mental health treatment—that is something that is included in a piece of legislation on which we will be having a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee. That will provide families additional tools other than involuntary commitment, which is just temporary and doesn't serve the long-term problems.

One of the biggest problems, I have learned, with our mental health system is that so often people who need treatment refuse treatment. In other words, frequently they don't take their medication. As long as it is purely a voluntary matter, particularly for people who are a threat to their own safety as well as the community's safety, then we are going to continue to see repetitions of this and more and more tragedies, more families torn apart by mental illness, when we could actually offer them some help and some hope.

There is a gentleman named Pete Earley who is an award-winning journalist who wrote a book called ''Crazy.'' This is not about his son, although his son did suffer from mental illness; this is about our broken mental health system. He called it ''Crazy.'' He wrote a book, which I would commend to anybody, about his own family's experience dealing with a mentally ill son and how hard it was to get him to comply with his doctor's orders and take his medication and the like.

I hope Pete Earley will come testify in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee later this month, along with some really innovative programs like those in San Antonio, TX, where they found a way to not just warehouse the mentally ill in our jails but to actually divert them for treatment and to get them in a better place and out of this turnstile of the criminal justice system.

So those are just a couple of ideas about what this President could do, and I hope they are areas he will perhaps address tonight that he would be willing to work with us on: criminal justice reform and mental health reform. I think if he were willing to do that, he would find Republicans and Democrats alike willing to work with him to try to build that common-ground consensus, and actually that would be one of the lasting legacies of his final year of his administration.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

SCRUB ACT

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the Searching for and Cutting Regulations that are Unnecessarily Burdensome Act—more affectionately known as the SCRUB Act. This past summer, my colleague Senator HATCH and I introduced this legislation to help free American families and small businesses from the unnecessary burdens of our regulatory system. I am pleased to mention that the bill passed the House last week on a bipartisan basis.

For too long, our Nation's innovators and employers have been trying to comply with a swath of outdated, duplicative, or obsolete regulations that hamper their growth and creativity. Many of these regulations also come with stacks of paperwork requirements that force our small businesses to spend time on filling in the blanks rather than filling in jobs. The SCRUB Act would peel back these types of regulations so our businesses can focus on doing what they know best: innovating and creating jobs.

The purpose of this bill is to take an objective and in-depth look at major regulations that are at least 15 years old and could be repealed because they have, No. 1, achieved their goal and there is no threat to the problem reoccurring; No. 2, technology or market changes have made the regulation unnecessary; or No. 3, they are ineffective or overlap with other Federal or State regulations.

For decades, lawmakers and Presidents on both sides of the aisle have recognized the need to unleash our small businesses and job creators from rules and regulations that don't make sense. When new rules are proposed, there is very little, if any, attention paid to how the new rule will work with the hundreds of other rules that came before it. This buildup of rules is a cumulative burden on our businesses which ultimately slows job growth and hits families even harder who are already struggling to make ends meet. In fact, according to one study, if the cost of all of these regulations was considered in an independent country—all of the costs of these rules and regulations—it would be about the 10th largest economy in the world.

Let's face it: The more expensive it becomes to make a product or deliver a service, the more money the consumer will have to dig out of their own pockets to pay for it. It is those families who are working multiple jobs to provide for their kids who are going to be hit the hardest.

This bill is how we start to solve that problem. The SCRUB Act establishes a bipartisan, blue ribbon commission to give a fair and thoughtful review of our Nation's existing regulations. Once the commission is finished with their review, they would provide recommendations to Congress and we would have an opportunity to vote on them.

If an agency wants to impose a new regulation, they can do that under the SCRUB Act, but they would have to offset the cost of that new regulation by repealing an existing one that is of equal cost and has been deemed unnecessary or outdated by the commission.

I know Iowa families do this. They know how to prioritize. Why can't our Federal agencies? We simply cannot allow the buildup of unnecessary and costly regulations over time.

I will end with just one last comment. Rules and regulations often have unintended consequences. It is our responsibility as lawmakers to not only recognize when this happens but to then proactively fix it.

The SCRUB Act is a commonsense solution that forces lawmakers and our agencies to be honest about their regulatory system by fixing the rules that need fixing and dropping those that have outlived their useful purpose.

I thank Senator HATCH for his leadership on this, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

RECESS

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

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:27 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

FEDERAL RESERVE TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2232, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 289, S. 2232, a bill to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:30 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to secrecy. I rise today in support of auditing the Federal Reserve. I rise in opposition to the lack of accountability at the Reserve, an institution that has for too long been shrouded in secrecy. The objective of the Federal Reserve Transparency Act is simple: to protect the interests of the average American by finding out where hundreds of billions' worth of our dollars are going.

The Federal Reserve has the ability to create new money and to spend it on whatever financial assets it wants, whenever it wants, while giving the new money to whichever banks it wants. Yet if the average Joe and Jane from Main Street printed their own money, they would be imprisoned as counterfeiters.

Nowhere else but in Washington, DC, would you find an institution with so much unchecked power. Creating new money naturally lowers interest rates, or the price of using money. Put another way, the Federal Reserve's unchecked printing press creates a price control on the cost of using money.

Throughout our country's history, price controls have never worked, and the Fed's price control on interest rates has also not worked. Think back to the housing bubble. Artificially low interest rates led to many individuals buying, selling, and investing in the housing industry. This in turn led prices to soar, which ultimately led the economy to spiral down to the great recession of 2008.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, the Fed has increased its balance sheet from less than $1 trillion to over $4 trillion. Although the Fed has created trillions of new dollars, it has become apparent that most of this money is not finding its way into the hands of average Americans. From 2009 to 2012, the incomes of the top 1 percent increased by a whopping 31 percent, while everyone else's income increased by only 0.4 percent. The reason for this is simple: Big banks, corporations, and government entities receive the Federal Reserve's money long before anyone else, and they bid up the price of assets before any of the rest of us can get to purchase them.

Former Federal Reserve Governor Kevin Warsh once referred to the Fed's easy-money policies as the reverse Robin Hood effect. ''If you have access to credit—if you've got a big balance sheet—the Fed has made you richer,'' he said in an interview. ''This is a way to make the well-to-do even more well-to-do.''

The side effect of this uneven distribution of money is painfully apparent to anyone who shops at a grocery store. Over the past 15 years, the price of white bread has increased by over 50 percent, while the price of eggs has more than doubled. The cost of housing has also appreciated significantly in many areas. When adjusting for inflation, the price of housing in San Francisco has increased by 58 percent over just 25 years.

Real household income for regular Americans has declined 10 percent over the past 15 years. Higher rent and higher grocery bills cause low-income workers to incur more loans and credit card debt, which involve far higher interest rates than what the banks and Wall Street are currently paying. These low-income workers do not get the luxury of receiving the Fed's newly created money first, nor do they have the luxury of receiving the near-zero interest rates the wealthy do. As a result, one thing is for certain: The Fed's price control on interest rates acts as a hidden tax on the less well-to-do.

The Fed also exacerbates income inequality by paying large commercial banks $12 billion in interest. This is a departure from nearly a century of practice. While individual savers earn practically no interest, the big banks are given $12 billion per year in interest. There often is a revolving door between the Fed, the Treasury, and Wall Street. It is a revolving door in a building that is all too eager to enrich big banks and asset holders at the expense of everyone else.

I think it is about time we pull back the curtain to uncover this cloak of secrecy once and for all. Who is receiving the loans from the Fed today? To whom is the Fed paying interest? Are there any conflicts of interest about how these payments are determined? Are there any checks and balances on the size of these payments?

The Federal Reserve Act actually forbids the Fed from buying some of the troubled assets they bought in 2008; yet they did it anyway.

Given all of these unanswered questions and given the sharp increase in the risk of the Fed's balance sheet, it is unquestionably necessary for the Fed to be audited more thoroughly than it has been in the past. Audit the Fed is just 3 pages long, and it simply says that the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, which is a nonpartisan, apolitical agency in charge—that they be allowed to audit the Fed, a full and thorough audit.

Currently the GAO is not allowed to audit the Fed's monetary policy deliberations or the Fed's Open Market Committee transactions. The GAO was also forbidden from reviewing agreements with foreign central banks. During the downturn in 2008, trillions of dollars were spent, much of it or quite a bit of it on foreign banks, and we are not allowed to know what occurred, to whom it was given, and for what purpose. The Fed audit in its current form is virtually futile.

When these restrictions were added to the audit in the 1970s, the GAO testified before Congress, saying: ''We do not see how we can satisfactorily audit the Federal Reserve System without the authority to examine [its] largest single category of financial transactions and assets. . . . ''

To grasp just how limited the current audit is, recall that in 2009 Democratic Congressman ALAN GRAYSON asked then-Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke which foreign countries received $500 billion in loans from the Fed. Bernanke was unwilling to name which countries or banks received half a trillion dollars' worth of funds.

