## JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 10:33 a.m., took a recess subject to the call of the Chair, and the Senate, preceded by the Secretary of the Senate, Julie E. Adams; the Deputy Sergeant at Arms, James Morhard; and the Vice President of the United States, JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Jr., proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear an address delivered by His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.

(The address delivered by the Prime Minister of Japan to the joint meeting of the two Houses of Congress is printed in the Proceedings of the House of Representatives in today's RECORD.)

At 12:16 p.m., the Senate, having returned to its Chamber, reassembled and was called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SASSE).

## CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

## PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1191, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1191) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1140, in the nature of a substitute.

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1179 (to amendment No. 1140), to require submission of all Persian text included in the agreement.

Blunt amendment No. 1155 (to amendment No. 1140), to extend the requirement for annual Department of Defense reports on the military power of Iran.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today because I noticed that the minority leader, the Senator from Nevada, had some nice things to say about me on Monday in his remarks. He said that I was ''relentless'' in my ''condemnation of ObamaCare.'' Those are his words. I appreciate the minority leader's kind remarks, because he is right. As a doctor, I am relentless in my condemnation of the President's health care law, a law that has done incredible harm to so many people all across this country.

Minority Leader REID also said that he had the facts about the law. Most of those facts seemed to come from a New York Times opinion column by the renowned liberal icon Paul Krugman.

So let me share some real facts with the minority leader. The insurance plans offered in the health care exchanges are so expensive that they are a horrible deal for most Americans. That is why the President had to give out subsidies—to help hide the costs. The Congressional Budget Office said that Washington will spend $850 billion on those subsidies over the next decade. That is a fact.

According to a new study by the health research company Avalere, ObamaCare plans are extremely unpopular among people who don't get the huge subsidies to buy the plan. Only 2 percent of the people who don't qualify for subsidies have actually bought insurance through the exchanges. That is a fact. It is an alarming sign of how high the cost of ObamaCare really is.

It is not just the premiums that are sky high. This year, the average deductible for ObamaCare's silver plan is almost $3,000 for a single person and more than $6,000 for a family. Now, that is according to something called HealthPocket, which is a Web site that helps people actually compare insurance plans. That is a fact, and $6,000 is a lot of money for a hard-working family to pay for their deductible.

Now, the minority leader said that Paul Krugman's opinions should be treated like facts—not as facts but like facts—because as Senator REID said, ''this isn't some high school teacher talking about the merits of ObamaCare.'' Well, I agree on that point. High school teachers are far more likely to have had actual experience with the damage that is done by the ObamaCare health care law than has this New York Times columnist.

That is what we learned from a report at KMOX TV in St. Louis on April 23. Their report talked about the Parkway School District in Missouri. It was Senator REID who said this isn't some high school teacher. Well, this report from St. Louis said ObamaCare is forcing the school district to outsource the employment of substitute teachers. Why would they want to do that? It is in the face of a $4 million penalty for not offering health insurance to the part-time teachers. That is a fact. And those substitute teachers are real people who are being hurt by President Obama's health care law.

Here is another fact reported by Politico on Monday afternoon. This was their headline on April 27: ''Study: ACA exchange enrollees take tax hit.''

According to a new study by the tax preparers at H&R Block, almost two-thirds of people enrolled in ObamaCare exchanges had to pay back some of their subsidy with their taxes this month. The average amount people owed the IRS was $729. That is a fact. It is a big hit to a lot of families who thought they were going to get help to pay for their ObamaCare premiums. It does not even count the people who decided that the insurance was just too expensive and decided not to buy it. According to H&R Block, those people paid the IRS an average tax penalty of $178. That is a fact. It is only going to be higher next year when people sit down and fill out their taxes.

I remember another speech Senator REID gave on the floor on ObamaCare. On February 26, 2014, he said: ''Despite all that good news, there's plenty of horror stories being told.'' ''All of them are untrue.''

That was Senator REID a year ago.

Republicans had been citing—this is Senator REID—examples of people being harmed by ObamaCare, and Senator REID said that all of them were ''stories made up from whole cloth.''

Well, here is a horror story from the minority leader's home State newspaper—Nevada—very recently. This was an article from earlier this month, the Las Vegas Review-Journal, April 7. The headline was ''Past state ObamaCare sign-up glitches now haunt Nevadans at tax time.''

Here is what the article says:

How did a Reno collections agent end up in collections himself?

The answer:

He bought coverage in 2014 through the state's health insurance exchange.

According to the article:

Rick Furst is still ironing out wrinkles in a plan purchased in May through the Nevada Health Link and its contractor, Xerox. His cascade of issues has included bad coverage dates, unpaid medical bills and an incorrect tax-credit form.

This man told the Las Vegas newspaper, ''My credit was excellent, and now my credit is shot.'' His credit was excellent, and now his credit is shot. Does Senator REID think this man from his home State of Nevada made up his story out of whole cloth?

People are having their lives turned upside down by the disgraceful failure of these ObamaCare exchanges. That is a fact. It is a cruel and costly side effect of this terrible health care law. Paul Krugman of the New York Times did not talk about that fact in his opinion column in the New York Times the other day.

Another thing he and the minority leader are not talking about is the fact that many Americans now have less access to actual care because of the health care law. Well, they should have known about that fact; it was reported right there in the New York Times itself on Sunday, February 8, 2015, with the headline ''Insured, but not covered.'' ''New policies have . . . many

Americans scrambling.'' The article talks about the narrow networks many insurance plans had to create. This was to try to meet the requirements of ObamaCare without the premiums going even higher.

The story starts off by talking about one woman in New York City. Her name is Karen Pineman. First, she lost her existing health insurance policy because it did not meet all of the mandates President Obama said a health insurance policy had to include.

The President calls those benefits ''essential benefits.'' I call them excessive benefits. It is much more insurance than many people need, want, or can afford.

The article in the New York Times says that she accepted that she would have to pay a higher premium for a plan with a narrower network of providers and no out-of-network coverage. According to the article, she also accepted the fact that she would have to pay out of her own pocket to see her primary care physician because her doctor was not part of the narrow network that was now covered under her insurance. Well, she even accepted having copays of nearly $1,800 to put a cast on her ankle after she broke it playing tennis. Finally, the article says, her frustration bubbled over when she tried to arrange a followup visit with her orthopedic surgeon. The nearest doctor available in her network who treated ankle problems was in Stamford, CT. Remember, she lives in New York City.

This woman finally had enough. She told the newspaper: It is ridiculous. Didn't they notice that I was in another State?

Well, that woman, as reported in the New York Times, did not make up her story out of whole cloth. Those kinds of narrow networks are a fact under President Obama's law.

It is a fact that there are people who now have coverage and can't have access to care. There is a difference between coverage and care. You do not have to take my world for it; it is right there in the New York Times.

So the minority leader is correct. Republicans have been relentless in condemning the horrifying costs of the President's health care law. Republicans have been relentless in condemning the intolerable damage the health care law has done to people's access to health care.

Republicans will continue to be relentless because this health care law has been bad for patients, it has been bad for providers, and it has been terrible for American taxpayers. Republicans will continue to come to the floor to offer the facts about how the health care law has harmed American families. We will continue to offer solutions that deliver the real reform people have been asking for all along—the care they need from a doctor they choose at lower cost.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, if the Senator from Iowa is intending to speak, this Senator will only use about 5 minutes.

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

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I wish to embrace this package that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has brought forth to the floor.

First, it is much needed bipartisanship which has been shown on the committee. That is a very good thing, given the fact that we have had so many contentious and divisive issues.

But, secondly, what it does is set up a process by which the Congress would express its approval or disapproval with regard to a future agreement that may be made between Iran and the United States to prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon.

First is the process by which we would express that vote, and then if the agreement is concluded by the end of June, the actual vote on whether sanctions under the agreement should be lifted. So it is a two-step process, and it is often confused. That is why it is important to keep this committee bill clean.

As I have already expressed to the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee on the floor of the Senate 2 or 3 days ago, it is this Senator's intention that all of the amendments, which generally have a deleterious effect and that are generally considered poison pill amendments—this Senator will oppose them. It is my understanding that leadership of the Foreign Relations Committee will likewise oppose those amendments.

Then, I might say, assuming this legislation is passed and we have this process in place and the President has said he will sign it into law—if the framework, as announced a few weeks ago by the President, is fleshed out in the final details of the agreement, and those details, by the end of June, reflect the framework of the agreement that has been announced, it is this Senator's intention to support the agreement.

I do that, very simply, on what is in the best interests of the United States. If, in fact, this agreement, once completed—if the framework is fleshed out—prevents Iran from developing a nuclear weapon for at least a 10-year period—and there are other 15-, 20-, and 25-year period benchmarks in the framework—but if they are prevented from developing a nuclear weapon within 10 years, and we know there is a regime in place in order to detect that so we have the verification, and that because of the verification we have at least a year's advance notice so that appropriate action could be taken—if all of that is included within the agreement, it is this Senator's intention that I will support the agreement.

Why? Because if we keep Iran from having a nuclear weapon for 10 years at least, the world is going to be a very different place in 10 years. And what we will have done as a country is prevented Iran from going ahead and developing a nuclear weapon now, of which we would have to face those consequences with possible military action.

I do not shy away from supporting military action if that is necessary to prevent a nuclear weapon from being developed. But if we have a path to achieving the same thing, doing it diplomatically and having the guarantee of at least 10 years—if not 15 and 20—then, to this Senator, that seems to be in the interests of the United States.

I want to clearly state where this Senator is coming from. I happen to think that is in Israel's interests as well. The interests of the United States and Israel are inextricably entwined when it comes to the defense of that little democracy that is a beacon of democracy in that part of the world. I have some familiarity with the integration and the sharing of our military forces, as well as our intelligence apparatus.

It is clearly in the interests of the United States that we see that Israel's security is protected. From what I see of the framework of this agreement, if fleshed out, then I think that is in the interests of our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise to stress the importance of ensuring nuclear negotiations with Iran to preserve our national interests and our security, one that protects the security of our allies and partners in the region and maintains peace and stability in the world.

As a member of the Iowa Army National Guard and serving on the Armed Services Committee in the Senate, I am focused on strengthening our national security, developing strategies to confront terrorism, and discussing ways to support our exceptional military.

While I believe Iran's long-term goal is developing nuclear weapons, its most effective line of effort against us and our allies has been through its unwavering support of terrorism. The Obama administration should only accept a final deal which prohibits sanctions relief until Iran abandons its support of terrorism.

Providing Iran with sanctions relief would only enhance their opportunity to fund proxy groups which threaten our Israeli allies and whose activities have led to horrible consequences for

millions of people in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

While the Obama administration has been seemingly eager to relieve sanctions in an effort to convince Iran to sign a nuclear deal, Congress cannot stand by and watch as a deal is negotiated that paves the way for Iran to obtain nuclear weapons. We must take a step back and examine their actions, and it is absolutely crucial we understand who is on the other side of the negotiating table.

Iran continues to be the world's lead sponsor of terrorism and a supporter of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is responsible for killing hundreds and thousands of his own people, creating the gravest humanitarian crisis in modern history, and who facilitates the continued rise of extremism and sectarianism across the region.

Iran has shown unwavering support of terrorism and has aligned itself with groups that are hostile to the United States, our allies, and partners in the region. In fact, Iran continues to fund groups that threaten our Israeli allies, who are very concerned about Iran amassing nuclear capabilities and the direct threat they pose to the region. After this longstanding pattern of behavior, I do not believe we can trust that Iran will curb its ambitions or support for terrorist activity on their own.

Despite any agreement Iranian President Hassan Rouhani may agree to, I believe Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will ultimately maintain his policy of attempting to obtain a nuclear weapon and may use any funds obtained through prematurely providing sanctions relief towards that end, as well as to support terrorists.

Iran's more than a quarter century long effort to obtain a nuclear weapon will not subside overnight. It is a faulty assumption to trust that Tehran is on the side of the rule of law. Iran has a very troublesome track record of deception when it comes to compliance and trustworthiness, which is why we need a deal that ensures America's and the world's ability to verify and enforce any agreement with Iran. This includes complete and open access at any time to all of Iran's facilities, to hold them true to their word and to verify their actions. We must also have the proper enforcement mechanism in place so that any broken promise garners an appropriate and immediate response.

This accountability can be enforced through renewed and strengthened congressional sanctions. Sanctions have been effective in the past, and we must keep this option on the table. In fact, these sanctions are what brought Iran to the negotiating table in the first place. So we must not be too quick to suspend them.

The ever-increasing and complex threats we face in the Middle East underscore how crucial it is that any longstanding agreement with Iran must go through Congress. This enables the American people to have a voice. Congressional review is supported by a bipartisan majority of my colleagues and a majority of Americans. It is common sense. We must have more oversight of this process and the opportunity for thoughtful consideration to ensure we have been very clear about our demands and the framework of any final agreement.

There is no doubt the administration shares my concern and the concern of many of my colleagues regarding the hundreds of thousands of Syrians who have been murdered with barrel bombs, sarin gas, the indiscriminate shelling of cities, been in prisons or the millions more who have been forced to flee their homes.

We must stop Iran from supporting this criminal regime which has helped engulf the region. Sanctions relief without ensuring funds would not go to Assad or to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, which are key to the survival of the regime, would do nothing to help achieve a favorable political or military solution in Syria.

With that in mind, I cosponsored the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, which has bipartisan support and is before the Senate today. This legislation embraces fundamental and core principles that lay the foundation for a good deal with Iran. This deal ensures congressional review of a final agreement. It demands that no congressional sanctions be lifted during the review period, and it safeguards congressional oversight of Iranian compliance.

This bill is a good starting point, and I want to praise the good work by the chairman of the committee for continuing to push for congressional review. Our ultimate goal must be to curb all Iranian terror, and this will never happen if we do not confront and contain Iran's nuclear ambitions.

I believe a final deal which does not address Iran's support of terrorism and other groups which subvert recognized governments is not in the best interests of our Nation, and an agreement without these assurances will miss an opportunity to provide stability in the region.

In closing, the bottom line is that Iran must never be allowed to develop a single nuclear weapon—not now or at any point in the future. A nuclear Iran presents one of the greatest threats to peace and stability in our time.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I thought I would take this time—I know Senator CORKER is at a lunch with some of our colleagues and is going over some of the issues concerning how we are going to move forward, but I thought I would take this time to at least tell our Members that we are working very hard to try to resolve some of the amendments Members want to offer.

