

live in the hearts and memories of all those he impacted and who cared for him.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with the Jonesboro community and those who served alongside Officer Parks and all those who loved him.

May he rest in peace and may his example inspire and shape future acts of service and sacrifice.

I yield the floor to Senator COTTON and thank him for his constant efforts to champion our law enforcement community.

Mr. COTTON. Sadly, I join Senator BOOZMAN again in mourning the death of a public servant and a good and decent Arkansan. This July, Jonesboro policeman Vincent Parks died of a heart attack after training exercises at the Central Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy. He was on the force for 32 days.

Parks was a native Arkansan and dedicated family man who is survived by his loving wife Christina and his daughter Viviana. He is remembered as a kind and joyful man with an infectious smile and positive attitude that could fill a room.

For 14 years, he had a good, stable job, but he felt a calling to do more and to serve the community where he was born. So in June of this year, he answered that call. At the age of 38, he joined the Jonesboro Police Department.

Tragically, only a month into this noble new chapter of his life, Officer Parks started showing signs of medical distress during training. He suffered a severe heart attack on the way to the hospital and was pronounced dead later that day.

All of Arkansas was saddened by the news of this good and dedicated man who was taken from his family and community so young and too early, but his memory, spirit, and example endure.

May God bless and keep Vinnie Parks, and may God bless and keep all of our heroic fallen officers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

FOR THE RELIEF OF ARPITA KURDEKAR, GIRISH KURDEKAR, AND VANDANA KURDEKAR

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 680 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 680) for the relief of Arpita Kurdekar, Girish Kurdekar, and Vandana Kurdekar.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read

a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (H.R. 680) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, this measure provides relief through H.R. 680 for Arpita Kurdekar and her parents, Girish and Vandana.

Arpita came here from India in 2014 to pursue higher education. Like so many students before her, she was drawn to the strength of our universities. She started her master's degree at the University of Buffalo.

Heartbreakingly and tragically, in September of 2016, in a freak accident, she was struck by a falling tree and suffered a severe spinal injury that caused her to be paralyzed from the neck down. Her parents came to this country from India to be at her side, to be her aid.

Remarkably, she has not only survived, but she has thrived. In fact, she has found the strength and will and character to overcome that paralysis. She is now a resident of Connecticut and she pursues a Ph.D. in structural engineering at the University of Connecticut, while also working as a graduate research fellow and research assistant. Her research is on the cutting edge, exploring how technologies, including virtual reality, can enhance learning opportunities in engineering and the arts.

It is a miraculous story.

Here, she has access to physical therapy and to other resources that she needs, and services. Of course, her parents are essential to her performance and, indeed, her thriving as she has done. If she is forced to return to India, she would have drastically reduced opportunities for her and also for this country, which is benefiting enormously from her work. She would have needed access to physical care and therapy that were unavailable there. She would have effectively been homebound due to the lack of accessibility for the disabled.

In all kinds of ways, her life will now be productive and rewarding to her and to this country. That is why, in recognition of those very difficult circumstances, the Kurdekar family has been accorded the permanent status to stay here as a result of our passing this bill without objection—in effect, unanimously—here. I thank my colleagues for that action.

AFGHAN ADJUSTMENT ACT

Madam President, I also want to talk briefly about the Afghan Adjustment Act because I have just come from the Senate Swamp, the lawn outside the Capitol, where a group representing the veterans and Afghan allies and others who traveled across country who have been literally on the steps of our Capitol to tell us, in effect, that we have an obligation to the at-risk Afghan allies. Literally thousands of them have

come here and have only a limited amount of time under their current status, the humanitarian parole, and then could be deported back to Afghanistan and to a place where they would have targets on their back, where they would face persecution, torture, death.

We need to give them permanent status here. We need to provide these men and women, who have risked their lives for our country and put their futures on the line for us, the safety and security of staying in this country. We cannot turn our backs on the Afghan allies who managed to escape in those frightful days last summer, nor can we turn our backs to the at-risk Afghan allies who remain there.

I have advocated their cause. I championed their plight for the months since we withdrew from Afghanistan. I will pledge to them, to our veterans who have so bravely advocated this cause, and to the Afghan allies who come to this country that we will continue this fight.

Some of these individuals are former Afghan special forces. Some are female members of the Afghan defense forces who accompanied our troops and provided vital intelligence that saved countless American lives.

Overall, these Afghan allies, now at risk, worked with our troops and diplomats and helped to save their lives and guide them.

I know from my son's own experience as a U.S. Marine Corps officer that our men and women in combat were, in fact, saved and made secure because of their interpreters, their guides, their translators, all who worked with our troops and diplomats.

We must honor our commitment to them. They put their lives on the line for us. A failure would be a stain on our national honor. Great nations keep their promises, and that is what the Afghan Adjustment Act would enable us to do. We need to pass it next session if we cannot do it this session.

