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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business, with time reserved for the Democrats.

Ms. COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2577, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2577) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Collins amendment No. 3896, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Lee) amendment No. 3897 (to amendment No. 3896), to prohibit the use of funds to carry out a rule and notice of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

McConnell (for Nelson/Rubio) amendment No. 3898 (to amendment No. 3896), making supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 2016 to respond to Zika virus.

McConnell (for Cornyn) modified amendment No. 3899 (to amendment No. 3896), making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016.

McConnell (for Blunt) modified amendment No. 3900 (to amendment No. 3896), Zika response and preparedness.

Collins (for Blunt) amendment No. 3946 (to amendment No. 3900), to require the periodic submission of spending plan updates to the Committee on Appropriations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I thought it would be useful for our colleagues if I gave a brief update on where we are. First of all, I think it is important to know that more than 70 Senators had input into the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development and Related Agencies funding bill. I am sure if you added the number of Senators who weighed in on the VA-Military Construction bill, the number is even higher.

We worked very hard in the subcommittee process and the full committee process to incorporate suggestions from many of our colleagues to produce a bipartisan bill. The ranking member, my friend and colleague Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island, has been a tremendous leader in this effort. We have worked in a very transparent and collaborative manner to bring us where we are today.

Since we started the debate on this bill, we have had 17 amendments that have been adopted by unanimous consent on the two divisions of the bill. That has required a great deal of work, but I think it shows the good faith of both of the managers of the bill and the sponsors of these amendments that we were able to work together, compromise, negotiate, and get them adopted in three separate packages.

We are continuing that process. More and more amendments have been filed, and we are continuing to see how we can best accommodate the concerns that have been raised by our colleagues while keeping the essential principles of this bill and the desire to make sure we keep on track with the appropriations process.

I believe it is a great credit to the Senate, to the leaders, and to Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, who has made as a goal that we would report all of the appropriations bills, bring them to the floor, one by one, for full and open debate, the way it should be, and that we get our work done so we avoid the situation of either having a series of continuing resolutions—which lock in last year's priorities and lead to wasteful spending, which is not a good solution and ends up costing us more because agencies can't plan, they can't do their contracting activity—or having the other unfortunate outcome of bundling all 12 of the appropriations bills into one huge omnibus bill that is thousands of pages long and is very difficult for Members to know exactly what is in the bill.

That is not a good way to legislate. It is not in keeping with our responsibilities. I am proud the Appropriations Committee in this Chamber is doing its job and that the Republican leader set as the goal that we are starting the appropriations process earlier than ever before. The Energy and Water appropriations bill was passed earlier than any appropriations bill in literally decades. I would note that would not be possible without the cooperation we have had from our Democratic colleagues on the committee. We have worked as teams. That is the way the process should work. I could not have a better partner in that regard than Senator JACK REED.

We also had a very vigorous debate yesterday on the funding that is necessary to combat the very serious threat posed by the Zika virus. We know this virus causes very severe birth defects, in some cases, and has been linked to Guillain-Barre syndrome, which can lead to paralysis and even death. So this is a serious public health threat.

A couple of weeks ago, Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON and I went to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA. We were briefed on the threat posed by Zika, which is carried by a mosquito that is known as the cockroach in the mosquito world because it is so difficult to get rid of. It can reproduce in water in a container that is size of a bottle cap. We know Zika has already become an epidemic in Puerto Rico and that there are confirmed cases in nearly every State in the Union. That is because, even if you live in a far Northern State where the type of mosquito that causes Zika is not present, such as the State represented by the Presiding Officer, Zika is still a threat. People travel. We know it can be transmitted through sexual contact. That is why we are seeing Zika showing up in virtually every State. We need to get ahead of this epidemic. That is why we had three different approaches offered yesterday on the Senate floor. Cloture was successfully invoked on a bipartisan proposal offered by Senators BLUNT and MURRAY that provides more than $1 billion to counter effectively the threat of Zika.

The last thing we want is not to have acted against this serious public health threat and find that pregnant women, who are especially at risk, are going to be infected and, in some cases, have children who will have a lifetime of serious disabilities as a result of the impact of Zika. We are hearing more and more about the dangers of the Zika virus every day.

I have great confidence in the CDC, which is the major interface with our local and State public health agencies, to do an excellent job on prevention and education of providers and the public. They are also working on diagnostic tests so we can have a more rapid response to Zika. The National Institutes of Health is working on a vaccine which we hope will be available in another year, but in the meantime this truly is a public health emergency.

I believe the Senate deserves great credit for putting the Zika supplemental on our bill and providing adequate funding to do the job, to do the job that is necessary to counter this very serious threat.

We will have to proceed to a vote on the underlying Blunt-Murray amendment now that we have invoked cloture by 68 votes. I would note also that there is a 1 p.m. deadline today on filing first-degree amendments to the substitute bill. I also anticipate that this afternoon we will have a debate on Senator LEE's amendment, which has to do with a rule the Department of

Housing and Urban Development has issued to implement provisions of the landmark 1968 Fair Housing Act.

In addition, Senator REED and Senator COCHRAN and I have offered an alternative amendment. At some point, we will have votes related both to the Collins-Reed-Cochran amendment and the Lee amendment. That is going to be a very important debate this afternoon on a very important policy that I believe helps to further the goals of the 1968 civil rights-era Fair Housing Act. That will be an important debate on this bill.

In the meantime, we are continuing to work with our colleagues on other amendments, as the Presiding Officer is well aware. I believe we are continuing to make progress. I thank my colleagues for coming to the floor, for working with us. That is the update I wanted to give my colleagues at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

ARKANSANS OF THE WEEK

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I would like to honor all Arkansas law enforcement officers as this week's Arkansans of the Week. This week marks the 54th National Police Week. On Sunday, we marked National Peace Officers Memorial Day, a day set aside by President Kennedy in 1962 to honor those law enforcement officers who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Arkansas has over 7,000 law enforcement officers who protect our State every day. These men and women willingly put themselves in harm's way to ensure the safety of our residents, and maintain order in our State. National Police Week is also a time to remember and honor the nearly 300 Arkansans who have lost their lives in the line of duty as law enforcement officers. Their service and sacrifice is not forgotten, and Arkansas is safer because of their service.

There are many different types of law enforcement officers, but each plays an important and distinct role in our safety. There are officers, such as Chris Bunch of the Paragould Police Department, who protect Arkansas' students as a school resource officer, officers such as Jeff Prescott and Sergeant Greg Herron, who are retiring from the Rison Police Department after 30 and 20 years of service, respectively, and Corporal Kristi Bennett of the Texarkana Police Department, who serves as the public information and education officer. Kristi recently received the Silent Wilbur Award, which is given to an officer who shows leadership and works to motivate and move their community forward.

These are just a few of the long list of Arkansas law enforcement officers who serve our State, but there are many more where those names come from.

I know I join all Arkansans in extending our sincere thanks and appreciation to all Arkansas law enforcement officers, not only this week but every week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

OBAMACARE

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, we are all too familiar with the famous promises President Obama made to sell the American people on his ObamaCare proposal, and yes, I said, ''sell.''

We now know from White House revelations made by former Members who work for the President that the White House has been actively engaged in selling their program, selling their proposals to the American people through some admittedly sophisticated ways in using social media to achieve a goal. Just recently, White House National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes did an interview and discussed openly how the White House manipulated the media and the American people to sell the administration's Iranian nuclear agreement.

With all the authority given to an American President, President Obama made this statement to sell ObamaCare to the American people—and I quote: ''No matter how we reform health care,'' the President said, ''We will keep this promise to the American people: If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period. If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period.''

Why did the President add ''period'' to that statement? The statements are clear. If you like your doctor, you keep your doctor. If you like your health care plan, you keep your health care plan. When you add ''period,'' it basically says: Take my word for it. Count on it. It is a done deal. I am telling you, the American people, I am making you a promise—period. You can take this one to the bank.

I am not often a reader of the New York Times, but a recent headline in the paper caught my attention: ''Sorry, We Don't Take Obamacare.'' The article discusses the growing number of doctors and hospitals who are no longer accepting patients who are covered by ObamaCare insurance plans. So much for ''If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period.'' So much for that promise.

It is not just medical professionals who are saying no to ObamaCare. The largest health insurer, UnitedHealth Group, recently announced it will stop selling individual ObamaCare plans in Indiana next year because such plans simply are not profitable. It is pretty hard to run a business if you are not making a profit. If you are losing money, you can't pay the employees. You can't produce your product. UnitedHealthcare has said: We have lost so much money under this ObamaCare mandate that we are going to stop selling individual plans.

According to the Indianapolis Business Journal:

> In April, UnitedHealth said it would drop out of all but a ''handful'' of state exchanges where it sells individual Obamacare plans. It had said the exchange market was smaller and riskier than it had expected.

