

Adequate policing is not an enemy of civil rights. Among other things, a recent study by multiple university professors confirmed that more cops lead to fewer murders:

Larger police forces save lives, and the lives saved are disproportionately Black lives.

Police funding isn't the only important issue where the nominee's judgment has missed the mark.

Three years ago, when the then-Attorney General was standing up a task force on religious liberty, Ms. Clarke said this was designed "to make it easier for people to use religion to mask their discriminatory goals"—an incredibly out-of-touch, far-left statement.

Finally, we are currently watching an alarming spike in anti-Semitic attacks and violence across our country. I introduced new legislation on Friday, with Senator COTTON, to confront anti-Semitism head-on, but as a Harvard undergraduate, Ms. Clarke invited, welcomed, introduced, and then defended a famously anti-Semitic guest speaker who had authored a book literally entitled—now listen to this—"The Jewish Onslaught."

The nominee has stated recently that she regrets that decision. Goodness, I would certainly hope so.

Yet she also claims that her op-ed from just last year, which asserted three times—three times—that we must invest less in police, was not actually suggesting that we invest less in police.

This is not the right nominee for a crucial post at a crucial time so I would urge colleagues to vote no this week.

CHINA

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Madam President, on another matter, last week, a bipartisan majority of Senators voted to proceed to floor debate about our Nation's long-term competition with China.

There is no disagreement that the People's Republic's strategic capabilities and its growing influence beyond the Indo-Pacific pose a singular challenge to American strength and security. There is robust debate about the right ways to address this challenge.

The legislation before us arrived on the floor incomplete, and it spans a number of huge issues that occupy multiple committees' jurisdictions. It is a prime example of a bill that needs a thorough, bipartisan amendment process here in the Senate. So far, we have had a few votes on important amendments. There are a lot more that need consideration, and we should not close debate on this bill until those amendments are addressed.

Unfortunately, during one important vote last week, our Democratic colleagues sent a telling signal. They voted down Ranking Member INHOFE and Vice Chairman SHELBY's amendment to make sure that the real back-

bone of our competition with China—the resources we allocate to our Armed Forces and national defense—was not neglected.

Make no mistake, supply chains, espionage, intellectual property—those are all important topics, but all the policy tweaks in the world would not amount to much help if we lose our military edge with respect to China. Soft power isn't much good without the hard power to back it up.

The Chinese Communist Party appears to understand this quite clearly. According to one watchdog, it has increased military investment by 76 percent over the last decade. China has increased its military spending by 76 percent over the last decade. The same data show that our own U.S. defense spending fell 10 percent over that period, thanks to the approach of the last Democratic administration, and now President Biden has signaled that he wants to cut defense spending after inflation—exactly the wrong approach.

No serious strategy for our competition with massive foreign powers could leave the U.S. Armed Forces, their tools, and their resources out of the conversation in a meaningful way. I hope and expect we will have a number of further votes on important amendments before there would be any attempt to shut off debate on this wide-ranging measure.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1260, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1260) to establish a new Directorate for Technology and Innovation in the National Science Foundation, to establish a regional technology hub program, to require a strategy and report on economic security, science, research, innovation, manufacturing, and job creation, to establish a critical supply chain resiliency program, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer amendment No. 1502, in the nature of a substitute.

Cantwell amendment No. 1527 (to amendment No. 1502), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

TRIBUTE TO BILL HOULIHAN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, if you have been involved in Illinois poli-

tics and government in the last 40 years or if you have called my office in Springfield anytime in the last 24 years, there is a good chance you know the fellow I am about to speak about this afternoon. For those who haven't been lucky enough to meet him yet, let me tell you about my friend, one of the best people I have ever known. His name is Bill Houlihan.

Bill came to work on my first Senate campaign in 1996, and when we won, I asked him to be my staff director for downstate Illinois—all 96 counties. He has been with me ever since, and now he is State director of the entire State. Whenever I can't attend an event in Illinois, Bill is the person I turn to. I don't have to write any speech for him, and I don't have to check on what he said. People know Bill speaks for me, and I have complete confidence in his judgment and integrity.

Everybody seems to know him. Just try going to a grocery store with Bill Houlihan in Springfield, IL. Be prepared for delays as everyone needs to talk to him or to thank him for something that he might have done: Thanks for helping my mom get her Social Security. Thanks for helping my dad with the Veterans Health Administration. Thanks for helping to get that passport so my daughter could go away to school. Thanks for helping the local union get the project that creates the jobs here in our community.

Over the years, Bill has helped thousands of people find jobs and provide for their families. He knows about the dignity of work. He does whatever he can to help whomever he can, having no expectation of any recognition.

Bill started his professional life in 1981, fresh out of Eastern Illinois University. He was the class president. His first job was with the Illinois Education Association. They sent him into a David-and-Goliath battle scene in Peoria, IL, where they were trying to convince the local teachers to sign up with the IEA. They hired Bill 6 weeks before the crucial election and sent him into Peoria—his first campaign for a union. You see, Bill had worked on political campaigns for his dad, and I will talk about those in a minute.

When he got down to Peoria—a place where he had never lived—everybody knew him, and whenever he went up and introduced himself as Bill Houlihan, they would say: Well, are you the son of Bill Houlihan?

He would say: No, I am the son of John Houlihan.

Bill didn't understand for a while why he kept getting that question. It turns out that he had exactly the same name as Peoria's longtime and venerable TV weathercaster Bill Houlihan.

When, as a young union organizer, Bill showed up, puzzled teachers always said: Are you sure you are not related to Bill Houlihan?

Our Bill Houlihan was no TV personality, but Peoria teachers quickly learned that he cared about them and

that he knew his stuff. Just as important, he understands how to build political organizations and campaigns and how to use that power to help everyday people. Thank goodness for me he knows how to win. The IEA won the election in a close, upset victory back in the day. It was the first of many election campaign victories for Bill Houlihan.

Bill and Cindy, his wife, are the parents of four children, but they did it the hard way—one set of triplets and a bonus baby born 22 months later. Mariah, John, Grant, Neil are all grown up now, but when they were younger, at the start of every school year, their teachers would often ask them: Is Bill Houlihan your dad? That question was followed with the teachers telling stories about Bill and how he had helped them. This young, unknown organizer had become a legend in his own right. These stories were the only way the Houlihan kids learned about what their dad did for a living. He never bragged about himself; he was too modest.

Driving around the State of Illinois for over 20 years with Bill Houlihan, I have heard a lot of stories, but I think the thing that impressed me the most was when he talked about his dad—what a remarkable man. I was lucky to know him.