That is right. The Feds swapped half a trillion dollars to foreign countries in secret and did not even have the decency, under testimony before Congress, to report the details. But it gets worse. Democratic Senator BERNIE SANDERS asked Bernanke: Who received $2.2 trillion that the Fed lent out during the financial crisis? Again, Bernanke refused to give an answer.

In the 2011 Dodd-Frank law, Congress ordered a limited, one-time GAO audit of Fed actions. During the financial crisis, that audit uncovered that the Fed lent out over $16 trillion to domestic and foreign banks during the financial crisis.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for an extra 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, does Senator PAUL—how much time do we have?

Mr. PAUL. I would be happy to ask unanimous consent for equal time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senator PAUL's time has expired. The time of the majority has expired.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I only need 5 minutes, so I am willing to cede whatever remains so he can have enough time, but I would like to reserve 5 minutes, and I lift my objection.

Mr. PAUL. Well, the unanimous consent would be to have 5 extra minutes and to give the Senator as much time as he needs to conclude.

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

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Both Republicans and Democrats agree that it is absurd that we do not know where hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of our money is going. In fact, last year my audit the Fed bill received the support of nearly every Republican in the House and over 100 Democrats.

Some say an audit will politicize the Fed. I find this claim odd given the support of both sides of the aisle for the bill. The GAO is nonpartisan, independent, and works for Congress. It does not lean Republican or Democratic, and it is not interested in influencing policy. I can't seem to understand how a simple check by the GAO to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest will politicize anything.

Instead of criticizing a standard audit, though, maybe the individuals who work at the Fed and within our central bank should begin curbing their own actions. Unlike the actions of current Fed officials, my bipartisan bill will not politicize anything. I simply want the Fed overseen to ensure that our central bank isn't picking favorites, and I want to ensure that it remains solvent.

Like every agency, the Federal Reserve was created by Congress and is supposed to be overseen by Congress.

Auditing the Fed should not be a partisan issue. Regardless of one's monetary policy views, regardless of whether one thinks interest rates should be higher or lower, everyone can and should agree that for the sake of the country's economic well-being, we need to know what has been going on behind the Federal Reserve's cloak of secrecy. It is time we quit this guessing game. It is time we audit the Federal Reserve once and for all to restore transparency to our Nation's checkbook.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I do not support Senator PAUL's bill to audit the Federal Reserve.

In 2010, I supported an amendment to the Dodd-Frank financial reform legislation included in the final law which required an audit of the Federal Reserve's actions during the financial crisis. That report was released in 2011 and found no significant problems with the Fed's activities.

Dodd-Frank not only authorized the 2011 audit, it also expanded the scope for future GAO audits which any Member of Congress can request. Also, the Fed includes an independent audit of its financial statements within its annual report to Congress.

The Federal Reserve has taken independent actions in recent years to be more transparent about its operations. Since 2009, the Fed has publicly released its economic projections, and since 2011, the chairman has held quarterly press conferences following Federal Open Market Committee meetings. Two recent studies found the Fed to be one of the most transparent central banks in the world.

Transparency and openness in government is essential to a healthy democracy, but by requiring more audits and more disclosures, we risk politicizing a nonpartisan institution that plays a uniquely significant role in the global economy.

Fed Chairman Janet Yellen recently wrote that a similar bill that passed the House of Representatives ''would politicize monetary policy and bring short-term political pressures in the deliberations of the FOMC by putting into place real-time second guessing of policy decisions. . . . The provision is based on a false premise—that the Fed is not subject to an audit.''.

Since there are already many means for audits, disclosure, and transparency at our disposal, I do not support Senator PAUL's bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to oppose the audit the Fed bill.

One of the things that we learned around here as new Members of the House and Senate—and I served with the Presiding Officer almost my entire time in the House, and we learned this—is that if you can name the bills here, you have a tremendous advantage. You call the estate tax the death tax, even though about 1 percent of Americans pay it, and you may have won the debate. Calling this bill audit the Fed—and how can you be against auditing the Fed—may win the debate, but this time I don't think so.

I am concerned in this way. It won't make the Fed stronger. It won't make the Fed more effective. It won't make the Fed more accountable. It will impair the Fed's functions. It will give conservative Members of Congress more tools to second-guess the Fed's decisionmaking. It will make the system ultimately less sound, flexible, and responsive.

Think about what happened in 2009. President Obama took office. We were losing 800,000 jobs a month. Congress passed the Recovery Act, passed the auto rescue, which mattered so much to the Presiding Officer's State, to my State, and, frankly, to the Senator from Kentucky and his State too, but then, with the changing time and the elections of 2010, this Congress engaged in austerity, and we saw what that meant. It took a Bush-appointed Federal Reserve Chair, Ben Bernanke, who engaged in enough pump priming, if you will, through low interest rates and then QE to get the economy going.

I think we asked ourselves, would we have wanted a Federal Reserve then where Congress had its tentacles in monetary policy? Congress failed on fiscal policy. Chairman Bernanke and now Chair Yellen have had to move on monetary policy in that way. I don't want to straitjacket this Congress and straitjacket the Federal Reserve by doing that with Congress.

I know some of you have supported audit bills in the past. Many supported the Dodd-Sanders amendment during Wall Street reform. But this one is different. It doesn't include provisions to review the Independent Foreclosure Review Program process, and it doesn't include protections on some of the sensitive information that GAO could review, such as transcripts.

What this is about, in addition to Congress meddling in monetary policy, is ultimately this: We know the Fed is charged with a dual mandate—to deal with the tension between combatting inflation and combatting unemployment. We know that in past years the Fed has leaned far more toward the bondholders and Wall Street in combatting inflation than it has toward Main Street in employment and combatting unemployment.

We also know that with the pressures in this town, when President Obama signed Wall Street reform, the chief lobbyist for the financial services industry said it is now half time, meaning that conservative Members of this Congress, people in this Congress influenced by Wall Street, would immediately go and try to weaken these rules going directly to the agencies.

We will see the same thing here. We will see many Members of Congress pushing the Fed to side with the bondholders and Wall Street on combatting inflation rather than siding with Main Street and small businesses and workers in dealing with unemployment. That is fundamentally the biggest problem with the Paul proposal. I ask my colleagues to defeat it.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has been yielded back.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 289, S. 2232, a bill to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, John Barrasso, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, Cory Gardner, David Vitter, Shelley Moore Capito, Rand Paul, Johnny Isakson, Steve Daines, Patrick J. Toomey, John Boozman, Chuck Grassley, Mike Crapo, Mike Lee, David Perdue, Rob Portman.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 2232, a bill to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 2 Leg.]

YEAS—53

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Ayotte	Gardner	Portman
Baldwin	Graham	Risch
Barrasso	Grassley	Roberts
Blunt	Hatch	Rounds
Boozman	Heller	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Sanders
Capito	Inhofe	Sasse
Cassidy	Isakson	Scott
Cochran	Johnson	Sessions
Collins	Kirk	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	McCain	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Toomey
Enzi	Moran	Vitter
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—44

Bennet	Heinrich	Nelson
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Peters
Booker	Hirono	Reed
Boxer	Kaine	Reid
Brown	King	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Shaheen
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Coons	McCaskill	Udall
Corker	Menendez	Warner
Donnelly	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	

NOT VOTING—3

Coats Cruz Franken

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 44.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to complete my remarks.

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

SCRUB ACT

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to take up a piece of legislation that I am sponsoring which has recently passed the House of Representatives, the Searching for and Cutting Regulations that are Unnecessarily Burdensome Act—or SCRUB Act.

Federal regulations today impose—by some estimates—a crushing burden of $1.88 trillion on our economy. That is roughly $15,000 per household and more than the entire country's corporate and individual income taxes combined. Excessive and often unnecessary rules imposed by unaccountable Washington bureaucrats strain family budgets and create conditions where small businesses struggle to create jobs.

Nevertheless, the regulatory burden keeps growing year after year. The Code of Federal Regulations is now more than 175,000 pages long and contains more than 200 volumes. Since 2008, regulators have added on average more than $107 billion in annual regulatory costs. And as we near the end of President Obama's time in office, Americans should be prepared for a deluge of new rules. As has been widely reported, about 4,000 regulations are working their way through the Federal bureaucracy, with some experts predicting their costs to exceed well over $100 billion.