I think I heard a lot of the Republican Members on the floor basically saying what has been written and endorsed and imposed on the American people is something that simply doesn't make economic sense. There are going to be insurance companies that simply are not going to be able to not only survive on this basis but will not make any profit whatsoever. Obviously, with the case of UnitedHealthcare, they are dropping this because they simply cannot expose themselves to this kind of risk. It is said that they will lose $650 million on the plans this year alone, and UnitedHealthcare sold coverage in 34 States on the ObamaCare exchanges.

The UnitedHealthcare situation is not unique. According to the Indiana Business Journal, ''Roughly half of the health insurers selling plans on the Obamacare exchange in Indiana lost money on the business last year.''

So much for the President's promise: ''If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period.'' So much for the President's promise.

Decreased access to providers is just one of many problems with ObamaCare. Another major problem is the rising cost of coverage for those who are on this plan. Oh, yes, there were other promises made by the President here also. You may recall the President promised that the annual health care costs would be cut by $2,500 per family if ObamaCare were enacted. As recently as 2012, we were told by the President that the health insurance premiums paid by small businesses and individuals will go down because of ObamaCare—another promise to the American people: Don't worry, folks. . . . Your costs are going to go down, not up.

Despite that promise that ObamaCare will cut costs and make coverage more affordable for families and small businesses, many Americans are experiencing higher premiums or paying outrageous deductibles when they purchase coverage through the ObamaCare exchanges.

I have been on this floor documenting literally hundreds, if not thousands, of inputs to my office through phone calls, emails, and so forth, saying: Wait a minute. I just got a notice from my insurance company that my deductible is skyrocketing from $1,000 to $5,000 or to $7,500 or $9,000. I can't afford this kind of stuff. I thought we were promised this wouldn't happen. It is not just the deductibles, it is the copays.

All of a sudden, I walk in and a doctor's office says: Wait a second. You have to put down the cash copay here. My copays have just gone through the roof.

Premium increases have dramatically increased. The average premium

for benchmark silver plans in the Federal exchange, the ObamaCare exchange, is rising by 7.5 percent this year.

In Indiana, premiums for policies on the ObamaCare marketplace have gone up by an average of 14.4 percent per year since ObamaCare was implemented, a total increase. Get this. We have had a total increase in premiums under ObamaCare in Indiana totaling 71.5 percent.

Tell the American people: You have my word, period. This isn't going to happen.

It happens, and what do we hear? What is this rhetoric we hear coming out of the White House? This is one of the most wonderful things that has ever happened.

In the campaign—I mean, those running for office from the President's party are simply saying: You have to elect us to preserve this wonderful ObamaCare health plan.

Is it any wonder the American people are turning out in record numbers to vote against this kind of thing?

These are just a few of the many broken promises and the many problems with the ObamaCare law. There are many other things I could get into, such as the failure of many State-run exchanges. Some States only have one exchange or no exchanges left. The rollout of the plan—which cost American taxpayers hundreds of millions of hard-earned tax dollars because this rollout was so botched nobody could get into the computers or even on the phone—the thing was rushed to meet a deadline, and they weren't prepared. It was hundreds of millions of dollars just to get it on board so people could begin to ask questions as to what they were mandated they had to do. So from increasing premiums and increased health care costs to failures to keep your doctor, to reduced access to doctors and hospitals, the bottom line is ObamaCare is not working for the American people.

Rather than making health care more affordable and successful, ObamaCare has actually driven up health care costs and a decreased choice of doctors for too many Americans and too many American businesses. It is long past time for repeal of the President's disastrous health care law. We need to replace it with more effective and clearly patient-centered solutions.

Despite numerous attempts by Republicans to repeal this fatally flawed legislation, all efforts have been rejected by the President and the White House, but we are approaching the time when the American people can express their response to these broken promises this administration has made in relation to ObamaCare.

Mr. President, with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise to speak once again about the rising cost of health care in the United States.

It has been a few months since I came to the floor to comment on the state of our health care system. Sadly, over that time period, we have seen little, if anything, in the way of good news. Indeed, while the United States has some of the best health care law in the world, recent headlines point to serious problems with how that system is working.

A little over 6 years ago, the Democrats on both sides of the Capitol and on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue forced the so-called Affordable Care Act on the American people without any Republican votes or any serious attempt to get bipartisan consensus. The result was an attempt at overhaul of roughly one-sixth of the American economy crafted with the input and support of only one political party.

As I have said before, given its size and scope, the passage and signing of ObamaCare was probably the largest exercise of pure partnership in our Nation's history. Quite frankly, our country hasn't been the same since.

At the time the law was passed, Republicans made a number of predictions about the negative impact this law would have for people buying health insurance and for our economy overall. Six years later, many of those predictions have already come to pass, with many more on the way.

Still, looking back on it, I think we may have undersold our case at the time. I don't think any of us could have predicted just how detrimental the law would be, not only for the United States but on our Nation's public discourse and our government institutions. As a result of ObamaCare, the divide between Republicans and Democrats has gotten deeper, voters have become more cynical and distrusting of our government and our leaders, and the government itself has expanded its powers well beyond the authority granted in the statute.

At the time the law was passed, many of us issued warnings of what was to come, though much of that seemed to have been drowned out by the sounds of celebration emanating from the Capitol and the White House.

To quote some of my friends on the other side, passage of this law was a ''big bleeping deal'' because once the law was passed, the American people would finally get a chance to see what was in it. In the midst of all that self-adulation, many promises were made about what the law would do for individuals and families throughout the United States of America.

Chief among those many promises was a claim that as a result of in law, the cost of health care for the average American family would go down. That is what the American people were told in 2010. In 2016, the law has been implemented and in effect for 3 years. Despite those many promises, average health insurance premiums have gone up every single year. As insurers begin to make decisions about rates and availability for the 2017 plan year, we are looking at significantly higher premiums, double-digit increases in some places, for the fourth straight year.

Reports about these premium increases seem to be coming in on a daily basis. For example, in Virginia we know that among the five largest carriers in the State, premiums could go up anywhere from 9 percent to 37 percent, with a likely average of around 18 percent.

In Iowa, tens of thousands of people who buy their insurance from one major carrier will likely see increases in the neighborhood of 40 percent. In Oregon, the State's largest insurer in the individual market has requested a premium increase of nearly 30 percent. That number, 30 percent, is similar to the rate hikes requested by some of the largest insurers in Maryland as well.

I could go on and on. I am not just cherry-picking States, this is a trend. Unfortunately, it is having a real-world impact. People are concerned, and they have every right to be. According to a Gallup poll a few weeks back, health care costs are the No. 1 financial concern for families in the United States. People are more concerned about health care costs than they are about low wages, housing, education, or even debt. As premiums go up, I can imagine that the number of families concerned about health care costs will continue to go up as well.

In addition to higher premiums for 2017, we are also hearing many insurers will be opting to drop out of the exchange markets. For example, one of the country's largest insurers has, so far, decided to pull out of more than two dozen State exchanges due to mounting losses. This is the same company that currently offers plans in 34 different States but has said it will continue to do so only in a small number of States going forward.

In Utah, we recently saw the closing of an ObamaCare co-op that covered roughly 45,000 people, all of whom had to find health insurance at the beginning of this year. Indeed, 12 of the 23 co-ops around the country have already closed, further reducing the number of health insurance options available to people throughout the country.

The Obama administration is trying to downplay these reports and convince people that a smaller number of insurers in various markets will not be a problem. But the impact should be obvious: When an insurer—let alone many insurers—drops out of a market, the patients and consumers in that market are left with fewer choices. And in any market, for any product, when consumers have reduced options, it generally leads to both lower quality and higher prices. That is definitely true in the health insurance market.

The question many are asking is, Why is this happening? Why are so many insurers raising premiums or choosing not to participate in the ObamaCare exchanges? The answer is relatively simple: ObamaCare is not working and can't work the way it was designed.

I think it would be helpful at this point to briefly review its timeline. From the time the law was first drafted, the Affordable Care Act included a number of insurance coverage mandates designed to dictate what insurance companies had to offer and what coverage patients would have to buy. Of course, imposing those kinds of requirements was bound to increase the cost of insurance across the board.

However, if you will recall, during the congressional debate over the law, the President and his supporters repeatedly claimed that because the law was going to require everyone to have health insurance, more young and healthy patients would be coerced into the insurance risk pools. According to their arguments, this shift in the market would more than compensate for the costs associated with the new insurance coverage mandates. In short, they claimed they could expand coverage requirements and keep premiums from going up.

Now, fast forward to 2013, which is when the exchanges went online. At that time, insurers entered the exchanges and set premium rates, presumably assuming the law would work as promised. As it turns out, that assumption was ill informed in many cases, and insurance companies across the board found they had priced their premiums too low. The expansion of younger, healthier, less risky market participants never came and, as a result, the industry suffered huge losses.