John Houlihan was born in a section of Chicago which describes where you might find it. It is called Back of the Yards; that is, the stockyards. In that section of the city, immigrant families got their start and worked in some of the hardest jobs in Chicago. John's father was a slaughterhouse worker. John himself grew up on the South Side of Chicago—in that area—and his dream came true. As an Irish Catholic kid, he was admitted to Notre Dame University. Can I tell you what a big deal that is still today? For the kids in those parishes to consider going to Notre Dame was nothing short of a miracle. So John Houlihan, Bill's father, who was 6 feet 4, incidentally, was going to try out for the basketball team at Notre Dame University, an absolute dream come true. Yet there was an intervening event which the Presiding Officer will appreciate. It was called Pearl Harbor.

John Houlihan, Bill's dad, had to drop out of Notre Dame University to enlist in the U.S. Marines. He served in many campaigns. As his 21st birthday approached, his mom and dad sent him a little gift, a belt. It was small enough that it could make it through the mail, and at least he knew they were thinking of him on his birthday. He was embarking on the Battle of Bougainville on his 21st birthday, an island in the South Pacific. A grenade explosion ripped through his left leg in that battle. Lucky for him, he pulled off that belt and applied it as a tourniquet. It saved his life, but it couldn't save his leg. It was amputated at the hip. The Allied forces won that battle, and John Houlihan spent a year and a half recovering in veterans hospitals.

He left the Marines with a chest full of medals, including three Bronze Stars, a Marine Corps Medal, and, of course, a Purple Heart. He went back to Chicago with one leg, an artificial leg, and a cane or a crutch. He went to a dance in the basement of St. Gabriel's Catholic Church on the Chicago South Side, and he met his future wife Vernal. They had eight kids together. Bill was the middle child, the fourth of the eight kids. Amazingly, his dad, despite having that devastating injury, wanted to get involved in politics. He moved to Park Forest, IL, just south of Chicago, to raise his family in a larger house, as you can imagine, and decided to run for the Illinois General Assembly in 1964.

I have a picture here I am going to show you. This is John Houlihan, Bill's dad, and this is his brother Mike. Bill is over here at the age of 10. His dad was elected to the general assembly. He served with some of the giants of Illinois' political history: my friend Paul Simon, Adlai Stevenson, and Harold Washington. John Houlihan fit right in.

As an amputee, at a time before the Americans with Disabilities Act, John Houlihan knew that they would applaud you on Memorial Day and Veterans Day but that it was hard as heck for a disabled vet—really severely disabled like John Houlihan—to get a job. He fought for those disabled vets just like himself, so much so that, when he came to the Illinois General Assembly in Springfield, the Black Caucus invited him to serve as a member. They knew that he appreciated what discrimination was all about. He accepted the invitation as an honor.

Years later, when his son Bill Houlihan was working in that same Illinois State Senate, the Black Caucus asked that he be assigned to them as a staff member because they knew of his reputation—Bill Houlihan's reputation—for being willing to fight for the underdog.

John Houlihan served in the general assembly for 8 years before turning his full attention to veterans' rights.

He served with the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Veterans' Administration here in Washington, and the Cook County Veterans Assistance Commission. His young son Bill was watching him throughout this life experience, and I know he came to appreciate his dad's courage and determination that he was going to build a family and build a life despite his serious disability.

He also knew what it was like for his dad. I remember his dad, a World War II vet. We look today to amputees who have the good fortune, thank goodness, of modern prosthetics, even computer-driven devices to help them lead as normal a life as possible. That wasn't the luck of the World War II vets. They were given some crude artificial legs, and they did their best.

I can still picture Bill's dad John—one-legged man, lumbering around life

with this big, wooden leg of his that he would just swing forward as he made it with his cane and made his life despite that handicap.

Bill's mom was a big influence on him as well. She might have been quieter than his dad but just as strong. Think what kind of woman it was who would marry John Houlihan, quickly returning from war, trying to make a life. Vernal Houlihan was a kind, generous woman. No matter how tight money was, there was always room for one more place at the Houlihan dinner table.

Bill Houlihan is just like both his parents, the same courage and determination and the same sense of caring.

The heart of every congressional office is something called casework, helping constituents untangle redtape caused by government bureaucracy or to help solve everyday problems in their lives that mean the world to them.

Bill Houlihan may be the only State director in this Senate who still does casework along with his colleagues in addition to all his other duties. I can't count the number of people whose burdens have been made lighter by Bill Houlihan.

He logs every call he receives, and his day doesn't end until he returns every call. He treats every person with dignity, compassion, and respect, and he always makes time for them.

When we would drive around the State, thousands and thousands of miles, it reached the point where people would call him in his car. The phone never stopped.

Many times I said to Bill: Why don't you pick up on that when we get back to Springfield tomorrow?

No, he said. I knew he was going to call, this buddy of mine. He calls me every day. He just wants to chat for just a few minutes. I will be done, Boss, in just a minute.

And he would take the call.

Many people called him just to hear his friendly voice. He has fans the likes of which I wish I had some days. A lot of chiefs of staff would think twice about that approach to the job but not Bill. That is just who he is.

Our office in Springfield is located in the same block as Abraham Lincoln's home. That neighborhood is part of the National Park Service. When Bill walks down the block, he greets every park ranger by name, and they know him by name. It is like that wherever we go.

Illinois is filled with young leaders all over the State—women and men, Black White, and Brown—who didn't know they could be a leader until they met Bill Houlihan. He is one of the best talent scouts and coaches I have ever known. He boosts the confidence of everyone who works for him or with him.

He crisscrosses the State of Illinois in his dark-blue minivan; they call it the Houli-van. The miles he puts on that van every year might take him to China or the Moon. He knows every

mile marker on every highway in our State by heart.

He has, at last count, 47,000 contacts in his Palm Pilot—yes, he still has a Palm Pilot—and I think he knows 20,000 of those telephone numbers by heart. He has an encyclopedic mind for names, numbers, election results, sports stats, history—everything—and he shares everything he has learned with anyone who might benefit from his knowledge.

In between organizing for the IEA and joining my staff, Bill worked as a legislative director the Illinois Senate Democrats and downstate director for Senator Carol Moseley Braun, the first woman of color to serve in the Senate.

One of these pictures here is the early days when he was just getting started as an organizer, hair much darker than it is today.

Now, let me show you a more recent appearance. This is Bill. He is speaking at the Women's March in Springfield in 2017.

