again means an America that is always advancing and never in retreat.

Our search for solutions, our search for a government we can be proud of comes from the common bond—regardless of color, gender or creed, and, yes, even party—that we as Americans all hold: the shared story of our lives, the unrelenting American spirit. This is the American story.

We owe our Nation to the sacrifices made by millions of men and women for freedom for each other, to countless generations in the past and present who have worn a uniform in the defense of our Nation—a nation made exceptional by pioneering people, a nation of innovation and opportunity, a nation that imagines and inspires, a nation that rises above to be better tomorrow than we are today.

I grew up working at the family implement dealership, a family business that was started by my great-grandfather 100 years ago. Sweeping the floors and cleaning the bathrooms, I learned what it takes to make a business work. I learned about the employees who made the business function and how we succeed as a business when our employees succeed—the hard-working men and women who hope their aspirations will be fulfilled.

I learned from my grandma, the real life Rosie the Riveter who welded liberty ships in World War II alongside her husband, my grandpa. They gave up everything, moving their family and all they had in life to be part of the effort to win the war and to provide their four children with the opportunity to succeed and to build their own futures for their own families in a free world.

A few weeks ago, when going through some old boxes—a random collection of endless material, pictures—I discovered a stack of letters that were written by my grandfather to his parents and to my grandmother during World War II. The letters were written in near perfect cursive. Others were typed on an old hammer-strike typewriter they undoubtedly used to the last days of the implement dealership. He talked about the loneliness for home, new friends he had made during the war, questions about his young son, and the new countries he was visiting in France and beyond.

I would like to share parts of one of those letters today because it shares part of our American story. It was written on August 15, 1945.

Dear Folks,

Aha, that day, 14 August, is indeed a history making day, and last night at twelve o'clock when at last all the rumors were confirmed that the world was at peace I said a silent prayer and know that it won't be long until we are all together again. If you pull those reins hard enough, maybe I will be home for Xmas, mother, certainly have a good chance of making it now, although anything can still happen and there are thousands of miles to cover, but one can't help but be optimistic.

It must have been an incredible feeling to know that the war you had been fighting, the war that had consumed the world and taken our Nation's young men and women thousands of miles away from home was over, to have received word that "the rumors were confirmed that the world was at peace." And after years of battle and weariness and a silent prayer, the optimism of one soldier and that soldier's Nation persevered.

There are countless families across this country who share a similar story. One of their aunts or uncles, parents or siblings are people who share the honor and the obligation of wearing a uniform for the United States of America with all of the responsibility that comes along with it.

They are people whom we will most likely never meet, nor will we ever be able to fully thank them, but they still fought for all of us. Through the words of one simple letter, we recognize the power of peace over conflict, of love for family and country. A silent prayer, no doubt of thanks, thanks for answering so many other silent prayers, silent prayers for a day of peace and homecoming. What it must have been like to know that the great darkness of war which threatened freedom not for some but for all had finally come to an end. Just like that, you will be home as if nothing ever happened.

Somewhere in that silent prayer, under the new calm of a war-torn horizon was the thanksgiving of a soldier for his victorious nation, a soldier looking to go home a civilian to live out his dreams far away from harm, in the arms of his family.

While we may disagree on the details of policy and the tactics of direction, let us make no mistake in our charge—

to ensure that we have a nation that is worthy of the sacrifice so many have made; to refuse to pass on to future generations a nation in retreat or decline; to make sure ours is a nation that is always worth fighting for. This is Colorado. This is the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING EDWARD WILLIAM BROOKE III

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on January 3, the Nation lost a courageous public servant—actually, an icon of the 20th century: Massachusetts Senator Edward William Brooke III. He was 95 years old.

I have had the privilege of serving with more than 350 Senators since Vermonters first elected me to represent them in this Chamber. There is a very special list of those with whom I have served, and it is a privilege to count among those on that special list Senator Edward Brooke. We were both elected representatives of Northeastern States, even though we came from different political parties.

Senator Brooke and I forged a relationship that lasted long after he left Congress. We actually shared a similar start to our careers. As a former State's Attorney, I admired and respected Senator Brooke's legacy as a fearless prosecutor. As Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Senator Brooke exposed and fought against political corruption.

He was no stranger to breaking barriers, and he ultimately became the first African American elected in Massachusetts to serve in the United States Senate—a post he held for 12 years.

Senator Brooke was a problem-solver. He wanted to spend his time in the Senate making a difference, not just making pronouncements. He invested his considerable abilities in bridging racial, economic, and political divides to solve the challenges facing the Nation. He was a key, and sometimes crucial, voice along the difficult path toward enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. He spearheaded equal opportunity legislative initiatives from housing, to education, to employment. I think there was no bridge Senator Brooke was unwilling to cross to make lives better.

Senator Brooke is one of the few Senators to receive the Nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He was also the recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal. His service in World War II was recognized with a Bronze Star.

This lifelong public servant dedicated his life to defending the bedrock principles of this country. His legacy of fighting for justice and equality is as important today as ever before. It is a legacy that will always deserve to be remembered and honored.

Marcelle and I feel privileged to have known him and I send my condolences to his wife, Anne, his children, and his grandchildren.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. President, the New York Times ran an editorial this morning aptly entitled "The Loretta Lynch Confirmation Mess." The editorial writers note:

Of course, as Mr. McConnell readily acknowledged, the delay [of the vote on Loretta Lynch's nomination] is not simply about trafficking legislation but a redirection of Republicans' fury at what they consider Mr. Obama's lawless actions.

If Republicans are serious about law enforcement, serious about implementing the legislation I hope will pass to combat and prevent human trafficking, they will stop their partisan attacks and allow a vote on Loretta Lynch's nomination. After all, she has a very good record of prosecuting people who are involved in trafficking. You can't say you are in favor of stopping trafficking and then block an Attorney General who has a record of enforcing the trafficking laws.

It has been 19 days since the bipartisan majority in the Senate Judiciary Committee favorably reported her nomination. She has been waiting longer for a floor vote than the five most recent attorneys general combined. She has been waiting for a vote for 19 days. If you took Attorneys General Reno, Ashcroft, Gonzales, Mukasey, and Holder, all of them together were 18 days. For Loretta Lynch it is 19 days.

It has certainly been much longer than for the three men nominated during the last Republican administration or for the incumbent Attorney General nominated by this administration. She has now waited, as I said, longer than the previous five Attorneys General combined.

If we don't vote on her this week, her nomination will have waited on the Senate floor longer than the most recent seven Attorneys General combined. I hope it doesn't come to that. That would show a real disdain for the Department of Justice in its efforts to enforce our laws, to stop trafficking, and to go after terrorists, but it is also beneath the Senate.