According to a report released last month by the Mercatus Center, in 2014 alone, insurers nationwide suffered more than $2 billion in losses for plans sold on the exchanges. This happened despite subsidies they received from the government to mitigate the risk of covering a mostly unknown population.

As we fast forward once again to the present day, we see that this situation has not corrected itself over the first 3 plan years under ObamaCare. In fact, it has only gotten worse. Premiums are going up, enrollment is lagging far behind the initial rosy estimates, and millions of the younger, healthier population of insured people the system needs to properly function are either opting to pay the fines for going without insurance, going undetected because they do not file tax returns, or staying on their parents insurance for as long as legally possible.

A recent Blue Cross Blue Shield report compared three separate groups among the carrier's membership. These groups were, No. 1, individual members newly enrolled in the ObamaCare exchanges; No. 2, members who had individual plans prior to the passage of ObamaCare; and No. 3, members currently enrolled in Blue Cross employer plans. According to the study, the people newly enrolled in insurance under ObamaCare are significantly less healthy and require significantly more services than the other two groups. The cost of care among that group is, not surprisingly, significantly more expensive.

That is remarkable. If we assume what is happening in this study is in any way reflective of what is happening nationwide, not only did the Affordable Care Act fail to create more favorable risk pools for insurers and patients sharing the costs, but the risk pools are, overall, more risky now than they were before.

While a number of complicated factors have likely contributed to this outcome, the major reason we are seeing this result is relatively simple: ObamaCare did little, if anything, to address health care costs. As a result, young and healthy people who are less in need of health insurance are making the calculation that it would be less costly for them to go uninsured and pay a fine than purchase insurance through an exchange. Indeed, in countless polls and surveys of still uninsured Americans, we have seen the biggest reason people refuse to buy health insurance is that it costs too much.

Under this status quo, insurers can stay afloat only in one of two ways: They can raise premiums, which makes their coverage even more costly, driving more young and healthy people out of the market, further depleting the risk pools, or they can exit unprofitable markets. Currently, we are seeing insurers do both, ensuring that the exchanges—and with them the entire system created by the Affordable Care Act—are becoming more unstable all the time.

Let's be clear: There is no solution to this problem that keeps the current system in place. There is no way to reset or rearrange the incentives under the current system. There is no minor tinkering that can fix these problems. It is not simply going to correct itself over time. Quite frankly, the system is damaged beyond repair. The only thing we can do to give options to patients and bring down costs is create a different system.

Some of us have put forward plans to do just that. I have a plan that I put forward with Senator BURR and Chairman UPTON over in the House. It is called the Patient CARE Act, which I have mentioned a number of times here on the floor. However, ours isn't the only solution out there. There are a number of ideas. We just need to get serious about addressing these issues. But that will not happen—that will not happen—so long as people refuse to acknowledge there is even a problem.

The supporters and authors of the Affordable Care Act have gotten pretty good over the years at mining the available data for favorable citations and moving the goalposts for what qualifies as ''success'' for this law in order to fool the American people. Fortunately, the people are not buying it.

Since the day the law passed, 90 percent of national polls show that more people oppose ObamaCare than support it. I don't see that changing as long as premiums keep going up and people are left with fewer and fewer options.

However, as always, I am an optimist. I believe we can make some progress here. I currently chair the Senate committee with jurisdiction over many of the most consequential elements of ObamaCare. Over the next few months, I plan to do something that the authors of ObamaCare never did—listen. I am going to take the time to engage with stakeholders from across the spectrum to get a clear sense of what needs to be done to bring down health care costs for American families and get skyrocketing premiums, deductibles, and out-of-pocket limits under control.

I plan to hear from experts, industry leaders, and advocacy groups to get their ideas in order to arrive at a workable solution. Then I am going to solicit the help of anyone in Congress—from either side of the aisle—who is willing to put in the necessary work to right this ship and craft meaningful legislation to address these problems.

As I said, the cost of health care is the No. 1 financial concern for American families. It is an issue that deserves the attention of everyone in this Chamber. Finding a solution will require not only that we acknowledge the failings of the system created by the Affordable Care Act but that we also work together to address these failings in a productive, less political way—in a bipartisan way, if you will.

Now, that is my focus when it comes to health care, Mr. President. I hope all of my colleagues will be willing to work with me on this effort.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

AMENDMENT NO. 3897

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise to speak on Lee amendment No. 3897 that deals with the Federal Fair Housing Act, and I want to describe why many of my colleagues and I are opposed to the amendment. The amendment would eliminate the current affirmative furthering fair housing enforcement regulations promulgated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. I want to go into that.

I will start with a personal story. Before I was in partisan elected politics, I was a civil rights lawyer in Richmond for 17 years. About two-thirds of my legal practice was fair housing cases. I will just tell you the story about my first client and two lessons I learned from my first client that bear upon this amendment.

I had barely hung my diploma on the wall in my office, where I was the junior person among 12 lawyers, when a client was referred to our firm. They

did what is often the case; they sent it to the newest person. Somebody needed some help—pro bono assistance. This young woman's name was Loraine.

Loraine was almost exactly my age. I think I was 25 at the time, and she was the same age. I had just moved to a new city and had just gone out to find my apartment in that new city and started my first real job after school. She was kind of in the same place—just out of college, just starting a new job, just looking for an apartment.

Loraine had been at work one day and had read in the newspaper an ad for an apartment in a neighborhood she liked. So she called the landlord and said: Hey, I am really interested in your apartment. Is it still available? Yes, it is available. Could I come over on my lunch hour to take a look? Sure, come on over.

Well, about an hour later she went over to the apartment, and when she met the owner, the owner looked at her and said: Oh, I'm sorry, this place has just been rented.

This was in the fall of 1984.

Loraine drove back to her office and had this sinking suspicion that when the person saw she was African American, maybe that was why suddenly the available apartment turned into one that wasn't available. When she got back to the office, she asked a Caucasian colleague to make a call to the same owner and ask about the apartment. Within 20 minutes the colleague had made the call and asked: Hey, I'm calling about this apartment. Is it still available? The owner, who had just turned Loraine away, said: Sure, it's still available. When do you want to come over and see it?

That was the first lawsuit I drafted. I know I am speaking to a Presiding Officer who is an attorney and who has done the same thing. For the first client who was truly mine, the first pleading I drafted was a Federal fair housing action. With the testimony of the coworker, it was a slam-dunk case. We settled it shortly after we filed it. So in that sense, I don't have a big momentous trial story or anything to tell. Nevertheless, it made a huge impression on me as a brand-new attorney for two reasons. First, in hearing my client tell me the story, I understood more deeply than I ever had how important your home is, how important housing is. I think most of us feel that what is important in life is relationships—not things, not physical objects. But where you live is more like a part of your person than it is a physical thing.

As she described this experience, obviously, that was what made it so painful. But the thing that really stuck with me about this was this: She and I were so similar in many ways—about the same age, excited to be coming out to find a house, having a new job. But my experience—I found an apartment with no problem for my wife and me—was a positive one. But Loraine's experience of being turned away—and then having the sinking suspicion that she was turned away because of her skin color and then finding out that was the case—was a very negative and painful one. What really struck me, as I talked to her, was that the pain was not just the pain of something in the past tense. The pain was also the anticipation: What about the next time I look for a house? What about the next time? Am I going to be faced with this same differential treatment because of the color of my skin?

That first case I had suddenly made me the expert in Virginia on fair housing law—doing one case that was settled within a matter of weeks. So for the next 17 years, this was the heart of my legal practice—representing people who had been turned away from housing because of their race, disabilities—apartments, houses, mortgages, homeowner's insurance policies. I learned an awful lot when I did it.

One of the things I learned was what a superb piece of legislation the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 is. It was the last of the major pieces of civil rights legislation done in the 1960s. There was the 1964 act of public accommodations, employment discriminations, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 1968, the Federal Fair Housing Act was really the last of those big pieces of Federal legislation. I am proud to say that even over the course of my legal career, from 1984 until I stopped practicing in early 2002, in Virginia and elsewhere there was significant improvement. The Federal Fair Housing Act really did open the doors so that people could live where they wanted to live and as their resources would allow them to live there. Yet, if we just looked at the statistics about residential segregation, in all 50 States, we would see that we still have more work to do. There are still barriers that people face, and some of them are just absolute, sharp, and clear barriers, and some of them are more subtle.

HUD was directed by GAO in 2010 to do a study because they had been encouraged as part of the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 to encourage affirmatively to advance the fair housing mission through agencies that are funded by HUD. The case that I described with Loraine was a private landlord, and that is not necessarily relevant to this topic except to underline how important the law is and how critical housing is. But there are circumstances in which HUD is giving funding to organizations.