Usually, he is very soft-spoken, until he gets in front of a microphone, and that is when he turns up the volume. Oh, there is one other time he turns up the volume. If he is watching his Fighting Irish play football and they score a touchdown, Bill will let out a scream that will rattle the windows.

Always, always Bill Houlihan is the voice for people whose hopes and needs aren't heard enough within the halls of the Senate or the halls of power. He is a voice of compassion, encouragement, wisdom, and decency.

Loretta and I are lucky to call Bill and Cindy some of our best and dearest friends. So it is hard to say, but this is his last week on the job with the U.S. Senate. It hurts to lose a man who has given me such a big part of his life. It is going to take its toll on my office, my politics, and my life, but I can guarantee you that I will be calling Bill just as often as I always have. He may not be on the payroll, but I know he will take my call.

Bill and Cindy want to move on to the next chapter in their lives. That is understandable. I am sure it is going to include some traveling and special time with their kids and grandkids.

Bill, God bless him, just volunteered again to once again become the chairman of the Sangamon County, IL, Democratic Party—a post he held years ago.

Above all, I know that Bill will continue to help everyone he can in every way he can because that is who he is and always has been.

Bill, I hope you are watching—Cindy too. Thank you. I couldn't have done it without you. Loretta and I wish you and Cindy and your whole family good health and happiness in all the years to come.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Hawaii.

NOMINATION OF KRISTEN M. CLARKE

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I rise today in support of the nomination of Kristen Clarke to be Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

In the 4½ months since she was nominated, my Republican colleagues and their rightwing allies have engaged in a coordinated smear campaign to distort Kristen Clarke's record. It is past time to set things straight.

Kristen Clarke is a supremely capable and qualified nominee to lead the Civil Rights Division. I would argue that she is among the most well-credentialed and qualified nominees ever to serve in this role.

During her career, she has served as a trial attorney in the Division's voting section; a prosecutor in the Division's criminal section; an assistant counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and later as the codirector of its Political Participation Group; as the civil rights chief of the New York State Attorney General's Civil Rights Bureau; and as president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, one of the Nation's preeminent civil rights organizations. Kristen Clarke's credentials for this job are unimpeachable.

Unable to undermine her nomination on the merits, Senate Republicans have engaged in a vicious smear campaign against Kristen Clarke because they are afraid she will actually do her job. They are afraid she will enforce our civil rights statutes, challenge discriminatory voting laws, combat systemic racism in policing, and protect the LGBTQ community.

This work is urgently needed after the Civil Rights Division endured 4 years of intentional neglect and outright hostility during the Trump administration. During its 4 years in office, the Trump administration brought only a single case—one under the Voting Rights Act, even as States like Georgia, Ohio, and Wisconsin worked to suppress the vote by targeting people of color.

The previous administration also effectively ended the use of consent decrees to bring police departments into compliance with the Constitution. It abandoned this critical tool at the worst possible moment, as the Nation watched Black Americans like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor killed by officers sworn to protect and serve.

President Biden nominated Kristen Clarke to lead the Civil Rights Division because she is precisely the leader we need at this critical moment. But for 4½ months, my Republican colleagues have tried to tear down this highly qualified woman of color with unfounded smears and outright lies. They

feign outrage over a satirical letter Ms. Clarke wrote as an undergrad at Harvard in 1994, over 25 years ago.

I don't recall any comparable Republican outrage when Michael Truncale, then a practicing attorney for decades, disparaged President Obama as an "un-American imposter [who] bows to Arab Sheikhs and other world leaders." Instead, they confirmed him to a lifetime appointment as a judge in the Eastern District of Texas.

Senate Republicans have also tried to paint Ms. Clarke as some sort of anti-Semite—again, reaching back 25 years to criticize a speaker Ms. Clarke invited to campus as an undergrad. They conveniently ignore that Ms. Clarke has addressed their concerns head-on and demonstrated a long track record of defending religious rights throughout her career.

Her work in this area has earned her the support of the National Council of Jewish Women and the Anti-Defamation League, among other organizations. And if we needed any more evidence to rebut this outrageous claim, we should all look to the words of Attorney General Merrick Garland, who forcefully said: "I'm a pretty good judge of what an anti-Semite is, and I do not believe she is an anti-Semite."

Republicans are also trying to derail Kristen Clarke's nomination by pushing the lie that she supports defunding the police. It doesn't matter how many times they repeat the lie, it will never be true. Ms. Clarke has clearly expressed her support for shifting resources to social workers and mental health professionals so that police officers are no longer called upon to address every problem in society. This is not defunding the police, no matter what twisted definition is used.

As the Senate Judiciary Committee prepared to vote on Ms. Clarke's nomination, several Republicans took this baseless criticism to a pathetic, ridiculous new low. The junior Senator from Texas claimed that voting for Ms. Clarke—and, previously, voting to confirm Vanita Gupta as Associate Attorney General—put "every single Democratic Member of the United States Senate. . . on record supporting abolishing"—abolishing—"the police." "Abolishing the police"—that is what he said—not defunding, not reforming, abolishing. What a crock.

Unfortunately, we have come to expect these laughable exaggerations from our colleague from Texas. He would rather smear a nominee with baseless charges than engage with the facts, because neither Kristen Clarke nor Vanita Gupta has ever supported abolishing the police. Neither of them has said anything remotely close to this. If they had, I am sure it would come as news to the Fraternal Order of Police, the Major County Sheriffs of America, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, all of whom endorsed Vanita Gupta's nomination. You might also want to ask the Major

Cities Chiefs Association and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives why they endorsed Kristen Clarke if she is looking to put their members out of work. The fact is, she is not. This smear is only one example of the baseless, personal attacks Kristen Clarke has endured by those seeking to derail her nomination.

This week, the Senate can and should repudiate the vicious rightwing smear campaign against Ms. Clarke and confirm her as the next leader of the Civil Rights Division.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday was the last day that members of the National Guard were stationed at the Capitol. In the wake of January 6, they have all done us an extraordinary service providing an additional layer of security here. I want to thank everyone on behalf of the Senate and the entire Capitol Complex.

It was never our intention to have an element of the U.S. military on guard at the Capitol for an indefinite period. It was always a temporary solution to a temporary security threat caused by the former President—a reality acknowledged by the House and Senate minority leaders in the immediate aftermath of January 6 but not much since.

Going forward, we must establish and maintain a critical balance between security and access. The Capitol is a place that belongs to the people. We want visitors and tourists to be able to come and go. We want constituents to be able to meet their representatives and make their voices heard. We also have an obligation to make everyone—Members, staff, media, employees of the Capitol—feel safe when they come to work. Our Senate committees and the new team at the Sergeant at Arms are working very hard to strike that perfect balance.