Every President since Jimmy Carter has affirmed the need to review our existing regulations to make sure that they are efficient and no more intrusive and burdensome than is absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, administrations of both parties have failed to make meaningful reductions in the regulatory burden, with some retrospective review efforts even adding costs to the economy. Most notably, according to a study by the American Action Forum, the Obama administration's much-touted efforts to review old rules actually added more than $23 billion in costs on the economy and mandated nearly 9 million additional hours of paperwork.

With family budgets stretched thin and our economy badly in need of job creation, we need to act to turn this longstanding bipartisan commitment to effective retrospective review into a reality. But to do so, we need to take the responsibility of reviewing old rules away from the bureaucrats who keep failing to make the reductions to the regulatory burden. That is why I have joined my colleagues, the junior Senators from Iowa and Missouri, to introduce the SCRUB Act.

The SCRUB Act establishes a bipartisan, blue-ribbon commission to review existing Federal regulations and identify those that should be repealed to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens. It prioritizes for review regulations where major rules have been in effect more than 15 years, impose paperwork burdens that could be reduced substantially without significantly diminishing regulatory effectiveness, impose disproportionately high costs on small businesses, or could be strengthened in their effectiveness while reducing regulatory costs. It also sets other basic, commonsense criteria for recommending repeal of regulations, such as: whether they have been rendered obsolete by technological or market changes; whether they have achieved their goals and can be repealed without target problems recurring; whether they are ineffective; whether they overlap, duplicate, or conflict with other Federal regulations or with State and local regulations; or whether they impose costs that are not justified by benefits produced for society within the United States.

Once the commission develops a set of recommendations, our bill requires that these recommendations be presented to the House and the Senate for approval by joint resolution. If Congress votes to approve the commission's recommendations, repeal must take place.

Mr. President, I have served long enough to know that Washington's preferred solution to a tough problem is to create a commission that, once established, is rarely seen or heard from again, no matter how compelling its recommendations. Therefore, I want to lay out a few key features of how SCRUB avoids the pitfalls of so many do-nothing commissions as well as the problems encountered with other attempts to implement retrospective review.

First, our bill sets a hard target for the commission: the reduction of at least 15 percent in the cumulative costs of Federal regulation with a minimal reduction in the overall effectiveness of such regulation. The Obama administration's efforts at retrospective review—perhaps by mistake, perhaps by design—lacked a quantified cost reduction mandate. The result was the manipulation of the review process into a charade in which highly suspect new benefits were touted as a reason for adding costs. Our bill structures the retrospective review process in a way that prioritizes cost cutting while maintaining a responsible respect for benefits by calling for a minimal reduction in general overall effectiveness.

Second, our bill does not artificially limit what costly and unjustified regulations could be repealed. Under some superficially similar but fundamentally unsound proposals for retrospective review, review would be arbitrarily limited by time or subject. Such limits would not only seriously hinder the prospect of meeting a meaningful cost reduction target, but also put numerous regulations off limits for review just because they have seen minor tweaks after a certain arbitrary cutoff.

Third, our bill guarantees an up-or-down vote on the Commission's package of recommendations as a single package. This element of our bill represents the single most important feature that distinguishes it from a do-nothing commission that far too often characterizes Washington's approach to intractable problems. We should be under no illusions that every single special interest in town is going to fight to preserve the favors they have won by manipulating the regulatory process over the years, and gathering the votes to get the Commission's recommendations enacted will certainly be a difficult endeavor.

Following the models of other successful means by which Congress has addressed situations in which the costs are concentrated but benefits are widely dispersed, it is absolutely vital that the Commission's recommendations be packed together as a single bill and not subject to dismemberment by amendment.

Further, to put it simply, an up-or-down simple majority vote requires an actual viable pathway to repealing these regulations. Subjecting the package to the supermajority threshold would represent nothing but a death knell for the prospect of repealing these onerous rules. Moreover, because extended debate in the Senate exists to allow Senators to modify a proposal under debate, the lack of amendment opportunities seriously undermines the rationale for subjecting it to the supermajority threshold typically required to end debate. And this carefully tailored exception to the cloture rule is hardly a wild departure from precedent; rather, it follows the precedents set by numerous other pieces of legislation such as trade promotion authority and the Congressional Review Act, both of which have long earned bipartisan support.

Fourth, for any given regulation, the Commission is authorized to recommend either immediate repeal or repeal through what we call cut-go procedures, whereby agencies, on a forward basis, would have to offset the costs of new regulations by repealing Commission-identified regulations of equal or greater cost. These procedures allow immediate repeal in the most urgent cases and staggered repeals of other regulations to assure a smoother process for agencies and affected entities.

Mr. President, a process such as cut-go proves critical for two particular reasons. First, it provides an avenue for addressing the many regulations on the books that impose unjustifiable costs in pursuit of a legitimate goal. While some regulations on the books

could undoubtedly be repealed without any meaningful negative consequences, numerous others provide important protections but in an inefficient and costly manner. The cut-go process allows agencies to repeal costly rules and replace them with more sensible ones—for example, prescribing performance standards instead of specific, oftentimes outdated technology—in a manner that reduces costs on the economy while maintaining or even improving regulatory effectiveness.

Second, the cut-go process holds agencies accountable to Congress's laws, a perennial problem in the regulatory process. Bureaucratic agencies—so often devoted to increasing their own power and insensitive to the costs they impose on the economy—frequently use the excuse of limited resources to avoid retrospective review. By imposing a reasonable limit on prospective rulemaking until an agency complies with congressionally enacted repeal recommendations, cut-go ensures that the agency cannot simply ignore its duty to repeal.

Mr. President, these are just a handful of the numerous reasons why the SCRUB Act provides a uniquely visible pathway to accomplishing the longstanding bipartisan goal of repealing outdated and ineffective regulations. I wish to thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle—and both sides of the Capitol, by the way—who have joined in support of this bill, especially Senator ERNST for her leadership on this issue on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Even though she has only been in the Senate for a year, her strong and effective leadership on this issue has been a model for how to hit the ground running. I call on my colleagues in the Senate to follow the House's lead and pass this effective, commonsense approach to rooting out unjustifiably burdensome regulations. Also, as I understand it, the House has passed this bill just today.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Mr. President, I also wish to address another subject—the subject of religious liberty. Congress is convening for the second session of the 114th Congress at a moment in time rich with significance for religious freedoms. January 6, for example, marked the 75th anniversary of President Franklin Roosevelt's famous ''Four Freedoms'' speech. During the depths of World War II, President Roosevelt used his 1941 State of the Union Address to describe a world founded on what he called ''four essential human freedoms.'' One of these is the ''freedom of every person to worship God in his own way.''

At the end of the week, on January 16, it is Religious Freedom Day. It commemorates the 230th anniversary of the Virginia General Assembly's enactment of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. Thomas Jefferson authored the legislation and, after he left to serve as U.S. Minister to France, his colleague James Madison secured its enactment.

Of his many accomplishments—and Jefferson had a lot of accomplishments—Jefferson directed that three of what he called ''things that he had given the people'' be listed on his tombstone. One of them was the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which laid the foundation for the protection of religious freedom in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Mr. President, last fall I delivered a series of eight speeches on the Senate floor presenting the story of religious freedom. I explained why religious freedom itself is uniquely important and requires special protection. At no time in world history has religious freedom been such an integral part of a Nation's character as it is here in the United States.

The story of religious freedom includes understanding both its status and its substance. The status of religious freedom can be summarized as both inalienable and preeminent. As James Madison put it, religious freedom is ''precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of civil society.''

Madison also explained that religious freedom is the freely chosen manner of discharging a duty an individual believes he or she owes to God. As we have affirmed so many times in statutes, declarations, and treaties, it includes both belief and behavior in public and in private, individually and collectively.

Tonight, President Obama delivers his final State of the Union Address. According to the Washington Post this morning, President Obama will speak about unity, about coming together as one American family. Until very recently, religious freedom was such a unifying priority. Last month, I described to my colleagues the unifying statement about religious freedom called the Williamsburg Charter. Published in 1988, it brought together Presidents and other leaders in both political parties, the heads of business and labor, universities and bar associations, and diverse communities to endorse the first principles of religious freedom.

The charter boldly proclaims that religious freedom is an inalienable right that is ''premised upon the inviolable dignity of the human person. It is the foundation of, and is integrally related to, all other rights and freedoms secured by the Constitution.'' It asserts that the chief menace to religious freedom is the expanding power of government—especially government control over personal behavior and the institutions of society. And the charter also declares that limiting religious freedom ''is allowable only where the State has borne a heavy burden of proof that the limitation is justified—not by any ordinary public interest, but by a supreme public necessity—and that no less restrictive alternative to limitation exists.''