I must point out that there have been no requests for amendments on the Democratic side. I know Senator CORKER is a little bit more busy than I am. He is trying to work with the number of amendments that have been filed by Republican colleagues. But we are trying to go through those amendments and see if there is a way consistent with the purpose of the bill that we can work out language that would accomplish what the author of the amendment is attempting to accomplish but consistent with the purpose of the bill—to make sure that we have an orderly way to review any agreement reached between the United States and our negotiating partners and Iran on its nuclear weapon program and that we get timely notice from the administration in regard to material breaches so that we can take action to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapon state. There are also provisions in the bill that provide notification by the administration and important information so that we can do our work.

We are taking a look at these amendments and trying to see whether we can work our way forward in order to move this bill in the same method that it moved through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As the Presiding Officer knows, we worked together to try to get that accomplished.

We started the debate yesterday, and we are going to continue it today. Senator BARRASSO brought an amendment forward, which he wants to have pending, that would change the certification requirements. We are trying to work out a way in which we will be able to take that issue up before the full Senate. Senator CORKER and I are trying to resolve that issue as to how we can bring that forward.

I talked about this issue yesterday and explained the certification requirement to all the Members of the Senate. The President has to certify on a regular basis that Iran is basically in compliance with the agreement. If they can't do that, then we get into an expedited process for imposing sanctions or to take action against Iran.

There are a lot of amendments that have been filed—they are not pending—that would require additional certifications by the administration, and if the administration cannot make those certifications, there is an expedited process. The problem with going beyond the terms of the nuclear agreement on any of those certifications is that it affects the bill itself, and that is why we call them poison pills. I will try to explain that.

Senator BARRASSO's amendment dealt with a certification that Iran will

not be involved in terrorism against the United States or any of our citizens. But there are several other amendments that have been filed that would change the certification requirements so that the President would have to make those certifications or it could trigger expedited procedures.

Why do we call those poison pills? First of all, it changes the balance of what we are trying to do, and it is highly unlikely that we are going to be able to get that bill to the President for his signature. It will compromise what we are trying to do, and we are not going to be able to get the bill done. We will end up losing the bill. We will lose the opportunity for the committee to get the information and consider it. The committee needs to have a period of time in order to go through the review process. And the administration will not be able to exercise its waiver power for additional sanctions relief. All of that hard work will be lost. It is really counterproductive to what the authors of these amendments are trying to do.

The second consequence that could happen, if this is in the bill, is that the President would not be able to make the certification and we would very likely never get an agreement. Therefore, what will happen is that the United States will be accused of walking away from trying to negotiate an agreement with Iran. We would be isolated, and our chances of preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state becomes that much less likely to happen.

The third reason why these amendments are problematic and are poison pills has to do with the fact that it becomes a negotiating objective for the United States. These are good objectives. We don't want Iran to be able to sponsor terrorism. It is certainly something that is part of our policy. But if we make it a negotiating objective, then the administration has to achieve that in order to prevent sanctions from going into effect in order to achieve our objective. That makes it much more difficult to achieve the primary objective, and the primary objective is to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state.

Although these amendments are well intended, they have the consequence of just the opposite. These amendments will make it less likely that we will prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state.

The same is true on any certification. One of the amendments that have been filed says that we have to certify that Iran recognizes Israel's right to its own sovereignty. I want Iran to recognize Israel's sovereignty. We put very strong language into this bill and made it clear that Israel's security is of prime concern to us. It is in the bill. If we make it a certification requirement—think about this for a moment—it means our negotiators will have to figure out a way to negotiate with Iran something they don't want to do. And what will we have to give up in order to get that? What will they put on the table in regards to international recognition? It distracts us from objective to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state, which is critically important to the security of Israel. These amendments do just the opposite of what they are intended to do.

I mentioned that because we are trying to move forward with this legislation. I hope that we can do it very quickly and we can find a path forward. We are going to try to accommodate the fair considerations of these amendments. But I urge my colleagues to take a look at their amendments, to work with Senator CORKER, to work with me, and let's see whether we can accommodate, within the framework of the legislation, any concerns that the sponsors of the amendments may have. Then we can do what the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was able to do on a 19-to-0 vote. It makes the Senate much stronger, and it makes the United States much stronger when we can come together on these amendments.

Our objective is to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state, and the best way for us to do that is to speak with a united voice and the type of work we did in a bipartisan manner.

The people of Maryland and the people of this country want us to work together. They want us to resolve issues. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee was able to do that.

I urge Members who have filed amendments to work with us so we can find a way forward to make sure this bill remains intact and gives Congress the best chance for an orderly review of the process and gives us the tools we need to make America's position even stronger to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise to speak in favor of the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

First, I wish to commend my colleagues, Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN, for their leadership on this important bipartisan legislation. Because of their crucial leadership, the Foreign Relations Committee recently passed this bill unanimously in a 19-to-0 vote. One thing that is so important to remember, as we debate this bill, is that without this legislation, we would not have a say at all on the President's nuclear deal with Iran.

Now, I will be the first to say that an international agreement of this magnitude should have been considered the same as a treaty. But, unfortunately, the President chose to completely circumvent Congress in this process.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of which I am a member, did all we could to ensure that the American people, by way of Congress, get a say in this deal. If we let the perfect become the enemy of the good, however, and fail to pass this bill, the President will be able to go ahead and implement any and all aspects of a nuclear deal with Iran. This bill prevents the President from having a total free hand with regard to this potential deal with Iran and from prematurely lifting sanctions.

According to CRS, this lifting of sanctions would mean an estimated $130 billion in sanctions relief would start flowing to Iran. That is more than Iran's entire annual defense budget. Imagine what they could do with over $100 billion. They could continue to fund terrorism. They could continue to prop up Assad's regime in Syria. They could continue to fuel the Houthi rebellion in Yemen. And, yes, they could further fund development of their nuclear weapons program.

Congress passed the very sanctions credited with bringing Iran to the table, and I firmly believe that Congress should play a role in any decision to lift those sanctions. While the President may be able to waive sanctions on Iran later this year, permanent sanctions relief can only come from Congress.

My colleagues and I still have many questions about this deal, and we must take this opportunity to get a period of congressional review so we can get answers to these questions and prevent the President from prematurely lifting sanctions. We are truly facing a global crisis, and the world is watching.

As Prime Minister Netanyahu recently said before Congress, a nuclear Iran is not just a threat to Middle East security, and it is not just a threat to U.S. security. It is a threat, indeed, to global security. There is no scenario in which a nuclear Iran would be anything but catastrophic. Indeed, a nuclear Iran would spark a wave of proliferation in the Middle East and potentially worldwide. And if we don't like Iran's behavior today, imagine what their actions will be like if they have a nuclear weapon with the missiles to deliver them. Under no circumstances can we allow Iran to become a nuclear weapon state—not now, not in 10 years, not ever.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I would like to talk about the important legislation we have pending right now on

the Senate floor. I do not see a greater threat to our security interests in this country than a nuclear-armed Iran. Our national security interests require a permanent and verifiable end to Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Today, I come to the floor to support the legislation that I was proud to be an original cosponsor of that will ensure that Congress reviews this agreement if there is an agreement reached with the Iranians and that we will have a voice on this agreement because without Congress's involvement in this—I believe it would be a huge disservice to the American people to not have their elected representatives weigh in on such an important matter.

What matters most is, is this agreement one that is transparent, verifiable, and will actually end their nuclear program because the country of Iran is the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world. We cannot give one of the most dangerous regimes in the world the most dangerous weapon.

Iran described the United States of America as the ''Great Satan.'' Iran said it wants to annihilate or wipe out the State of Israel. Iran is a country that is supporting terrorist groups around the world. We can only imagine the devastation that could be wrought if Iran gets a nuclear weapon. So the stakes cannot be any greater with what is happening right now with the administration negotiating with this regime, which is not a regime we can trust, unfortunately. So the terms of this agreement matter.

The elected representatives of this country need to have a vigorous debate about this agreement in the Congress, and we need to make sure it is not an agreement that allows them to continue their march toward a nuclear weapon.

Some of the information that has been released so far about the framework the administration has put together has raised a number of red flags about where this agreement is going. It is my hope that this legislation passing will ensure that Congress is able to review the agreement to make sure it is one that ends their nuclear program.

Some of the concerns I already see with this framework agreement suggest that the administration is moving in a direction that would not fully force Iran to dismantle its nuclear infrastructure or require Iran to address its long history of deception regarding its nuclear program, including long-term questions about the program's military aspects. The framework that has been released would not address Iran's support for terrorism, its intercontinental ballistic missile program, or its stated desire to knock Israel off the map.

In order to ensure that we have an agreement that would end Iran's nuclear program and hold them accountable, we cannot have a situation where Iran keeps so much of its infrastructure and then can run up to a nuclear weapon or walk to it instead of running to it.

Even worse, as we look at the framework of this agreement and the inspection framework the agreement would require, we cannot have an agreement that does not allow unlimited inspections of Iran's nuclear program at any time, unannounced, because this is a regime which is not a trustworthy regime. Yet, as I look at the terms of the framework that the administration has announced, it seems we have a ''mother, may I'' approach to asking Iran whether we should go in and inspect their facilities. Well, that is going to be unacceptable. We need to ensure that the terms of this agreement, if reached, make sure we can show up at any time, anywhere, without notice to Iran, to inspect their facilities to make sure they are adhering to the terms of the agreement.

In short, the framework of the agreement that has been released by the administration suggests that this potential deal could eliminate hard-fought sanctions on which we worked together in this Congress on a bipartisan basis—economic sanctions that brought Iran to the table, which would take years to restore—in return for concessions that have only reversed Iran's program by days or weeks. Iran would retain a massive nuclear infrastructure, and they don't seem to be answering the tough questions about their support for terrorism or their missile program.

Iran's activities during these negotiations in supporting terrorism have continued. As their diplomats sit at the negotiating table and smile for the cameras, their government continues to support terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and provide arms and funding to the murderous Assad regime in Syria that has murdered hundreds of thousands of innocent people. It has continued to destabilize Yemen. It is imprisoning innocent Americans and developing an intercontinental ballistic missile whose obvious purpose is to potentially deliver a nuclear weapon to the United States of America.

I intend to offer an amendment to the pending legislation that will address Iran's ICBM program because one of the concerns I have is that there doesn't seem to be any mention in these negotiations of Iran's development of ICBM capability that could be the delivery mechanism to deliver a nuclear weapon to hit the United States. I will offer that amendment to indicate to this administration that this issue needs to be on the table. We need to not only stop their nuclear program, we need to stop Iran's ICBM program, which some of our intelligence estimates have indicated could be successful as soon as the end of this year.

That is the testimony we have heard in the Armed Services Committee. So there is real urgency that we stop not only their nuclear program but also their support for terrorism and their work on an ICBM that could deliver harm—very grave harm—to our country. In fact, in February, Iran had actually successfully launched a long-range missile system and used a space launch that could be the potential manner in which they would deliver a nuclear weapon capability to our country.

So this is a real concern that we address their missile program in the context of this agreement. In fact, on January 29, 2014, the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, testified that ''we judge that Iran would choose a ballistic missile as its preferred method of delivering nuclear weapons'' capability. One of the real important issues that we need to debate and address when it comes to their state sponsoring of terrorism is what is happening in Yemen right now.

As we stand here, we have had a situation where Iran has been harassing and threatening cargo ships in the region, challenging a core American national security and economic interest in the freedom of navigation, particularly in key chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

If you look at our interest in what has happened in Yemen, Iran has supported the Houthis that have undermined the Government in Yemen. Why is that important to us? It is important to us because we had to leave Yemen, in part, as a result of Iran's support of terrorism in Yemen. Who presides in Yemen? Who is one of the great presences in Yemen? Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a group that has vowed to attack our country, a group that has made attempts to attack us and our country. Iran is aiding the way, through their terrorism there, to give Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula more space to conduct attacks that can harm our interests and the interests of our allies.

So this legislation that is pending on the floor right now—if we were to not pass it, I think people need to understand the implications of it. The implications of not passing this legislation that is on the floor is that Congress would not have any say on these issues that are so important, would not have any say on whether the agreement that the administration is negotiating with Iran actually will end their program, actually will dismantle their nuclear program, actually will have a verifiable inspection regime that allows inspectors to go anywhere unannounced at any time to ensure that they are not cheating on whatever agreement is reached between us and the Iranians.

So this bill could not be more important. I thank the sponsors of this bill. I certainly thank Senators CORKER and CARDIN for their leadership in the Foreign Relations Committee, to ensure that the people of this country, through their elected representatives, on something of such importance when it comes to the national security of the United States of America—that their elected representatives perform their important oversight role here.

So I am hopeful we will pass this legislation that the U.S. Congress—I hope

the administration, with some of the concerns I have raised about this framework, really toughens what they are doing in this framework to end their program, to have a transparent, verifiable inspection regime to address the ICBM Program, to address Iran's state sponsorship of terrorism. I hope they will do that.

But I know that on behalf of my constituents, it is important, if any agreement is reached, that we have that debate here, that we have a voice in it on behalf of the American people. In doing so, we will protect the national security interests of this country to make sure that whatever agreement is entered into is really a good agreement, one that protects our country, which protects our allies, and ends Iran's nuclear program, as none of us can look in the mirror and think about one of the most dangerous regimes in the world having the most destructive weapon in the world. That is something that—as I think about all of the national security issues, this is on the top. So I cannot think of a more important debate we could have now or more important legislation that we could work on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

THE NEW CONGRESS AND PATENT REFORM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the 114th Congress is just a little over 100 days old now, but we have actually seen what used to be called the world's greatest deliberative body actually get back to work and be producing results for the American people. Just a few months into this session, we have passed important legislation, from a budget—we will perhaps, as early as Tuesday, pass the first budget since 2009.

We repaired something called the doc fix, which maybe is inelegantly named but basically fixed a problem that had been lurking since 1977, when somehow we got the idea that we would be able to save money by cutting the reimbursement rates to doctors and hospitals. Then we were shocked, absolutely shocked, that some doctors would not see Medicare patients and some hospitals could not afford to build or expand in rural areas and the like.

Well, we got that off the table as well. Then, I am glad to say, last week we were able to pass some major antitrafficking legislation which, of course, dealt with the victims of human trafficking, the profile of which is about a 12- to 14-year-old girl who is literally in human bondage. So we have done some, I think, good work. There is a lot more we need to do.

Of course, the present legislation that enjoys broad bipartisan support is the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015. I, too, commend the chairman and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee. I know this can be a frustrating process because other Members of the Senate now have ideas they want to offer by way of amendment. We are working through this. I think this will test their patience and ours in the process.