We thank once again the National Guard for helping us protect this place during a very difficult period for our democracy.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, now on Senate business, this week, the Senate will consider at least two nominations for important positions in the executive branch: Chiquita Brooks-LaSure to be the next Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid and Kristen Clarke to be the next Assistant Attorney General.

Ms. Clarke would become the first woman and the first woman of color to formally lead the Justice Department's

Civil Rights Division since it was established in 1957.

I look forward to confirming both nominees this week.

The Senate will also continue its work on the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act—the largest stand-alone investment in American science and technology in decades. With a once-in-a-generation investment in the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, the Department of Commerce, and other vital entities, this legislation will set our country on a path to outinnovate, outproduce, and outcompete the world in the industries of the future.

As the week goes on, we will consider a number of amendments from both sides of the aisle, as well as a managers' amendment, to bring together a package of bipartisan changes to the bill. This is regular order in action.

The bill itself is the product of at least six Senate committees and includes input from nearly every Member of the Senate. As promised, we are working in a bipartisan way and a much more open way than the Senate used to act to allow amendments and debate. When a bill passes 22 to 4 out of one of its major committees and 21 to 1 out of another, it is truly bipartisan, and we should be able to move this bill forward without any dilatory obstruction. With so much cooperation happening, I see no reason why we can't finish the legislation by the end of the week.

So far, this bill has flown a bit under the radar, but it is an incredibly important piece of legislation. At its core, the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act is about maintaining America's role as the global economic leader. Few issues could be more important. Just because it may have its effect 2, 3, 4, 5 years from now and not the day after it passes doesn't mean that it isn't one of the most important pieces of legislation we could pass.

The next century will be won or lost on the battleground of technological innovation. The country that leads the world in science and tech will create a generation of millions of good-paying jobs, economic growth, and prosperity for its citizens, with profound implications for national security as well.

We want American workers, American businesses, and American values to lead the way in the 21st century, just as they did in the 20th century. That is what the Innovation and Competition Act is all about.

I look forward to working with Members from both parties to complete this legislation by the end of the week.

JANUARY 6 COMMISSION

Madam President, now on a final matter, the Senate will soon consider bipartisan legislation passed by the House to create an independent Commission to investigate and report on the January 6 attack on the Capitol. I have already taken procedural steps to make the legislation available for consideration on the Senate floor. I will bring the bill forward for a vote very soon. I will have more to say on that in the coming days.

The formation of the Commission is more important now than it has ever been in the months since January 6. Washington Republicans have tried to rewrite history and recast the attack on January 6 as little more than peaceful protests that got out of hand. One Republican Member said the rioters were more like a group of "normal tourists." Did you see the tapes? Did you see the films, America? Those were normal tourists? Another went so far as to say the mob—not the staff who were terrorized or the police who were brutalized—were the real victims of January 6. Give me a break.

For the sake of our democracy, it is crucial to establish an independent and trusted record of what truly transpired. According to an Ipsos poll today, 56 percent of Republicans believe that the election was rigged, and 53 percent of Republicans believe that Donald Trump is the true President, not Joe Biden. That is what the Big Lie has caused. The majority of one of America's two major political parties doesn't believe our President is the actual President.

Now more than ever, both parties must stand up to the Big Lie and shine a light on the truth of the 2020 elections and what happened on January 6. Yet it seems our Republican colleagues would rather avoid the subject entirely. The Republican leader, after moving the goalposts week after week, announced his opposition to the Commission, despite the fact that Democrats agreed to every single request made by the House Republican leader.

One Republican Senator said this weekend that it was "too early" to establish a Commission. Another admitted that many Republicans opposed the Commission because they feared it would hurt the Republican message in the midterm elections. Talk about saying the quiet part out loud.

The prevailing view among Republicans seems to be that we should sweep the Big Lie and all of January 6 under the rug like it never happened. Look, I am sorry that some Republicans believe that a bipartisan investigation of the attack on our democracy is inconvenient for their midterm campaigns, but the Democratic-led Congress of the United States is not going to sweep January 6 under the rug. We are going to vote on the January 6 Commission in the Senate, and the American people will see where every Member stands: on the side of truth or on the side of Donald Trump's Big Lie.

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

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

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, each year, the month of May is recognized as National Foster Care Month. I thank my colleagues for once again unanimously passing a resolution recognizing and bringing awareness to the experiences of youth and families in the foster care system.

This month, organizations in Iowa and around the entire country have been working to support youth in foster care and the foster parents who open their homes to the kids in need. And they deserve this recognition. In 2019, the most recent year for which data is available, there were over 426,000 kids in foster care in the United States. In Iowa alone, there were almost 6,000.

As stated in our resolution, Congress must continue to work toward real solutions for these young people because they face trauma, abuse, and neglect. Obviously, there are a lot of them who get loving care as well.

In recent years, lots of changes have been made to the way that child welfare works. Congress passed the Family First Prevention Services Act in 2018. The goal of that act was to provide more services to families before removing children from the home, before that action had to be taken. And that is where you ought to start—preserve the family as much as you can, as long as the children are not being mistreated.

This bill also seeks to help kids who age out of foster care have access to more support and successfully transition to adulthood and to independence.

I was glad to support this legislation, and I hope that, as it is implemented, we see positive outcomes for these young people and their families. All children, no matter what their circumstances, deserve a permanent, loving home and consistent, caring adults in their life.

When you visit with these young people, some of them tell us about being in two or three school systems in a year so obviously probably in two or three different homes in a year. And what you hear from them is “I would like to have a mom and dad. I would like to have a home. I would like to go to the same school for the whole year.” They want some consistency and some permanency. I guess that is what it all adds up to.

Research has shown that the presence of just one caring adult who is available for advice, for support, and for guidance can make a meaningful difference for children in foster care. For some young people, this may be a foster parent who maintains a relationship with a child even after temporary placement is over. For other kids, this may mean an aunt or an uncle, a family member who is willing to shoulder the responsibilities of providing a loving home. Others may benefit from a court-appointed special advocate, what we know as CASA, or a guardian ad

litem. These are volunteers assigned to be a child's advocate.

For a system designed to protect children, often the child welfare system does not give much opportunity for a child's voice to be heard, and it is a very important voice to listen to. CASAs are often the only adults in the court proceedings who are exclusively advocating for what the youth in foster care wants. I am happy that this year, for the first time, May 18 was labeled National CASA/GAL Volunteers Day to honor the service of these volunteers.