Congress made these principles law 5 years later by almost unanimously enacting the Religious Freedom Restoration Act—an act that I had a great deal to do with. One way to know the value of something is by the effort made to protect it. In RFRA, government may burden the exercise of religion only if it is the least restrictive means of furthering a compelling government purpose. That is the toughest standard found anywhere in American law. By this statute, we declared that religious freedom is fundamental, it is more important than other values and priorities, and government must properly accommodate it. The Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion supporting RFRA was the most diverse grassroots effort I have ever seen in all of my years in the U.S. Senate.

Five years after RFRA, Congress unanimously enacted the International Religious Freedom Act. Twenty-one Senators serving today voted for it—12 Republicans and 9 Democrats. So did Vice President JOE BIDEN and Secretary of State John Kerry when they served here. That law declares that religious freedom ''undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States.'' It calls religious freedom a universal human right, a pillar of our Nation, and a fundamental freedom.

That is what unity looks like. With a Presidency no less than any other aspect of life, however, actions speak louder than words. While President Obama has paid lip service to religious freedom, as I assume he will in his annual Religious Freedom Day proclamation this week, the actions of his administration tell a different story.

In 2011, the Obama administration argued to the Supreme Court that the First Amendment provides no special protection for churches, even in choosing their own ministers. The Court unanimously rejected that bizarre theory. The administration ignored religious freedom and RFRA altogether when developing the Affordable Care Act and its implementing regulations. When religious employers argued that the administration's birth control mandate did not adequately accommodate their religious freedom, the administration fought them all the way to the Supreme Court. The Court again rejected the administration's attempt to restrict religious freedom.

Yesterday, 32 Members of the Senate and 175 Members of the House of Representatives filed a legal brief with the Supreme Court supporting religious organizations that are again arguing that the Obama administration's birth control mandate violates the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. I want to thank my friend from Oklahoma, Senator LANKFORD, for working with me on this important project. I know religious freedom was important to him when he served in the House and he is already a leader on this critical issue in the Senate and I am pleased to see him in the chair today.

This mandate requires religious organizations to violate their deeply held religious beliefs or pay crushing monetary fines. The plaintiffs in these cases

include Christian colleges, Catholic dioceses, and many organizations that minister to the elderly and disadvantaged as part of their religious mission. They want to provide health insurance for their employees and students in a manner that is consistent with their religious beliefs.

The Obama administration, however, is working hard to make those religious groups knuckle under to its political agenda. It provides blanket exemptions for churches that do not object to the birth control mandate but denies exemption to religious employers that do object. The administration exempts for-profit companies employing more than 44 million workers, including some of America's largest corporations, even if they have no objection to the mandate. Yet it is fighting to force compliance by religious nonprofit organizations that do object to the mandate on the basis of deeply held religious beliefs. Not only is that policy simply irrational, but it treats religious freedom as optional.

Here is how I put it last month: Subjugating religious beliefs to government decrees is not the price of citizenship. To the contrary, respecting and honoring the fundamental rights of all Americans is the price our government pays to enjoy the continued consent of the American people.

If that is true, then religious freedom must be properly respected and accommodated. And I believe it is true.

Religious freedom should be a primary consideration, not an afterthought. Religious freedom should be given the accommodation that a preeminent right requires, rather than begrudgingly be given the least attention politically possible.

If our leaders wish to abandon the religious freedom that undergirds America's origin and existence, they should say so. If Members of Congress now reject what they once supported and insist that religious freedom is less important than the political reference of the moment, they should make that case.

If the Obama administration wants to repudiate treaties we have ratified, asserting that religious freedom is a fundamental human right, the President should be upfront about it.

As with many things that happen in the twilight of a Presidency, I expect to hear much in the State of the Union Address tonight that speaks to President Obama's legacy. What will he be remembered for? What great principles or causes will be associated with the Obama Presidency?

Part of President Roosevelt's legacy is that State of the Union Address 75 years ago that affirmed that practicing one's faith is an essential human freedom. What a tragedy to have President Obama be remembered for hostility to—rather than protection of—religious freedom.

In the coming days, I will be presenting to each of my Senate colleagues the collection of speeches on religious freedom that I offered on the floor last fall. I hope they will encourage us in Congress, as well as our fellow citizens, to unite in our commitment to this fundamental right.

This is important. Even though we may agree or disagree with certain religious beliefs, they still ought to have the right to believe them. They still ought to have the right to worship the way they want to. The fact of the matter is that is what has made America the greatest country in the world—bar none. I don't want to see it destroyed because we are doing everything we can to undermine religious freedom in this country. I refuse to allow that to happen, and I hope my colleagues will take this seriously as well. I know a number of them do, including the current Presiding Officer.

I just want everybody to know that as long as I am in the Senate, I am going to be fighting for religious freedom and I hope that all of us will also.

God bless America.

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. 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, tonight President Obama will be coming to Congress to deliver his final State of the Union Address. His advisers have been all over television talking about what the President is planning to say. Tonight, I expect President Obama will talk a little about the health care law. Last year in his State of the Union Address, the President bragged—he actually bragged—that more people have insurance now than when he took office. I expect he will probably say something similar tonight.

I wish to talk a little bit about the other side of the story. I want to talk about what President Obama is not going to say tonight to the American people. The President is not going to admit that many Americans are actually worse under his health care law. He is not going to say that under the health care law there is a very big difference between health law insurance and being able to actually get health care. The President focuses on the word ''coverage'' and, as a doctor, I focus on the word ''care.''

The New York Times had an article about this just the other day. The article on page 1 of Monday, January 4, says: ''Many Holdouts Roll the Dice And Pay I.R.S., Not an Insurer.'' They would rather pay the penalty to the Internal Revenue Service rather than pay the insurance company. Why?

Turn to page A9 of the same day, January 4, 2016: ''Many Who Refuse Insurance See I.R.S. Penalty as Most Affordable Option.'' The most affordable option for the American people is not the Obama health law insurance. It is actually paying the IRS the penalty. The article tells the story about a number of different people. One is named Tim Fescoe from Culver City, CA. He and his wife had an insurance plan that cost them more than $5,000 a year, but it came with a deductible of over $6,000 for each of them—$5,000 for the policy, $6,000 for the deductible for him and another $6,000 for her. Well, they decided to drop the insurance last year.

Mr. Fescoe told the New York Times: ''It literally covered zero medical expenses.''

I wonder if President Obama is going to talk about this man tonight, Tim Fescoe. Will we hear anything about him in his speech tonight? Will the President point to him in the gallery as somebody who the President claims to have helped by making insurance so expensive and so unaffordable that it was much better to just pay the penalty than deal with what the mandates of the President's health care law call into play? Is he going to talk about the deductibles and how the out-of-pocket costs have become so high for Americans all across the country?

The article also talks about Clint Murphy of Sulfur Springs, TX. Clint Murphy expects that he will have to pay a penalty of about $1,800 for being uninsured this year. The article says that in his view, paying the penalty is worth it if he can avoid buying the President's law health insurance, a policy that costs $2,900 or more.

This man in Texas went on to say: ''I don't see the logic behind that, and I'm just not going to do it.''

Is President Obama going to talk about these people—people who think that it is better to pay the steep IRS penalty than buy the President's expensive and, in many ways, useless insurance? There are millions of Americans in this same situation as Clint Murphy, as Tim Fescoe, and other people who are mentioned in a story in the New York Times. If the New York Times is writing about it—they are supporters of the health care law—even they are pointing to the damage that this very unpopular law continues to do to the American people.

According to a report by the Kaiser Family Foundation, about 7 million Americans were finding it cheaper to pay the tax penalty than to pay for this unusable insurance. Look at this chart. Of those people who don't get subsidies and are not eligible for subsidies, 95 percent would pay—all of these people—less for the tax penalty than for an ObamaCare bronze plan, which is the cheapest level of plan that there is.

So for people who don't get a subsidy from Washington, 95 percent of them would pay less by paying the tax penalty than they would for an ObamaCare bronze-level plan with high deductibles and high copays—so high that the people who look at it say: It is unusable.

Now, remember, again, these bronze plans are the cheapest option, and the people are just saying no because even the cheapest option under ObamaCare is more expensive than dropping insurance and paying the penalty. Bronze plans are the ones most likely to have a $5,000 to $6,000 deductible per individual on the plan.

Do we expect President Obama to talk about any of these things tonight or any of these people who have been harmed by his law?

After the President gives his State of the Union Address, much has been made that he is going on a tour of America. He is going to visit Baton Rouge, LA, and Omaha, NE. What the President may not know and certainly won't mention is how much ObamaCare premiums have increased in those States he is going to visit.