But this Chamber is poised to continue in the spirit of bipartisanship on other important issues as well: trade promotion authority, which, to me, is the essential link between us and the ability to pass important trade agreements.

Texas, as the Presiding Officer knows, is the leading export State in the Nation. We benefit from that because we understand that when you have markets for the things we grow or the livestock we raise or the manufactured goods we make, it is good for our economy, it is good for job creation. Well, trade promotion authority will be good for hard-working Texas families and families all across the country.

But there is another area that may not seem of great significance but I think is important, where I think we have another opportunity. That has to do with patent reform and particularly lawsuit abuse reform. Now, patents do not just affect the technology sector. They just do not affect the financial sector and Wall Street. It literally is a Main Street problem because you have restaurants now, you have real estate agents, you have hotels, motels, you have construction companies that have been sued by patent trolls, people who do not make anything, merely they hold a license to a patent and use that to file—frequently—frivolous litigation in order to literally shake down the defendant.

Many times it is people who cannot adequately defend themselves. Maybe they are a startup business, an innovator who has come up with a new idea or a better idea and they are thinly capitalized. Can you imagine what happens when they get sued by the patent trolls? Well, it is a sad and short story. Either they have to capitulate and pay the ransom or they go out of business entirely.

But patent reform is an issue whose time has come again. It is one I have been involved in for a number of years in the Senate. In 2011, after years of negotiations, Congress passed something called the America Invents Act. This is the first major patent reform in decades. This is something that makes America unique. You know, in Texas we believe in property rights. Well, what we are talking about is intellectual property rights. But when somebody smart or creative or innovative comes up with a better idea, our Constitution and our laws provide a means to protect that against people who would take it or steal it or infringe upon it. That is why patent law is so important.

But one of the issues left unaddressed was this rising tide of lawsuits and the threat of litigation, of which a wider and wider swath of stakeholders are now complaining loudly—again, not just the big technology firms but restaurants, hotels, motels, builders, real estate agents, and the like. So, in 2013, a number of Members of Congress began working on this legislation to address those frivolous claims, which really kill jobs because it kills innovation in the process.

Bills were introduced in the House and the Senate targeting the various aspects of this problem but focusing primarily on lawsuit abuse, lawsuits brought not to vindicate a legitimate claim by somebody who actually has lost something of value but merely somebody who is a holder of a license to sue, in essence, and uses it to shake down these small startup companies and innovators.

Well, we were able to see the passage, in December of 2013, of something called the Innovation Act in the House of Representatives. That legislation passed overwhelmingly, 325 to 91, with almost all Republicans and the bulk of Democrats supporting the bill. Here is the other thing. This is not just a Democratic or Republican issue. This is something the administration wholeheartedly supports.

In fact, this is one of the stories I told last year as I was traveling around Texas and elsewhere as evidence of the dysfunction, because, I asked: If Republicans are for something and Democrats are for something, if the majority of Congress is for it and the White House is for it, why is it we can't get it done? Well, the obstacle to getting it done was eliminated with the new majority in the Senate.

So I think we are poised to take good action here very soon. We are in a new Congress with a new leadership and a new majority. That is everything when it comes to reforming our broken patent system. Today, we had a broad bipartisan group of people, from the ranking member and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, the former chairman, Senator HATCH, to Senator SCHUMER, who is in the leadership of the Democrats in the Senate, Senator KLOBUCHAR, and Senator LEE.

All of us announced this broad, bipartisan support for a new piece of patent reform legislation designed to attack this problem of lawsuit abuse and the shakedown of America's innovators and job creators and technology creators. So Republicans and Democrats alike have come to realize that under the status quo, too many of our most promising innovators, not to mention other businesses, are wasting time and money in frivolous, costly litigation. This legislation takes a number of commonsense steps that ends the exploitation of these so-called patent trolls.

Many of those are not particularly earth-shaking, but the culmination of them, I think, will have a real positive impact on this problem.

First, it would require plaintiff's in patent cases to simply explain the substance of their claim when filing the initial lawsuit. What frequently happens is a lawsuit will be filed with no real detail as to the nature of the claim

or the infringement of the patent. Then there would ensue costly and time-consuming discovery, until finally the plaintiff would figure out some claim they could make to hang their hat on. Well, we eliminate that by requiring upfront specific notice of what the infringement is in the nature of the claim.

Second, it would stay cases against the end users, including restaurants, motels, hotels, construction companies, and the like, and would give the party with the major incentive to defend the case the opportunity to do so. So the person who is actually responsible for the manufacture of a product—let's say a Wi-Fi device—the manufacturer would defend that case and not the hotel or motel that happened to deploy that Wi-Fi device in their hotel or their motel.

Third, the bill would bring greater fairness to the discovery process by limiting discovery until the court resolves threshold motions in the case. This is important because the court is going to have to make a decision whether this is a legitimate case that could go on and thus authorize the expensive and time-consuming discovery. If it is not a legitimate case, then that is the time for the court to address it by a motion to dismiss or some other legal device.

Fourth, it would curb the practice of sending abusive demand letters. What I have learned is that in patent litigation these days, there would be demand letters which literally would carpet bomb the people who were using some of this innovation, in an effort to shake them down. It causes a lot of expense, delay, and other consternation.

Fifth—and this is perhaps one of the most critical elements—it would allow courts to shift responsibility for the cost of patent litigation more often to the losing party when the court finds that the claim was not a reasonable claim to be brought. In other words, it was a privileged claim. So no longer can you file a lawsuit and pursue it, even though it is a bogus case, without any fear of actually having to pay the costs of the other side that prevails in a case involving an unreasonable use of the legal process.

So I believe, as many of my colleagues do, that these are sensible reforms, and it is one way we can take a step to protect better the access to justice for plaintiffs with legitimate claims of infringement and to deter those who simply abuse the system.

This is another promising area where I think the 114th Congress can distinguish itself from the 113th and previous Congresses by showing we can actually work together to try to solve real problems in a bipartisan way that hopefully will improve life just a little bit for the people we represent.

Entrepreneurs in Texas and throughout the country need this legislation to protect them from abuse of patent litigation practices that have burdened America's private sector for far too long.

The last point I would make is that I saw this morning the news that, basically, America's economy did not grow in the last quarter. Basically, the gross domestic product was, I think, a 0.2 percent increase. That is simply too slow of an economic growth to create the jobs we need for the population increases we are seeing.

So if we are going to get our economy growing again, which is the best way to raise the wages of hard-working American families, we are going to need to do a number of things, such as reform our tax system. We are going to need to rein in overreaching regulation, which is a wet blanket on the private sector and on job creation, and we are going to need to do efforts such as patent reform, as in this litigation reform legislation I have just been talking about. That will unleash this sleeping giant of the great American economy for the benefit of all Americans once again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the pending business before the Senate. Of all the things we will do, probably in our political lifetime, I can't think of anything more important than getting the Iran nuclear ambitions right.

I stand in two camps. I would love a good deal, and a bad deal would be a nightmare.

What is a bad deal? A bad deal would be one that would result in a North Korean outcome, where you lock in a capacity in the hands of the Iranians to be monitored by the international community. And one day they break out, you wake up, and you have a bomb.

A bad deal would be too much capacity in the hands of the Iranians. That would spook the Sunni Arabs who want to go buy a bomb of their own.

I cannot tell you the consequences to the world and to our Nation if you have a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. That is what a bad deal leads to.

A good deal allows us to wind down a hotly contested dispute between Iran and the world over the last 20 years without firing a shot. A good deal would be allowing the Iranians a peaceful nuclear power program, what they claim they want, with no real capability in a year—or any time—to make a bomb.

If all they want is a peaceful nuclear power program, I do not object.

I do object to the capability to enrich the uranium in a fashion that one day they could break out, as North Korea did—because I don't trust the Iranians.

So to Senator CARDIN and to Senator CORKER, you have navigated this very well. You have a Democratic President, who I think wants the deal way too badly, and we have a Congress who I think wants to have a say.

We created the congressional sanctions, and we should have a say as to whether they are waived based on the deal and the quality of the deal that they may negotiate with the Iranians and the P5+1. Since we created the sanctions, I don't think it is unfair to this President or to any other President to say: You need our vote. You need a debate to occur before we will agree to do that.

Now, is it a treaty? I don't think so. I would love it to be a treaty, but it is not.

The one thing I don't want to do, in the process of dealing with a very dangerous situation in the Middle East, is to turn the rules upside down in the Senate because I like a particular outcome.

Senator JOHNSON sincerely believes this is a treaty. I do not doubt his motivations at all. But I have come to conclude, right or wrong, that it doesn't meet the definition laid out by the Supreme Court and the precedents of the past.

When we did a deal with North Korea, it wasn't a treaty. Maybe it should have been, but it wasn't. So I don't think we are going to change the rules just because we have a very dangerous moment in American history, in world history, and a President some of us don't trust or like.

Condoleezza Rice says it is not a treaty. I don't think she would have said that if there had been any doubt in her mind.

I have had discussions with other Republicans who have served in prior administrations, and they have come to the same conclusion.

So we had a vote, which was a good thing, and the concept of it becoming a treaty was voted down. The debate was worthy of the Senate, and I applaud all those who were involved.

There are aspects of amendments that are pending that I would embrace in a New York minute, but I believe that some of these amendments—no matter how much I support the concept—would break apart a bipartisan coalition that has taken a year to form.

To Senator CARDIN and Senator CORKER, you have struck a balance that I think makes sense to me. A Democratic minority, I don't believe, is going to turn all the power regarding this deal surviving or being struck down to the Republican majority. If I were in your shoes, I would not do that.

And to my colleagues who ask that the Democratic minority with a Democratic President cede the entire process to us, as Republicans, that is probably a bridge too far.

I don't think a Republican President would like that outcome. I don't think a Republican minority would turn over to a Democratic majority the ability to act unilaterally on something of this consequence.

So what have Senators CORKER and CARDIN been able to do? They have brought the bill to the floor without a filibuster, allowing the debate and, hopefully, more votes.

To my Democratic colleagues, don't shut my Republican friends out. They

all have a say, and I will vote with you against some of the amendments that I like but that I just think would break the deal apart. Let's get the Senate back in business in a reasonable fashion.

What I would say is that the construct of this bill makes perfect sense to me. You need 60 votes to disapprove the deal. Sixty votes are required for any major action in the Senate. That has been the historical precedent of the Senate. So the Democrats are not asking us to do something that hasn't been around as a concept for a long time.

What does it require? It requires the 54 Republicans, if we are together, to convince 6 Democrats that this is a bad deal.

I think, if it truly is a bad deal, our Democratic colleagues—for the good of the Nation—and the consequences of a bad deal are understood by them—would join with us and say: This is not what we want, Mr. President; try harder. Rejecting a bad deal does not mean that we want to end diplomatic efforts. It means that we believe the deal in question falls short.

To Senator CORKER, you did a good job, because I don't think anybody in your shoes could have convinced the Democratic Party basically to deal themselves out.

To Senator CARDIN, you made it possible, along with Senator MENENDEZ, for us to have this debate and create, I think, a standard of disapproval consistent with the traditions of the Senate.

There may never be a deal, but if there is one, it has to come back here, and every American will get to hear the contents of the deal—while some think it is good, and while others think it is bad—and you will not have to wonder what we are doing with regard to the Iranians.

If the Republican Party cannot convince enough Members of the Democratic Party that it is a bad deal, then we will be disappointed, but that is democracy.

Israel is very worried about the framework. The Sunni Arab States are very worried about the framework. It is not a final deal yet.

Three things, I think, have to be there for me to be on board: anytime, anywhere inspections in Iran by international organizations of our choosing, including military facilities; no upfront signing bonus in terms of money until the Iranians comply with the initial phases of the deal, because they will take the cash and put it in their war machine; and whenever the inspection regime is supposed to terminate—10 years, 15 years or whatever date you pick—at that moment, the then-existing President, whoever he or she may be, has to certify that Iran is no longer a state sponsor of terrorism, because you would not want to end an inspection regime if they were still involved in state terrorist activity.

So the two leaders on this bill, from my view, have crafted a very good piece of legislation. People dislike it for different reasons, which means it is probably the balance we need—and I can't think of a better way to do this.

To those who think they have a better way, the only thing I can tell you is you better get some Democrats to agree with you. Because if you cannot, it is just all talk.

What BOB CORKER and BEN CARDIN have been able to do is they have given the Senate a voice that we wouldn't have otherwise. They have given the American people a chance to understand the deal better than any opportunity I know of, and they have given us the power that every Member of the House and Senate should want in this regard, a chance to have a say and to be recorded in history.

The outcome may not please you, but this is the best process I could think of, given the way the Senate works and the way democracy works, which means both parties are going to require a say in something this important.

So, well done. I look forward to voting for this deal. Any amendment you want to bring to the floor, I will vote for it if I think it is a good amendment that will not deconstruct the deal or unravel the deal. I will vote against the amendment if I think it will break the deal apart, even though I am sympathetic to it, because my goal is to get this right, to make sure that any final deal with the Iranians is explained to the American people through the House and the Senate debate, and that can only happen if this bill becomes law.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I wish to say, while the Senator from South Carolina is on the floor, that at the end of the day, this bill is the Graham vision. I mean, the fact is that this is Graham-Corker, Corker-Graham. It has evolved so that we could have the kind of support that we need to pass this into law.

But I thank Senator GRAHAM for his pushing to make sure we got to this point. There is no question. Look, you have been on this issue for months. You have pursued this. You have sold this publicly. You have worked with us as we have caused this to evolve to get the number of votes that we may get actually to cause this to become law. I don't know of anybody in our caucus or anybody in the Senate that has more of a foreign policy national security background—no one.

I thank you for your efforts to ensure that we do everything we can to make sure we have a voice in this agreement that may happen on June 30 or a few days thereafter. We wouldn't be here without your continual pushing.

I yield the floor for Senator CARDIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, before Senator GRAHAM leaves the floor, I wish to concur with Senator CORKER's observations.

It was several months ago that Senator GRAHAM grabbed me on the floor of the Senate to talk about this being the most important responsibility we have—to have an orderly way to oversight any potential agreement.

So I really thank Senator GRAHAM for his attention to this issue. We wouldn't be here today if it weren't for his leadership on this issue, and I thank him for the manner in which he brought this issue forward so that we could find a way to get this done in a constructive manner.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I, too, want to begin today by thanking the Senators from Maryland and Tennessee for the work they have put into this process. It is important. It is important that Congress have a role in reviewing any deal the President concludes with Iran.

This is an extraordinary threat to the world. This is a nation which is run not by the individual with whom they are negotiating; Iran is a country governed and run by a radical Shia cleric who has ideas about the future of the world that are frightening.