I salute all those who work tirelessly to support kids in foster care in Iowa and nationwide.

When I founded the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth in 2009, the special focus was to hear directly from the young people themselves. Older youth in foster care and adults who experienced foster care as a child can speak to what worked for them and, of course, what didn't work. They should always have a seat at the table.

Over and over again, I have heard the same thing from kids in foster care, so I am repeating what I said previously. They want a mom and a dad, they want a family, and they want a place to call home. For some kids, this goal can be met by their family's getting help with mental illness, substance abuse, or housing. For others, the dream of a family can be found through foster care and eventually adoption. For others, kinship care provides an opportunity for stability and permanency.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, no silver bullet that can help all kids the same way, but there is one common outcome that we can strive for. We should be wary of attempts to undo progress that has been made in speeding up adoptions and providing permanency for these children. The goal should always be to protect kids from neglect and abuse and, at the same time, improve their well-being.

Moving ahead now, Congress must continue to work to find better solutions and secure better outcomes for youth in foster care.

Once again, I thank my colleagues for passing this resolution recognizing May as Foster Care Month.

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

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

S. 1260

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, a few hours ago, I had the pleasure of joining Secretary Raimondo and Senator WARNER of Virginia for a tour of the Micron Technologies manufacturing plant just outside Washington, DC, in Manassas, VA. This is one of the great companies with facilities that produce semiconductors on U.S. soil.

Secretary Raimondo, Senator WARNER, and I were given a behind-the-scenes tour of how these advanced chips, or semiconductors, are made, and we discussed some of the reasons why it is more expensive to build these facilities in the United States.

The average American uses countless products every day that could not function without semiconductors. For everything from cell phones, to televisions, to cars and dishwashers, chips underpin our most-used technology. As we become more technology dependent, it is going to get nothing but more important. But it is not just consumer products; cell towers, water treatment plants, agricultural equipment, our energy grid—semiconductors make all of that possible.

These tiny technologies also play a huge role in our national defense. When we send our troops on a mission by land, sea, air, or even in cyber space, they need the best equipment available. Now more than ever, the equipment can't function without these chips.

Just look at Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system. This highly sophisticated system of rocket interceptors is a great example of the role that chips play in national security—not only ours but of our allies' as well. We know that the number of civilian casualties that would be caused if not for the protection of the Iron Dome for the Israeli people would be significantly higher. I asked my staff to find out how many semiconductors are actually in one of those interceptors that knock out one of those rockets coming from Hamas. What I found out is that every single one of these interceptors contains more than 750 different semiconductors.

So it is not hyperbole to say that there are life-and-death consequences to a reliable semiconductor supply chain, but right now, we are in a seriously vulnerable situation. Over the last two decades, the United States has gone from producing roughly a quarter of the world's semiconductors to about 12 percent. At the same time, China, our rival, our competitor that we are talking about a lot this week and last, has gone from manufacturing zero chips to now 16 percent of the world's supply, and it plans to invest another \$1.4 trillion in semiconductor technologies.

Right now, China is building 17 fabs, or manufacturing facilities, in China. We are maybe thinking about building one, through Taiwan Semiconductor in Arizona, but it depends on our willingness and ability to support that domestic manufacturing whether or not they actually complete that currently planned manufacturing facility. But when we are looking to our adversaries to supply the technology to power our most critical devices and systems, it is a huge problem.

The global shortage we are seeing right now is a glimpse of what things could look like and worse. The lack of supply has forced companies across the

full range of impacted industries to scale back production or hit pause altogether. We have seen that particularly in the car manufacture business.

This shortage has led to some serious consequences. If companies have to shut down production, which is happening right now, due to lack of supply of semiconductors, there are hard-working Americans who aren't able to earn a paycheck. This impact, as I have suggested, is now being felt by auto-workers across the country.

But we have every expectation that in a few months things will get back to normal. Those production lines will start back up, workers will be back on the job, and life will carry on hopefully as normal.

But the bigger question we need to ask is how would we fare if our supply chain to advance semiconductors was cut off entirely. Let's say it is another pandemic or a natural disaster or, heaven forbid, a military conflict in the South China Sea.

Nearly 90 percent of the world's chips are made in Southeast Asia. If that supply was cut off for any reason, what would we do? The consequences wouldn't be limited to a few bells and whistles on new cars. It would impact our missile defense systems, the F-35—the fifth generation Joint Strike Fighter—advanced weapons systems, quantum computing, and the full range of equipment and technologies our national defense depends on. If we don't have the ability to provide our troops with the technology they need to be successful, what would we do?

Well, the risks of carrying on business as usual are far too high for us to even contemplate that scenario. There is a clear need to invest in domestic semiconductor manufacturing and secure perhaps our most vulnerable supply chain. As we continue to debate the most effective ways to confront threats from China and bolster our national and economic security, there is no question that funding to shore up domestic semiconductor manufacturing is a must-do.

Last year, Senator WARNER, the senior Senator from Virginia, and I introduced the CHIPS for America Act, and it was adopted by an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act with broad bipartisan support on a vote of 96 to 4—a rare thing these days. That bill became law earlier this year, and now we have the important job of providing the funding for it, something I hope we can achieve through the legislation that is before the Senate today.

During the committee consideration of the bill, an amendment was added that would apply the controversial prevailing wage language to this portion of the bill. Considering the current wages of U.S. semiconductor manufacturing companies, it really is a nonissue. But what is an issue is expansion of Davis-Bacon prevailing wage provisions, not for public works but to private companies. And I believe the inclusion of this provision includes

some roadblocks on the way to passage of this final legislation.

So last week I introduced the amendment to strike this unnecessary and divisive provision and to protect the broad bipartisan support this legislation has already received. A controversial provision that doesn't even enact any real change is hardly a reason to let the funding go down the drain, and it really is just an unnecessary distraction. We don't need any other speed bumps in our ability to pass this important bipartisan legislation.

I hope our colleagues will continue to work with us in good faith to reach a compromise that will earn broad bipartisan support.

Last year the CHIPS for America Act, as I said, passed with a vote of 96 to 4, and there is no reason why this critical funding that we will be voting on this week should be politicized now.

NOMINATION OF CHIQUITA BROOKS-LASURE

Finally, Madam President, on another matter, this evening the Senate will take up a procedural vote on the President's nominee for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

CMS, as we all know, plays a vital role in providing healthcare to our most vulnerable populations. More than 4 million Texans, including half of our children, depend on the stability of our State's Medicaid Program to provide healthcare for them and their families. And in States across the country, Medicare funding is vital to the health of our most vulnerable friends and neighbors for everything from an emergency room visit to mental healthcare. But that could soon change.