I was a mayor, and my city had a housing authority. HUD funding went into the housing authority in my city, just like it goes into housing authorities all around the United States. I was a Governor, and Governors got CDBG funds that came from HUD. So whether it is to a city, county, State, or to a CDBG program that then gets allocated out—even to worthy and strong housing nonprofits—HUD was under a directive when it was funding organizations to make sure they were affirmatively advancing the commands of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. HUD was doing this sort of in fits and starts and in a little bit of an extemporaneous way. In 2010, the GAO said: You have an obligation to affirmatively further fair housing, but you are not exactly doing it the right way. Can you really look at guidance that you can give to your grantees?

Now, this was really important—that Federal grantees get this guidance and affirmatively further fair housing because it wasn't just the private landlords of the world that had done bad things in the housing industry. In fact, there had been a lot of policies of State and local governments, and even the Federal Government, that had cut against fair housing. There were zoning laws that cut against fair housing. There were Federal appraisal standards to get FHA loans that cut against fair housing, and there were other Federal policies that actually cut directly against the goal of allowing people to live where they wanted to live.

So that is the reason why these grantees that are receiving Federal money, are in a unique position to do something about it, and often are inheriting a history where in the past they did the wrong things, need to be encouraged and given clear guidance about how to affirmatively further fair housing.

So to follow the GAO directive, HUD, under this administration—and I give Secretary Castro huge credit for getting this to the goal line—did the work to come up with clear guidance so that organizations that receive HUD funding know what it means to affirmatively encourage fair housing and so that it is not just a vague platitude or something you pay lip service to but you don't actually do it.

The rule announced by HUD is pretty straightforward. It doesn't mandate changes to local zoning laws. It doesn't require people to move. It doesn't end local control of community planning and development. It allows communities to determine what the best strategies are to comply with the Fair Housing Act. It provides local communities with data and tools that are needed to make fair housing decisions, including allowing local communities to add any relevant local or regional data so that people can understand the effects of their actions.

It does include protected classes in the statute in the larger community planning process. It prevents the use of Federal resources to discriminate against protected classes of individuals. It simplifies compliance with the Fair Housing Act, and this is really important because a lot of small communities don't have a phalanx of lawyers to pour through all the laws and regs. So simplified compliance guidelines are helpful. It does not require grantees to collect new data and data they are not already collecting, and it encourages engagement with the local

community, including the real estate industry, residents, developers, and other organizations.

As somebody who was sitting on the other end of this as a mayor, and as somebody who was appointing members to a public housing agency in Richmond, I think this kind of guidance is actually very, very helpful. So I was heartened when the GAO directed HUD to do this work. HUD did a significant period of study and put out guidance under Secretary Castro's leadership. I think it is actually something that is helpful—not harmful—to those who are receiving HUD funds and should be using HUD funds to advance important goals, including the fair housing goals.

I know the Senator who is proposing the amendment—Lee amendment No. 3897. I know it is well-intentioned, and the intention might be to not put too many burdens and obligations on the shoulders of local planning officials or cities or counties. But as somebody who has been a mayor and been in that spot, guidance is helpful. I actually think this guidance gives clarity in an area where, before the guidance, there was some confusion. I think the guidance strikes the right balance.

I don't know exactly when this is going to be called for a vote. I gather soon. But I just wanted to take the floor and hearken back to the days before I ever knew I would be in politics and I was representing people who desperately needed to just be treated equally to everybody else when it came to their housing. This HUD regulation really furthers that goal in a positive way, and I think we should not eliminate it by accepting Lee amendment No. 3897. So, for that reason, I encourage my colleagues to oppose the amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I just want to thank the Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia for an excellent statement. As he has indicated, he comes to this issue from the perspective of an attorney who is an expert in the Fair Housing Act, which, as he notes, is a landmark civil rights law. But he also brings a very important perspective of having been a mayor who was the recipient of Federal funds and who looked to HUD for guidance on how to make sure that, when community development block grant monies, for example, were given to local communities, the communities used them in ways that carried out the goals of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. It is very valuable that he has both the technical understanding of an attorney who has practiced in this very field for many years and also as a municipal official who had to live with the Federal rules.

The fact is, as he indicated, the Fair Housing Act regulation that came out last year is intended to give clarity to local officials who are the recipients of Federal funds.

I am very much opposed to the amendment offered by Senator LEE that would prohibit any funding for carrying out HUD's affirmatively furthering fair housing rules.

It is important to recognize that this rule didn't just come out of the blue. It is based on a specific requirement included in the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which mandates that HUD ensure that the recipients of Federal funds not only prevent outright blatant discrimination but also act to affirmatively further the fair housing goals of the act.

In fact, Congress has repeatedly reinforced this concept in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act, and the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. All of those laws require HUD program recipients to affirmatively further fair housing. It is probably a phrase that most of us are not that aware of, and it does not come trippingly off of one's tongue. But it is an integral part of the 1968 civil rights law, the Fair Housing Act.

It is also important to remember that when we are discussing fair housing, we are not only talking about discrimination based on race but also discrimination based on disabilities, national origin, and even against families with children.

It is important to note that more than 50 percent of all reported complaints of housing discrimination are initiated by individuals with disabilities. That is one reason the Paralyzed Veterans of America organization has come out so strongly against the amendment that will be offered by Senator LEE.

In a letter issued by the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the organization notes:

> HUD's AFFH rule helps curb discrimination against people with disabilities, including veterans and the elderly. Each year, over 50% of all reported complaints of housing discrimination are initiated by people with disabilities.

The organization goes on to say:

> This alarming trend will continue and affects Americans returning from conflicts abroad with a disability and the growing percentage of elderly Americans with a disability. HUD's AFFH rule will help governments identify strategies and solutions to expand accessible and supportive housing choices for our veterans and elders with disabilities.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter from the Paralyzed Veterans of America be printed in the RECORD.

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

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC.

VOTE "NO" ON LEE ANTI-CIVIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Senator Mike Lee plans to introduce an amendment to the FY17 T-HUD/MilCon-VA appropriations bill which would prohibit HUD from implementing or enforcing its "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" (AFFH) rule (FR–5173–P–01), keeping long-awaited guidance and data intended to help state and local govemments connect housing and community development dollars to neighborhood opportunity. Any limitation or reversal of HUD's AFFH rule will stop our nation from ensuring that federal investments connect every neighborhood to good schools, well-paying jobs, public transportation options, and safe places for children to play and grow.

Senator Lee's amendment would halt implementation of the Fair Housing Act and throw our nation back into the pre-civil rights era. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 was intended to prohibit discrimination and dismantle historic segregation, which continues to limit the housing choices and opportunities of people of color, people with disabilities, families with children, and religious groups. To achieve this goal, the Fair Housing Act requires that recipients of federal housing and community development funding "affirmatively further fair housing" (AFFH).

HUD's AFFH Rule closes recommendations made by the GAO. In 2010 the GAO issued a report recommending that HUD reform its process of implementing the AFFH provision of the Fair Housing Act and the guidance that it provides to grantees. HUD's rule implements the GAO's recommendations by providing state and local governments and PHAs with data about the demographics and housing needs of their communities as well as a framework that they can use to identify and address issues that contribute to isolation and economic inequality.

HUD's proposed rule emphasizes local control in the development and implementation of solutions to remove obstacles to opportunity. Once an analysis of the barriers to fair housing is complete, governments and PHAs have the power to decide for themselves which issues they and local stakeholders identify are important to prioritize and address. HUD leaves these choices to the discretion of local governments and PHAs.

HUD's AFFH rule helps curb discrimination against people with disabilities, including veterans and the elderly. Each year, over 50% of all reported complaints of housing discrimination are initiated by people with disabilities. This alarming trend will continue and affects Americans returning from conflicts abroad with a disability and the growing percentage of elderly Americans with a disability. HUD's AFFH rule will help governments identify strategies and solutions to expand accessible and supportive housing choices for our veterans and elders with disabilities.

Ms. COLLINS. So I think it is important, as we debate this issue today, that we recognize what is at stake. The Paralyzed Veterans of America organization was founded by a band of servicemembers who came home from World War II with spinal cord injuries. I think we should listen to their experience.

There are many other groups that have come out in opposition to Senator LEE's amendment. They include the Urban League. Those are big cities that receive a lot of Federal funds, but they are opposed to Senator LEE's amendment. The NAACP is opposed to the amendment. Disability groups have come out in opposition to the amendment.

There is another extremely important point that the Senator from Virginia made; that is, this rule, which has been criticized by some, is in direct

response to GAO criticizing HUD for not doing a good job in carrying out this part of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. That is so important.

How many of us in this Chamber have repeatedly looked to GAO for advice on how we can improve how Federal programs work? Look to GAO. Look to its 2010 report, which is very critical of HUD. Surely, it is significant that when HUD issued the new regulations last year, the GAO said ''Fine'' and closed out its recommendations as being completed. That is significant.