What is more frightening is the information we have received from this administration about the framework they agreed to on April 2. It is a framework, for example, that would allow Iran to retain thousands of centrifuges and grant them the right to enrich uranium. It is an arrangement that would allow Iran to avoid dismantling its key facilities. It is an arrangement that allows Iran to continue to deny its past work on nuclear weapons. It is an arrangement that would allow Iran to retain a significant ballistic missile program, including efforts to develop a missile capable of hitting the very spot on which we stand right now. It is an arrangement that does nothing whatsoever on the cases of those Americans who are currently unjustly detained in Iran. It is an arrangement that does nothing to impact Iran's state sponsorship of terrorism or its brutal treatment of its own people. In fact, it is an arrangement that, if it goes through, will turn over billions of dollars into the hands of the chief state sponsor of terrorism on the planet. And it is an arrangement that will do nothing to bring an end to Iran's self-proclaimed support at the highest levels of its government for the destruction of the State of Israel.

Since April 2 of this year, by the way, the Iranians have made clear that they are not willing to do many of the things the White House itself has claimed are part of this deal. We are going to get to that in a moment, but understand that when the White House announced this deal, they put out a fact sheet. They said: This is what the deal is about. Iran is disputing it. They do not have the same fact sheet. In essence, what Iran is saying was agreed to and what the United States is saying was agreed to are, apparently at this

moment, two very different things. That alone should be concerning.

In addition to that, this deal is going to be a dangerous deal, a bad deal not just for the United States and our allies in the region but especially for our allies in Israel.

That is why it is important that Congress take a stand and ensure that this deal is not implemented unless its fundamental flaws are addressed.

That is why I supported this legislation in the committee. I voted for it so we could be here on the floor to strengthen it—not in a committee of just 20 members but here with all of our colleagues—over a number of days, potentially weeks, so the country could see what is at stake.

The first amendment I will offer today and hope we can overcome objections to is pretty straightforward. Here is what the amendment says: It says to the President that no deal can go forward unless the President certifies that the Iranian leadership has accepted Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

Why is that important? Because we will hear the argument that this has nothing to do with nuclear weapons, that this has nothing to do with the nuclear capacity of Iran. I am going to make the argument that that is not true.

The first reason is—we have to understand why it is important for Israel to exist as a Jewish state. Israel is not just a country; it is a homeland for the Jewish people, created in the aftermath of the Holocaust with the belief that never again would there not be a place for the Jewish people to go and seek refuge and be able to live if they faced persecution—as they have for thousands of years and as they do even now but especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust. So Israel is not just a country. It has a special and unique purpose that sets it apart from any other nation on Earth. It was created as a homeland for a persecuted people who survived despite the deaths of 6 million human beings in the Holocaust, maybe more. It is now a homeland where they will be safe.

It is also important to remember that beyond that, it is in the national security interests of the United States. What is Israel? Israel is a pro-American, free enterprise democracy. I promise that if there were more pro-American, free enterprise democracies in the Middle East, our lives would be a lot simpler and the world would be a lot safer and a lot better. But there is one, and this country must always be firmly on the side of that one country, this free enterprise, pro-American democracy in the midst of a region full of chaos and uncertainty.

Why is that relevant to this deal? Here is why it is relevant. This is not just a deal about what Iran is allowed to do in its nuclear program; this is a deal that would lift billions of dollars' worth of sanctions off of the Iranian Government. And what is the Iranian Government going to do when they get access to those billions of dollars? Are they going to donate it to charity around the world to feed the hungry and house the homeless? No. Are they going to use it to substantially improve the rights of their people in their own country? No. They are going to use those billions of dollars to do what they are doing now with less money: export terrorism to every corner of the globe.

Today, Iran is an active sponsor of terrorism in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Latin America, and Europe. This is the same government that tried to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador here in Washington, DC. This is the same Iranian Government that blew up a Jewish center in Buenos Aires. This is the same Iranian Government that tried to detonate a bomb in Uruguay. They use terrorism the way normal countries use diplomacy. Yet, now we are going to turn over billions of dollars to them.

The reason why this has something to do with Israel is, what are they going to do when they have even more money to carry out these sorts of acts? They are going to invest it not just in their nuclear program, but they will invest it in their sponsorship of terrorism and they will invest it in their long-range rockets.

What have they told us they want to do with this increased capacity? What have they told us is the chief goal of this Government in Iran? Why do they need this terrorism? Why do they need those weapons? Why do they need those long-range rockets? Well, let's take them at their word. Here is why they need it. They need it because, according to a tweet put out by the Ayatollah in July of 2014, ''This barbaric, wolflike and infanticidal regime of Israel which spares no crime has no cure but to be annihilated.''

In November of 2014, the Supreme Leader posted a chart on his Twitter account. It had ''9 key questions about the elimination of Israel.'' I am holding it here, but it can be found online. Here are some of those questions:

''Why should the Zionist regime be eliminated?''

''What does elimination of Israel mean in the viewpoint of the Imam Khomeini?'' Meaning him.

''What is the proper way of eliminating Israel?''

''How will the proposed referendum succeed?'' Well, here he is talking about actually calling for a referendum in Israel, but the Jews can't participate in the referendum, according to him.

''Why do we oppose compromise proposals?''

The point is that this is a country led by a leader who has made it very clear repeatedly, time and again, that one of their main objectives is the destruction of Israel and ending Israel's existence as a Jewish state. When someone says that over and over again, we should believe them. This is not for domestic consumption to make him look good in Iran, the way some in the administration would argue. I believe they mean it. Do you know why I believe they mean it? Because they sponsor terrorism in an effort to kill Jews and Israelis.

In January of 2015, a suitcase full of explosives was found near the Israeli Embassy in Uruguay. The day after an individual left a suitcase bomb near the Embassy, a senior Iranian diplomat by the name of Ahmed Sabatgold left the country. Uruguayan authorities clarified a report claiming that he had been expelled from the country. They said no. They suggested that, in fact, he was a person of high interest with whom they would like to speak but that he left the country on his own.

So the reason why the existence of Israel as a Jewish state is directly tied to this deal is simple. We are about to turn over billions of dollars into their hands, and we have every reason to believe they will spend a significant portion of that money to destroy our strongest and most important ally in the region and one of the most important allies in the world.

The first amendment I have offered is pretty straightforward. It calls for any deal to require that Iran recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

The second amendment I will propose is even more straightforward, even more on point. Here is what it requires. It requires that this final deal be the deal the President says it is. Here is what I mean by that. I filed an amendment that basically took the White House's own fact sheet—by the way, I have problems with that fact sheet. The deal as the President describes it is not a deal I believe will work. It is not a deal I believe will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. But just to take them at their word, just to prove this point and to ensure we are building safeguards into what we are doing here, I took the White House's own fact sheet, what they said the deal was about, and I say in this amendment that the final deal must be about those points that the White House already says it is. For the life of me, I don't understand why that would be controversial. My amendment is basically this. It says the deal has to be what you say it is. That is all my amendment says. Yet, somehow I have been told this is going to box in the White House. If it does, it boxes them in with their own words.

But here is the reason I am doing it. Iran apparently negotiated a very different deal than the one the White House thinks we have. For example, the White House says this deal will impose permanent inspections on Iran. The State Department fact sheet says: ''Iran's adherence to the Additional Protocol of the IAEA is permanent, including its significant access and transparency obligations.'' The Iranian fact sheet says: ''Iran will implement the Additional Protocol on a voluntary and temporary basis for the sake of transparency and confidence building.''

That doesn't sound like the same deal to me.

How about the inspection of military sites? In an interview on CNN, Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes said: ''If we see a site that we need to inspect on a military facility, we can get access to that site and inspect it.'' But on April 9, Iranian Brigadier General Hossein Dehghan said: ''Visiting military centers are among the red lines and no visits to these centers will be allowed.''

How about the scope of the sanctions relief? The State Department fact sheet says: ''United States and European Union nuclear-related sanctions will be suspended . . . All past U.N. Security Council resolutions on the Iran nuclear issue will be lifted simultaneous with the completion, by Iran, of nuclear-related actions addressing all key concerns.'' But Iran says: ''According to the reached solutions, after the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Joint Action, all of the U.N. resolutions will be revoked and all of the multilateral economic and financial sanctions by the EU and the unilateral ones by the U.S. will be annulled.'' So are the sanctions limited or total? We say they are limited; Iran says they are total.

There are three more differences. On the timing of the release, at a news conference on April 2, the President said:

> In return for Iran's actions, the international community has agreed to provide Iran with relief from certain sanctions—our own sanctions and international sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. This relief will be phased as Iran takes steps to adhere to the deal.

So the President is basically saying that every time Iran complies with a portion of the deal, an additional sanction will be phased out; it will be in steps. If they do something, sanctions come off slowly. Trust but verify. That is what the American Government says. That is what the President said in his own words. But Iran says: ''We will not sign any deal unless on the very first day of its implementation all economic sanctions against Iran are lifted all at once.''

How about restrictions on enrichment? Are there restrictions for 10 years or for 15 years? The United States and the State Department Fact Sheet says:

> Iran has agreed to not enrich uranium over 3.67 percent for at least 15 years . . . Iran has agreed to not build any new facilities for the purpose of enriching uranium for 15 years . . . Iran has agreed to not enrich uranium at its Fordow facility for at least 15 years . . . Iran has agreed to not conduct research and development associated with uranium enrichment at Fordow for 15 years.

That is a lot of 15 years.

What does Iran say? On April 4, on an Iranian state TV channel, its Foreign Minister said:

> The limitations are for 10 years and then enrichment will continue its own scientific progress. We have accepted 10 years of limitations.

Last but not least, research and development—is it limited or not limited? The United States, in our fact sheet, says it is limited.

> Iran will not use its IR–2, IR–4, IR–5, IR–6, or IR–8 models to produce enriched uranium for at least 10 years. Iran will engage in limited research and development with its advanced centrifuges, according to a schedule and parameters which have been agreed to by the P5+1.

The group that negotiated all this.

That is what the U.S. fact sheet says. But what does Iran say? Iran says no.

> Iran will continue its research and development on advanced machines and will continue the initiation and completion phases of the research and development process of IR–4, IR–5, IR–6, and IR–8 centrifuges during the 10 year period of the Comprehensive Plan for Joint Action.

So these are at least six major points of difference where Iran is saying the deal says one thing and the United States is saying the deal says another. What my amendment does is it takes what we say the deal is and puts it in the bill and says: Any final deal must be what you told us it is, not what Iran says it is. Yet, somehow, apparently, that is controversial.

This is not a game. This is a very serious matter because this is a country—and I don't mean its people but its leaders—that has shown the willingness to sponsor terrorism and do atrocious things all over the world.

When you read in the newspaper about civilians being barrel-bombed and gassed and killed in Syria, do you know why Assad is able to do that? Because of the help he gets from Iran.

When you read about the rockets that flood into Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem and Haifa and cities all across Israel every couple years as Hezbollah launches attacks, hiding behind human shields while they are trying to kill Israelis, do you know how they are able to get them? Because of help from Iran.

When you read in the newspaper that yesterday the Iranian military hijacked a vessel in international waters, when you read that they tried to kill the Saudi Ambassador in Washington, DC, when you read that they tried to set off a bomb in Uruguay, when you read how in 1994 they did set off a bomb at a Jewish center in Buenos Aires, Argentina—this is who we are dealing with. Now they are on the verge of being able to enrich weapons-grade uranium and reprocess weapons-grade plutonium. Now they are headed quickly toward building a long-range rocket capable of reaching not just Israel but Europe and the United States.

This is a very significant moment because this President is about to sign a deal that will place in their hands billions of additional dollars. If this is the terrorism and the nuclear activity they are pursuing now with sanctions on them, imagine how much more they will be able to afford to do once the sanctions are lifted. That is why it is so relevant on this point of Israel but also on the details of this deal.

By the way, as I said, and I will repeat it, the State Department fact sheet, what the President says the deal is—I am not comfortable with that either. I don't think that will work. It is not as if I am celebrating what they say the deal is.

All I am asking is this: At a minimum, before you bring and sign a deal, at least let it be what you say it is. Don't come back here in 6 months and surprise us with ''By the way, it was the Iranian's fact sheet that had it right and not ours.''

So I hope we will be able to move on these amendments. I don't think they undermine this one bit. I think they are relevant to the debates we are having. I think they are relevant to the decision we are being asked to make. And it is about time this body takes this up. Congress has an important role to play. The people of Florida whom I represent speak on these issues on this floor through me and the senior Senator from Florida. We have a right to have these issues debated. This is not some minor issue we are talking about; this is the security not just of our strongest ally in the region but of our very own country.

So I hope we will have an opportunity to have debates on these amendments. When we hear people say: If these amendments pass, we are going to lose the support of the bill; the President might veto it—well, if you want to make that argument, make that argument, but let's have a vote on it. What is wrong with having a vote on an amendment? If you don't want to vote on the amendment because you disagree with me, stand up and say you disagree with the amendment and you vote no. If you agree with the amendment but you are going to vote against it because you think it unravels this process that is being put in place, then say that. But let's have a vote on it.

If you don't want to vote on things, don't run for the Senate. If you don't want to vote on things, don't run for office. Be a columnist. Get a talk show. Everyone who runs for office knows that what we are called to do here is vote on issues on which sometimes we are uncomfortable.

There is a microphone at your desk. Come to the floor and give a speech and explain to the world why you are voting against a deal that requires Israel to have a right to exist. And if you say you believe Israel has a right to exist but you are voting against it because you don't want to unravel the deal, people will respect it. You can make your argument, but vote. Don't tell me we can't have votes on these things. You can argue that we shouldn't pass it, and I will argue against you, but don't tell me we can't even vote on it because then what you are saying is you want to be protected from taking a position on it, you don't want to take a position that you think is tough, and that I find to be unacceptable.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment in order to call up the two

amendments I just described, amendment No. 1141 and amendment No. 1148, en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me explain to my friend from Florida—a very valued member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—that we have two pending amendments. We have also been working to get a vote on Senator BARRASSO's amendment dealing with terrorism. Senator CORKER and I are trying to work through many amendments that we can clear that Members have brought forward. They are working with us to get those amendments where we can consider them.

For an orderly process, since so many amendments have been filed—and, I might say, they have all been filed by Republican Members of the Senate—we need to make sure we have an orderly way to consider these amendments and vote on these amendments. For those reasons, I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, just as a point of clarification, I am a member of the committee that heard these amendments, particularly the one on Israel's right to exist. They were available to me at the time. I chose not to offer them in consultation with the Senators who worked so hard to put them together. I could have offered my amendment in the committee. I did not in order to work in a cooperative way to move it from the committee onto the floor.