The Biden administration has taken the unprecedented step of rescinding an agreement with my State and the previous administration to maintain the stability of our State's Medicaid Program. Under this agreement, Texas was set to receive approximately \$11 billion a year over the next decade to provide healthcare for our underserved population. Low-income individuals and those in rural areas are especially reliant on this funding, as are those who need mental healthcare. Mental and behavioral health providers alone receive about \$300 million a year.

When asked for the reasoning behind this dangerous and frankly shocking move, rescinding a prior agreement extending our 1115 waiver, CMS said it was to correct their administrative error—their error. But two anonymous Federal healthcare officials, I believe, did something that is all too rare here in Washington: They actually said the truth. They explained the real reasoning to the Washington Post. They said it was done “to push state officials toward accepting the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion.”

So, in effect, the administration is doing something that the Supreme Court of the United States said it cannot do, which is to hold a gun to the head of the States and force them to accept Medicaid expansion. So now

what they couldn't do under the Supreme Court's decision, they are trying to do now by holding our healthcare hostage in order to force the expansion of Medicaid into our State. That is a choice left up to the Governor and our elected legislature, not one to be made by bureaucrats with the Department of Health and Human Services or CMS.

While patients in Texas may be the first ones caught in this political game, I have no expectation that they will be the last. As a matter of fact, there are only four States that don't have approved or pending 1115 waivers, which is what we are talking about—four. There are only four that don't have those. So every other State beyond those four could be in the same situation my State is in, in the coming months. Whether it is Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Missouri, Idaho—the list of States that could be impacted by this life-and-death game of political chicken is a long one.

Of course, this all comes at a time when our healthcare system is already in fragile condition after more than a year of battling COVID-19. And the patients whose healthcare relies on the stability of the Medicaid system are those who have faced the biggest challenges during the pandemic.

I have asked the Biden administration to work with the State to ensure that millions of impacted individuals won't lose access to healthcare, but so far there has been little or no progress. The administration has been unable to provide me any assurance that an agreement could be reached before the end of this fiscal year—something that would have dire consequences on our providers and especially those in behavioral and mental health.

To state the obvious, the nominee to lead CMS, Ms. Brooks-LaSure, did not personally rescind the Texas Medicaid waiver. As a matter of fact, she hasn't been confirmed yet; so she couldn't. But before her nomination could advance, Members of the Senate deserve a commitment from the administration that it won't try to force the hand of other States, including Texas, by putting the healthcare of millions of vulnerable citizens on the line.

If we don't stand up now and push back on this reckless move, who will be next? Which State will be next? How far will the administration go to force States into enacting laws that they don't want to enact?

CMS funding is vital to the healthcare of millions of my constituents and to the stability of our entire healthcare system. CMS cannot be used as the administration's strong arm to coerce States into accepting its political demands, which is all this is.

I appreciate Ms. Brooks-LaSure's experience in working with States to develop these types of waivers and her willingness to meet with me on this issue, but frankly this is a decision being made above her in the food chain. But my State has not so far received

an assurance that this action will be rectified, and it looks like the administration is intent on pulling the rug out from under our poorest and most needy patients.

For that reason, I cannot support this nominee, and I urge my colleagues to stand with me and, in doing so, stand up for the healthcare of their most vulnerable constituents, too, and pushing the administration to find an alternate and satisfactory path forward. If the administration will take aim at the healthcare of 4 million vulnerable Texans, they will do it to anyone.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, a week from today, we will be celebrating Memorial Day. I know folks back home probably have some fun things planned for the long weekend—cookouts, family gatherings, maybe even a trip to the beach.

But while Memorial Day is a joyous, carefree weekend for many families, it is a reminder of what they lost—a father, a mother, husband, or a wife, a son, daughter, brother, sister, a family member, a friend that cannot be replaced.

Our Gold Star families have given a great sacrifice to our country. I have been there myself. My father served in World War II, driving a tanker across Europe. He earned five Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart. After the war, he died on Active Duty.

And I still miss him today. I am forever grateful that he, like so many folks from his generation, put on that uniform. They enlisted, not knowing whether they would ever come home. Many of them—hundreds of thousands—did not.

But they knew what they were doing was worth the danger. They knew the United States of America and all she stood for was worth defending. They earned the title of the “greatest generation.”

I will be introducing a resolution this week honoring the immense sacrifice of the “greatest generation” and not just those who put on the uniform. This resolution recognizes the millions of Americans who worked in the factories, bought war bonds, and donated their pots, pans, and more to a war effort. We owe the “greatest generation” a debt we can never fully repay.

I want to take a moment to thank Mr. Sam Romano from Vestavia Hills, AL, for advocating on behalf of the “greatest generation” and his contributions to this resolution.

Today, we have more than a million Active-Duty service men and women who continue to defend our freedoms. They, too, stand ready to answer the call when evil threatens America. They, too, stand ready to give their lives to defend their country, if need be.

The United States stands on the foundation of generations of service

men and women who gave their lives to defend their country. Their sacrifices created the most free and prosperous country in the history of the world.

We are not perfect, far from it, but our unique system of government is distinguished from any other—“of the people, by the people, and for the people.” That is why I stand for the flag and for our national anthem because for the last 250 years, men and women have given their lives for all this flag represents. They gave their lives to defend our right to make our country better.

The continued service of our military allows us to have that barbecue this weekend. Their service allows us to gather freely with family and friends, to think, to worship, and live how we want to. Memorial Day reminds us that our freedom and prosperity comes at a cost.

So for this upcoming Memorial Day weekend, I would encourage all of us to take a moment to remember what we are celebrating: the brave men and women who laid down their lives for ours. Let's honor our soldiers' sacrifice by keeping our country strong and upholding the values they gave their lives to defend.

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.

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

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

MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, this month is Military Appreciation Month. It is a month when we let our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines know just how grateful we are for their service. Madam President, we are grateful for the service that you gave our Nation in uniform. We thank you for that.

Tennessee is home to three major military installations and numerous other Guard installations. For us, Military Appreciation Month actually lasts all year long.

I would like to start off by welcoming the 101st Airborne Division's 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment back stateside following a 9-month rotational deployment to Korea. We are so happy to have them back home.