In Louisiana, prices for the benchmark silver plan on the ObamaCare exchange went up over 9 percent this year. In Nebraska, the same benchmark silver plan rates went up almost 12 percent this past year. Now that is for the people who are willing to actually shop around and switch their insurance from last year to try to hold down the costs.

Remember when the President said this: If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. Well, if you only want a 9-percent or a 12-percent increase, you can't keep your plan. You have to try to shop around and switch to a different plan, maybe even change your doctors and the hospital you go to. That is the only way you can find rates of insurance that still go up a lot but don't go up even higher by staying with what you had.

The President probably won't mention that when he goes to Louisiana or Nebraska. He probably won't mention either that the ObamaCare co-ops in both of the States that he is visiting collapsed last year—fundamentally collapsed. Tens of thousands of people lost the insurance they had in those States, and now the taxpayers are on the hook for over $100 million.

The law has not come anywhere near what President Obama promised the people of Louisiana or the people of Nebraska or the people of America. All across the country, the American people know that ObamaCare was not what they wanted. They know that it has never been the right answer for the problems in our health care system. That is why majorities in both Houses of Congress voted recently to repeal the key parts of the Obama health care law. We passed the legislation, and we sent it to the President's desk. When President Obama vetoed the bill, he rejected the judgment of the American people.

In his speech tonight, I expect the President to continue to pretend that there are no problems at all with American health care under his law. Well, Republicans are going to keep offering solutions to fix health care in America. Almost 6 years ago President Obama sat down with Members of Congress to try to sell us his health care law. I was part of that roundtable discussion. I told the President at the time that low-cost catastrophic plans could be a good option for people as long as they could use health savings accounts to help pay their day to day medical bills.

The President had no interest in that idea or in any of the Republican ideas that we brought forward that day.

So now, under his law, people are left with the equivalent of catastrophic coverage and they are paying far too much for it because of all of the law's mandates. On top of that, the law cuts back on health savings accounts. The law specifically cut back on that so people all across the country have fewer options to help them pay for their care.

Republicans are going to continue to bring up better ideas. We will talk about real solutions that give people more options, not more mandates. We will talk about the ideas that help people get the care they need from a doctor they want at lower costs, not just as the President talks about coverage—coverage that most Americans find they cannot use.

Tonight President Obama is probably going to make a lot more promises. When he does, I think everybody should remember Clint Murphy from Sulfur Springs, TX, who doesn't see the logic in paying for overpriced ObamaCare insurance. They should remember all of the broken promises from the health care law and all of the hardworking Americans who have been hurt by the Obama health care law. Even though President Obama won't admit it tonight, America can do much better. If the President won't say it, then it will be up to Congress to lead on the issue. That is exactly what Republicans intend to do. President Obama's speech tonight will be looking to define his legacy. Tonight and for the rest of the year, Republicans will be offering solutions for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to enter into a colloquy with a number of my colleagues, including Senators from Virginia, Florida, and New Jersey.

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

DELEGATION TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND IMPLEMENTING THE NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I have just returned from a trip to the Middle East—an absolutely important and eye-opening trip at this vital moment when the threat of extremism, the threat of violence, and the risks posed to regional stability by Iran and its regional ambitions could not be clearer. Senator GILLIBRAND of New York led this delegation, and a group of eight of us had an opportunity to visit Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Austria.

Let me begin by saying that all of us were deeply moved and concerned when we heard this morning news of a terrorist attack in Istanbul, literally in an area we had just visited Saturday morning. I reached out, as have a number of others on this trip, to express our condolences and concerns both to the Turkish Ambassador, the American Ambassador, and to others we met with on our visit there.

This is just another brazen reminder of the instability raging throughout the Middle East and of the threats to our concerns and interests and to regional stability posed by terrorism.

I invite the Senator from Virginia to join me in making some comments based on his insights and his experience on this trip. The very first place we visited left an important and lasting impression on me. We visited with the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency, in Vienna to hear about their progress towards implementing the nuclear deal with Iran and what they are going to be doing, now and in the future, to ensure full, thorough, and valuable inspections of the entire cycle of Iran's nuclear efforts.

If Senator KAINE would offer any additional comments as a member of the delegation and someone who joined in the trip, what were some of the things that the Senator saw and what were some of the concerns that the Senator came home with that we ought to share with our constituents and colleagues?

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Delaware for the opportunity to engage in a colloquy. It was a remarkable visit with eight Senators to Israel, Vienna, Turkey, as well as Saudi Arabia, to dig into two issues that I would like to address. The issues are Iran and the war against ISIL.

With respect to Iran, since the conclusion of the negotiation and the green light for the deal to go forward, there have been some positive developments and there have been some troubling developments. I wish to spend time talking about both.

On the positive development side, because of the deal that the United States and other nations entered into with Iran, as of yesterday they have permanently decommissioned the plutonium reactor at Arak, which is one half for them to make a nuclear weapon. That is a very positive result of the negotiation.

Second, they have disabled a huge percentage of the centrifuges, which was also a requirement under the agreement—the centrifuges that are used to enrich uranium, another path to nuclear weapons.

Third, Iran has worked with the IAEA to structure the level of inspections. Under the inspections required by the agreement, Iran will be the most inspected nation in the world, because the inspections will not only go to nuclear sites, but they will go to the entire supply chain of uranium mills and uranium mines. Those are inspections not required of any other nation.

The IAEA is ready to move forward on those inspections.

Finally, there is the last bit of positive news, which in my view, personally, is the most compelling. Iran took more than 28,000 pounds of low-enriched uranium, which is sufficient for multiple nuclear weapons. Because of this deal, they have shipped that uranium out of Iran. It is held in a facility in Russia that is closely monitored 24/7, 365 by the IAEA. So any movement of that material will be understood.

Having that nuclear material—sufficient for multiple nuclear weapons—out of Iran's hands and out of that country would not have happened without this deal, and it makes the world safer.

There are some challenges. In October, Iran fired a missile, and a number of us on the Foreign Relations Committee immediately wrote to the President and Secretary of State that we think this violates a separate U.N. Security Council resolution. The United Nations empaneled a team of exports to dig into the factual and technical evidence, and they concluded in mid-December that Iran had in fact fired a missile in violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution separate from this deal. We all think it is very important—for both Congress and the administration and our global partners—to make sure that there is a consequence for that. Whether we supported the deal or didn't, the strategy should be strict enforcement and strict implementation, requiring that Iran meet every last detail—not only of the deal but of their other international obligations. We need to continue to press the administration and Congress to do that.

So on Iran, that was basically the gist of the conversation. We had a lengthy discussion with Prime Minister Netanyahu, where we said: Look, we disagreed on the deal. But now the important thing is to make sure we implement it and we are strong and united on implementation issues. I think that is critically important.

Finally, I have a word about ISIL. Everywhere we went in the region we heard about the threat of ISIL. The bombing this morning in a tourist square in Istanbul, where some of us were standing just 72 hours ago, although all of the investigative work hasn't yet been done, clearly has the earmarks of an ISIL-related bombing, much as the bombings in the Sinai, in Beirut, and the attacks in Paris. So it is very critical that we take this seriously because we are not only seeing ISIL extend their field of battle beyond Syria and Iraq; we are seeing them engage in one-off or rogue terrorist activities around the globe.

The U.S. is at war with ISIL, and we have been at war since August 8, 2014. We are in the 17th month of that war. We have spent billions of dollars, we have deployed thousands of troops, and we have seen both American hostages and servicemembers killed in this war. But as I hand it back to my colleague, I will conclude and say that Congress has been strangely silent during this war. It is Congress under article I that should declare war, and yet we have not been willing to have a debate and vote—even as we are deploying people, even as Americans are being killed, even as we are spending billions of taxpayer dollars. The only vote that has taken place in this body on the war directly on the authorization question was in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in December of 2014. It was a vote to move forward to an authorization. But when it came to the floor, it got no action.

I am reminded of the great Irish poet W.B. Yeats, who talked about a time where ''the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.'' We see every day efforts that ISIL is, at worst, filled with passionate intensity. I believe America is the best. I believe Congress should be the best. Yet we have been strangely silent and have lacked conviction in the face of an enemy that is dangerous and threatens us abroad and at home.

With that, I hand it back to my colleague, the Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Virginia for his service on the Foreign Relations Committee and for his real leadership on the question of our prosecution the war against ISIL and the roll of this Senate in confirming that we are in fact engaged in a conflict, for his role on the Armed Services Committee, and for the important and tough questions he asked on our visit to the four countries that I just referenced in opening. I appreciate the Senator detailing the four different, big positive moves forward that are happening as the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal, moves towards into full implementation.