Certainly when I was chairman, I did not do that for President Bush's Attorney General nominee when he was in his last 2 years as President. As chairman I moved Judge Mukasey through in a fraction of the time we have taken on Loretta Lynch. I did this even though his nomination was not something I supported and I ultimately voted against it. I moved him forward quickly even though Judge Mukasey was unwilling to state how he felt about President Bush's position on tor-

ture and did not seem to have a position on the politicization of his predecessor, or his work with U.S. attorneys, things that set back law enforcement for years. In fact, even though he had no position on most of the issues President Bush was involved in, either through Executive orders or otherwise, he was still moved through in a tiny fraction of the time Loretta Lynch has been pending so far.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the New York Times article I mentioned earlier.

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

[From the New York Times, March 17, 2015]

THE LORETTA LYNCH CONFIRMATION MESS

(By the Editorial Board)

What does the abortion issue have to do with the prevention of human trafficking? Nothing.

What do either of those things have to do with Loretta Lynch, whom President Obama nominated more than four months ago to succeed Eric Holder Jr. as attorney general of the United States? Even less.

Yet Ms. Lynch's confirmation as the nation's top law enforcement officer—which seemed like a sure thing only a few weeks ago—is being held hostage to last-minute political mischief.

Ms. Lynch, a supremely well-qualified prosecutor, has waited far too long to be confirmed. Senate Republicans said as recently as last week that they would schedule Ms. Lynch's confirmation vote for this week, but, on Sunday, the majority leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, said that won't happen until the Senate moves forward on a bipartisan trafficking bill, which would, among other things, establish a fund for victims through a fine paid by those convicted of trafficking crimes.

The legislation, which sailed through committee in February, stalled last week when Democrats noticed a provision that would prohibit money in the fund from being used to pay for abortions. The original Senate bill, introduced in the last Congress, made no reference to abortion. Nor did the House's version of the bill, introduced by Representative Erik Paulsen, a Republican of Minnesota. "There is no reason it should be included in these bills," Mr. Paulsen said last week of the abortion language. "This issue is far too important to tie it up with an unrelated fight with politics as usual."

Republicans say they routinely add the abortion language into many bills and that Democrats should have read more carefully. Democrats say Republicans operated in bad faith—not to mention in violation of Senate norms—by misrepresenting the bill's contents.

This dispute has nothing to do with the needs of the Justice Department. It is beyond irresponsible to strand the department without a leader, sowing instability and uncertainty in an important executive agency.

Mr. Holder announced his retirement in September, to the evident delight of Republicans who have opposed him from the start. One would have thought they would be eager to see him go, yet almost six months later he remains in office because a replacement has not been confirmed. No one disputes Ms. Lynch's experience or accomplishments. She currently leads the federal prosecutor's office in the Eastern District of New York, and she has received the support of senators of both parties. The only objection anyone

could come up with was that she might not stand up against President Obama's policies, an odd criticism to aim at a prospective cabinet member.

Of course, as Mr. McConnell readily acknowledged, the delay is not simply about trafficking legislation but a redirection of Republicans' fury at what they consider Mr. Obama's lawless actions. Ms. Lynch is "suffering from the president's actions," he said Sunday, referring to Mr. Obama's move on immigration policy last November.

This is not the way for Republicans to reassure the country of their ability to govern now that they control both houses of Congress. Instead, they could start by ending the delay on what should be a straightforward floor vote and do the job Americans elected them to do.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, next Tuesday, March 24, we will reach the deadline for the deal with Iran for its illicit nuclear program. That is the date by which the Obama administration said it would have a framework for a final agreement with Iran. So far, it seems as though the administration is willing to make a deal at any cost. America cannot afford that and Congress should not allow it. An overwhelming majority of Americans believe we should not accept a bad deal with the Iranians. In one poll earlier this month, 84 percent of Americans said it is a bad idea to accept the kinds of concessions this administration seems to be making.

The Obama administration started negotiating with Iran more than 5 years ago. It has mishandled these talks from the very beginning by conceding Iran's right to enrich uranium. This deal was supposed to be about stopping Iran's nuclear program as a pathway to a bomb. Negotiators started off by insisting that Iran should have no more than 1,500 centrifuges to produce nuclear materials. That number has steadily grown during the negotiations. According to David Ignatius in the Washington Post on February 24, the number is now four times the level where we started. His article is entitled "A compelling argument on Iran." It says, "The deal taking shape would likely allow Iran about 6,000" centrifuges. So we have gone from 1,500 to 4,000 to now 6,000. The author of the article says one administration official told him that even 9,000 centrifuges would be okay.

Remember, Iran is not supposed to have a uranium enrichment program. The United Nations Security Council has demanded the program be suspended. So why is the Obama administration negotiating on this point at all? When did this change from being an attempt to stop Iran's nuclear program to become an attempt to delay or to manage Iran's nuclear program? If this deal makes too many of these kinds of concessions to the Iranians, it would be just one more example of the failed foreign relations of this Obama Presidency.

Go back and look at what happened with the Russian reset. It was the reset button Secretary of State Clinton launched in March of 2009—6 years ago this month. Look at her comments in which she said that Syrian President Assad was “a reformer.” President Obama talked about a redline with Syria—a redline that Syria could not cross by using chemical weapons against his own people. Assad crossed that line more than 2 years ago.

Remember when the President called ISIS a JV team?

This is all part of a pattern of the Obama administration underestimating our enemies and being outmaneuvered by them. This administration has a terrible record of being wrong about Iran as well.

When Congress was debating increased sanctions against Iran, the White House opposed those sanctions. Congress had to force sanctions authority on the President. It was those sanctions—the ones Congress imposed upon the President—that brought Iran to the negotiating table. Now the administration says it opposes congressional participation once again. Well, I don't believe the White House gets to be the sole decider on this important issue.

The administration claims it understands it would be better to have no deal at all than to have a bad deal, and I agree. That is why we need oversight—oversight by Congress—to make sure this is not a bad deal. The negotiators don't get to decide for themselves if it is a good deal or a bad deal. The American people get a say, and Congress, as the elected representatives of the people, is the right place for the people to have their voices heard.

So what does the Obama administration have to say about all this? The President's Chief of Staff sent a letter over the weekend, Saturday night—the Saturday night surprise—and he said Congress will get to be involved only after the administration signs a deal. Congress gets to be involved only after people get to find out what is in it, after President Obama signs a deal. It is kind of like NANCY PELOSI when she said of the health care law, first you have to pass it before you get to find out what is in it.

So why is it the Chief of Staff of the President is acting this way? Why is the Obama administration telling Members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to sit down and be quiet? Let's be clear about what is at stake here. If the Obama administration allows Iran to continue with its illicit nuclear program, the world will be less safe, less stable, and less secure. Any agreement must be accountable, must be enforceable, and must be verifiable. If that is not the case, then it is a bad deal.