In more exciting news out of Fort Campbell, this Thursday, SGM Veronica Knapp will become the first woman to serve as a command sergeant major of a U.S. Army division. She will assume responsibility as the senior enlisted adviser of the 101st Airborne Division.

On behalf of the entire Tennessee delegation, I offer my congratulations and wish her success in all that is yet to come.

The servicemembers stationed at Fort Campbell have really had a very busy past year. Starting last March, we

began deploying soldiers to help with COVID-19 response operations across the Northeast, including members from the 501st Medical Company, the 531st Hospital Center, and the 101st Division Sustainment Brigade.

Boston and New York City were among the most severely affected areas in the country. And if you ask the healthcare workers and city officials in those areas if Tennessee servicemembers made a difference, they will tell you, yes, without a doubt.

Last year, many of our Tennessee National Guard members also joined the fight against COVID-19. The 164th Airlift Wing transported desperately needed PPE all the way from Italy to healthcare workers across the entire country. The 118th ISR Group, along with five other Air National Guard targeting units, produced over 70 percent of the U.S. Air Force's targeting materials, all while providing continuity to Activity-Duty units.

I want to keep bragging on our Guard members because they really have made an impact, especially when it comes to getting testing and vaccine centers up and running. They set up more static vaccine sites than any other State. As of March of this year, they have set up double the number of sites that were running in the next most successful State. Job well done.

They directly helped more than 1 million Tennesseans stay healthy through the pandemic. It was a great effort, and we thank them for that.

I am sorry to say that the pandemic wasn't the only natural disaster Tennesseans had to deal with over the past year. But when tornados destroyed multiple counties across West and Middle Tennessee, the National Guard was right there to help. And when blizzards shut down half the State, the Guard kept water flowing in Memphis, repaired communications infrastructure for first responders in Rutherford County, and found shelter for displaced families in Lynchburg and Manchester.

When you are on the outside looking in on a natural disaster, the last thing you want to hear is that local officials had to call in the National Guard. But I will tell you, when you are sitting in the aftermath, there is no more hopeful sight than a vehicle full of guardsmen pulling into town ready to help.

That peace of mind, of course, comes at a cost. Our servicemembers go where they are told to go and do the jobs they are told to do without hesitation. Why? Because they have accepted that the cost of freedom is more important than the freedom they sacrificed when they put on the uniform. Their families have accepted this too. And when you are a military family, the uniform comes first. This is why every year when we re-up defense funding, we put special focus on military families and their needs.

For example, 2 years ago, we established a pilot program to offer professional licensed reciprocity for military spouses who want to continue working

after moving across State lines. Last year, we increased funding for that program.

We also continued our support for the Preservation of the Force and Families Program, which helps special operators process the aftereffects of their missions.

Last month, the Presiding Officer and I introduced a bill called the Military Hunger Prevention Act. This is an incredibly important piece of legislation that would create a basic needs allowance for low-income military families.

The reason this is so important is that existing benefits programs like SNAP and free school lunches include housing allowances and other military benefits in revenue calculations. Although it is obvious that this only creates the appearance of higher income, the programs aren't designed to allow an exception. Once we pass this bill—and I am sure that we will—these families will be able to use their allowances to buy groceries instead of relying on food pantries to put dinner on the table.

This is what we should all be thinking about during Military Appreciation Month—renewing the commitment we have made to take care of our service-members both on and off the battlefield.

We need to ask ourselves: What are we doing to meet their practical needs? What are we doing to support their families? What are we doing to right unintended wrongs?

It is the most important way we can recognize their extraordinary service to our Nation.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATION OF CHIQUITA BROOKS-LASURE

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, the Senate is now debating the nomination of Chiquita Brooks-LaSure to head the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

This is clearly one of the most important healthcare jobs in America. Ms. Brooks-LaSure brings decades of health policy experience to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and I think it would be fair to say that she has worked on healthcare from just about every angle short of scrubbing into the operating room herself. I am going to talk, in a minute, about her qualifications, but I also want, as we start this discussion, to recognize that this is a job that requires urgent, hands-on professionalism—exactly the kind Ms. Brooks-LaSure brings to this.

We are, obviously, still working through enormous challenges on the COVID-19 pandemic. There are efforts by colleagues on both sides of the aisle on healthcare, and we, in particular, on this side want to expand healthcare coverage, bring down the cost of prescription medicine, and bring the Medicare guarantee into the 21st century. The American people need a chief of Medicare and Medicaid as soon as pos-

sible, and blocking this nomination slows down important work that needs to be done. Senators on the other side have objected to moving forward with the nomination. So I am going to talk for just a few minutes about these concerns—but, first, a little bit more about Ms. Brooks-LaSure.

Starting out, she worked at the Office of Management and Budget on Medicaid policy and the CHIP program, the Children's Health Insurance Program. So she was, long ago, focused on trying to improve healthcare for the millions of Americans who every single day walk an economic tightrope in balancing the food bill against the fuel bill and the fuel bill against healthcare costs. She was there for them.

She then moved to the House Ways and Means Committee as a senior staff member. She helped to write portions of the Affordable Care Act dealing with expanding coverage and updating the Medicare guarantee.

When the Affordable Care Act became law, she went to Health and Human Services, and there she played an important role in implementing the law. She was the leader in the effort to create marketplaces for health insurance with strong, built-in consumer protections. She has been a leader when it comes to defending and expanding women's healthcare under the Affordable Care Act and other essential programs. After leaving HHS, she went to the private sector and continued to work on policies that expanded coverage and made healthcare more affordable.

Ms. Brooks-LaSure has the qualifications, the experience, and the know-how to run Medicare and Medicaid, and there are absolutely no questions about it.

Now, our colleague from Texas, Senator CORNYN, has raised objections to moving the nomination forward. His objections relate to a decision by the Biden administration to rescind a Medicaid policy waiver that the Trump administration rushed to grant the State of Texas in mid-January. There are a few key points Members ought to understand about this issue.

First, nothing is going to change for health providers and patients in Texas for more than a year as a result of this decision. That means there is plenty of time to work out a solution that doesn't get rushed and follows the right process with public comment.

Second, Ms. Brooks-LaSure had nothing to do with the decision that Senator CORNYN is unhappy about. She wasn't on the job when it was made.

Third, she made clear in her Finance Committee hearing that she is committed to working on a bipartisan basis with State officials, and she said that to Senator CORNYN and to other Republican members on this issue as well. She has the track record and the experience to get that done.