I will admit that I did not speak to Senator CARDIN about this in particular, but I was told by multiple Members that the right place and the right time for me to offer this amendment would be on the floor, not in the committee, because the hope was to get it to the floor as quickly as possible. So in an effort to move this issue to the floor, I held back on filing this particular amendment with regard to Israel's right to exist on the assurances and on the conversations that we had that, in fact, when we got to the floor, these amendments would be heard.

Now, if, in fact, it turns out that today is not going to be the day we vote on the amendment, I understand that. I know there are a lot of other people with ideas they want voted on.

My understanding is and I have been told that there is potentially the effort here to say we shouldn't have any amendment or just have three or four amendments, and I think that is an unfair position to take. I am not saying that is what the Senator from Maryland is arguing. But I hope that at some point, as the order is established—I will continue to make this motion in the hope that this amendment can not just be pending but can be part of this debate.

I respect the views of my colleagues, some who I think will come to the floor and say they agree with me on the substance of it but don't want to vote on the amendment because they think it endangers the agreement we have in place or the bill that is in place. But I do think it deserves a vote, and I do think it deserves that debate.

So I hope in this orderly process that is established, these two amendments—I have filed seven, but I prioritized these two—these two will get the consideration I believe they deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as Senator RUBIO pointed out, we had no discussions about this. I don't know what Senators he is referring to, but let me just talk briefly about some of the points Senator RUBIO mentioned because I think it is important that we respond to them.

First, the bill we are considering, S. 615, is a bill that doesn't deal with the merits of a potential deal. It deals with the right way for Congress to review a potential deal that is reached between the United States and our trading partners and Iran concerning its nuclear weapon program. That is what this bill does. It doesn't say whether the President's agreement is a good one, a bad one, et cetera. It is a process for us to review it and take appropriate action because we are the ones who impose the sanctions. Only the Congress can permanently change or eliminate the sanctions. Therefore, it is important that we have an orderly way to review the potential deal. That is what it does—nothing more, nothing less.

It also, by the way, gives us the opportunity to get notice of material breaches and be able to take action to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state if they, in fact, breach the agreement.

So the two points Senator RUBIO mentioned—the first is that there are different interpretations being given, one by the United States and one by the Iranians. Well, we think the first amendment we filed is going to help deal with that. It is pending right now. It requires us to get every official document of a potential deal in the language in which it is agreed to. So that amendment is pending—it is followed by Senator CORKER and me—for the reasons Senator RUBIO mentioned, and that is, we want to see the original text. We don't want to have the interpretation by the Iranians; we want to know what the language says. That is our responsibility. We are going to get that once we take up this first amendment—I hope it is approved—that will give us the original language text of every agreement and exhibit that is agreed to between the parties.

The second issue Senator RUBIO mentioned is Israel's right to exist and Iran acknowledging Israel's right to exist. I fully agree with Senator RUBIO. I don't think there is a Member of this body who doesn't want Israel legitimated by every country in the world. It is our key ally in the Middle East. It is a country that shares our values, that has a strategic relationship with the United States, and I could go on and on.

Since 1948, the United States and Israel have enjoyed a very close and important relationship, and we have taken so many actions in this body in order to protect Israel's right to exist. That is why we included your language and Senator BOXER's language in this bill where we say, ''The President should determine that the agreement in no way compromises the commitment of the United States to Israel's security or its support for Israel's right to exist.'' We have that in the bill.

What Senator RUBIO's amendment would have us do—and let me explain this. What his amendment would have us do is require that the President certify to us before he could submit any agreement—enter into any agreement—that Iran has recognized Israel's right to exist.

This agreement we are negotiating with our negotiating partners and Iran is to deal with Iran's nuclear weapon program. I know from my conversations with the Israeli Government that they think that is the most important thing for their existence—the most important thing—that Iran not become a nuclear weapons state. That is what Israel needs, and that is what we are trying to get.

The Rubio amendment, although it is not intended to do that, would say: No, that is not the most important thing. The most important thing is to negotiate the language, what Iran says about Israel, not their nuclear weapons program, and that the President must achieve that.

When you are negotiating, the more things you put on the table, the weaker position you are in in achieving the most important point, and that is making sure we have a strong agreement that Iran can never become a nuclear weapons state.

That is why this amendment will accomplish just the opposite as far as Israel's security is concerned. Yes, it is a poison pill. Yes, it will defeat this bill. That also happens to be true. And, yes, it will mean it will be almost impossible for the President to negotiate a nuclear agreement with Iran.

I think most people in this body and most people in America believe that the best course is a negotiated agreement with Iran. The unintended consequences of this amendment would make it virtually impossible to have that agreement completed.

So, yes, we could get into debate on the specifics of your amendment. I am more than happy to do that. But we have an orderly process here, and there are a lot of amendments that have been filed, and we are trying to work out a way to do this. Senator CORKER and I have been on the floor now for 4 or 5 days debating this issue, and we will debate any Member who wants to come by because we want do make sure we do have an open debate. But we are

going to follow an orderly process. And this amendment, as well-intended as it is, is an amendment that would very much compromise what we have tried to do in a bipartisan way, and that is to make sure that this Senate and the House have an orderly way to consider any deal struck between our negotiating partners and the United States and Iran. That is our responsibility, and we are going to stay focused on that, and we are going to end with a bipartisan product that is in I think the best traditions of the United States Senate.

So I respect very deeply my colleague's commitment to Israel. I do.

All of us are committed to Israel, but let's think about what is the most important thing for Israel, and that is having a strong agreement that prevents Iran from becoming a nuclear weapon state. Let's focus on that because that, I think, this bill helps us achieve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I appreciate the passion of the Senator from Maryland. He makes points that I think are very relevant to debate once we are on the amendment. That is all I am asking for, a vote on the amendment. He is making an argument right now why he thinks we should not pass this amendment.

I respect the orderly process. I did not necessarily recognize that coming to the floor and trying to get my amendment pending would somehow unravel this orderly process, but I am more than happy to work within the orderly process, whatever that process entails. I would be more than happy to have it explained to me, where I fit in, in this orderly process, and at the appropriate moment we will file the amendment. But I wanted a vote on the amendment, and then the argument you made here today can be made.

The only other point I would make is it is true, tragically, that there are a number of countries in the Middle East that do not recognize Israel's right to exist. The difference is those countries are not trying to build a nuclear weapon, nor are they building long-range rockets, nor do they use terrorism as an instrument of statecraft, nor do they every Friday hold ceremonies in which their top leader chants ''Death to Israel'' and ''Death to America,'' nor do they actively support terrorist groups around the world that exist for the sole purpose of destroying Israel itself, nor do they have billions of dollars in sanctions that are about to be released.

At the end of the day, there is a big difference between what is happening in Iran and the billions of dollars we are about to turn over to them and these other countries that, unfortunately, do not recognize Israel's right to exist but are not going around actually actively trying to destroy the State of Israel.

The last point is on the differences in the details. Listen, I do not think the fact sheet the State Department put out is sufficient. I think the deal, as described by the President, is not good enough and will not lead to the prevention of a nuclear weapon. But all I am asking for in my amendment is for the deal he submits to be the one that he says he negotiated.

He has told us already we have reached a preliminary agreement. He has announced it to the world what that preliminary agreement is. All I am saying is what you submit to us must be what you told us it is. Here is why I say this: Because this negotiation has been going on for a while. Every month that goes by, Iran gains more concessions, and our position slips further and further.

If you look where we were at the beginning of this process to where we are today, it is a very different place from where we were not that long ago. We are in a very different place than we were in terms of what we had originally said. When this whole thing started 10 years ago, 12 years ago, the U.N. Security Council put sanctions on Iran and said you are not even able to enrich or reprocess. Now they are allowed to enrich and reprocess. They are even allowed to enrich and reprocess at an even higher rate for research purposes.

If these negotiations keep going on, we are going to end up building the bomb for them at the rate it is going, because every year and every month that goes by, they gain more and more concessions. All I am trying do is, at a minimum, freeze this in place and say, Mr. President, you have told us that you have negotiated a deal. Mr. President, you put out a fact sheet that told us what the deal is. You have represented it to the American people as the deal, and now all this will say is what you submit to us must be what you told us you agreed to on April 2. Do not come back here in 6 months and submit to us a deal, and as it turns out the Iranian fact sheet is the one we should have been relying on.

All I am asking, even though I do not think that what he has agreed to is sufficient—all I am asking in my second amendment is that the deal he submits be the deal he says it is, nothing more and nothing less.

I hope that through this orderly process the moment will arrive, before we vote on passage of this, that my amendments can be heard and voted on. I respect the arguments that others make about why they cannot support them and what they think they will ultimately do to the process. All I am asking for are votes on these amendments, and then everybody is free to vote the way they want and for the reasons they want.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I can, quite frankly, share the Senator from Florida's frustration, and I urge us to fully debate and begin voting on important amendments to this bill. I am all for any productive, orderly process, but I want it to be productive, to be inclusive, and to get going. I share the frustration that has been expressed on the floor that that is not quite happening right now.

In light of that, I want to be assured of moving forward and getting a vote on a very important amendment for me. I send a second-degree amendment to the desk, Vitter amendment No. 1186, as modified. I ask that it be a second-degree amendment to Corker amendment No. 1179 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Corker amendment is not pending.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I have a parliamentary inquiry: What is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending amendment is amendment No. 1155.

AMENDMENT NO. 1179

Mr. VITTER. In that case, I call for regular order with respect to the Corker amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment No. 1179 is pending.

AMENDMENT NO. 1186, AS MODIFIED, TO AMENDMENT NO. 1179

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I send this second-degree amendment to the desk, Vitter amendment No. 1186, as modified, to be a second-degree amendment to Corker amendment No. 1179, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Louisiana [Mr. VITTER] proposes an amendment numbered 1186, as modified, to amendment No. 1179.

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

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: To require an assessment of inadequacies in the international monitoring and verification system as they relate to a nuclear agreement with Iran)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

''(C) ASSESSMENT OF INADEQUACIES IN INTERNATIONAL MONITORING AND VERIFICATION SYSTEM.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—A report under subparagraph (A) shall include an assessment by the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the heads and other relevant officials of agencies with responsibilities under this section, detailing existing inadequacies in the international monitoring and verification system to the extent such inadequacies relate to the agreement transmitted pursuant to paragraph (1), as outlined and in accordance with findings and recommendations pertaining to verification shortcomings contained within—

''(I) the September 26, 2006, Government Accountability Office report, ''Nuclear Nonproliferation: IAEA Has Strengthened Its

Safeguards and Nuclear Security Programs, but Weaknesses Need to Be Addressed'';

''(II) the May 16, 2013, Government Accountability Office Report, ''IAEA Has Made Progress in Implementing Critical Programs but Continues to Face Challenges'';

''(III) the Defense Science Board Study, ''Task Force on the Assessment of Nuclear Treaty Monitoring and Verification Technologies'';

''(IV) the IAEA Report, The Safeguards System of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and the IAEA Safeguards Statement for 2010;

''(V) the IAEA Safeguards Overview: Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols;

''(VI) the IAEA Model Additional Protocol; and

''(VII) the IAEA February 2015 Director General Report to the Board of Governors.

''(ii) RECOMMENDATIONS.—The assessment required under clause (i) shall include recommendations based upon the reports referenced in such clause, including recommendations to overcome inadequacies or develop an improved monitoring framework and recommendations related to the following matters:

''(I) The nuclear security program's long-term resource needs.

''(II) A plan for the long-term operation and funding of the IAEA and relevant agencies increased activities in order to maintain the necessary level of oversight.

''(III) A potential national strategy and implementation plan supported by a planning and assessment team aimed at cutting across agency boundaries or limitations that impact its ability to draw conclusions—with absolute assurance—about whether Iran is developing a clandestine nuclear weapons program.

''(IV) The limitations of IAEA actors.

''(V) Challenges within the geographic scope which may be too large to anticipate within the sanctioned treaty or agreement or the national technical means (NTM) monitoring regimes alone.

''(iii) PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATION.—Not later than 30 days after the Secretary of State submits a report under subparagraph (A), the President shall certify to the appropriate congressional committees and leadership that the President has reviewed the Secretary's shortfall assessment required under this subparagraph, including the recommendations contained therein, and has taken necessary actions to address existing gaps within the monitoring and verification framework.

''(D) CLASSIFIED ANNEX.—A report under

Mr. VITTER. I would be happy to explain the substance of the amendment.

This is about verification, obviously a really crucial part of this debate. Many of us who have concerns about the President's proposed agreement do not think we have adequate means to verify any agreement in the context and the structure he has proposed. So, clearly, those verification issues are very, very important.

This amendment tries to address those in a substantive and significant and meaningful way. What the amendment does is actually specifically lists documented reports from groups such as the IAEA, the U.S. Defense Science Board Task Force, and others, which have highlighted specific verification problems. The amendment would require the President to report in a very detailed, specific way on those documented verification problems and make certifications regarding making progress on and solving those verification problems.

Again, I think this is absolutely necessary because I believe the present deal, as it is being put together, does not have adequate verification capability. This would help fill that hole. I am not sure it would completely fill that gap, quite frankly, but this is a good-faith attempt to address those very real issues by, again, delineating specific documented verification problems and requiring the President and his administration to address them, to report on that, and to make certifications regarding how they are addressing those specific documented verification problems.

I urge strong support of this good-faith amendment. This would dramatically, in my opinion, improve this agreement by helping address those verification concerns. I believe they are very legitimate concerns shared by many people on both sides of the aisle. I urge strong consideration and, ultimately, approval of this verification enhancement.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 1180.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I know the good Senator from South Dakota knows that we are working with the other side to get a number of amendments ready to vote on today, and we certainly appreciate his constructive effort in letting us know what he is doing.

I object to making it pending because the other side—I am doing this on their behalf—wants to work through the tranche that we have right now.

I hope he discusses his amendment and maybe we can make it pending later today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Tennessee, who is managing this bill. I know they are trying to find a way forward, and I hope that will include getting some votes on amendments, including this one. I think this is a very reasonable amendment and one that certainly fits within what we are trying to accomplish here.

The Senate is in the midst of an important debate. This week we began a discussion on the role of Congress in approving or disapproving a nuclear agreement with Iran. Any agreement we reach with Iran must ensure one thing, and that is that Iran will never be able to acquire a nuclear weapon. That should be everything that this discussion is about.