We need to make sure this deal is about protecting Americans, not protecting the President's diplomatic legacy. If the Obama administration is so confident it can negotiate a good deal, why not let Congress participate?

We have bipartisan legislation here that Senator CORKER has written with Democrats and Republicans as cosponsors. That bipartisan legislation would make sure that congressional sanctions currently in place stay in place, and they stay in place long enough for Congress to hold hearings and to take whatever action is needed. That bill being proposed will be before the Committee on Foreign Relations next week. That bill will guarantee the President keeps an eye on Iran's compliance with any agreement. If the Iranians try to break the deal, we would know about it so that Congress would reimpose sanctions, reinstate sanctions.

The American people need to be involved in this process. Getting onboard and getting the approval of Congress only strengthens the agreement the administration negotiates. It will validate, give more legitimacy to it, and more credibility. Congress should and must be involved. It will make clear to both our allies and our enemies that America stands united in our commitment to ending Iran's nuclear program. It also makes it far more likely this agreement will outlast the Obama administration.

When President Obama and Vice President BIDEN were Senators, they favored this kind of involvement by Congress. They both actually cosponsored legislation requiring Congress to approve any long-term security commitment President Bush was to make with Iraq. Well, a long agreement with Iran over its nuclear program to me is even more important.

In one policy after another, President Obama has disregarded the views of the American people. This is a huge concern. He has ignored Congress. He acted on his own even when he had no authority to act. He has done it on the domestic side, he has done it on the foreign relations side, and it looks to me as if the administration is planning once again to ignore Congress and the American people in pursuit of an inadequate deal with Iran. It is time for Congress to step in and to stand up for the American people.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Washington Post story of February 24 by David Ignatius entitled “A compelling argument on Iran.”

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

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 24, 2015]

A COMPELLING ARGUMENT ON IRAN

(By David Ignatius)

Prussian King Frederick the Great offered this rebuke to those who refused to allow any concessions: “If you try to hold everything, you hold nothing.”

President Obama might make a similar retort to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's attack on the alleged “bad deal” the United States is contemplating with Iran. Netanyahu rejects any concessions that allow Iran to enrich uranium; he thinks the U.S. goal of a one-year “break-out” period before Iran could build a bomb isn't enough.

To which several leading administration officials respond: Okay, then, what's a better practical idea for controlling Iran's nuclear program? They see in Netanyahu's maximalist goals an air of unreality—of fantasy, even. They grant that their solution isn't perfect. But they argue that it's far better for Israel and the West than any other plausible scenario.

The Iran nuclear talks, arguably the most important diplomatic negotiations of the last several decades, will come to a head next month. Netanyahu will take his case against the agreement to Congress on March 3 in an unusual speech organized by the Republican House speaker. His own political leadership will be tested in Israeli elections on March 17. The Iran negotiations will reach a March 24 deadline for the framework of a final comprehensive accord.

Israel's Minister of Intelligence Yuval Steinitz made the case against the Iran agreement in an interview with me last week. “From the very beginning, we made it clear we had reservations about the goal of the negotiations,” he explained. He said Obama's effort to limit the Iranian nuclear program for a decade or so, in the expectation that a future generation of leaders wouldn't seek a bomb, was “too speculative.”

The administration's response is that the agreement is better than any realistic alternative. Officials argue it would put the Iranian program in a box, with constraints on all the pathways to making a bomb. Perhaps more important, it would provide strict monitoring and allow intrusive inspection of Iranian facilities—not just its centrifuges but its uranium mines, mills and manufacturing facilities. If Iran seeks a covert path to building a bomb, the deal offers the best hope of detecting it.

If the current talks collapsed, all these safeguards would disappear. The Iranians could resume enrichment and other currently prohibited activities. In such a situation, the United States and Israel would face a stark choice over whether to attack Iranian facilities—with no guarantee that such an attack would set Tehran back more than a few years.

The deal taking shape would likely allow Iran about 6,000 IR-1 centrifuges at Natanz. The Iranians apparently wouldn't install IR-2s, which operate twice as fast, and they would limit research on future models, up to IR-8s, that are on the drawing board. How these research limits would be monitored and enforced is a key bargaining issue. Another critical variable is the size of the stockpile Iran could maintain; U.S. officials want a very low number, with additional enriched material shipped out of Iran.

One official argues that the United States would be better off with 9,000 IR-1s and a small stockpile than with 1,000 IR-2s and a large stockpile. Netanyahu probably won't address this issue in his speech to Congress, since he insists the only acceptable number of centrifuges is zero.

Another key technical issue is how non-permitted centrifuges would be dismantled. There is a range of options, from simply unplugging the equipment to pulverizing it altogether. The United States wants a formula that would require at least a year for the Iranians to restart the shelved equipment. As for the planned Iranian plutonium reactor at Arak, negotiators seem to have agreed on a compromise that will halt construction well before Arak becomes “hot” with potential bomb fuel.

The length of the agreement is a crucial variable. U.S. officials have always spoken of a “double-digit” duration period, somewhere between 10 and 15 years. Negotiators are also exploring the possibility of different phases

of the timeline, with inspection provisions having a longer life span than, say, limits on the number of centrifuges.

The deal-breaker for the administration is if Iran balks at U.S. insistence that sanctions will only be removed step by step, as Iran demonstrates that it's serious about abiding by the agreement. In the U.S. view, Iran has to earn its way back to global acceptance.

The Iran deal is imperfect. As Count Metternich observed in 1807 about negotiations with the rising powers of his day, "Peace does not exist with a revolutionary system." But U.S. officials make a compelling case that this agreement is a start toward a safer Middle East.

Mr. BARRASSO. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. TOOMEY. Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to speak on S. 178, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, and the Toomey-Manchin amendment No. 291 to that bill.

First of all, I wish to thank Senator CORNYN for bringing this bill to the Senate floor. It is a bipartisan bill. It is an extremely important bill. It has been awfully frustrating that we can't even get onto this bill. It is especially hard to understand because of the fact that this is a bipartisan bill which has 10 Democratic cosponsors and another 3 Democrats who voted for it in the Senate Judiciary Committee. This shouldn't even be controversial.

It is particularly disturbing because when you think about what we are trying to address with Senator CORNYN's bill, it is awfully important. I mean, what can be more despicable than what we are trying to go after here—trafficking human beings? This is a form of modern-day slavery, is what it is, and some of the most despicable people in the world take the most vulnerable people in our society and they turn them into essentially slaves in the sex industry. I mean, as appalling as that is, it happens, and it happens in every State.