I wish to encourage my colleague from Florida, the second-most senior Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, to also offer his thoughts on how this deal contributes to our security and what concerns are remaining.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President and my fellow Senators, I just want to point out what the Senator has already brought up and underscore that the fact is that the plutonium reactor in Arak has now been filled with concrete. The fact is that 12 tons—or 24,000 pounds—of enriched uranium has been shipped out of Arak to another destination, mostly to Russia.

Before the agreement, it would only take 3 months to build a nuclear weapon. Now, it would take at least 12 months. So we would have a 1-year advance notice in order to determine what we needed to do to deter Iran.

May I say it is irritating that we are going to continue to deal with an Iran that is going to do things that are going to provoke us. And they have certainly done this in the Strait of Hormuz just a few days ago, doing a live-fire exercise while we have the aircraft carrier battle group going through the Strait of Hormuz—not even 29 miles wide. That is a provocation. There is the provocation of shooting off two missile tests, which is a violation of U.N. sanctions. I hope the President will follow through and sanction them for that, regardless of their protests that say: Oh well, then, you are violating our nuclear agreement.

No, it is a nuclear agreement. They have now stretched the time to 12 months before, if they decided today that they wanted to build a nuclear weapon. That was the whole purpose of the nuclear negotiations in the first place—to take off the table that Iran would be a nuclear power and upset the balance of power in that part of the world.

I thank my colleague for yielding. I thank all of my colleagues for making these insightful comments.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Florida.

I would invite my colleague from New Jersey, who also joined us in the Middle East and is on the homeland security committee, to offer his comments on how the Iran deal actually contributes to regional and global security, and I ask what remaining concerns there are that we have to tackle together.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, first, I echo the concerns of my colleagues here. It was extremely valuable to be able to travel with Senators HEITKAMP, KAINE, and COONS as part of the eight-Member delegation to the IAEA, and meet with the individuals in charge of the inspections, as well as to go to Israel, and meet with Benjamin Netanyahu in a private setting about the concerns Senator KAINE articulated. In addition to that, we visited with other allies: Saudi Arabia, as well as Turkey.

Let's be clear. As has been said already, we are seeing important steps being taken that, in the immediate term, reduce the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. The steps they are taking are definitive, measurable, and specifically aligned with the JCPOA.

It is important to understand—whether it is moving uranium out, blocking their plutonium pathway, and setting up the inspections regime along the entire supply chain—that these are all important steps toward implementing the JCPOA. But I want to make two very clear points.

The first point is that last summer, as I and many of my colleagues were immersed in evaluating the JCPOA, the Administration promised clear and firm responses to even the smallest violation. Like many of my colleagues, this played a role in my decision to support the nuclear agreement. We expect to see a follow-through on that promise of accountability. We expect enforcement. If we allow Iran—as this agreement goes on—to push the bounds and cross the lines laid out in this deal without a response, we are undermining the strength of this agreement

and, I believe, actually putting in jeopardy the security of the region.

The second point I want to make relates to the provocative behavior Iran is engaging in right now. Separate and apart from the nuclear sanctions that will be lifted, there are other sanctions in place for other issues related to Iran's behavior. Iran is a dangerous actor and has proven so throughout that region. They are a state sponsor of terrorism and other destabilizing activities in that region. While the immediate threat of the nuclear issue might be off the table, they are still a regional threat.

So when we have clear transgressions that are measurable, that have been done in violation of international law—such as two separate instances of ballistic missile testing—there must be a response. I am calling on the administration not to hesitate any longer. We must respond with sanctions appropriate to these violations of international law. To not do so, to me, is unacceptable.

The U.S. must make the consequences for Iranian regional aggression clear and follow with robust response, if necessary. We cannot lose sight of Iran's use of surrogates and proxies in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen to further undermine the security of the region. Let's not lose sight of the fact that there are Americans being held in Iran right now, such as Siamak Namazi, a graduate of Rutgers University in New Jersey, arrested in October, and being held by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard for, as of yet, unspecified reasons. Let's not forget about Jason Rezaian, who continues to languish in jail without a clear and justifiable rationale for his imprisonment, as well as Saeed Abedini, Amir Hekmati, and Robert Levinson. These Americans are being held by a regime for no justifiable reason.

These are particularly egregious violations. In my opinion, Iran should be held accountable. So I repeat, the Senate should collectively call on the administration to take action against Iran and to sanction Iran for their violation of Security Council Resolution 1929.

I want to finally say that my colleagues and I observed in our meetings with Israeli officials, as Senator KAINE mentioned, an Israeli administration that understands the nuclear deal will go into effect. Let's make sure it is enforced. Let's make sure we have the eyes and ears in place so we can make sure the nuclear threat is removed. But let's stay united with Israel and our other allies in holding this dangerous actor to account if they violate international law, if they threaten their neighbors, if they engage in destabilizing activities, if they support terrorism. We must share intelligence. We must double down our efforts to interdict the movement of arms. And we must work together for a larger piece in that region.

With that, I will turn it back to Senator COONS.

Mr. COONS. I wish to thank my colleague from the State of New Jersey and to briefly recognize a success in the fall, in September—a raid off the coast of Yemen that seized a large cache of Iranian arms destined for the Houthi rebels who are working to undermine the legitimate Government of Yemen. This massive weapons shipment of 56 tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided TOW missiles, and the associated sights, mounts, tubes, and batteries—those are all the different components for these advanced and sophisticated anti-tank weapons—was successfully interdicted in international water. This is an example of what my colleague the Senator from New Jersey was just talking about, which is the need for more and more aggressive and more successful interdiction to push back on Iran's destabilizing actions in the region.

I am grateful now to be joined on the floor by my colleague from the State of New Hampshire, who is also my colleague on the Foreign Relations Committee, who wants to contribute to our conversation today about the positive progress that is being made in the implementation of this deal and what remains ahead in the work we have to do to make sure we are implementing it effectively.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague Senator COONS and others on the floor today, especially those of you who had a chance to travel to the Middle East. I didn't get a chance to go with you on this trip. But, like Senator KAINE, I do serve on both the Armed Services and the Foreign Relations Committees, and I supported the nuclear deal with Iran because I was convinced and continue to be convinced that it is the best available option for preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

As my colleagues have already spoken to, to some extent, we already see the effects of this nuclear deal in Iran's actions. On December 28, Iran shipped over 25,000 pounds of low-enriched uranium to Russia, including the removal of all of Iran's nuclear material enriched to 20 percent that was not already fabricated into reactive fuel. We know this was one path for Iran to get a nuclear weapon. They have removed this low-enriched uranium. It is in Russia.

The IAEA has increased the number of its inspectors on the ground in Iran. They are deploying modern technologies to monitor Iran's nuclear facilities, and they have set up a comprehensive oversight program of Iran's nuclear facilities. The IAEA is now inspecting all of Iran's declared nuclear facilities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and they will have access not just to the facilities where we know Iran was trying to build a weapon but also to the uranium mines and mills, which will give the IAEA and the rest of the world complete access to the entire nuclear fuel cycle.

The Iraq reactor, which has been spoken to already, will be completely disabled. Its core is being filled with concrete. Once the IAEA verifies that Iran has completed the steps related to the Arak reactor, Iran's plutonium pathway to a bomb will have effectively been blocked. Iran has been dismantling its uranium enrichment infrastructure, including the removal of thousands of centrifuges.

Again, taken together, these and other steps will effectively cut off Iran's four pathways to a nuclear weapon, and they will push its breakout time to at least a year for the next 10 years.

What should Congress be doing? My colleague from New Jersey, Senator BOOKER, was very eloquent in talking about some of the actions that we need to take, both Congress and the administration, to continue to address Iran's terrorist activities throughout the region. But I think one of the other things we ought to be doing as a Congress is confirming key Obama administration foreign policy and national security nominees because many of these nominees are critical as we look at the implementation of the Iran agreement. They are critical as we think about what we need to protect this country, to protect our national security.

I would ask my colleague on the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator MURPHY, what does it mean that we have failed to confirm Adam Szubin as the Treasury Department's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes? I was a cosponsor, with Senator RUBIO, of the Hezbollah sanctions bill, the additional sanctions we can put on Hezbollah to limit their activities, and yet we are still missing one of the key players in making that work at the Treasury Department. What does that mean, I ask Senator MURPHY, the fact that Congress has failed to confirm these nominees?

Mr. MURPHY. I thank Senator SHAHEEN for the question. I would hope that regardless of how any individual Senator voted on this deal, we would all be rooting for its success because success in the end is an assurance that Iran never obtains a nuclear weapon. But the results of this Senate failing to confirm Adam Szubin as the Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes undermine the implementation of not only this important achievement but also of all our efforts to try to root out the financial sources of terrorism all around the world.