A nuclear-armed Iran would threaten the safety, stability, and security of the entire world. It would also pose a direct threat to the United States and to our allies in the region. Given the stakes of this debate, it is critical that Congress have a role in reviewing any agreement so that the American people's voices can be heard. That is really what this is all about—giving the American people a voice on something that is of critical importance to America's national security.

I thank the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for forging together a bipartisan path forward to allow for such a congressional review.

While I support the underlying bill and appreciate the work of our bill managers, I do believe the bill could be significantly strengthened, and the amendment I am introducing today will help to do that.

My amendment, No. 1180, is one way that the Senate can strengthen the underlying bill. This amendment will require the Secretary of State to verify whether the International Atomic Energy Agency, or the IAEA, which would be in charge of inspections in Iran under any agreement, would have access to Iranian military bases. There have been recent reports that have indicated that the Iranian military is hostile to any inspection of military facilities.

General Hossein Salami, the deputy head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, recently told Iranian media: ''They [the inspectors] will not be permitted to inspect the most normal military site in their dreams.'' Again, that statement was made by General Hossein Salami, who is the deputy head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

If the administration enters into an agreement that doesn't guarantee the inspection of Iranian military sites, the American people and our allies in the region will have very little reason to believe that Iran will comply with any agreement. Without such an agreement, Iran can conduct research on nuclear weapons systems on military bases outside the reach of international inspectors. That is not an acceptable scenario.

We must ensure that any deal with Iran is verifiable, enforceable, accountable, and promotes security and stability in the region and around the world. That goal is hard to achieve without a robust inspections regime that allows for international inspections of Iran's military sites.

Accordingly, I encourage my colleagues to support my amendment, which will help ensure that Iran cannot circumvent an agreement conducting

research on nuclear weapons systems at military facilities. A nuclear-armed Iran is a threat to the safety, security, and stability of the entire planet.

I hope that when an agreement about how to proceed with regard to amendments is reached, this amendment will be included among those amendments that will be debated and voted upon, because I do think it will strengthen the underlying agreement. I certainly look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides, not only to get this amendment adopted but also to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. That is first, foremost, and what this always needs to be about.

With that, 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.

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

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am here on the floor this afternoon with my good friend from North Dakota, and I want to speak to an issue as it relates to the Iranian sanctions bill that we have on the floor in front of us.

This is about an issue that so many of us care deeply about—about our own domestic production here, about the strength of our economy, about the strength of our national security and how the United States in a global environment really stands toe-to-toe in good strong competition around the world. I want to speak today about U.S. oil—the ban on U.S. oil—and how this all intersects with Iran, Iranian sanctions, and specifically, the sanctions on Iranian oil.

I am submitting a bipartisan amendment to allow U.S. oil to compete with Iranian oil on the global market. I am pleased to be joined in this effort by Senator HEITKAMP, Senator HOEVEN, Senator LANKFORD, and, hopefully, others, as this discussion progresses.

Iran's Government is largely dependent on its exports of oil for its revenue source. It sends oil to countries such as China, Japan, India, and South Korea. The sanctions that have been imposed have really hurt Iran's economy. They have brought Iran to the table. The sanctions that have been in place have cost the government in Tehran some $40 billion in lost export revenues in 2014 alone, according to the Treasury Department.

Under the sanctions regime and the Joint Plan of Action, countries are still able to purchase Iranian oil, and I don't think a lot of folks understand that. They think the sanctions are in place and Iran can't derive a benefit from the oil exports. But in fact, companies are still able to purchase Iranian oil, up to 1 to 1.1 million barrels per day and—no surprise—countries have purchased up to that limit nearly every month since the JPA was implemented in November of 2013. So sanctions are in place, but Iran is still deriving the benefit of being able to sell Iranian oil to other nations.

It is worth pointing out that this is only possible because the State Department does not include condensate in its definition of crude oil. If you include the condensate volumes, then the limit of 1.1 million barrels per day was breached back in January of 2014, in February, March, April, and May—not June—in July, September, October, and December, and also in February of 2015, according to reports that came out of the International Energy Agency.

It simply does not make sense for us to lift sanctions on Iranian oil while we keep them on American oil. It just doesn't make sense that we would tell Iran that we are going to allow these sanctions to be lifted over there, but by keeping our oil export ban in place, we are effectively imposing sanctions on U.S. oil producers. This is a de facto sanctions regime against ourselves.

Now, one can understand why we have imposed sanctions on certain places—on Tehran, Moscow, and Damascus. However, we are effectively talking about sanctions on the Permian, on the Utica, on the Niobrara, and on regions where we have the ability to produce a resource that helps this country, helps to create jobs, and helps with all aspects of our economy. We are going to say: Iran, OK, we are going to relieve sanctions on you, but we are going to keep in place sanctions on U.S. oil producers.

So what this amendment does is to add a third section to the Corker-Cardin Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015. It would require a DOE report on Iranian crude oil and condensate exports. It would then lift the de facto ban on U.S. crude oil and condensate exports. It still preserves the emergency authorities of the President to prohibit exports if it is warranted. So there is that safety valve there.

The deadline for submission of this report to Congress would be 60 days following the enactment of the act. It would still be required even if an agreement with Iran were not reached. It would effectively address two issues—the relative ability of U.S. and Iranian oil producers to compete in the global market, which is pretty important out there, and the extent to which any agreement with Iran would increase Iranian oil exports through the lifting of sanctions.

As we know, American oil producers are generally prohibited from exporting overseas. Alaska is the one exception to the oil export ban. A very limited amount is exported over the years. Iran, on the other hand, currently exports over 1 million barrels per day of oil onto the global markets.

Now, we had a hearing in the energy committee a week or so ago. The Presiding Officer was there. We heard from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the EIA. They estimated that lifting the sanctions on Iran would increase Iranian volume by some 700,000 to 1 million barrels per day. So if we lifted that, EIA estimates that Iran would then be in a situation where they would be able to put out onto the market, basically to new purchasers, 1 million barrels per day.

Think about what that does—giving them new markets for their oil. As they have new markets for their oil, they get paid for it. EIA estimates that given the price of Brent being where it is in this range right now, it would be $25 billion per year to Iran from the ability to put that out onto the market and gain new customers—an extra $25 billion.

How comfortable are we with that? How much of that $25 billion is going to fund terrorist organizations, terrorists, in areas that we are fighting directly and immediately today? What kind of sense does it make that we would say that we will remove sanctions on Iran, allowing them to move their product to new customers, gain potentially $25 billion additionally into their treasury to do who knows what with it.

At the same time, what this does is it harms American producers who are unable to compete with Iranian oil due to this outdated ban on U.S. exports that was imposed 40 years ago. So we are going to let a 40-year-old policy sanction us, sanction our economy and benefit Iran's. Lifting the ban on U.S. oil exports would let American oil compete with Iranian oil. It would reduce Iranian revenue from oil exports. It would send a strong signal to U.S. allies that still depend on Iranian oil that alternative supplies are available and lower global oil prices which would decrease the price of gasoline and other consumer fuels.

A few hours ago, on the other side of the hallway here, over in the House of Representatives, we heard from the Prime Minister of Japan. Japan is currently purchasing and is able to purchase oil from Iran. Don't you think that our friend Japan would much rather have security and diversity of supply if it were to come from their friend the United States? I sure think so.

The amendment that we have introduced lifts the ban by requiring, after 30 days have elapsed from the enactment of S. 615, that crude oil exports may be authorized on the same basis that they are currently authorized for petroleum products, whether it is gasoline, diesel, jet fuel or whatever it is. Currently, these petroleum products can be exported without a license. In fact, we are, here in this country, the largest exporter of petroleum products in the world. So think about this as you kind of shake your head and say: What is going on here? We are the largest exporter of refined products, but yet we impose a flat ban—an outright ban—on the crude itself.

So, again, we have a safety valve in the amendment that preserves the

President's emergency authority, which is derived from the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, the National Emergencies Act, and the Energy Policy and Conservation Act. They prohibit exports, under these various proposals, if needed for the safety and security of the Nation. We do not touch those. We do not impact them in that amendment at all.

So it is important to recognize that what we are doing here is we are looking at an outdated policy that is 40-years old. We are moving into present time and space, where we have a situation with a country that we have tried desperately to bring to the table to be a nation that will work with us rather than against us. Yet part of what we are considering is an action that would remove sanctions on them and continue to keep in place sanctions on this country.

It makes no sense to me. I would hope that my colleagues would consider it. I know that my colleague from North Dakota has given great thought to this, has great understanding about the issue, and also has great passion about how we ensure that from a national security perspective we are covered in all corners.

So I would ask my colleague from North Dakota, as she has reviewed an antiquated and an outdated policy, and being from a producing State such as North Dakota, where she is working to advance the opportunities not only for North Dakotans but for people all over this country, how people in North Dakota feel when it is suggested that we are imposing, effectively, domestic sanctions on them, while at the same time we would relieve sanctions on Iran.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I want to thank my good friend from Alaska for giving me an opportunity to talk about this policy of sanctions that is wrong, wrong, wrong on so many levels. When we first looked at it, we need to understand that the embargo, or the limitation on the exportation of crude oil in this country, is a policy decision made by the President—initially, President Nixon—in response to a number of producers going around oil price support controls.

So this is a 1970's policy. Unfortunately, when we transitioned away from price supports for crude oil, we never removed this embargo, we never removed this restriction. That was a mistake at that time. It continues to be a colossal mistake for our growth towards energy independence in this country and our ability to use our energy and our oil for soft power and to actually provide a consistent and ready supply of crude oil to our allies so they are not beholden, not only to Iran, but to countries such as Russia.

So it is critically important that we examine some of the concerns that people have about lifting the embargo. Obviously, in North Dakota, we do not see any logic, because we are kind of a commonsense State. We do not see any logic behind not allowing crude oil to be exported but allowing every refined product that we could produce in this country access to a foreign market.

That makes absolutely no sense. If the logic behind this is to try and maintain stability and a lower gasoline price, then we should lock down gasoline and we should not export gasoline. The antiquated policy that we are talking about today did not have a lot of logic after we deregulated oil. It has even less logic in the dangerous world we live in. We know that so many of our foreign enemies rely on oil revenue basically to fund their terrorism activities, to fund their government, to supply the necessary government services that keep them in power.

We have an opportunity to say to our allies, whether it is Japan or in Europe, don't worry about whether someone is going to hold you hostage because you will not be able to heat your homes in the winter or provide gasoline to your communities and your consumers. Do not worry about that because we have your back.

But we cannot have their back if we don't have the ability to export our crude oil. The bottom line is that on every level, in terms of foreign policy, in terms of what we should be in this country—on every level—a policy of maintaining an embargo, a restriction against exports of crude oil makes no common sense—absolutely none.

But let's talk about domestic policy because I think some of the concerns that have been expressed to me by my colleagues, and I am sure Senator MURKOWSKI's colleagues, have been this: Well, won't this increase gasoline prices? I have to applaud Senator MURKOWSKI because very early on she heard that, and she said: Let's have some real intellectual work done. Don't rely on my economics 101. How about we actually get economists from Brookings, economists from the Aspen Institute, economists from all over the country, who have come to one single conclusion, which is, that it will not raise gasoline prices.

In fact, the conclusion is quite the opposite—that allowing us access to an international market could, in fact, reduce gasoline prices. Why would that be, you wonder? Because of the fluke of how we refine crude oil in this country, most of our refineries are based on heavy sour crude. The crude we produce in North Dakota is light sweet crude. We don't have a big refining capacity for light sweet crude, so we have a price reduction in our country.

So how are gasoline prices established? They are based on that higher crude oil price, because they are refining crude oil that comes in from other places such as Saudi Arabia. They are refining crude oils that come in from Venezuela, and they are charging an appropriate price. Some people would say there is a little bit of price creep here as we are looking at gasoline prices.

The ability to get our crude to market is absolutely critical. Now, there are a lot of people who also think that we should keep a captive market on a lot of our resources. We have heard this argument in natural gas, and we heard this argument in crude oil. They said: We should have a captive market. I have a constant reply. I say: I have a lot of hog farmers who like low corn prices. The solution for low corn prices has never been not to export corn.

This is the only commodity that is traded on a global price that does not have the ability to find its market. Now, what is the consequence of that? I would tell you, to my friend from Alaska, and I think she sees this, one of the things I sincerely believe is that the ability to produce oil—our domestic production of oil—had a lot to do with driving Iran to the negotiating table.

They saw that we could, in fact, infiltrate the market and take market share. That is threatening to a lot of the former OPEC countries that are wanting that captive market. If we had access to that market, we would be sending a message. So why don't we do the right thing here? Why don't we understand how this export ban on American crude oil is restricting our ability to use crude oil as an appropriate soft power opportunity? Why don't we talk about how actually allowing for the export of crude oil could drive down gasoline prices in the United States of America and continue the energy renaissance?

If we cannot find our market, if we cannot find our market in North Dakota for this production, guess what happens? It either goes into storage or it gets shut in where it is, which is in the field. Hundreds of thousands of jobs will be lost. But more importantly, our energy security in this country will be jeopardized and harmed.

This policy of opening up this restriction is so right on so many levels. I applaud the Senator from Alaska for bringing it forth in this context. I think it is critical to talk about it in this context. But I also applaud her for all of the work she has done and we have supported, as she has built out the case—the economic case—for why this policy makes no sense at any level.

It is wrongheaded. It is time to change it. This is an opportunity. We will not end because it is only fair to every oilfield worker out there, it is only fair to every owner of a royalty or minerals in place, it is fair to every operator, and it is fair to the people of this country to engage in trade, level the playing field, and make sure we are telling our friends and allies that they don't have to buy their oil from countries that threaten their security every day. We have a supply of oil that can readily be exported and provided to them.

I thank my good friend from Alaska for her continued advocacy on behalf of

consumers of this country and her continued advocacy on behalf of an energy-appropriate policy in the United States of America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from North Dakota. She has articulated the case so well not only from a domestic perspective but from the international perspective as well. We need to appreciate that as we are recognized as a nation, as that superpower when it comes to our military strength and all those who serve us have to offer, that we are also an energy superpower. We have not yet embraced that as a responsibility, as an obligation to use that not only to our advantage but to the advantage of our friends and allies around the globe. That is an important transition, transformation we need to make.

We are mired down in policies that are decades old, based on history that is no longer relevant given the geopolitics of today. We have an opportunity to wake up to where we can be, how we can lead from an international perspective. It can begin with the strength of our energy and our energy resources, but we have to believe in our own possibilities. Right now, I think we are lagging in that.