What this bill does is it provides more tools for law enforcement to better be able to crack down on this appalling practice and provides harsher penalties, as well it should, and it provides more resources for folks who do the important work of helping victims to heal, which is a very long, very difficult, very painful process. It is unimaginable what some of these folks go through. Children are forced into slavery, brutalized, beaten, and raped. It is dehumanizing—an atrocious situation. We have a bill which is bipartisan and which would actually do something constructive about it, and our Democratic colleagues will not even allow us to begin the debate, much less move on in the process.

I understand there is a provision in the bill they don't like. I get that. But we have offered repeatedly that they would be allowed to offer any amendment they like. They can offer an amendment to strike the language to which they object, and that is the way the Senate is supposed to work. You put a bill on the floor. If somebody doesn't like something that is in it, you try to change it. It is pretty basic, pretty fundamental, and that is what we ought to be doing. But we haven't been able to persuade enough of our Democratic colleagues to allow us to proceed to this bill yet. I hope we will soon.

One of the reasons I hope so goes beyond the substance of this bill, and that is the amendment Senator MANCHIN and I will introduce as soon as we are able to do that. This is an amendment which will allow us to amend the underlying trafficking bill with a bill Senator MANCHIN and I have introduced designed to protect kids from sexual abuse. It is amendment No. 291, and it is based on a bill we have called the Protecting Students from Sexual and Violent Predators Act. The goal is to protect kids from pedophiles in schools. That is what it comes down to. There is overwhelming bipartisan support for our legislation, the bill I introduced with Senator MANCHIN. It passed the House unanimously.

I rose last week to ask unanimous consent to bring up this amendment and make it pending so we could debate and we could vote on it, and one of our friends from the other side of the aisle objected to that as well. So there is no progress on this yet, but I am convinced that this isn't going to stand. I am convinced that enough Democratic Senators are going to come to their senses and they are going to join us in voting on this bill and that we are going to be able to somehow proceed with this and proceed with the various amendments I and others intend to offer.

I want to speak a little bit about my amendment because I think we are going to get to it. As I mentioned, it is about protecting kids at school from violent and sexual predators. Let me start with an observation that should go without saying, but I will say it anyway.

We all know that the overwhelming majority of school authorities, teachers and nonteachers alike, are very good and decent people and that it would never occur to them to abuse the children in their care. They are motivated in their desire to help kids succeed in the various ways they help guide these kids. I am completely convinced that the overwhelming majority of teachers and school employees don't want a pedophile anywhere near their school. They don't want them in the classroom next to them. They don't want them coaching their kids. They don't want them in any way involved because most teachers have good sense and decency. That is the way they are.

But the reality is that schools are, in fact, where the kids are, and pedophiles know this. So we have a problem. The problem is that some of these predators are finding ways into the schools.

Stated very clearly, last year alone, 459 school employees—some teachers, some not teachers—459 adult school employees were arrested across America for sexual misconduct with the kids they are supposed to be looking after; 459 that we knew enough about what they were doing and the prosecutors felt they had a strong enough case that they could actually go ahead and make the arrest. How many more are under investigation? How many more where there are suspicions but no evidence with which to pursue a case? Probably a lot more. But we know for sure there are 459 appalling cases, and so far this year, we are on track to have similar numbers. We are 76 days into the school year, and over 90 school employees have already been arrested this year across the country.

This is absolutely a real problem. Some of these predators are finding ways to slip through the cracks of the system that is meant to keep them out, and Senator MANCHIN and I want to do something about it.

Here is our suggestion. We have a bill that does two simple things. It says to the State: If you are going to collect the millions of dollars in Federal funding that go to primary and secondary education, then you have to do a proper background check and you have to make sure you are not hiring a pedophile. You have to check the Federal and State databases to make sure you are doing a thorough background check. And the second requirement is you can't engage or permit anybody to engage in this appalling practice that is known as passing the trash. It is shocking that this could even exist, but it does.

I will tell you the story that actually inspired this legislation, which is a case in point of passing the trash. The story begins with a teacher teaching in Delaware County, PA. This teacher was a pedophile who was molesting boys who were in his care. The school district figured out what was going on. There was never enough evidence to actually prosecute him, but they knew something was very wrong. The school district decided it would be better if this teacher became someone else's problem, so, as appalling as it is, what they did was they wrote a letter of recommendation to recommend this teacher for another job provided that he leave. Well, he leaves. He goes across the State border into West Virginia, applies for and, in part on the strength of the letter of recommendation he had, he gets hired at a school in West Virginia. He works as a teacher. He resumes what these people do—abusing children. Eventually, he becomes principal, and while principal at the school, he rapes and murders a 12-year-old boy named Jeremy Bell.

So the practice of sending a letter of recommendation along with a monster

such as this is known as passing the trash. As appalling as that is, it happens enough that it has its own name. As a matter of fact, just Friday, I was in Pittsburgh and I was visiting a wonderful group of people—Pittsburgh Action Against Rape—a great group of professionals who do wonderful work, mostly helping victims cope with the aftermath of their assaults. One of the people I met there and heard from is the president of the board of directors. Her name is Beth Docherty. She told her story. Her story began when she was 15 years old. She was in the band at her school when the band instructor began to rape her. When she came forward and told the authorities what was happening, the school promised the teacher they wouldn't conduct any investigation if he would just quietly resign. Then the school wrote a glowing letter of recommendation for this guy, which he took with him, went to Florida, and found a teaching job there.

Fortunately, the prosecutors in the case in Pennsylvania felt confident that they had a strong enough case, and in time they were actually able to get him back from Florida. They prosecuted him and they locked him up, and he is in jail today, where he belongs and might be for the rest of his life.

The point of this is, as appalling and shocking as it is to our conscience that anyone would do this, I am here to say it happens. It happens, and we need to do something about it for the sake of Jeremy Bell and for the sake of Beth Docherty and who knows how many other children.

Our legislation simply requires that the State have a provision in its law that makes it illegal to knowingly recommend for hire someone who is attacking kids. This, too, strikes me as a bill that should not be controversial. It passed the House unanimously. But there are people who are trying to kill this bill. We have some of our friends on the other side of the aisle, and outside organizations from the left have argued against this.

I want to quote from a letter that was sent to all of us explaining why a number of those groups are opposing the legislation. Here is the quote. This is what they say in their letter:

“Individuals who have been convicted of crimes and have completed their sentences should not be unnecessarily subjected to additional punishments because of these convictions.”

Well, wait a minute. Think about the logic of that position. By that logic, an admitted convicted child molester who serves a 10-year prison sentence for his crime should be able to walk out of the jail, walk down the street, apply for and get a job teaching elementary schoolkids. How ridiculous is that? It is completely ridiculous.