The fact is that this gentleman, Adam Szubin, is particularly qualified for the job. There is no one on the Republican side who has raised any individual objection to him. He has been doing the job very well for the United States under President Obama. He was the senior advisor to this appointee under President Bush's administration. He has done and worked in this field under both Republican and Democratic Presidents. It seems as if it is just politics that are holding this up. He is not

the only one who is on that list. Laura Holgate has been appointed to be our U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. offices in Vienna, which includes the IAEA. She was nominated on August 5. Her nomination hasn't even gotten out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Wendy Sherman's replacement, Tom Shannon, was nominated on September 18. His nomination is on the floor today. We could vote on that this week if it was our pleasure.

If we want this agreement to succeed, if we want to make sure Iran does not get a nuclear weapon, if we want to cut off the flow of funds from Iran to groups like Hezbollah, then we actually have to have people in place to do those jobs.

I wanted to quickly come to the floor to make the point that in addition to the important points that are being made by my colleagues about the success so far of the agreement with respect to implementation, if we all are hoping that the end result of this is despite the predictions of many Republicans that Iran doesn't obtain a nuclear weapon, then we have to have these people in these important roles.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Would my colleague yield for another question briefly? I didn't give the date that Adam Szubin was nominated, and he has been before the banking committee. Does the Senator have that information to share with everybody?

Mr. MURPHY. I said that Holgate was August 5, and Shannon was September 18. Adam Szubin has been before the banking committee since April 16. He is a few months away from being before the Senate for almost a full year in a job that we can all agree is one of the most important when it comes to protecting the national security of this country. That is pretty astounding.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I thank all three of my colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee. I will close and yield back to Senator COONS with saying that I would hope that one of the things we would all agree to, as Senator MURPHY has said, is that regardless of where we stood on the Iran nuclear agreement, the goal now is to make sure that is implemented in a way that makes sure that at least 10 years from now we have at least a year's breakout before Iran—if they decided to do that—could go back and have a nuclear weapon. I would hope that we all share that as our most important priority with respect to Iran.

I yield back to my colleague Senator COONS.

Mr. COONS. I thank my colleagues from Connecticut and from New Hampshire. I invite my colleague from North Dakota, who also serves on the homeland security committee and who was part of our delegation that just had the opportunity to travel to Israel, to Saudi Arabia, to Turkey, and to Austria, and in Austria to hear from the IAEA.

The references just made by my colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee were in one part to the vacancy in the position of the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. offices in Vienna. I want to reemphasize that. Ever since August 5 of last year, that mission the Senator from North Dakota and I just visited that is responsible for directing and supporting the work of the IAEA to the extent the United States helps fund it and supports it and is a participating member—they have been waiting for a new confirmed ambassador for more than 6 months.

I wish to invite my colleague to make comments based on her experiences and her reflections based on this recent trip.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, thank you to my great friend from the State of Delaware. I wish to first make a comment on Adam Szubin because I also serve on the banking committee and have had a chance not only to meet with him personally but to witness the excellent testimony he provided during his confirmation hearing.

We all see very smart people. They come through and they agree to serve their country in these appointed positions which frequently get bogged down here. And not taking anything away from anyone else who has ever appeared before the banking committee, I would say that he is one of the brightest America has to offer. He has a wonderful family, he is deeply devout in his religion—he is Jewish—and a friend to Israel, a friend to this country, using his enormous talents to keep this country safe. There is nothing that would recommend that we not confirm Adam Szubin in one of the most critical positions we have in the Treasury Department. If we are serious about stopping Iran from getting a weapon, if we are serious about enforcing a regime of sanctions, then we need our best and brightest. He clearly is our best and brightest.

One of the points I want to make coming to the floor is that we cannot allow incremental creep, incremental violations, small, little violations. You know how it is. We are all parents, and we watch kids take advantage and take advantage until pretty soon we don't really have the role anymore of a parent. We want to make sure that when we are enforcing this agreement and when we are looking at this agreement, we send a clear message from the very beginning, which is we will not tolerate a breach.

I think it is disturbing that somehow this has become such a partisan issue. We should all be on the floor today encouraging the administration to not let this agreement be eroded by the failure to enforce.

An agreement is only as good as the enforcement capability, and we need to fund the IAEA. We need to make sure they have adequate resources. My great friend from Delaware has suggested a long-term strategy for funding. We need to make sure they have the political support, not just in this body, but across the world to do the right thing.

We have been talking about the reason we, in fact, agreed to allow this agreement to go forward, and the biggest agreement was the enforcement regime. We believed that because of the unprecedented access that the IAEA would have in Iran, we would know more about this program and we would have access to more. We were reassured about that access when we went to Vienna. We were reassured that, yes, they were not going to back down, but if they do back down and don't give access, we need enforcement. We should all be joining together to talk about what that enforcement should look like, how we fund that enforcement, and what a difference it could make.

I share a level of optimism that we are moving in the right direction, but being someone who has negotiated deals, I know it is not over when you sign on to the agreement. It is never over when you sign on to the agreement. It is going to take a level of absolute myopic focus on enforcement to make sure we realize the promise of this international agreement and that we work with our allies and work with our colleagues. We can't do that if we don't have people in those positions who can have a dialogue and speak for the administration, and we certainly can't do it if we allow an incremental breach.

I am joining with my colleagues to provide a unified voice that says: We stand ready to do what it takes to enforce this agreement and prevent breach and make sure we realize the promise of the joint agreement.

Mr. BOOKER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Ms. HEITKAMP. I will be glad to yield to the Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. I was with the Senator when you heard from Prime Minister Netanyahu about the priorities and the partnership between our two nations, including support for the Iron Dome and David's Sling. What was also critical, was our cooperation to prevent terror tunnels. One of the other challenges we had before this deal was even executed, was Hezbollah's vast arsenal of rockets that could be fired toward Israel. Those missiles are getting more sophisticated and their range is getting longer.

I don't think people put the connection together between the importance of us doing the work of the Treasury Department to stop the flow of money that can purchase those weapons and have Israeli citizens scrambling for bomb shelters. When we say a name like Adam Szubin, most folks in America have no idea who he is and the work that he is doing. Now that the Senator has been to Israel, I wonder if she can make the connection as to why the work he is doing is so important to stop the growing sophistication and source of those missiles.

Ms. HEITKAMP. I thank my good friend from New Jersey for that question. The surest way to prevent acts of terror is to make sure acts of terror

are never funded. That takes an international banking sophistication and an understanding of every potential loophole you have in every country out there, and that is what Adam Szubin does. He spends all day getting briefings and reports about where those potential failures could be and how to plug those holes. How do we do what is necessary to unfund terrorism? Whether it is ISIL—ISIS—Hezbollah or Hamas, we need to take away the money. That is the surest way toward success.

If we do not confirm someone in this critical position, what is the message? I will be the first person to say that if he is not up to the job, let's find somebody else, but after having met him and watched his testimony and the level of dialogue he has not only with the Democrats but also with the Republicans—this isn't about the caliber of this gentleman to serve our country. It is about a political fight over this deal. The deal is done—not done, but the deal is in its infancy. If we are going to realize the promise of this deal and the commitment this country made, we absolutely need people in place to make sure this deal is enforced, and that is in fact Adam Szubin.

My colleagues who were on the trip with me know we received a number of briefings that went to the heart of taking a look at the international banking system, where the weakest links are, and how we can attack those weakest links in shutting down the terrorist network for financing this terrible behavior.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues who have come to the floor to join with one voice in recognizing the very strong progress that is being made so far in implementing the JCPOA, in implementing the nuclear deal with Iran.

I wish to particularly thank my colleague from North Dakota who has taken her experience on the banking committee to help us understand why it is so important to have confirmed senior administration figures who can enforce the sanctions that were on the books before this deal, were enforced during this deal, and should be enforced going forward.

In closing, let me briefly make some reference as to what that means. The JCPOA was an agreement about constraining Iran's nuclear program, but the sanctions the United States has on the books to stop Iran's support for terrorism, to stop Iran's ballistic missile program, and to stop Iran's human rights abuses or to hold them accountable and sanction them for those abuses will remain on the books.

I will briefly mention that during the negotiation of the JCPOA, the Treasury Department, where Adam Szubin is the nominee to be the top sanction enforcement person, utilized multiple authorities and sanctioned more than 100 Iranians and Iran-linked entities, including more than 40, under its ongoing terrorism sanction authorities.