This wasn't some wild scheme that was dreamed up by bureaucrats at HUD, as some have claimed. This was in response to a report from the Government Accountability Office. We talk about how we want more efficiency, better accountability. That is why we have the GAO. This rule that was directly adopted in response to the GAO's report surely is significant.

I see the Senator from Texas has arrived and wants to speak. I will be speaking more on this issue later today. Let me make one final point.

There are those who have claimed that somehow HUD is going to get involved in dictating the zoning rules and ordinances of local communities. I don't believe that is the case, but we are going to offer an amendment and have filed an amendment to make sure that is not the case.

The amendment that Senator REED, Senator COCHRAN, and I am offering specifically prohibits HUD from dictating in any way to any community what its zoning ordinances should be. If that is a possibility, we will foreclose it with our amendment.

I will be speaking further about this important issue later this afternoon, but I know there are many of my colleagues who are eager to speak, and I will yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to congratulate our friend, the Senator from Maine, for doing a tremendous job of managing this bill. It is never easy, given the fact that an individual Senator can slow down the process or insist on their rights, which I am not disparaging at all. There comes a time in every piece of legislation where it is important for us to make sure that we invoke our rights as Senators on behalf of the people we represent. I know it takes some patience and diligence, and I admire the diligence, patience, and professionalism of our colleague from Maine on what is always a challenging piece of work, which is trying to get an appropriations bill passed.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK AND POLICE ACT

I wish to speak on a different topic. This is National Police Week. Earlier this week I had the chance to visit with a police officer by the name of Gregory Stevens of the Garland Police Department. For people who are not aware, Garland is a city northeast of Dallas, TX. Around this time last year, it was a site of an attempted terrorist attack. There was a display of some artwork of the prophet Muhammad that provoked a terrorist attack. Fortunately, Officer Stevens was the man in the right place at the right time when it happened.

Many of us remember that fateful day last May when two armed gunmen from Phoenix, AZ—clad in body armor with automatic weapons—pulled up to the conference center and opened fire. According to media reports, the attackers were inspired by ISIS, the Islamic State. This is a real problem because these folks, like the shooters in San Bernardino, hadn't actually traveled to Syria, although the San Bernardino couple had been in Saudi Arabia and had traveled overseas—if I am not mistaken. But these people were radicalized in place by the ideology of the Islamic State.

This is a big problem for the United States because, as the FBI director has commented, in every FBI field office in America, there are FBI investigations open on potential radicalization of people in place here in the United States. It doesn't take people traveling from the Middle East over here. It doesn't take people traveling from here, over there, and coming back. This is the third leg of the stool or the third prong of the threat, of people being radicalized in place.

Getting back to my story, Officer Stevens responded decisively. He was able to stop the two terrorists from hurting or killing hundreds of people inside the conference center and, thankfully, he left unscathed.

I asked him: What sort of weapon did you have to protect yourself against these two terrorists in body armor with automatic weapons?

He said: I had a .45-caliber Glock with a 14-shot clip. He said he had to do a tactical reload, but he never fired an additional shot after he reloaded his weapon. For those of us familiar with such things, that is the mark of a real professional—somebody who is very well trained and responds as well as you could hope for.

I know the people of the city of Garland and the folks in Texas are grateful to Officer Stevens for his quick response and his bravery. As I said, he saved potentially hundreds of lives and prevented injuries. I think it is appropriate during National Police Week for us to honor people like Officer Stevens by telling their stories.

On Monday, President Obama presented Officer Stevens the Medal of Valor, the highest honor given to a police officer. It is a fitting tribute to the heroic actions he exhibited that day.

During National Police Week, we should note that there are more than 900,000 law enforcement officers serving our country. After 9/11, we have come to talk about them as being first responders, but I am talking specifically about the law enforcement officers, not the broader category here during National Police Week. They are folks who get up every morning, kiss their families good-bye, go to work, put on a uniform, and put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities and our families.

Tragically, we know that not all of them make it home at the end of the day. Last year, the United States lost 124 law enforcement officials; 12 of those officers were from the State of Texas. All of them had their individual stories, but some left behind spouses and children. I have no doubt that all of them left behind loved ones and people who care deeply about them and a community that, in their absence, misses them terribly.

I am particularly proud of the men and women in my State who serve in law enforcement—not just in Texas but across the country, including here at the Nation's Capitol. Our Capitol Police do a terrific job of keeping all of us safe and not just Members of Congress but, obviously, the hundreds of thousands of tourists who visit the Capitol on an annual basis.

All of the professional law enforcement officials have dedicated their lives to public safety, and we should honor them for it. There is no doubt that our Nation is a better place because of their hard work and dedication, and we all owe them a debt of gratitude.

In the Senate, we need to do everything we can do to help professional law enforcement officials learn how to do their jobs as effectively and as safely possible. One simple way we could do that is by making sure they have access to the very best and latest training techniques—active shooter training, for example.

I recall the situation at Fort Hood when MAJ Nidal Hasan killed 13 people and wounded many more. Two police officers in active shooter mode crashed the site, exposing themselves to danger and ultimately paralyzing Nidal Hasan. More importantly, they took him out of action and saved a lot of lives.

This training they had and they exhibited with such great effect on that day is what we need to give more of our law enforcement officials access to. That is why I am glad to join my colleague, the senior Senator from Vermont, in sponsoring a piece of legislation called the Police Act—a bill that passed out of the Judiciary Committee last week.

This is pretty straightforward and it is bipartisan, so it doesn't make a lot of news, but I do think it serves a useful purpose. It will allow the use of existing grant money for police training to be used for this active shooter training. I know some of that training occurs at Texas State University in San Marcos. I have been to that site and walked through some of the buildings they use for the training. It is a heart-thumping exercise to realize what law enforcement deals with when confronting an active shooter. It is really important training.

We have seen terrorist attacks and sudden acts of violence in communities

across the country and, thankfully, we have people like Officer Stevens who helped avoid tragedy in Garland. But we should do everything we can to help equip our law enforcement officials with the training and tools they need in order to do their jobs as effectively as possible.

The Police Act would help in this effort, and it would help protect those who put their lives on the line on our behalf every day and support their efforts to guard the communities they serve. I look forward to passing this legislation soon. I can think of no better way to honor those who serve our country so well during National Police Week than to pass the Police Act, which will in some small way provide them access to the training they need in order to do their jobs better and help keep our communities safer.

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

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have been coming to the Senate floor and talking about a very important issue for our country that we should be spending much more time focusing on, and that is the importance of growing our economy. With the exception of national defense, I believe there is no more important moral imperative for this body and the Federal Government to focus on than this issue, but unfortunately, as we have seen, the administration doesn't focus on it. They don't want to talk about the importance of growing the economy because the record they have of economic growth for Americans, particularly middle-class Americans, has been dismal.

I have been trying to get my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to focus on this chart over the last several weeks because this chart says a lot. If you look at the different records of different administrations, both Democratic and Republican, the Obama years have been a lost decade of economic growth. This red line shows 3 percent GDP growth. That is decent growth but not great. We can see that Reagan, Clinton, and Kennedy all had better numbers. This is the worst recovery over a 7-year period. That is a fact. They don't want to talk about it. We should talk about it a lot more.

I clearly think it is one of the most important things we should be doing in this body, and one way we can reignite the American dream and our economic growth, especially for the next generation—like for our pages—is to reduce burdensome and unnecessary regulations. Everybody agrees with that, including the Presiding Officer and all of my colleagues here. We need to reduce burdensome and unnecessary Federal regulations and build infrastructure for America. That is exactly what my amendment No. 3912 to the Transportation appropriations bill—which is so ably managed by my colleagues from Maine and Rhode Island—would do, and that is what I will talk about for a minute.

My amendment would give States and communities throughout this Nation the ability to expedite permitting for the maintenance, reconstruction, or construction of structurally deficient bridges. It is pretty simple. The amendment is very narrowly tailored. It says: If you are going to do maintenance, construction, or reconstruction on a bridge that is structurally deficient and the Federal Government won't be burdened, we will expedite the permitting by waiving many of the permitting requirements. That is it. It is very simple. As a matter of fact, this amendment only has two paragraphs.

It is a win-win for the country. Investing in our infrastructure will help boost our economy and economic growth, and importantly, it will keep American families safe. It is a commonsense approach that I am hoping my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support.