Our kids should not be involuntary members of a social experiment where we are trying to see which convicted child molesters are going to be recidivists. Frankly, most of them are.

I am not willing to take the risk that our kids should be left alone with people like that. We have a National Sex Offender Registry for a reason. It is because we recognize those people pose a danger that extends past the time of their incarceration. Parents need to know about that. That is why we have this national registry. Schools need to avoid the danger.

To be clear, I am not suggesting a convicted child molester can never work again anywhere, but I am saying they should not work in a school. I think that is completely reasonable. I am shocked, frankly, that these organizations would come out against this commonsense legislation.

But the objection, in fairness—some objection comes from our side of the aisle as well. I have a colleague for whom I have all the respect in the world. The senior Senator from Tennessee is a wonderful Senator. I agree with him on far more than I disagree. But I have to say, I strongly disagree with his view of this particular view. He has been here on the Senate floor. He has been very upfront with me about his opposition to our bill. The basis of his opposition to my bill is he believes that passing the legislation Senator MANCHIN and I are proposing, requiring background checks and forbidding the passing of trash, constitutes the equivalent of a national school board, that it is an unreasonable infringement on schools.

Well, I could not disagree more. Now the idea of a national school board is a terrible idea. I have no interest in that. You will never hear me arguing that the Federal Government should impose on States and school districts things such as appropriate class size, or whether you should teach geometry before algebra in middle school, or what grade should students read “The Grapes of Wrath.” Any of those kinds of curriculum issues or testing issues should be left to local school boards and States. But that is not what we are trying to do here.

What I am saying with my legislation with Senator MANCHIN is if a State takes billions and billions of Federal tax dollars each year, then you cannot use that money to pay the salary of a convicted child abuser. I think that is totally different. That is nothing like a national school board.

Furthermore, we all voted in favor of the substance of these background check requirements when we all passed the child care development block grant bill, which, by the way, passed this Chamber with one dissenting vote. It was 98 to 1. There was one “no” vote, which had nothing to do with the background check provisions, by the way. The senior Senator from Tennessee was an original cosponsor of that legislation.

By the way, that also passed the House unanimously. It is virtually identical. It holds that children in these daycare centers should have the protection that comes with knowing

the employees have gone through this background check system.

So do we have a national daycare board? I do not think so. If it is okay to protect the youngest of kids, which it certainly is and should be, why cannot we also extend that protection to kids who are a little bit older? We are insisting on a standard that is appropriate and rigorous for kids who are toddlers. Then when they go to kindergarten, we are not going to have the same standard to protect them? That makes no sense to me at all.

Then another point I would make regarding this idea of a national school board is this practice of passing the trash. When a school district sends a letter of recommendation for a known offender, and he takes that letter with him and goes across State lines, what can a single State do about that? The case I described of Jeremy Bell, the little boy who was killed by the teacher in West Virginia who originated in Pennsylvania—what could West Virginia do to forbid Pennsylvanians from sending a letter of recommendation for that teacher? Absolutely nothing is the answer. Because West Virginia's legislative authority does not reach into Pennsylvania. This happens across State lines. In fact, it is a very conscious decision on the part of many of these predators, because they want to put as much distance between their criminal activities as they can. When they move, they move far sometimes. So this demands a Federal response. There is nothing a State can do to solve this problem. That is why we address it in our bill.

The other point I would make is, look, this is not the first time we have had the Federal Government establish some employment standards. We have Federal laws that, for instance, ban discrimination in schools. Schools are not permitted, under Federal law—you cannot discriminate in your hiring on the basis of sex or race or age or religion or pregnancy. Does that mean we have a national school board? Does that mean we have a national school board? Does this mean we have to repeal all of these laws? I do not think so. I think it is perfectly reasonable to have employment standards.

Finally, I would say do we not have some responsibility of oversight of how Federal tax dollars get spent by the States? I mean, do we send the money and say: Hey, here is a pile of cash, do whatever you like with it? I do not think that is a very reasonable standard. What could be more reasonable than simply saying you cannot use Federal tax dollars we are responsible for if you are going to use it to pay the salaries of convicted child abusers. I think that is pretty straightforward.

I will say there may be alternative amendments here. There has been some discussion that some of our colleagues may offer alternatives to the legislation Senator MANCHIN and I have. I am still willing to work with anyone on our side or the other side of the aisle.

If we can constructively work—if the goal is to actually get something passed that is going to be helpful, that is going to be constructive, then I will work with anybody to get there. But there are a few things I will not agree to. I will not agree to a provision that, under the guise of privacy, requires a school to stay silent while a known child molester seeks a new teaching job. That is not reasonable. I will not agree to a bill that does nothing to change the status quo, a bill that does nothing to provide additional protections for our kids.

Unfortunately, in my view, the amendment that is offered by the senior Senator from Tennessee fits into this latter category. He has got an amendment that I think provides absolutely no additional protections. It says all States have to have a background check system. But guess what. All States already do. The problem is, many of them are inadequate. As I said before, there is nothing a State can do about passing the trash across State lines. So it does nothing to stop passing the trash. It does nothing to stop schools from hiring a convicted child rapist. It does not say anything about the standards of the background check. The bill is so loose that if a State simply decided to do a Google search, that would meet the criteria of the bill. It is completely unacceptable. It does not change the status quo. It does nothing to protect the kids. You could make the argument that this bill is arguably worse than doing nothing, because it could undermine the effort to do this right, create the illusion of having done something at the national level when, in fact, it has not done so.

I will conclude by simply saying I am not prepared to settle for the status quo. I am not satisfied when we have a situation where 459 school employees are arrested in a single year—arrested for sexual misconduct with the kids they are supposed to be taking care of. Obviously we have a problem here. I am not going to settle for a pretend piece of legislation that accomplishes nothing.

What comes home to me is my own three kids. I have three young children. When one of my children gets on a schoolbus in the morning, I have every right to expect the school that child is going to—the school my child is going to—is as safe an environment for him or her as it can possibly be. Every other parent in Pennsylvania and every parent in America deserves to have peace of mind. Every child deserves to have that security. So that is why I am not going to give up on this.

I am confident at some point our Democratic friends are going to realize it is a huge mistake for them to continue their filibuster of the trafficking bill. When they do, they will agree to let us proceed to it. When that happens, I will be back. Senator MANCHIN and I will offer our legislation as an amendment. We are going to have a debate about it. We are going to have a

vote about it. I certainly hope we win this vote. This, again, is legislation that passed the House unanimously. If it passes the Senate, it is sure to become law. If it does not pass for some reason, then I am going to come back again and again until it does.