I regret that right now it is not part of the omnibus budget bill, but our bipartisan group—and it is truly bipartisan and we have the votes to pass it even with a 60-vote threshold—will continue fighting, working for this cause.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Connecticut.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 1171, 1189, 1190, 1191, 1192, 1193, and 1200; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that

the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the following nominations en bloc: Alexis Taylor, of Iowa, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs; L. Michelle Moore, of Georgia, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026; Robert P. Klein, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026; William J. Renick, of Mississippi, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2027; Adam Wade White, of Kentucky, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2027; Joe H. Ritch, of Alabama, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2025; and Beth Pritchard Geer, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2023—Continued

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. 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. MORAN. 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. MORAN. Mr. President, we are debating, discussing, and hopefully concluding our work on something called an Omnibus appropriations bill. I certainly decry the method by which the committee, the Senate, and the Congress work in regard to appropriations bills. I am a member of that Appropriations Committee, but there is no reason—none—that we could not do as we are supposed to do, as we are intending to do—12 separate appropriations bills, one at a time.

It is an opportunity for the committees to have hearings with witnesses to debate and discuss the content of that appropriations bill, pass it out of the committee, send it to the Senate, and let other Members of the Senate who are not on the Appropriations Com-

mittee amend, discuss, and debate that section of what today, tonight, this week becomes this large, all-encompassing bill.

We all would be better off if we broke this down into the 12 separate parts that are now combined into this one large bill. We would know much more about it, the deliberations would be more forthright, and we would have less likelihood of something being contained in the bill that there was objection to it being there.

I hope in the new Senate, the new Congress beginning in January, we as appropriators, we as Members of the Senate, work hard to go back to the way things were before I was ever in the Senate in which there is a budget, 12 appropriations bills, and then fill in the spaces on that budget. Then, ultimately, every Member of the U.S. Senate has input into the outcome.

I want to highlight something that is in the appropriations bill that we are discussing and considering at this point in time. Before I do that, I want to, again, indicate that one of the most important components to me in this legislation is the opportunity for us to more fully fund those who serve in our military and to better care for our veterans who have served.

There is some suggestion that we are rushing to complete this legislation before the new year. The reality is, we are—again, because of the process that we have failed to follow, we are behind in the system. It is not that we are advancing a bill that was something to take advantage of in the future. We are 3 months behind in passing an appropriations bill that was due at the end of the fiscal year September 30, 3 months ago.

And if we wait to pass an appropriations bill into the new year—we are supposed to have our appropriations process completed in March—we will just be beginning the discussion, debate about the old bill—the bill for this year—at a time in which we are supposed to be advancing the conversation, debate, and outcome of a bill to fund the new year.

And in the process of doing so, we will have left our military at flatline funding. And the challenges we face in this country are so significant that no additional dollars to the Department of Defense for even a short period of time—months, 6 weeks, 3 months, a year—that is very damaging, particularly in these days of significant defense inflation. And so it is important for us to complete our work in a timely fashion.

And, unfortunately for us, that timely fashion is already 3 months ago. In this bill, in a bipartisan fashion, we were successful in adding a number of provisions to the bill that advanced the cause of those who served our Nation. So my point, first of all, is for those men and women who serve in our military today, they deserve something different than old funding or no funding or continued funding at a flatline level.

And for our military men and women who have served in the past, our veterans, they deserve many of the provisions that are now included in the appropriations package.

Our military, as we know, is comprised of many selfless Americans who signed up, volunteered to serve. It is through their sacrifices, their family's sacrifices, that they have protected and preserved the gift of freedom that we have in this country and what we should always cherish.

In asking brave people to serve, men and women, generally young, we make, as a Nation, a promise to them and to their families that their government will assist them in successfully returning to civilian life after their service.

Specifically, I think we promise those who serve help for them in transitioning to civilian life through education, training, and economic assistance, to provide them medical care for their injuries or diseases incurred during their service, and to compensate them financially if those injuries prevent them from meeting their full earning potential.

As we consider the fiscal year 2023 appropriations package, there are a few specific veterans bills that have been included in this legislation to give the Department of Veterans Affairs the tools and resources they need to meet the changing needs of America's veterans.

One is the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and the Robert J. Dole Memorial Veterans Benefit Healthcare Improvement Act, long last name, honoring two previous Members of the U.S. Senate—including my successor in the seat I hold in the U.S. Senate, Senator Bob Dole.

He himself, not only a Kansan but a significantly wounded veteran and an individual who never stopped fighting for his fellow veterans, it is an honor to name this legislation with his respect in mind.

This legislation, described in that title, delivers new benefits and improved resources for the VA, including a specific bill that I introduced, one that is—we call in short words GHAPS, Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served. That act builds upon previous legislation and efforts to continue to lay a groundwork necessary to transform the VA into a modernized innovative healthcare system.

It includes protections to safeguard veterans' access to care from highly qualified providers in VA medical facilities and through the VA's Community Care Network to help veterans across the country, including those in rural—a significant component of my State and the Presiding Officer's—and remote communities, that those veterans get the care they need when they need it and where they want it.

It would also require the VA to establish a pilot program to empower veterans by letting them schedule their own appointments, just like they would be able to do if they were seeking care elsewhere.