Recently, President Obama was asked about the economy and our crumbling infrastructure. He talked about the need for infrastructure investment, which I completely agree with; however, he laid the blame for a lack of investment in infrastructure on Republicans, who he said were unwilling to spend on our infrastructure. Well, I think with the highway bill, the WRDA bill, and this appropriations bill, we are doing it. Again, it is very bipartisan. I don't think what the President said is true. We are certainly willing to invest in infrastructure, which is so important to our economy, but we need to do it wisely, and we need to make sure our taxpayer money does not go to unintended uses. In fact, I believe, as do many of my colleagues, that there is perhaps nothing more central to growing our economy and competing globally than sound infrastructure for America, but throwing money at projects that aren't ready for development because of the burdensome permitting and regulatory requirements that we often see from the Federal Government is not a sound use of taxpayer dollars.

A recent column in the Wall Street Journal points out that of the $800 billion of taxpayer money that was passed several years ago as part of the President's stimulus package, only $30 billion was spent on transportation infrastructure. That is remarkable. Out of the $800 billion, only $30 billion was spent on infrastructure. Why? One of the big reasons is because these infrastructure projects were not shovel-ready because of the onerous permitting requirements and environmental reviews.

Consider this: The average time for an environmental review for a major transportation project in the United States has increased to a staggering 8 years. In 2011, it took 8 years to get a transportation project approved in terms of Federal permitting, and that is up from 3½ years in the year 2000. We have more than doubled the time in less than 7 years because of the Federal permitting requirements.

The average environmental impact statement was about 22 pages when NEPA, which requires EIS's—and that is important. When that bill initially passed, the average EIS was 22 pages. Today's highway projects often have EIS's that are well above 1,000 pages. On average, it takes over 5 years to permit a bridge in the United States. Nobody wants this.

As a matter of fact, former President Bill Clinton highlighted the need for reform in this area in a well-known Newsweek article. In 2011 he was on the front cover of Newsweek. His article talked about how to get Americans back to work. One of his top recommendations was to make sure that when we have infrastructure projects, the permitting requirements don't take forever. He said that we need to ''keep the full review process when there are real environmental concerns, but when there aren't, the federal government should be able to give a waiver to the states to speed up start times on construction projects.'' That was former President Bill Clinton's recommendation. Well, that is exactly what my amendment does. Again, if you are going to repair or build a bridge and keep it in the same capacity—a two-lane bridge stays a two-lane bridge, not a four-lane bridge—and in the same place and the same size, then the permitting process should be expedited.

Let me spend a few minutes on why this is so important for our economy and the safety of our citizens. I think most people in this body know our bridges are in poor condition. About 1 in 10 of America's roughly 607,000 bridges is termed and classified as ''structurally deficient.'' Let me repeat that in a different way. In the United States, there are more than 61,000 bridges in need of repair. The average age of our bridges is 42 years old. Americans cross these structurally deficient bridges 215 million times a day.

Here is a chart that shows where they are located. If you look here, this classifies different bridges. The red category shows the most bridges—over 25 percent—that are structurally deficient. The lighter red represents 20 to 25 percent, and the lightest shade of red represents 15 to 20 percent. As we can see, every State has structurally deficient bridges that Americans are crossing 215 million times a day.

Let me be clear. It is not just about the economy, where truckers and commerce are crossing these bridges every day; it is about the safety of our children when they ride on schoolbuses and parents when they come home from work. Every State in the Union is impacted by this.

Let me give a few quick examples of some structurally deficient bridges across the country.

This is the Magnolia Bridge in Seattle, WA. It was built in 1929. This bridge carries over 18,000 cars per day and has been declared structurally deficient.

The Greenfield Bridge in Pittsburgh, PA—Pennsylvania has the most structurally deficient bridges in the country, and this chart shows one of them. It was built in 1921. It carries almost 8,000 cars per day. In 2003 a 10-inch chunk of concrete went through a car windshield, injuring the driver. This structurally deficient bridge has been crumbling for decades.

I have one more example, which the Presiding Officer will find of significant interest. This is the Russell Street Bridge in Missoula, MN. Transportation for America rates the deck of the Russell Street Bridge a 4 out of 10 in terms of structural soundness. It was built in 1957 and carries over 22,000 cars a day.

I think we would all agree that we need to fix these 61,000 structurally deficient bridges. There is no doubt about it. I don't think there is any Member of this body or anyone in the Federal Government who would disagree about that, but what happens when we try to do that? In fact, the efforts, especially in the local communities, are strangled by bureaucratic redtape.

The Wall Street Journal recently had an article titled ''The Highway to Bureaucratic Hell,'' and it talked about this very issue of what happens when communities try to fix their structurally deficient bridges. They gave a number of examples, but I wanted to read one that impacts Americans in the New Jersey-New York area of the country. The Wall Street Journal article stated: Another illustration of what happens is the Bayonne Bridge that connects New Jersey to Staten Island and at 150 feet tall blocks large cargo ships. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey plans to raise the bridge from 150 feet to 215 feet. They wanted to do that to allow cargo ships to go under it. They planned to keep the bridge the same size; they just wanted to raise it so they wouldn't have to spend over $3 billion to build a tunnel.

The article goes on to say that their reward for thinking rationally was that it took 6 months to have the lead agency identified for an environmental review—an environmental review that dragged on for more than 5 years and spanned 20,000 pages. That is not good for New Jersey, that is not good for New York, and that is not good for America.

Again, what my amendment would do would fix this issue. It is very narrowly tailored, and it would simply make sure that when we are trying to fix the 61,000 structurally deficient bridges in the United States, we can do it in an expedited manner, not in the way in which this Wall Street Journal article described—5 years and 20,000 pages.

This amendment is a win-win-win. It will help spur economic growth, help us with the safety of our citizens, and help our workers get back to work so we can do the maintenance and reconstruction on these bridges. Everybody here talks about regulatory reform and how we need it. Even the President, in his State of the Union speech, talked about the need to cut redtape in order to grow this economy. But we rarely act on it. We talk about it, but we don't act on it.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—my colleagues particularly from older States, where this amendment will help them more than the rest of the country—to vote on this amendment which will keep our families and kids safe, help grow our economy, and put workers back to work. It is a commonsense thing to do for our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, it has now been 62 days since Judge Garland's nomination—62 days. As we all know, our Founding Fathers entrusted all of us in the Senate with the role of providing advice and consent to the President of the United States in relation to his appointments to the Supreme Court. We have the option—in fact, I believe the responsibility—to meet with the nominee in person. We are responsible for holding hearings through the Senate Judiciary Committee. Based on his responses to questions, we then have the opportunity to vote yes or no on the nomination. But we don't have the responsibility of doing nothing. We have to proceed to consider the nomination.

Unfortunately, Senators in the majority are refusing to do that. They have said they will not hold hearings—no hearings, zero—on a nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court. And too many have refused to even meet with the nominee, and I believe it is a matter of respect to meet with the nominee, Judge Merrick Garland. This is our job in the Senate. This is their job—the job established for them—for us—by America's Founding Fathers. Unfortunately, the majority is refusing to do it.

I have talked with a lot of hardworking people in Michigan and, frankly, people around the country about what would happen if they decided to not do one of the most basic parts of their job; if they said: For the next year, I think I am just not going to do this major part of my job description. Usually, when I ask people about that, they laugh and say: Well, that is simple; I would be fired. That is the response of the majority of Americans.

If we go back in history and look at how long it usually takes for the Senate to process a President's Supreme Court nomination, we see how unprecedented these delays really are. If this Republican-controlled Senate did its job as previous Senates have, then there would have been a hearing of the Judiciary Committee by April 27, which was 3 weeks ago—3 weeks ago—but that hasn't happened. The Judiciary Committee would have held a vote on May 12, but that vote never came, and there is no sign it is coming anytime soon, if at all, this year. Based on historical precedent, the Supreme Court nominee would then come to the floor for a vote on confirmation, up or down, yes or no, by Memorial Day. That is not going to happen either.

I urge my Republican colleagues to schedule a hearing so that the American people can hear directly from Judge Merrick Garland in a transparent and open way. Ask the tough questions. Talk about his almost 20 years on the circuit court bench and his role as chief judge. We should also talk about the fact that he was confirmed for that position overwhelmingly, on a bipartisan basis, by the U.S. Senate.

Because there is not a willingness to hold hearings, to debate, to discuss, to have a vote, I think that is why polls show that the majority of Americans support holding the hearings and a vote for Judge Garland and don't understand what is going on.

Meanwhile, the eight Justices of the Supreme Court have been unable to reach a final decision on two important cases, and I am sure there will be more. Those cases are Zubik v. Burwell and Spokeo v. Robbins. As a result, the law remains unsettled and is likely to remain unsettled for a year or more as to whether women who work for certain nonprofits will continue to have seamless access to contraceptive health care coverage. Given the gravity of the decision the Supreme Court must make, we can't afford to let it continue with less than the nine Justices who make up the Supreme Court.

This is supposed to be a separate branch of government that will place a check on the administration and on Congress, the third branch of government.