I hope we will take this up sooner rather than later. I hope we get on this bill still this week. There is still time. I know we will have an open amendment process when we do. I look forward to offering this amendment.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, yesterday, I, along with a number of my colleagues, filed an amendment to the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. This amendment, based on the Rape Survivor Child Custody Act which we filed as a stand-alone bill last Congress, would provide grants to States that have laws on the books that allow women to petition for the termination of parental rights based on clear and convincing evidence that a child was conceived through rape. The goal is to encourage more States to adopt such laws.

The amendment as drafted gives broad discretion to the Attorney General to determine which States are eligible for grants and which are not. For that reason, I would like to say a few words regarding our intention in drafting this amendment.

Under the Rape Survivor Child Custody Act, the Attorney General is empowered to make grants to “States that have in place a law that allows the mother of any child that was conceived through rape to seek court-order termination of the parental rights of her rapist with regard to that child, which the court is authorized to grant upon clear and convincing evidence of rape.” Termination is defined as “a complete and final termination of the parent’s right to custody of, guardianship of, visitation with, access to, and inheritance from a child.”

There are a number of States that have such a law on the books but which also state that parental rights can be reinstated if extenuating circumstances occur. And while the bill states that a determination must be final, the bill was drafted with the idea that there is a difference between a “final” determination and an “unmodifiable” one. And States with such laws on the books should still qualify because the amendment does not say the determination has to be unmodifiable, just final.

The intention as currently drafted is that 10 States would be eligible under their current laws. These 10 States are Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Once this amendment is hopefully adopted as part of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking and passed into law, I am confident that the Department of Justice will concur in this assessment.

In addition to this amendment, I have two other amendments which I filed yesterday. The first amendment

would provide help support local law enforcement in their efforts to track down homeless and runaway youth by providing funding for retired Federal agents who assist the local law enforcement in these investigations.

In September of 2013, a group of retired FBI agents in Northwest Ohio came to my office and asked for help in creating a pilot program that would allow retired agents to assist local law enforcement in finding runaway children and teens. Generally, Northwest Ohio children who become involved in trafficking do so within about 2 weeks of running away from home, so finding them quickly is critical. Overall, about one-third of runaways become victims of trafficking.

Toledo has just one detective working on missing person’s cases, both adults and children. These retired FBI agents want to help law-enforcement officials investigate the 18,000 runaways in Ohio every year, but they need resources. Police don’t have the manpower to track these children, but every city has retired agents who could assist the “overworked” departments.

The second amendment mirrors Congressman MALONEY’s Human Trafficking Prevention Act. This legislation comes in response to a State Department inspector general report recommended the changes made by this amendment. It would train Foreign Service officers working at U.S. Embassies overseas to help stem the demand for trafficking and spot victims before they are trafficked into the United States. It passed the House in January on a voice vote, and I am confident that it would find similar broad support in the Senate.

Mr. TOOMEY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VOTING RIGHTS ACT ANNIVERSARY

Mr. COONS. Madam President, today is the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965, a day we are reminded of what is possible when we come together across party lines.

It was 50 years ago today that Republican minority leader Senator Everett Dirksen and Democratic majority leader Senator Mike Mansfield came together on this floor to introduce landmark legislation that sought to fulfill the promise of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution and ensure that no person would be denied the right to vote because of the color of his or her skin.

I was reminded of the power of their example just 2 weeks ago when I gathered with Republicans and Democrats from the House and Senate in Selma, AL, to honor the Americans who came

from across our country 50 years ago to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma and demand equal voting rights. Their example was one of unity, as was the example of Members from both sides of the aisle who came together to introduce and eventually pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

So I am concerned as I come to the floor this afternoon about our troubling inability to come together in this Chamber on issues where there clearly should be broad agreement as well. I have with me a photographic reminder that the last time the Voting Rights Act was signed into law—was reauthorized—it was signed by Republican President George Bush, with the support of both Democrats and Republicans in the then Congress.

Those of us who gathered 2 weeks ago at the bridge at Selma were treated both to a stirring speech by our current President, and the cheering presence of President Bush, when a challenge was issued to those Members of Congress present that we should come together, fix the Voting Rights Act, and reintroduce it in this Chamber.

When it comes to voting rights, it surely is true that today's America is not the America of half a century ago, just as today's hurdles to the ballot box are not the same as in the time of Jim Crow. Yet it is also true that in too many cities, towns, States, and counties across our country, new roadblocks are being built to make it more difficult for Americans to vote.

It is clear that, as President Obama said to us on the Edmund Pettus Bridge 2 weeks ago, "our march is not yet finished."

In the coming weeks, as Senator LEAHY, I, and others work to bring to the Senate a new voting rights act that reflects today's challenges, it is my sincere hope and my prayer that Republican colleagues will partner with us to continue the work that remains undone.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Madam President, this was also to be the week that we would take up, consider, and vote on the nomination of Loretta Lynch to serve as Attorney General. I must say that the Senate's proceedings this week do not portend well, because we find ourselves, yet again, stuck in regrettable partisan gridlock.

For the past 129 days, we have had before us an incredibly qualified and talented nominee for Attorney General. Loretta Lynch was first nominated by President Obama in November. She has now waited for a vote longer than any Attorney General nominee in 30 years.

As of today, her confirmation has waited longer on the floor than the last five Attorneys General combined.

That is unacceptable, and I frankly haven't heard a single good reason from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle for why Ms. Lynch's nomination deserves such a delay. Instead, her nomination is being used by many to

continue their fight with the President over his immigration policy, and this is after nearly shutting down the Department of Homeland Security because of those same disagreements.

While we do need to have a focused and functional debate in this Congress about immigration, it is simply irresponsible to hold up a highly qualified nominee for Attorney General because some don't like that she agrees with the very President who nominated her.

I take very seriously the Senate's role to advise and consent on Presidential nominations. So let's just take a minute and look at Loretta Lynch's experience, her background.

She is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School. She spent 8 years in private practice at a prestigious law firm, then known as Hogan & Hartson. She served on the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

She has served the public and previously been unanimously confirmed by this body—twice, I should add—to be the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York. That is a job where she has prosecuted drug crimes, violent crimes, and where she has taken on corrupt politicians.

At her nomination hearing in the Judiciary Committee, on which I serve, our chairman called an outside witness panel of nine witnesses. When asked, not one of them said they opposed Ms. Lynch's confirmation to be Attorney General on the basis of her skills or experience. The committee was, in fact, unable to produce one shred of testimony in opposition to her nomination.

Yet we stand today in the middle of March and the first African-American woman ever to be nominated Attorney General of the United States, our Nation's top law enforcement official, has foundered on this floor longer than the five prior nominees combined. I think this is unacceptable and sets an unfortunate, even dangerous precedent. We should not play political games with the Department of Justice, an executive branch agency with 125,000 employees and a \$28 billion departmental budget that is charged with all sorts of different law enforcement functions, from running the Federal prisons to enforcing the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, to making sure we fight human trafficking and money laundering.