Just this past July, three senior Hezbollah military officials were sanctioned in Syria and Lebanon because they provided military support to the Assad regime. In November, the Treasury Department designated procurement agents and companies in Lebanon, China, and Hong Kong, and just this last week, on January 7, the Treasury Department targeted a key Hezbollah support network by designating a Hezbollah financier and member, Ali Youssef Charara, and Spectrum Investment Group.

As my colleague from New Jersey has said, we are all optimistic that the administration will take the next step and soon impose sanctions in response to recent ballistic missile launches.

I celebrated earlier because I recognized the success the administration had in interdicting a weapons shipment from Iran to the Houthis rebels, their proxies in the region. The fundamental point is this. If we want to have the positive successes of the JCPOA, and if we want to continue to have the opportunity to constrain Iran's nuclear program and its bad behavior in the region, we have to be vigilantly engaged in oversight and in support for the enforcement of that agreement and for our exercise of the prerogatives and capabilities the American Government has to push back on Iran.

I think by working together in a bipartisan and responsible way, we can get this done. There are folks in this Chamber who opposed the deal and folks who supported it, but what we heard on our recent delegation trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey was that our regional allies are looking for clarity—clarity that the United States stands together in fighting Iran's regional ambitions to support terror and in constraining Iran's nuclear program. We can do that best by confirming these nominees, by funding the IAEA, by exercising the sanction authorities that this administration and this Congress have put in place, and by continuing to make progress under this agreement.

With that, I thank my colleagues and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

THE PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, tonight President Obama will deliver his final State of the Union Address, a closing argument for his Presidency. This President, who promised change, will attempt to point to his administration's accomplishments, as many Presidents have done in the past. However, this will prove to be difficult because Georgians and Americans have seen change but in the wrong direction.

When President Obama took the White House, he promised fiscal responsibility, but right now he is on track to more than double the debt in his tenure. He promised to work together in a bipartisan way, but he used the Democratic supermajority in those first 2 years to force through ObamaCare and Dodd-Frank on the American people. He promised to bring us together, but he has served to divide us as a country. He promised to focus on defeating terrorism, but he created a power vacuum in the Middle East for others who wish to do us harm. There is no denying it, under this President's failed leadership, the American people have had a tough several years.

Today more Americans have fallen into poverty under this Presidency. Too many individuals and families have seen their health care premiums and their deductibles rise to points where they can no longer afford them. Our national debt is almost $19 trillion, which is well past any reasonable tipping point, and we have a global security crisis on our hands that makes the world possibly more dangerous than at any point in my lifetime. These are all symptoms of the President's failed economic policies as well as a lack of leadership in foreign policy.

Even by his own accord, the President has saddled our country with an irresponsible amount of debt which he described in the past as unpatriotic. Before he took office, then-Senator Barack Obama reviewed President Bush's tenure in office saying:

> The way Bush has done it over the last eight years is to take out a credit card from the Bank of China in the name of our children, driving up our national debt from $5 trillion for the first 42 presidents—number 43 added $4 trillion by his lonesome, so that we now have over $9 trillion of debt that we are going to have to pay back—$30,000 for every man, woman, and child. That's irresponsible. It's unpatriotic.

Those are the words of this President, Barack Hussein Obama.

Let's be clear, under this President, our national debt has ballooned to almost $19 trillion from $10 trillion. That means that President Obama has added almost $9 trillion already and is on track to more than double this debt before he is through.

Before President Obama leaves office, he will have nearly added as much debt as all of the other Presidents before him. This is even more outrageous when you factor in how much revenue or tax dollars the Federal Government has collected.

In 2015, we collected over $3.4 trillion in taxes for our Federal Government. This is more than any year in our history. Washington does not have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem, and it is focused on the wrong priorities.

Equally concerning, this massive debt isn't interest free. If interest rates were to rise to the 30-year average of only 5.5 percent, the interest on this debt would amount to over $1 trillion each year. That is more than twice what we spent on all nonmilitary discretionary spending. It is more than twice what we spend on our military and defending our country. It is totally out of control and this is unmanageable.

In reality, this debt crisis will only get worse because this President and

Washington have not tackled the government's largest expense—mandatory spending programs such as Social Security and Medicare. This debt crisis does not only present a fiscal problem, it is inextricably linked to the global security concerns we are seeing today.

In order to have a strong foreign policy, we have to have a strong military, but to have a strong military we have to have a vibrant and growing strong economy. There is no secret that down through history the countries that have had the strongest militaries, and therefore the most secure foreign policy, are those that had the most vibrant economies of their day. Under this President's foreign policy decisions, he has created a power vacuum and put the country in a much weaker position.

Today our enemies don't fear us and our allies don't trust us. Just three decades ago we brought down the Soviet Union with the power of our ideas and the strength of our economy. Look at the world today. Over the past 7 years, we have seen the rise of a global security crisis that is unrivaled in my lifetime. We have seen the rise of traditional rivals such as China and Russia grow more aggressive. We have seen North Korea and Iran actually collaborate on nuclear proliferation. We have seen Syria cross red lines and terrorism fill power vacuums in the Middle East and around the world.

Last week North Korea claimed to have successfully completed its fourth nuclear weapons test with a much more powerful weapon than they possessed before. This is a sobering and stark reminder of the true consequences our country faces when our President shows weakness in the face of these radical regimes. And not only have we witnessed weaknesses, but we have also seen this President naively trust a country like Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism today.

Since President Obama announced his dangerous Iran deal in July despite strong bipartisan opposition, Iran has actively accelerated its ballistic missile program and continued financial support for terrorism in the region, in violation of the very sanction we just heard on this floor.

Iran has fired rockets near U.S. warships, fomented unrest in Yemen, taken more Americans hostages, refused to release an American passenger who has been held for 3 years, convicted an American journalist of spying, banned American products from being sold in Iran, and renewed its support for Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists.

From the beginning, President Obama didn't listen to military advice and prematurely pulled our troops out of Iraq, creating another power vacuum. ISIS, of course, we now know, grew into that power vacuum and sprouted influence not only in the Middle East but in Africa and Asia as well.

Last November, this President told the American people in a news interview:

> We have contained them. They have not gained ground in Iraq. And in Syria if they'll come in, they'll leave. But you don't see this systematic march by ISIL across the terrain.

Well, we now know ISIS is not being contained in their ability to wage war against the West and will stop at nothing to deliver terrorism even to the shores of America. The President's plan has failed, it is plain and simple, and we sit here today with no strategy to defeat ISIS.

The world needs to see decisive action from the United States, not empty rhetoric that can't be backed up. We need a new leader who takes every threat of any size seriously. Moving forward, nothing can go unchecked and unmet without relentless American resolve.

No matter how we measure it, President Obama's economic and foreign policies have indeed failed. Time and again, he has refused to change course when his policies didn't work, when they didn't help the American people, whom he claims to champion. Instead, this President has created the fourth arm of government—the regulators—and they are sucking the very life out of our free enterprise system today. Now, fewer people are working, wages are stagnant, incomes aren't growing, the debt is soaring, and the world is much more dangerous than it was 8 years ago.

But tonight we will also hear from this President about his optimism for the future. Well, I get that. I share that optimism but only because I believe we can do better. We can do a lot better. We can tackle our national debt crisis. We can save Social Security and Medicare. We can defeat terrorism once and for all. We cannot do it without bold leadership, however. We cannot do it without a sense of urgency or responsibility. We cannot do it unless the political class in this town—Washington, DC—finally puts national interests in front of self-interests. We cannot do it without the will and support of the American people.

I believe in America. Georgians believe in America. Americans believe in America. Americans have always risen to the crisis of the day, and I believe we will rise to this crisis. But Washington needs to really listen to the American people, focus on solutions they support, and unite our Nation to make sure our best days are indeed ahead of us. We owe it to our children and our children's children, and the time to move is right now. The time for rhetoric has ended.

We need to face up to the two crises we have today: the global security crisis and our own debt crisis, which are interwoven together.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I withdraw the motion to proceed to S. 2232.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

AMERICAN SECURITY AGAINST FOREIGN ENEMIES ACT OF 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 300, H.R. 4038.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

> Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 300, H.R. 4038, a bill to require that supplemental certifications and background investigations be completed prior to the admission of certain aliens as refugees, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

> We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 300, H.R. 4038, an act to require that supplemental certifications and background investigations be completed prior to the admission of certain aliens as refugees, and for other purposes.
>
> Mitch McConnell, Rob Portman, John Thune, Tom Cotton, Steve Daines, James M. Inhofe, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Lindsey Graham, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Michael B. Enzi, James E. Risch, John McCain.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived with respect to this cloture motion.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I further ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture vote occur at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 20, and that if cloture is invoked, then the time be counted as if it had been invoked at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, January 19.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business,