It is time that we get about the business of doing our job and for our Republican colleagues to say they are going to do their job and provide advice and consent on the nomination. Again, if there is not support for this nomination after rigorous debate, after hearings, after questions, after hearing from Judge Garland, then so be it. Then the President of the United States will have to come back with another nomination. But right now nothing is happening to reflect the fact that the third branch of government will be left ineffective, unable to fully function for probably a year, and it could be longer. That makes no sense.

It is time to do your job. It is time to do your job so that the U.S. Supreme Court can do its job on behalf of the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss important legislation

before the U.S. Senate this week—the combined Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill.

As chairman of the Surface Transportation Subcommittee and an active member of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, I am pleased that this appropriations bill includes a number of critical transportation and infrastructure initiatives that I have advocated for during my time in the Senate. A safe, efficient, and reliable transportation system is crucial to the economic growth of our country.

Last year Congress passed a much needed 5-year highway bill known as the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or the FAST Act. I was proud to work with my colleagues on this bipartisan legislation and usher in the first multiyear Transportation bill in over a decade.

The Transportation appropriations bill before the Senate fully funds the highway bill. Because of the FAST Act, Americans will benefit from increased investment in our Nation's transportation system. Rural and urban communities across Nebraska and our country will have new opportunities to secure funding for essential freight infrastructure projects. Meanwhile, a new national strategic freight program within the FAST Act will help our States and local communities prioritize freight traffic and increase safety. Through this program, States will be provided with the discretion to direct new funds to rural and urban freight corridors with higher commercial traffic.

As States work to develop their freight plans and designate corridors, stakeholders across all modes will have the opportunity to participate and provide valued feedback. First and last mile connectors for freight at airports, trucking facilities, and rail yards will also be eligible for increased investment under this national freight program.

Railroad infrastructure is also a pivotal component of our national transportation network. According to the Nebraska Department of Roads, my State hosts more than 3,000 at-grade rail crossings that will be eligible for Federal dollars. Additional funding is provided for railroad safety and research programs, including positive train control installation and resources to address highway-rail grade crossing safety.

I am also pleased that T-HUD advances key pipeline safety efforts, which I worked with my Commerce Committee colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, to include in the bipartisan SAFE PIPES Act. America's pipeline infrastructure transports vital energy resources to homes, businesses, schools, and commercial centers across our country. According to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA, more than 2.5 million miles of pipelines traverse the United States. Pipelines are often renowned as the safest way to transport crude oil and natural gas. Nevertheless, Congress must continue to increase safety on America's vast pipeline network. Our Nation's hazardous materials emergency responders and our firefighters are supported by T-HUD report language that encourages PHMSA to update important training curriculum programs.

The Surface Transportation Subcommittee has also been working on legislation to strengthen our Nation's maritime programs. For example, the Maritime Security Program is responsible for ensuring a fleet of U.S. merchant marine vessels stands ready and available to assist our Nation's military in times of war or national emergency, and I appreciate that T-HUD bolsters this very valuable program.

Furthermore, DOT and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy will be compelled to provide more information to Congress on efforts to combat on-campus sexual assault. Addressing on-campus sexual assault is something I have been seeking to address as part of my bill, known as the Maritime Administration Enhancement Act of 2017. Through meaningful prevention and response efforts, we can provide a more secure experience for the Academy's men and women, many of whom will go on to serve our country.

America's aviation and aerospace system will benefit from increased resources without raising ticket fees on our Nation's passengers. The bill's report tasks the Federal Aviation Administration with evaluating and updating commercial airline onboard emergency medical kits, particularly for families traveling with young infants. This is something I fought for in the Senate FAA bill.

Full funding is provided for the Contract Tower Program, which allows smaller airports to contract with the private sector for air traffic control services. Airports across the country, such as the Central Nebraska Regional Airport in Grand Island, NE, will benefit greatly from this program.

T-HUD allocates critical funding for our Nation's multimodal transportation network, and I am pleased the bill advances many of my own key initiatives.

I would also like to address some of the important provisions included in the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs portion of the bill. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our veterans and we have a responsibility to help them in their time of need. These men and women answered the call to serve our country and to defend our freedom. Some have deployed around the world, often into the heart of danger, to fight or provide humanitarian assistance. Many of these veterans return from service with both the visual and the unseen scars of battle.

These brave men and women deserve timely access to quality health care. Unfortunately, veterans living in rural States can be forced to travel great distances to receive the care they need. Through this legislation, the VA would be prevented from diminishing services at certain existing Veterans Health Administration medical facilities. It would also require the VA to take a more holistic approach to planning and executing realignment.

Throughout Nebraska, veterans are fortunate to receive quality care from dedicated VA medical providers. At the same time, the lack of modern infrastructure and outdated facilities are hindering efforts to provide the latest treatments and support. The VA must continue to explore innovative strategies to hasten updates and the completion of our new facilities.

Although this bill offers progress, we are not finished in our efforts to address problems at the VA. I will continue to do whatever I can to ensure that every veteran has access to the health care they need.

As I mentioned, the appropriations bill before us moves forward a number of significant national transportation priorities and enhances programs beneficial to America's veterans. I greatly appreciate the hard work of Senators COLLINS, KIRK, and their Appropriations subcommittee staffs on this critical bill. It will allocate much needed dollars to advance our Nation's transportation system and strengthen veterans programs.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Nebraska, Mrs. FISCHER, for her comments. She is such a leader on so many issues in the Senate. We work closely together on transportation issues, and she gave us very valuable input for the bill that is before us. So I acknowledge her help and assistance and guidance and thank her for her comments.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak as in morning business.

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, over the last few months, we have witnessed ObamaCare crumbling in my home State of Arizona. Several Obamacare-established co-ops collapsed, including Arizona's Meritus Mutual Health Partners, forcing nearly 63,000 Arizonans scrambling to find new coverage. Last month, UnitedHealth, the Nation's largest health insurer, announced it

will exit the Arizona marketplace and leave about 45,000 Arizonans to find new coverage in 2017. Now, as a direct result of the President's failed law, health insurer Humana just announced it, too, will exit the marketplace in 2017 in my home State. All together, over half of Arizona's counties will be left with a single insurer, and another third will be left with just two. In turn, this will cause premiums to skyrocket even higher than last year. While Democrats continue to stand by a failed law, Arizona families are bearing the burden. This is unacceptable.

More than 6 years after ObamaCare was rammed through Congress without a single Republican vote—and I was on the floor on Christmas Eve morning as it was passed on a strict party-line vote—Democrats are still trying to spin their overhaul of America's health care system. We continue to hear from advocates of ObamaCare who make their claims that continue to leave me speechless, such as that insurance markets are stable and premiums are not rising quickly. Unfortunately, as is often the case with advocates of the President's disastrous law, these statements are largely devoid of reality.

ObamaCare's upheaval and disruption to our Nation's health care system is a direct result of the efforts of the White House and Democratic leadership to write this massive bill behind closed doors, with no input from this side of the aisle. The process was anything but bipartisan, as promised on the campaign trail by the then-Presidential candidate, Barack Obama. Instead of crafting health care reform that works for the American people, the administration cut deals with drug companies to get their support, ensuring they would see increased profits and consumers would face increased costs.

Democrats' partisan effort to write and pass ObamaCare without Republican participation flies in the face of how every other major reform in American history was enacted. I have worked with Democrats on many occasions to solve some of the country's most urgent problems. Never in my experience has one party attempted to increase the government's influence in one-sixth of the American economy over the unanimous opposition of the other party.

Unfortunately, Americans are now facing the consequences of this massive overhaul of our health care system. The biggest problem in our health care system, and Americans' most pressing concern, is out-of-control cost increases, but ObamaCare does nothing to address this issue. That is why we continue to see health care costs balloon, while health insurance becomes increasingly expensive and unaffordable for citizens and their employers.

Sadly, as we have seen in recent weeks, the situation is only getting worse. Just last month, a poll by Gallup found that Americans cite health care costs as the most important financial burden facing their families. They name health care costs ahead of other financial burdens, such as low wages, debt, and being able to afford college or a mortgage.

The American people are now experiencing firsthand exactly what Republicans have been warning about ever since ObamaCare was written: The law will ultimately do far more harm than good, and they have every right to question what the future holds. The fact is, the crumbling of ObamaCare should come as no surprise to anyone.

UnitedHealth—which will exit from all but a handful of States in the individual marketplace in 2017—lost $475 million on the ObamaCare exchanges in 2015 and is projected to lose $650 million on the exchanges in 2016. Its exit from ObamaCare exchanges will send an estimated 45,000 citizens of my State, Arizona, scrambling to find new coverage with even fewer options to choose from.