Frustratingly, we find ourselves this week also considering a bill to combat human trafficking, which we don't seem to be able to move forward. It is important legislation that includes broad bipartisan support, except for a simple, partisan, political provision that has now turned it into a divisive issue.

The Republican leader this week has argued that once we finished work on this human trafficking bill, we could then move on to Loretta Lynch's nomination vote. But I am forced to wonder when the delay tactics here will end.

Not only is it seemingly untrue that we can't do human trafficking legisla-

tion and this nomination at the same time—because if my memory serves, we just confirmed two other executive branch nominees last night—but the Republican leader knows well that if he truly wanted to move this bill forward, Democrats would be ready to partner with him with just a minor revision to the bill.

There is, in fact, a bitter irony that, as was reported last night, Loretta Lynch's confirmation is being held up over an issue—human trafficking—which she herself said she would prioritize if confirmed.

I ask my Republican colleagues: Let's find a way to move forward on all of these issues—on combatting human trafficking and confirming Loretta Lynch to serve as Attorney General and on reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act, which is such an important linchpin of civil rights in this country.

We agree that we need to combat human trafficking. So let's work together on the broad areas where we are, in fact, united. Let's confirm an Attorney General nominee who is qualified, smart, and will give the fight against human trafficking the dedication it deserves. Ms. Lynch would make a superb Attorney General.

As someone who has herself served in law enforcement and served in that role at the State level, I think the Presiding Officer appreciates the importance of having a confirmed Attorney General to lead our Federal Department of Justice.

Loretta Lynch has demonstrated—throughout her confirmation process and through her many years of service to her country—that she is well and amply prepared and qualified to take on this vital and important role.

I urge my colleagues to end the delays and give Loretta Lynch the vote our country deserves.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BRINGING MONTANA SOLUTIONS TO WASHINGTON

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, it is an incredible honor to represent Montana in the Senate. More than 150 years ago, a young Norwegian woman named Karine Dyrud immigrated to this country. She came in search of freedom and opportunity. She came to a nation where government served the people and not the other way around. After her husband passed away, this tough widow and mother of seven headed West to Montana and settled with her children about an hour north of Great Falls.

Karine Dyrud was my great-great-grandmother and the beginning of my Montana story. Her perseverance is the reason why my family has called Montana home for five generations. It is

why Cindy and I have been able to pass along the legacy of faith and freedom, of personal responsibility, to our four children.

We are blessed to live in the greatest Nation on Earth, and it is a solemn responsibility of the Senate to do everything in its power to keep it that way.

Before I was elected to Congress, I spent 28 years in the private sector growing companies and creating jobs. In fact, I am the only chemical engineer in Congress. In the private sector, we understand the importance of hard work, of innovation, accountability, and not spending more than you take in.

The freedom of ideas and trade, private property and opportunity, are the fundamental elements of liberty and of prosperity. These are the elements that helped RightNow Technologies—a Montana-based cloud computing business that I served as vice president of for 12 years—grow from a small startup into a publicly traded company and a global leader in cloud computing. We created over 1,000 high-paying jobs—jobs that support a vibrant community with good schools and quality of life for Montana families.

Unfortunately, Washington, DC, under the guise of equality, is encroaching upon these freedoms, replacing the constitutional rule of law through elected officials with bureaucratic rule that is unaccountable, inefficient, ineffective, and far too costly. Washington is more concerned with its own self-interest and self-gain than the well-being of the American people.

As we begin consideration of the Federal budget this week, we must hold government accountable to the people. Last year, the New York Times did an assessment of the health and wealth of every county in the Nation. You might expect folks in Silicon Valley to be doing fairly well or perhaps in the suburbs of New York City. What shocked me was seeing that six of the Nation's top 10 wealthiest counties surround Washington, DC. That sends a pretty clear message about where Washington priorities are.

During the recession, while millions of Americans were struggling to make ends meet amidst layoffs and economic instability, Washington, DC, thrived. The Federal Government poured millions of dollars into new buildings, and salaries kept growing and growing.

It is time for Washington to be held accountable to the American people, and that is why the first bill I introduced in the Senate was the Balanced Budget Accountability Act. It simply requires Congress to balance the budget or Members won't get paid. It is not that complicated. It is easy to measure. It is very simple. No balanced budget, no paycheck.

Washington is out of touch with the day-to-day struggles that American farmers, ranchers, union workers, and tribal members face every day. Look no farther than President Obama's recent veto of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Instead of working toward North American energy independence, President Obama continues to play politics with good-paying American jobs. Instead of advancing economic opportunity for hard-working Montana families, President Obama is instead perpetuating his war on energy and standing in the way of affordable made-in-Montana and made-in-America energy.

While serving in the House, I invited Crow tribal chairman Darrin Old Coyote to testify before the Natural Resources Committee. The Crow Reservation in Montana is home to some of the richest energy reserves in our country, but the President's senseless agenda is preventing them from developing their resources. What Chairman Old Coyote said has stuck with me. He said, "A war on coal is a war on the Crow people."

President Obama and the EPA's regulatory overreach is a direct threat to thousands of jobs and our Nation's economic future. We shouldn't be hitting pause on American energy production. We need to encourage it. More made-in-America energy doesn't just mean more money in the pockets of hard-working families. It also means more jobs. It means energy independence.

Our energy security, though, isn't just about jobs and low energy prices. It is tied directly to our national security. I am happy to report the United States will become the largest oil and gas producer in the world this year, surpassing both Russia and Saudi Arabia. As we see the growing threat of ISIS and a nuclear Iran, one thing is clear: We need more made-in-America energy, not more made-in-the-Middle East oil.

We have tremendous opportunities to develop our Nation's energy resources and create new jobs across the entire Nation, but we must allow the States to take the lead. Rather than moving forward with commonsense, job-creating solutions, such as the Keystone Pipeline, Washington continues to put barrier after barrier up to prevent job creation and the responsible management of our resources.

We see that in our national forests and our public lands. Our public lands out West are a tremendous asset to our tourism economy and our way of life. It is one of the many reasons people come to Montana in the first place. But the Federal Government's perpetual failure to properly manage our national forests has led many of Montana's forested counties into economic despair. Like many Western States, Montana once boasted a robust timber industry. Now timber harvests in our national forests have declined 82 percent. In fact, I had dinner one evening with a couple from Eureka, MT, up in the northwest corner of our State, in Lincoln County. They said: STEVE, basically we describe this area now as poverty with a view.

We must implement meaningful forest management reforms that get our timber industry up and running again.