I appreciate all that my colleague is doing in this effort to help educate people. I recognize that it takes a little bit of time to recalibrate the thinking, but we are doing that, and we are doing it for the right reason, based on common sense, based on strength of the economy, and based on national security, which should be our primary consideration right now. We will never have sufficient boots on the ground or budget for defense to be everywhere many would like to be around the globe. What other assets do we have? What else can we contribute? It can begin with our energy resources.

So we have great opportunities, and I forward to further discussions about not only what we are proposing in this amendment but how we can lead as a nation in the energy sector.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from Oregon.

FDA TOBACCO DEEMING REGULATIONS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise to draw attention to the dangers of new and insidious tobacco products that are ensnaring our youth and to urge the FDA to take long overdue action to protect our children from these products.

First, I thank the Senators for coming to the floor today to join in making this critically important point. Senator BOXER is present, and she will be speaking next. Other Senators are planning to join us. So I appreciate their lifting their voices on this important issue.

Dr. Richard Wender, the chief cancer control officer for the American Cancer Society, said last year, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the landmark Surgeon General report on smoking and health, that ''the single greatest threat to the future control of tobacco is complacency.''

We are here today to call attention to a dangerous complacency that threatens the lives of our children, a complacency in completing rules that are essential to protecting our children from a lifetime of nicotine addiction. We are on the floor of the Senate today because this week marks the 1-year anniversary of the Food and Drug Administration's proposed ''deeming regulations'' on tobacco. Deeming regulations essentially say the FDA has the power to do what the law gave them to do in 2009 when we passed the act. These critical regulations have yet to be finalized, and it appears that there are not going to be finalized regulations this month or next or the month after despite the fact that we are now 6 years into this rulemaking regulation process.

Six years is a very long time. In 6 years, a lot of young Americans have become addicted to nicotine products. In 6 years, the industry has made huge strides in inventing new products designed to attract our children. In 6 years, a lot could have been done, and nothing has been done.

These critical regulations have not been completed, and it is time for the FDA and the administration to make getting this done a priority. This is one of the things that can truly impact the health of the next generation.

The tobacco industry is, as Judge Kessler said in United States v. Philip Morris, ''an industry . . . that survives, and profits, from selling a highly addictive product which causes diseases that lead to a staggering number of deaths per year, an immeasurable amount of human suffering and economic loss, and a profound burden on our national health care system.''

That is why, when it comes to tobacco and public health, the best way to save lives 20 or 30 or 40 years down the line is to prevent young Americans from becoming addicted to tobacco products today. But Big Tobacco knows this as well. They know that the best way to create a lifelong, reliable customer for their deadly product is to get our children hooked as young as possible. Now the industry refers to our children as ''replacement smokers'' to replace those who are dying. That is why they are working day and night to come up with new strategies and new products to keep kids in the pipeline, to keep new replacement smokers coming forward. They use cigars, cigarillos, tobacco candy, and snus.

Now they have the real winner—e-cigarettes. These products, such as flavored cigars, cost as little as 99 cents and are sold in colorful or cool packaging and come in flavors such as bubble gum, cotton candy, wild cherry, grape, candy apple, blueberry, chocolate, peach, and gummy bear e-cigarettes. Many of these products are cheaper and more accessible than cigarettes, and the candy-flavored versions are preferred overwhelmingly by young people.

This is a chart which shows the bottles of liquid nicotine that fuel these e-cigarettes. We have everything here from cotton candy to coffee. You name it, it is there. These are not flavors designed to appeal to adults; this is all about forming addiction in our children.

A new study released by the CDC this month found, alarmingly, that e-cigarette use had tripled among middle and high school students in just 1 year. In 2011, 1.5 percent; it doubled in the course of a year to 2.8 percent. It increased substantially in the year 2012 and 2013, and then we see it soared. E-cigarettes and vape shops have exploded across the county, and that has profound consequences for our children. Nearly one in seven high school students has used an e-cigarette in the last 30 years. That is 2 million teenagers nationwide, 2 million of our children responding to this very deliberate targeting by this demonic industry.

We have the power to do something about this. The FDA has power to do something about this because we, the legislature, gave it to them in 2009.

It is true that the long-term health effects of smoking e-cigarettes are yet to be fully calculated because it is a newer product, but there are some troubling studies we should pay attention to. What we know today is that nicotine is highly poisonous and that this vast, unregulated market of nicotine liquids threatens public health immediately.

Since 2011, poison calls related to e-cigarettes have skyrocketed—271 in 2011 to 3,808 poison calls in 2014, again showing the exploding use of this product. This industry doesn't even put this liquid nicotine into childproof containers. One brand called JJuice looks like little bottles of juice. It says ''juice'' on it. Yet, it is deadly if a child takes off that cap and drinks it. There were 14 times more poisonings in 2014 than in 2011, and yes, people die. A toddler died of nicotine poisoning just last December, and there were lots of close calls.

But tobacco companies see opportunities in these unregulated markets. They see opportunities to appeal to kids directly, market to kids more easily, and to sell to kids with fewer barriers.

There is no Federal law in place about the age at which children can buy e-cigarettes or the liquids that go into them. So it has been up to local communities to try to fill in those gaps, and they have been trying to do so, trying to catch up with the problem. The industry of e-cigarettes has exploited these opportunities.

This is where we are. Time is ticking. E-cigarette use is rising. And the rising numbers on this chart aren't just numbers, they represent our children, kids who every day, when we don't act, are

more at risk for a lifetime of dangerous addiction. This is 100 percent unequivocally unacceptable.

So to the FDA, to Health and Human Services, and to the Obama administration, it is time to quit stalling. Children are getting addicted, children are dying, and children will die more from nicotine diseases in the decades ahead. It is unacceptable.

No more complacency. Let's get it done, have it be the top item you wake up to fix every day. We expect more. I urge the administration to act quickly. Let's get these rules done.

It is a pleasure to yield the floor to my colleague from California, who has been a tremendous champion on this topic and will provide her insights. I am so delighted that she is on the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I thank Senator MERKLEY for his leadership.

This is an issue which is not getting the attention it should be getting, and we hope today, with the series of speeches we will start to make now, to wake up America to this threat.

I have a bill that would ban the advertising of these cigarettes to children. Senator MERKLEY showed you and told you the names. Let's take a look at that again. Can anyone really tell you with a straight face that these marketers are not going after children? Cotton candy, gummy bear, and popsicle—those are the flavors. I mean, we really were not born yesterday. This is what they are doing.

This is a moment for us—parents, grandparents, loving aunts and uncles—to stand up and say no to this. There are ways to do it.

Before I get into those ways, I thank Senators CORKER and CARDIN for their extraordinary leadership on the underlying bill in Iran that is on the floor. I express my thanks to the entire committee, both sides of the aisle of the Foreign Relations Committee. I have been on that committee the longest of anyone else, and this was a tough time. Everyone had a different position, and everyone was in a corner. We all came together, and we crafted a delicate compromise that essentially allows the Senate and the House to vote on whatever agreement may emerge. I say ''may.'' We don't know if there will be one from the administration on Iran's nuclear weapons. We know that if we go down the path of poison pill amendments, this whole thing could be lost.

I will close this little part and get right to the e-cigarettes with this.

I was listening to Senator RUBIO, whom I work with on the committee, and I love to work with him on issues where we find agreement, but he got up here and he said: All I want is a vote on my amendment, and we all know his amendment will derail this very delicately balanced agreement. He said: All I am asking for is a vote. And he said very eloquently: If you don't want to vote, don't be a Senator. And I thought: You are right about that. Then I checked his voting record and he stopped us voting on nominees 18 times in December alone.

So I say to my friends: Don't come down here and preach to us about the fact that we are trying to keep poison pills off this for the good of the world, to stop a war; OK? And don't tell us we are stopping you, when you stopped a lot of us 18 times in December alone and once on Loretta Lynch—once on the new Attorney General. I had to say that.

Mr. President, when I turn on the television, I don't know if it is 2015 or 1950. Tobacco companies are preying again on our youth. Just as we should be celebrating the decline of youth cigarette smoking rates, a new product is taking our high schools and middle schools by storm and they are called e-cigarettes.

As Senator MERKLEY so well explained, we are seeing a startling increase in the use of these cigarettes by our teens, with 2.5 million teens using them—2.5 million teens. If we do nothing, the CDC says that every year another 1½ million kids are going to be using e-cigarettes.

Now, what are they exposed to? Let us be clear, nicotine. We know nicotine is very dangerous to adolescent brain development. Let me say that again. Nicotine is very dangerous to adolescent brain development. In addition to nicotine, e-cigarettes have—and I hope young people are listening, including the ones right here—potentially dangerous chemicals, and chemicals we already know are dangerous, such as benzene, cadmium, formaldehyde, propylene glycol, and they also have nanoparticles that are present in traditional cigarettes—this all according to my health department in California.

Now, we already saw how these children are lured. They are lured by the cigarette companies. And by the way, the big cigarette companies—and I will finish in 1 minute and this is critical—have bought up the e-cigarette companies. I wrote to the executives and I said: Please, for the good of your children and my children and my grandchildren, don't advertise on television.

If you ever saw these ads on TV, Senator MERKLEY, and Mr. President, you would just think that e-cigarettes were curing all the illnesses of the world. Well, they are not. They are not, and the studies that are already coming out are quite alarming. Sales to minors should be banned, and 42 of our States have done so, but it is not nationwide. Online sales should be banned. Companies should not be advertising.

We have a potential crisis on our hands, and I will be working with Senator MERKLEY, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and all of my colleagues because we were not born yesterday. We have seen this movie before and we want our kids to be healthy. The FDA can take a stand by finalizing the proposed regulation today. Too many lives have been endangered while we stand here waiting.

Last month, more than 5,000 of my constituents signed a petition urging FDA to regulate e-cigarettes. Some of them told me why they were concerned, and I would like to share the words of Californian parents and teachers.

Susan from Long Beach wrote:

> I am a 7th grade health teacher and it is clear that students think ''vaping'' is okay and a healthy alternative to smoking. Shops selling e-cigarettes have popped up in all the stores around their neighborhoods advertising their products. A clear message needs to be sent that e-cigarettes are not for children under the age of 18.

Judith from Fairfield wrote:

> I teach high school, and too many students are using e-cigarettes, thinking they are safer than regular cigarettes. In the meantime, they are getting addicted to nicotine, and putting them at risk for a lifetime of impacts to their health.

Sondra from Corona wrote:

> I have worked in our local high schools for almost 15 years. The e-cigarettes definitely need to be regulated for people under 18. I am consistently told by students that ''these are better'' than traditional cigarettes. They don't realize the harm and the addictive qualities are still present.

Bob from Cathedral City wrote:

> We need to know what health and/or safety dangers are associated with e-cigarettes.

And finally Julie from Huntington Beach wrote:

> My 14-year-old son was offered an e-cig. They are too easy for children to get.

My constituents deserve Federal oversight of e-cigarettes. To protect the public health and our children, I join my colleagues and urge the Administration to finalize the pending regulation. I also call upon Congress to advance legislation that protects consumers from the health consequences of e-cigarettes. The data does not lie. We cannot wait another day.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from California for her kindness and my apologies for all the talking in the background.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we should be doing everything we can to ensure that our children are safe from products that harm their health. Thanks to life-saving public health interventions, and FDA regulation under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, we have seen reduced smoking rates among young people across the country. But, unfortunately, in recent years tobacco companies have found new ways to target children, through the promotion of e-cigarettes and other unregulated tobacco products.

Last year, the FDA took an important initial step toward regulating these products with its proposed tobacco deeming rule. But, we are here today, a full year later, without a finalized rule to help ensure tobacco companies aren't profiting off of selling our children an addictive, hugely harmful bill of goods.

Today, tobacco companies are marketing e-cigarettes with celebrity endorsements and cartoons that are

geared toward a younger audience—using tactics that they are banned from using to promote traditional cigarettes. They are producing kid-enticing candy and drink flavored products, which we know children are more likely to use. In fact, because they are unregulated, children can go online and buy them without their parents knowing.

Mr. President, it is unacceptable that e-cigarette companies are using the same tactics that tobacco companies used for years to promote smoking. So we should be doing everything we can to right this wrong, and prevent our youngest generation from becoming a new generation of smokers.

We know just how harmful and addictive these products can be and I am proud my home State of Washington has begun to regulate these products and is taking strong steps towards combatting their use among children.

But, there is still much more work to do to across the country to keep e-cigarettes and other unregulated tobacco products out of the hands of our kids, and that work starts with making sure the FDA finalizes its deeming rule.

So I stand with all of my colleagues today to urge the FDA to move quickly to finalize and implement last year's proposed rule, and put in place restrictions that would:

Prevent marketing targeted to minors,

Eliminate the sale of flavored e-cigarettes that appeal to children,

And end online sales.

These would be strong steps to further protect our children and I look forward to working with my colleagues, and the FDA to ensure they are implemented as quickly as possible.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am glad to join with several of my colleagues to talk about electronic cigarettes and the Food and Drug Administration's, FDA, role in regulating these products.

Over the last year, e-cigarette use among high school students has tripled from 4.5 percent to 13.4 percent, according to recent CDC data. In fact, research from the University of Michigan's annual Monitoring the Future survey shows that in 2014 more teenagers reported using e-cigarettes than traditional tobacco products. One year ago, the FDA took an important initial step by proposing to regulate e-cigarettes, but more must be done to strengthen this rule and ensure that the same practices used by Big Tobacco for years to promote smoking are not used by e-cigarette companies to create a new generation of smokers.

I am pleased that the FDA has proposed prohibiting e-cigarette sales to minors, as well as prohibiting vending machine sales and free samples, to prevent sales and use by minors. Further, the proposed FDA rule requires e-cigarette manufacturers to list product ingredients and for tobacco products containing nicotine to carry an addiction warning label. While I commend FDA on proposing these important steps, the rule must be improved to address the marketing of these products to children and e-cigarette flavorings and be finalized as soon as possible. Indeed, I sent a letter last week with nine of my colleagues—many of whom are also speaking about e-cigarettes today—urging the FDA to strengthen and finalize this rule.

E-cigarette companies are taking a page out of the Big Tobacco playbook, using celebrity endorsements of their products, cartoons, and advertising in magazines with youth readership and at music festivals and sports events targeted at children. According to a 2014 study in the journal Pediatrics, exposure to e-cigarette marketing by children aged 12 to 17 increased by 256 percent between 2011 and 2013, exposing 24 million children to e-cigarette advertisements. In this context, it is unsurprising that youth use of e-cigarettes has skyrocketed during the same timeframe. It is well known that tobacco advertising influences consumer behavior, especially that of children, so it is my hope that the final e-cigarette deeming rule will address this issue.