Humana's announcement that it will follow in UnitedHealth's footsteps by exiting Arizona's exchanges should also come as no surprise, given the fact that it continues to incur losses as a result of ObamaCare's onerous regulations. Humana and UnitedHealth's exit means fewer options, less competition, and most certainly higher costs for consumers. This is especially true after Blue Cross Blue Shield, the only remaining provider in several Arizona counties, increased premiums last year by 27 percent merely to recover the $185 million in losses it incurred in the ObamaCare marketplace between 2014 and 2015.

The health insurer has noted that continuing to suffer losses in the marketplace is unsustainable, meaning significant premium increases are on the horizon for 2017. All of this news of insurance companies exiting the marketplace and others increasing premiums is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the consequences of this disastrous law. Since ObamaCare became law, prescription drug costs have continued to skyrocket.

Instead of encouraging innovation and competition, ObamaCare places heavy taxes on manufacturers and prescription drug importers to the tune of $27 billion over 10 years. According to Standard & Poor's, the cost of drugs on the individual insurance market jumped 50 percent in 2015. Just as some are forgoing a visit to the doctor because of higher out-of-pocket costs, we are starting to see more and more individuals with chronic conditions not getting their prescriptions filled because of the increasing cost of drugs.

The fact is, ObamaCare was a failure from the start and Americans are paying the price. The best thing government can do to expand access to health insurance is to institute reforms that will rein in costs and make health care more affordable. I have introduced legislation to replace ObamaCare with real reform that would expand quality access to health care without compromising individual liberty, competition, or innovation.

Regrettably, every Republican effort to meaningfully bring down the cost of health care has been met with rigid opposition by Democrats who are more concerned with protecting President Obama's legacy than making health care accessible and affordable. Every day that goes by, with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle continuing to dig in their heels, leads to another day that millions of Americans face higher health care costs, decreased quality of care, and fewer choices.

It is past time for the President of the United States and Democrats in Congress to answer to the thousands of citizens across my State and the Nation who have been let down time and again by this disastrous law.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to commend the leaders of the Senate Appropriations Committee for accepting transparency language that I requested be included in the fiscal year 2017 spending bill for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The good governance provision, which I championed after years of oversight work, will ensure greater accountability in public housing authorities' use of the Federal money that they receive in this annual appropriations bill.

For the last 6 years, I have raised concern about HUD's failure to conduct proper oversight of how local housing authorities use those Federal dollars. Specifically, my concerns relate to HUD's practice of allowing local housing authorities to spend hundreds of millions of Federal dollars each year with virtually no Housing and Urban Development oversight and no transparency to the public. We all have reason to be concerned about this lack of transparency because some local housing authorities rely on the Federal Government for up to 90 percent of their funding.

That is why I thank Senator COLLINS, Senator KIRK, and other members of the Transportation-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee for recognizing that Congress must insist on HUD's paying closer attention to the use of taxpayer dollars by housing authorities.

The good governance provision that the Transportation-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee included in this year's appropriations report ensures that in the future the housing money we appropriate for low-income families will retain its Federal designation even

after it is transferred to the housing authorities.

I want to stress that this designation is no small matter. In other words, Federal money is going to be considered Federal money when it gets to the local housing authority, and no games can be played with it as are being played with it now.

U.S. taxpayers spend about $4.5 billion every year to help low-income Americans put a roof over their heads. We can be proud that we do so much for people in need. We should not let any of that money specifically for people of need be wasted or spent to feather the nests of local public housing authority bureaucrats.

I wish to take a few minutes to explain why the appropriations language that I championed and is in this legislation is so sorely needed. Some local housing authorities have devoted these limited funds, which are meant to help low-income people find affordable housing, to high salaries and even for perks for the people who run housing authorities around the country. I will just use three examples, but there are dozens of examples that can be given.

At the Atlanta Housing Authority, at least 22 employees earned between $150,000 and $303,000 per year.

The former executive director of the Raleigh Housing Authority in North Carolina received about $280,000 in salary and benefits plus 30 vacation days.

The executive director of the Tampa Housing Authority is paid over $214,000 per year, and the housing authority spends over $100,000 per year on travel and conferences.

After I called attention to these wasteful practices a few years ago, HUD limited the executive salary paid by local housing authorities. That is good news, right? Well, it didn't work out that way, even after the salaries were capped at level IV of the Executive Schedule pay scale, which today amounts to about $160,000 a year. As I say, it didn't turn out to be good news. Unfortunately, as it did turn out, this compensation cap had little impact in limiting housing authority salaries.

I will explain how this works. HUD provides over $350 million in operating fees annually to local housing authorities. Right now, these fees are considered income earned by the housing authorities for managing programs instead of considering them as what they are—grants given by the Federal Government. That is where the Federal money gets mixed up with local money and the Federal money isn't followed by HUD. That is why they get away with the waste of taxpayers' money.

Despite their source, when these fees reach housing authorities, they are no longer considered Federal funds. I say that a second time for emphasis. Once these funds lose Federal designation, housing authorities then can use the tax dollars as they see fit—and they do. Then, when they use it as they see fit, HUD is not required to conduct oversight of how the money is spent. Believe me; HUD hasn't done much oversight.

This means that many employees of housing authorities can continue to earn annual salaries well in excess of the $160,000 without technically violating the Federal salary cap. You can see the games that are being played to let these local housing people get these massive high salaries and fringe benefits and waste taxpayers' money that should be spent helping low-income people get safe housing. Sadly, these salaries exceed limits that were imposed by the Federal Government to ensure the money we appropriate goes to low-income families in the greatest need of our assistance.

After I began publicly voicing my complaints about this practice, the Office of Management and Budget in December 2013 issued a government-wide guidance that should have—should have—put a stop to it, but it didn't. But let me tell you what the guidance called for. So-called fees for service would then be designated as program income so the Federal funding would retain its Federal designation after it is transferred into housing authority business accounts. Making sure it kept its Federal designation meant it had to be subject to HUD oversight. HUD initially agreed to fully implement the OMB guidance, but they did not.

Later, the Department quietly—very quietly—requested a waiver that, if that waiver was granted, would have allowed housing authorities to sidestep the new OMB rule and then continue to avoid commonsense oversight because, with that waiver, the Federal dollars would not have Federal designation. They would be considered local money and could be spent any way people wanted to spend it.

I might never have learned of this HUD effort to get around this OMB rule but for the very good work of the HUD inspector general. After I learned from the inspector general's staff that HUD was requesting a waiver of the OMB guidance, I sent a letter to OMB expressing my concerns. But as so often happens with bureaucrats in this town, I didn't hear from OMB until I attempted to include amendment language addressing the fee designation in the Transportation-HUD appropriations bill before Thanksgiving of last year, when the issue was on the floor of the Senate. As we all know, that bill was pulled from the floor. But neither the inspector general nor I were ready to give up, and that is why we are here today.

Just recently, I received good news that reinforces my belief that congressional oversight works. HUD has finally agreed to implement its inspector general's recommendations requiring that funding provided by the taxpayers to public housing authorities will keep its Federal designation. In other words, HUD will be responsible for making sure that Federal funding is used as intended, and that is very clear. It is why we have public housing—to provide safe, affordable housing for those in need and, consequently, then, not to use that Federal money to pay exorbitant executive salaries.

My concern now is the timeframe for implementation and ensuring that HUD does not request another waiver.

HUD expects the final rule to be completed by December 2017, more than 1½ years from now. That is a very long time to finalize regulations. I hope HUD isn't delaying the process in the hope that either the inspector general or this Senator will give up. I can assure you that will not happen. We need to ensure that this reform is implemented by including language in this appropriations bill to not just keep salaries in check but also to ensure that HUD exercises oversight authority over how these funds are used and that more money is actually used for the poor.

I hope HUD uses that oversight authority to combat waste, such as in the following three examples: The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles misused over $3.9 million in operating funds for salary, travel, bonuses, and legal settlements. The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority in Canton, OH, misused $4 million in operating and capital funds to build a commercial development, and an additional $2 million was misused for salaries and benefits. The Hickory, NC, housing authority paid over $500,000 in operating funds to a maintenance company owned by the brother of a board member—a clear conflict of interest.

It is also vital that Congress be aware of any effort by HUD to once again avoid implementing this rule the way they tried to get around the OMB rule I just talked about. For that reason, the report language I requested requires HUD to notify both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees quarterly during fiscal year 2017 if they request any waiver from implementing these provisions.

I encourage my colleagues to support this effort to ensure that HUD implements these much needed changes and does its part to provide better oversight of our scarce Federal funding.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

POLICE ACT OF 2016

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am delighted to be here on the floor with the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the ranking member, our colleague from Vermont, whom I have worked with on so many issues, to ask unanimous consent to take up a bill that I talked about a little earlier this morning called the POLICE Act. This bill uses existing funding to support local law enforcement but specifically to make sure funding is available for active-shooter training.

For example, in San Marcos, TX, at Texas State University, they have trained 80,000 local law enforcement officials in active-shooter training. The