I want to state again to our colleague from Texas and to every Member of the Senate: I probably spent as much time

as any Member of the Senate working on the issue that the Senator from Texas is concerned about, and that is the process for granting waivers. I authored what is called section 1332 of the Affordable Care Act that was designed to say that progressive States that, for example, wanted to pursue a public option or aggregate Medicare and Medicaid money would have a chance to do it as long as they would adhere to the guardrails. Conservative States that sought to try their own approaches based on their ideas of a conservative approach to healthcare could do it as long as they met the coverage requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

I want to state again to Senator CORNYN, as I did in the Senate Finance Committee, that I am going to work very closely with him, after we confirm this nominee, to address the issues that he discussed in the committee that have concerned him.

To every Member who has issues with respect to waivers, I want each to know that there will be bipartisan interest in trying to bring people in their States together and adhering to the ideas in the Affordable Care Act, which states that States are free to pursue their own ideas for expanding coverage as long as they stay within the guardrails of the program.

We understand that Democrats and Republicans aren't going to agree on every health policy question. What I do know is that Ms. Brooks-LaSure is going to be the kind of CMS Administrator who can bring two sides together exactly as we envisioned in the Affordable Care Act with the waiver law and exactly as I have committed to working with Senator CORNYN on.

The Finance Committee has demonstrated that it can work together on big issues. In 2017, the committee passed the CHRONIC Care Act, which was a fundamental transformation of Medicare.

I have told my colleagues that back when I was director of the Gray Panthers, Medicare was about acute care. There was Part A, which was for hospitals, and Part B, which was for doctors. That was it. That was Medicare. When I taught gerontology, the first question on an exam was, What is the difference between Part A and Part B? That isn't Medicare anymore. Medicare, today, is primarily about chronic disease: cancer and diabetes and heart disease and stroke and chronic pulmonary disease.

The Finance Committee wrote the CHRONIC Care Act on a bipartisan basis. At that point, Chairman Hatch was chairman of the committee, and I was the ranking Democrat. We worked in a bipartisan way, but the Trump administration, after the retirement of Chairman Hatch, basically put everything on the back burner.

When we confirm Ms. Brooks-LaSure—and I am convinced that she is going to be confirmed—she will work with Democrats and Republicans to

make sure we are updating the Medicare guarantee for this century. In particular, what that involves is making sure that there are more opportunities for those who receive traditional Medicare to get the benefits of the CHRONIC Care Act. Already, the CHRONIC Care Act works well for what is called Medicare Advantage. We need to do more to make sure it is available for those who receive traditional Medicare.

Now, there are other issues the Finance Committee is working on that Ms. Brooks-LaSure will play an important role in—one being improving mental healthcare because mental healthcare has gotten short shrift in America for far too long. We know that Americans feel like they are getting mugged when they walk into a pharmacy and go to the window to get their prescription medicines. Look, for example, at insulin. Insulin prices have gone up twelvefold in recent years. The drug is not 12 times better. It is the same drug, but they are getting clobbered because the pharmaceutical companies can get away with it. So those are the kinds of practices that Ms. Brooks-LaSure is going to take on, and she is going to do it in a bipartisan way.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is right at the center of taking on these and other important healthcare challenges. This critical Agency—one of the most important places in American healthcare—needs a leader, and it needs one now. She is, in my view, an excellent nominee. She is going to work with both sides here in the Senate, including on the issue our colleague Senator CORNYN has raised. I want to restate my interest in working with both Ms. Brooks-LaSure and Senator CORNYN on this matter my colleague from Texas has raised.

We are going to be voting in a couple of minutes, colleagues, and I urge a strong vote for an eminently qualified nominee, Ms. Chiquita Brooks-LaSure.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Thereupon, the Senate resumed consideration of the nomination of Chiquita Brooks LaSure, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 117, Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Charles E. Schumer, Patty Murray, Alex Padilla, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jeff Merkley, Jack Reed, Debbie Stabenow, Benjamin L. Cardin, Patrick J. Leahy, Elizabeth Warren, Jacky Rosen, Richard Blumenthal, Tina Smith, John Hickenlooper, Michael F. Bennet, Tim Kaine, Brian Schatz.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) would have voted “nay” and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) would have voted “nay.”

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 200 Exe.]

YEAS—52

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Blunt	Kaine	Schatz
Booker	Kelly	Schumer
Brown	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cardin	Leahy	Smith
Carper	Lujan	Stabenow
Casey	Manchin	Tester
Collins	Markey	Van Hollen
Coons	Menendez	Warner
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warnock
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Ossoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	
Hassan	Peters	

NAYS—43

Barrasso	Grassley	Romney
Blackburn	Hagerty	Rounds
Boozman	Hawley	Rubio
Braun	Hooven	Sasse
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Tuberville
Ernst	Paul	Wicker
Fischer	Portman	
Graham	Risch	

NOT VOTING—5

Cruz	Moran	Young
Kennedy	Murray	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 43.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1520

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise today to address the need to reform our military justice system.

Just this month, the Department of Defense released its annual report on sexual assault in the military. That report and more than a decade of data on sexual assault in the military show a clear and disturbing trend. Reports of sexual assault have increased virtually every single year and remain at record highs, while prosecution and conviction rates have declined, including a shocking 10 percent point decline in the prosecution rate from last year. By every measure that you can imagine, we are moving in the wrong direction.

Congress has given the military more than \$1 billion—\$500 million in fiscal year 2019 alone—enacted hundreds of provisions, and chartered special panels, Commissions, and advisory committees to address this problem. Not one of these steps has reduced the prevalence rate of sexual assaults within the ranks. We are still getting reports like the one we got from Fort Hood, which found that the world's largest Army base was “a permissive environment for sexual assault and sexual harassment.” We are right where we started. Nothing has changed.

I have heard from too many survivors who have barely come forward in search of justice, only to have their cases outright declined by the chain of command and then face more harassment and retaliation for reporting their assailant. We owe it to our servicemembers to do more to prevent these crimes and properly prosecute them when they occur.

Our bill, the Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act, would ensure that, when these crimes are committed, justice is delivered. It does so by taking the same approach to these cases that the military takes in almost every other area of operation. It puts highly technical work in the hands of trained specialists.

This bipartisan and commonsense reform moves the decision on whether to prosecute serious crimes to independent, trained, and professional military prosecutors while leaving misdemeanors and uniquely military crimes within the chain of command. In other words, it will let prosecutors prosecute and commanders command.

By moving this work off of the commander's plate, it will empower command to focus on mission-critical activities and on rebuilding the trust among their ranks that we know is critical to military readiness.

This bill is not political. It is about doing the right thing for our servicemembers who do so much for this Nation.