As for the use of candy, soft drink, fruit, and other flavors in e-cigarettes, the FDA itself acknowledged in the proposed rule that children are the most likely to be attracted by and use these flavored tobacco products. The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act prohibits these kinds of flavorings from being used in traditional cigarettes and that same scrutiny should be applied to e-cigarettes and refill liquids so that children are not attracted to these products.

We have come a long way since I proposed legislation in the late 1990s to deny tobacco companies tax deductions for advertising to children. I was an original cosponsor of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which became law in 2009 and incorporated the goals of my bill to keep the tobacco industry from targeting children as new customers. This law provides the FDA with the explicit authority to protect the public from deceptive cigarette advertisements, prevents the targeting of minors, and removes certain harmful ingredients from cigarettes.

This was an important effort. But we must be ever vigilant and continue to address new tobacco-related concerns as they arise, such as e-cigarettes. Until the deeming rule is finalized, e-cigarettes will continue to operate completely unregulated, with an increasing number of children taking up this addictive habit every day. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on the issue and I join them in strongly urging the FDA to strengthen and finalize the e-cigarette deeming rule quickly so that the agency can begin regulating these tobacco products.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time until 5:25 p.m. today be equally divided in the usual form and that it be in order to call up the following amendment: Barrasso No. 1147; further, I ask that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the amendment; that there be no second-degree amendments in order to the amendment and that there be a 60-affirmative-vote threshold for the adoption of the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1147 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1140

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator BARRASSO, I call up amendment No. 1147.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Tennessee [Mr. CORKER], for Mr. BARRASSO, for himself, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. RISCH, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. LEE, Mr. CRUZ, and Mr. SASSE, proposes an amendment numbered 1147 to amendment No. 1140.

Mr. CORKER. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require a certification that Iran has not directly supported or carried out an act of terrorism against the United States or a United States person anywhere in the world)

On page 17, between lines 21 and 22, insert the following:

''(v) Iran has not directly supported or carried out an act of terrorism against the United States or a United States person anywhere in the world; and

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I certainly appreciate the hard work done by Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN and their efforts on getting this bill to the floor in a bipartisan way through the committee and bringing it up for a vote.

The amendment I am bringing today is something that was in the bipartisan agreed-upon bill that was introduced in the first place, with nine Democratic cosponsors. Then, this specific component, dealing with terrorism and the certification of terrorism, was removed in the managers' package as it went to committee. So I think it is important and there is bipartisan support for what I am doing. This amendment basically restores—restores—the terrorism certification that was in the original bipartisan Senate bill.

Every 90 days, the President will be required under this amendment to certify to Congress that Iran has not directly supported or carried out an act of terrorism against the United States or against an American citizen anywhere in the world. If there is evidence of terrorist activity by Iran against us, then Congress will have a more streamlined process to address it.

Right now there a number of different reports that have to be made to Congress as a result of this bipartisan legislation. This was the only one that

was removed in the managers' package. I think it is very important the American people get regular certifications from the President on this important point. Congress and the American people need to know if Iran is directly supporting acts of terrorism against our country and our people. If they are, I believe Congress must have an opportunity to respond quickly.

There actually have been some changes in the legislation to require some additional reporting components with relation to terrorism. I agree it is an improvement, but reports to Congress with information and evidence of Iran's terrorist activities are critically important, and I think it is even more critical for the President of the United States to acknowledge Iran's actions and for Congress to be able to have the opportunity to respond quickly. That is why I believe this amendment is so important.

Congress can always do more to ensure the safety and security of our citizens, but we must make it clear to Iran that Congress will be able to respond immediately to terrorist actions against us. I am restoring this opportunity with my amendment and recommending an ''aye'' vote.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first, let me thank Senator BARRASSO for the way he has worked with our committee, the way he has worked with us on the floor to get this amendment pending. We had a chance to debate this amendment yesterday, and today we have debated it. So I think the issue has been well debated.

I certainly agree with the intent of the sponsor of the amendment. As a result of his work in our committee, we have strengthened the reporting requirements on Iran's terrorist activities, which I have read into the RECORD before. It is very strong, and it has been strengthened as a result of the managers' amendment that Senator CORKER and I worked on.

We also have an assessment on Iran's human rights violations. We make it clear that nothing in an agreement would affect the sanctions imposed against Iran for its terrorist activities, its ballistic missiles or its human rights violations. So all those tools are available to us.

I object to this amendment because it affects the underlying bill itself. It jeopardizes the bill because it requires the President to make a certification that, in fact, he will probably not be able to make. Therefore, it not only jeopardizes the bill, it jeopardizes the ability to have a negotiated agreement and it weakens our position internationally and makes it less likely we can get Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program.

For all those reasons, I urge my colleagues to vote no on the amendment. We have already covered this in the notice requirements that have been provided in S. 615. It is an issue we all care about. This amendment, though well intended, would not advance it, and I urge my colleagues to defeat the amendment.

I yield back all of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI).

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

The result was announced—yeas 45, nays 54, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 168 Leg.]

YEAS—45

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ayotte | Fischer | Portman |
| Barrasso | Gardner | Risch |
| Blunt | Grassley | Roberts |
| Boozman | Heller | Rounds |
| Burr | Hoeven | Rubio |
| Capito | Inhofe | Sasse |
| Cassidy | Isakson | Scott |
| Cochran | Johnson | Sessions |
| Collins | Kirk | Shelby |
| Cornyn | Lankford | Sullivan |
| Cotton | Lee | Thune |
| Crapo | McConnell | Tillis |
| Cruz | Moran | Toomey |
| Daines | Murkowski | Vitter |
| Ernst | Paul | Wicker |

NAYS—54

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Alexander | Franken | Murphy |
| Baldwin | Gillibrand | Murray |
| Bennet | Graham | Nelson |
| Blumenthal | Hatch | Perdue |
| Booker | Heinrich | Peters |
| Boxer | Heitkamp | Reed |
| Brown | Hirono | Reid |
| Cantwell | Kaine | Sanders |
| Cardin | King | Schatz |
| Carper | Klobuchar | Schumer |
| Casey | Leahy | Shaheen |
| Coats | Manchin | Stabenow |
| Coons | Markey | Tester |
| Corker | McCain | Udall |
| Donnelly | McCaskill | Warner |
| Durbin | Menendez | Warren |
| Feinstein | Merkley | Whitehouse |
| Flake | Mikulski | Wyden |

NOT VOTING—1

Enzi

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is rejected.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, as we discuss the Iran nuclear agreement and the President's administration is attempting to negotiate the agreement, I come to the floor of the Senate to remind Coloradans, and indeed Americans, about some of the activities that have taken place in our relationship with Iran over the past several decades.

Following the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the ruling mullahs held 52 American diplomats hostage for 444 days, releasing them only on January 20, 1981, the day that President Ronald Reagan was sworn into office. Two years later, on April 18, 1983, a truck ladened with explosives rammed into the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 17 Americans. On October 23, 1983, there was a similar attack on the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut which killed 241 American servicemen. Overwhelmingly, the evidence led to Iran and its wholly owned subsidiary Hezbollah as the perpetrator of these attacks.

Several weeks ago, we had the opportunity to visit with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Israel to discuss the negotiations that were taking place and the details of the negotiations. Those details have emerged in a couple of pages of documents which were released by the White House. But they are still lacking in great detail and in the specifics of the framework.

Prime Minister Netanyahu described the negotiations to be a dance of porcupines in the Middle East. There is concern about the negotiations and where they would lead. Indeed, the Prime Minister made the comment that Iran is now putting its finger on the jugular of the world. Over the past 24 to 48 hours, we have indeed seen that happen in the Strait of Hormuz and with the boarding by Iran of a cargo ship that falls under the protective umbrella of the United States of America.

So we continue to see an Iranian regime that has not changed in more than 30 years. It has not changed in the last 48 hours. They have targeted and killed Americans during the Iraq war, supported Shiite militias, and supplied deadly explosives that have been used to kill and target our troops. Iran continues to prop up the murderous Assad regime in Syria. They regularly threaten to wipe Israel off the map and abuse the human rights of their own people. They have imprisoned Americans, reporters, and refused to release them.

There is no doubt that we must avoid a nuclear Iran and do everything in our power to make sure that Iran doesn't possess a nuclear infrastructure. But the questions that we have today lead more and more to a conclusion that they will continue to maintain a nuclear infrastructure.

Secretary Schultz and Secretary Kissinger made it very clear in an op-ed they wrote for the Wall Street Journal several weeks ago. We have entered this negotiation and somehow siloed off or bifurcated the issue of political restraint with nuclear restraint. We have somehow decided we will have tunnelvision on one issue without acknowledging, admitting or negotiating the other acts of violence, death, and destruction that the Iran regime has pursued for not just 30 years ago, not just 15 years ago, and there is also what is happening around the world and in the Middle East today.

I hope we can emerge from these negotiations with a strong deal, a deal that allows us the inspection of military bases without question upon demand, and with the fact that we will remove their nuclear infrastructure, that we can assure that they are no longer a regime that is leading state-

sponsored efforts to wipe Israel off the map, and that we can indeed protect Americans from the reign of terror that has been a state-sponsored effort.

There is nothing less that we should ask of this administration or any administration. We need to protect the American people. At the negotiating table—when we sit 2 or 3 feet across from the people with whom we are negotiating—we cannot ignore what is happening through state-sponsored terrorism. We cannot ignore the cargo ships in the Strait of Hormuz that have been stormed. We cannot ignore what has happened in Yemen or Hezbollah. We cannot ignore the reality that we face today of an Iran that has not changed in 30 years.

The fact is our sanctions have worked, and the fact is that increased sanctions could work as well. I hope before this negotiation is signed off and agreed to, they will realize who is making the negotiations happen and possible and that more needs to be done to protect Americans and protect the world from an Iran that simply doesn't have a dangerous threat posed to us from nuclear weapons but which poses the danger through state-sponsored terrorism which they continue to pursue today.

I thank the Presiding Officer for the time.

## MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. 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 (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## REMEMBERING MICHAEL W. DOWNING

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize the exceptional service and the extraordinary life of Rockingham County High Sheriff Michael ''Mike'' W. Downing of Salem, NH, who passed away recently following his battle with cancer.

Sheriff Downing was a knowledgeable, respected and compassionate public safety professional, a problem solver, and a concerned community member. He was one of a kind, and was beloved by everyone who knew him.

Raised in Salem, Mike attended Saint Joseph's School and graduated from Salem High School in 1972. He went on to serve our Nation as a member of the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division, after which Mike began what would be a long career of service to the State of New Hampshire, first as a N.H. State trooper after graduating from the 47th New Hampshire Police Academy. He continued his career in law enforcement service, joining the Salem Police Department where he rose to the rank of detective sergeant. Mike was a graduate of the Command Training Institute at Babson College, and earned an associate's degree from Southern New Hampshire University and a bachelor's degree from Franklin Pierce College.

After his retirement from the Salem Police Department, Mike continued his public service through his work in the State legislature. He served three terms as a State representative and then served two terms as a State senator, where he held the position of senate minority leader. In 2010, Mike returned to his law enforcement roots and was elected the High Sheriff of Rockingham County. Downing was serving in his third term as sheriff at the time of his passing.

In addition to his professional and elected service to the State of New Hampshire, Mike was very active in his local community. He gave generously of his time and energy as the 301st captain commanding of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, an ASA Salem softball coach, a NH Little League coach, a member of the Knights of Columbus, trustee of Amvets Post 2, a past president and board member of Salem Haven Nursing Home and Silverthorne Adult Daycare, a member of the Rockingham County Law Enforcement Association, Rockingham County Chiefs of Police Association, International Chiefs of Police Association, the National Sheriffs' Association, the NH Sheriffs' Association and a founding board member of Isaiah 58, a nonprofit organization focused on helping the homeless population of Rockingham County.

Most recently, he was honored as the 2015 recipient of the Chief John P. Ganley Community Service Award which is presented to an individual ''who has exhibited concern, involvement and leadership in the community of Salem; while providing inspiration to others, through his or her dedication, integrity and courage in the manner exemplified by Chief John P. Ganley during his life on earth.''

Sheriff Downing leaves behind the love of his life, his wife Heidi Downing and their five children, Jennifer, Jessica, Kaitlin, Kelsey, and Michael along with six grandchildren, Charlotte, Bella, Jacob, Logan, TJ, and Max. He also leaves his parents, Delbert and Teresa Downing. We are all deeply saddened by the loss of our friend Mike, an extraordinary man and proud New Hampshire son who served our State and Nation with honor, courage, and dedication. He represented the very best of our State, and I ask my colleagues to join me in sending Heidi and her family our deepest condolences and our gratitude for Mike's life of service to the people of New Hampshire.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator SANDERS and I be permitted to engage in a colloquy.

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

## COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, last week marked an important step as we worked in a bipartisan manner to improve the lives of survivors of trafficking. We were able to move the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act forward and help provide direct supports and services for these survivors, thanks to support from the Community Health Center Fund.

Community health centers are the safety net providers of our health care system. In my home State of Washington, they provide full health care services for working families across the State, and they work tirelessly to ensure that individuals get the supports and services they need. Community health centers help keep health care costs down and keep people out of the emergency room by improving health outcomes for the populations they serve.

Our community health centers were strengthened by the work in the Affordable Care Act, and I am proud that we were able to once again work together to strengthen them as part of the Medicare and CHIP Reauthorization Act earlier this year.

This was a very unique circumstance, and it is not a precedent for Congress to draw on the Community Health Center Fund for other purposes. It is my hope and intention that this was the one and only time Congress draws money from the health center fund to pay for other programs. This funding was intended to keep the health centers program whole so that more than 1,300 health centers nationwide can continue to provide access to care for their patients for the next 2 years.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as you know, I have worked for many years to ensure all Americans have access to primary care. Community health centers are instrumental in providing that access to primary medical, oral, and mental health care. Right now, community health centers provide primary care to 24 million patients in 9,000 underserved communities in every State and territory across the country.

Until last month, health centers were facing a 70-percent reduction in funding this fall due to the expiration of the Community Health Center Fund. On an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis, I was very pleased that Congress was able to extend the health center fund in the Medicare and CHIP Reauthorization Act bill for 2 years to avert this massive cut to the program.

Although I supported legislation to provide funds for victims of trafficking, taking money recently allocated to community health centers in the SGR bill to pay for health care services for victims of trafficking was not a good solution. Both of these programs serve important populations with significant health care needs, and I understand from those who negotiated this agreement that the funding transfer was a special circumstance as a way to move forward on this bill.