It improves the health of our forests and it ensures our rural counties aren't dependent on the whims of the Federal Government's annual budget. But we must ensure that States have primacy in these decisions. We must ensure the hard-working farmers, the ranchers, the loggers, and the sportsmen who live, work, and recreate on these lands every day have their voices heard, and that those closest to the land are guiding management practices, not bureaucrats in Washington, DC, or lawyers in San Francisco, who would be hard pressed to find Montana on a map.

But Washington's overreach doesn't just affect our natural resources. We are seeing it in our technology sector and the Internet. I worked in the technology sector for more than 12 years. I know firsthand how the Internet has removed geography as a constraint for countless businesses in Montana and across our Nation.

I know technology has created jobs and economic opportunities in communities where little previously existed. We must encourage the growth of these high-tech jobs in Montana and across our country. These are good-paying jobs that will help us grow economically and allow us to remain globally competitive.

The Internet is a laboratory of innovation, yet DC wants to tie our entrepreneurs' hands by placing more regulations on the Internet. The FCC recently approved a 300-plus-page plan to regulate Americans' Internet access as a title II utility, in short, a government takeover of the Internet. That is like putting a buggy whip manufacturer in charge of Tesla.

The Internet is unconstrained innovation. That is why I will stand strong against DC's attempts to tax the Internet, to regulate the Internet, and to stifle innovation. If we want to remain the greatest Nation in the world, we need to remain globally competitive, and technology plays a key role in that.

We also must implement meaningful tax reforms that encourage American businesses, incentivize American businesses to grow and create jobs here at home, not overseas. During my time at our software company, in the last 5 years I managed Asia Pacific, and I had offices in Tokyo and Sidney, but headquartered in Bozeman, MT, as we were growing and competing against some of the world's best technology companies.

We must expand our trade opportunities, certainly for our farmers and ranchers across our country. So it is important that innovation and entrepreneurship are encouraged, not hindered. Unfortunately, Washington, DC, is more interested in issuing press releases and headlines than getting results.

As an engineer, I was trained to solve problems, find solutions, and get results. It is time for Washington to look to the States for these solutions—to adhere to the principles of federalism

and States rights, as clearly found in our Constitution—and empowering local communities, State legislatures, Governors, and tribes to manage their resources, to grow economic opportunity, and to find and determine their own destiny.

In fact, it is time for Washington to listen to the States and it is time for Washington, DC, to listen to Montana.

I have always said one of the best decisions I ever made in my life was when I picked my great-great-grandmother. She got her family out to Montana, and she is buried in a small country cemetery just east of a small town called Conrad, MT. On her headstone, in this very remote small country cemetery, reads three simple words: “saved by grace.” She placed her ultimate faith in her God, not in her government.

It is an honor to stand here today on the Senate floor to serve as Montana’s voice in Washington. I will continue working to bring more Montana solutions to Washington and get it working again for all Montanans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR DAINES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I want to congratulate our freshman colleague from Montana on his initial speech, and particularly to second his observations about the devastation in the coalfields of America. We have a depression in the eastern part of my State as a direct result of this administration and the EPA, and I know it has affected the great State of Montana as well. So among the many insightful observations the Senator from Montana made, I particularly appreciate his thoughts about energy.

CLOTURE MOTION

Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the committee-reported amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the committee-reported substitute amendment to S. 178, a bill to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Tom Cotton, James Lankford, David Vitter, Richard Burr, Chuck Grassley, Joni Ernst, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, James E. Risch, Daniel Coats, James M. Inhofe, Shelley Moore Capito, Mark Kirk, Cory Gardner, Thom Tillis.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 178, a bill to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Tom Cotton, James Lankford, David Vitter, Richard Burr, Chuck Grassley, Joni Ernst, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, James E. Risch, Daniel Coats, James M. Inhofe, Shelley Moore Capito, Mark Kirk, Cory Gardner, Thom Tillis.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls be waived with respect to these cloture motions.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in 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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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. SCHATZ. 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. SCHATZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, I rise today to speak on two topics. The first topic is to urge my colleagues to bring up the vote on Loretta Lynch right away. The delay on her nomination to be Attorney General has gone on long enough, and there are no longer any legitimate excuses. She is by all accounts an excellent candidate. She is highly qualified, and she has bipartisan support in the Committee on the Judiciary. No one has questioned her stellar credentials. Her nomination has been held up for too long. In fact, Republicans have held up her nomination longer than the five most recent Attorney General nominees combined. But now her nomination has been tied to a piece of legislation that Republicans themselves have poisoned. Why are they putting poison pills in their own legislation? They took a perfectly good bipartisan bill and ensured it would go nowhere. Then they took a perfectly qualified Attorney General nominee and tied her vote to their poisoned legislation.

The majority party is getting in its own way when it comes to the major responsibilities of governing. It is time

for the Republicans to act like the majority and govern. This is the difference between being in the majority and being in the minority. Putting poison pills in legislative vehicles may be an odious practice, but it is normally reserved for the minority party—the party that is not in charge. Generally speaking, you do not poison your own piece of legislation.

The American people have given the keys to the car to the Republican Party, and now they need to drive the car. This is the difference between being in the minority and the majority. Governing includes giving advice and consent on nominations. This is a particularly important nomination. The Attorney General is the top law enforcement official in the country. He or she is responsible for enforcing our Nation’s laws, protecting national security, and upholding our constitutional rights.

This last role is vital at a time when the DOJ is investigating violations of constitutional rights by local law enforcement agencies. Just last week, DOJ released a scathing report on the deep and pervasive racism in the Ferguson, MO, police force. In that report, the Department described shocking practices: systematic targeting of African Americans and an abuse of power to collect enormous amounts in fees. In a city with a population of 21,000 people, 16,000 people have outstanding arrest warrants—16,000 people. That is three-quarters of Ferguson’s population. Those arrest warrants are overwhelmingly issued to Ferguson’s African-American population—92 percent, to be exact. Emails and other documents DOJ collected prove the Ferguson police force acted with racial animus.

If confirmed, Ms. Lynch would continue DOJ’s task of investigating unconstitutional policing across the country. She faces weighty issues—the over-militarization of our police, our policing practices, and reforming our sentencing guidelines, just to name a few.

As the first African-American woman to serve as Attorney General, this would be a historic nomination and a crucial one.

At a time when the public’s trust in law enforcement is badly eroded, we need to confirm Ms. Lynch as our Attorney General and let her get to work on fighting for our civil rights.

THE HOUSE BUDGET

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, today the House released its budget proposal. It is a proposal divorced from reality that seeks to balance the budget on the backs of those in the country who can least afford it. It takes from the middle class and gives to the ultrawealthy.

Without a doubt, my colleagues and I will have much more to say about the Republican budget in the coming weeks and months, but today I want to discuss a section of the budget that seeks