Judge Hall cared deeply about giving Vermonters, particularly Vermont Law School graduates, and those from non-traditional paths and backgrounds opportunities to learn and excel. Our lives have been forever changed by the gift of having clerked in his chambers. We hope that Judge Hall's leadership in elevating diverse voices and experiences will further cement his legacy on the Court and in the law. We owe him more than we could ever repay.

Judge Hall was a hero and a guiding light to many of us. He was all a federal judge and a career public servant should be. The United States is a more just nation because of his decades of public service. We miss him dearly.

M. Michael Cole; Timothy C. Doherty, Jr.; Minor Myers; Nora Von Stange; Thomas Brad Davey; Erik W. Weibust; Robin D. Barovick; Samuel I. Portnoy; Timothy C. Perry; Stacey D. Neumann; Rachel Hannaford; Russell Plato; Jill Pfenning; Reagan Roth; Melissa Kelly; Sanja Zgonjanin; Peter Sax; Elizabeth (Betsy) Grossman; Tom Valente; Nikhil Rao; Alison Share; Nomi Barst/Berenson.

Christopher Worth; Matthew Grieco; Justin Brown; Peter Fox; Katherine Padgett; Mark W. Vorkink; Shannon Wolf; Nathan P. Murphy; Jonathan D. Lamberti; Molly E. Watson; Jonathan R. Voegele; Megan E. Larkin; John H. Bernetich; Austin Winniford; Aiysha S. Hussain; Mark Harrison Foster, Jr.; Lydie Essama; Lucas C. Buzzard; Patrick A. Woods; Peter V. Keays; Molly R. Gray; Michael A. Mcguane.

Mike L. DiGiulio; Caryn A. Devins; Stephen F. Coteus; Ryan M. Royce; Peter I. Dysart; L. Raymond Sun; Matthew J. Greer; Danielle C. Quinn; Alex Nelson; Caroline C. Cease; Spencer R. Allen; Elise Milne Keys; Leslie Cahill; Jenna Scoville; Brentley Smith; Fiona O'Carroll; Amelia Hritz; Kelly Lester; Joseph Hartunian; Zachary Dayno; Atticus DeProspo; John Howard; Jessica Bullock.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

GUN VIOLENCE

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, I want to also just thank my colleague from Vermont for that lovely tribute to Judge Hall.

I can see that he meant a lot to you and was a great public servant. So thank you, Senator LEAHY.

Madam President, in a year of so much heartbreak and grief and death, it almost escaped notice that we had gone in this country a year without a mass shooting in a public place.

But now we face the grim reminder of our American reality. In the space of a week, two separate mass shootings stole the lives of 18 people. And just weeks ago, we suffered a mass shooting in a health clinic in my home State of Minnesota.

So here we are again, thrust into a familiar cycle of collective grief and frustration and anger. Our hearts break for the families and loved ones of those whose lives were stolen. Our voices cry out for change to end the scourge of gun violence. And our anger grows as our voices are ignored and we are told by Republican leaders that there is nothing that we can do to protect American lives from gun violence.

Colleagues, it is our job to protect American lives.

Today, I want to share with you the voice of Veronique de la Rosa. Her son Noah, just 6 years old, was murdered in his classroom at Sandy Hook Elementary, and she delivered this eulogy for her son at his 2012 funeral.

I am going to read it in its entirety so that it can be included in the RECORD, the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, and can serve as a reminder of the human toll that our gun culture has taken.

Veronique said:

The sky is crying, and the flags are at half-mast. It is a sad, sad day. But it is also your day, Noah, my little man. I will miss your forceful and purposeful little steps stomping through our house. I will miss your perpetual smile, the twinkle in your dark blue eyes, framed by eyelashes that would be the envy of any lady in this room.

Most of all, I will miss your visions of your future. You wanted to be a doctor, a soldier, a taco factory manager. It was your favorite food, and no doubt you wanted to ensure that the world kept producing tacos.

You were a little boy whose life force had all the gravitational pull of a celestial body. You were light and love, mischief and pranks. You adored your family with every fiber of your 6-year-old being. We are all of us elevated in our humanity by having known you. A little maverick, who didn't always want to do his schoolwork or clean up his toys, when practicing his ninja moves or Super Mario on the Wii seemed far more important.

Noah, you will not pass this way again. I can only believe that you were planted on Earth to bloom in heaven. Take flight, my boy. Soar. You now have the wings that you always wanted. Go to that peaceful valley that we will all one day come to know. I will join you someday. Not today. I still have lots of mommy love to give to Danielle, Michael, Sophia and Arielle.

Until then, your melody will linger in our hearts forever. Momma loves you, little man.

Veronique should not have had to eulogize Noah, her 6-year-old son—1 of 20 children killed at Sandy Hook.

So I ask my Republican colleagues to think of her when you suggest that families exaggerate their anguish for political gain.

Just yesterday, one of my Republican colleagues dismissed this grief as ''theater.'' No. This is life and death.

So I am angry. I am angry because I know that we have the power to stop this violence, and yet our Republican colleagues stand in the way. They refuse to work with us. They continue to put the demands of the NRA above the demands of the people we are elected to serve—that we stop this horrific gun violence, that we protect the people we are elected to serve.

Madam President, we need universal background checks. We need to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. We need to end this cycle, and we need all of us in Congress to find the strength and the humanity to take action.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

PPP EXTENSION ACT OF 2021

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, small businesses and their employees are the backbone of our economy, particularly in States like those of the Presiding Officer and the State that I am privileged to represent, the great State of Maine.

Later today, the Senate is slated to vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 1799, the PPP Extension Act of 2021.

As a sponsor of the Senate companion bill, along with my colleagues Senator CARDIN and Senator SHAHEEN, I urge my colleagues to support the cloture motion.

We are also delighted that several of our colleagues have joined us as cosponsors of the Senate companion bill.

The Paycheck Protection Program continues to be a lifeline for small businesses. It has made the difference between their shutting their doors and laying off their employees and their being able to remain open, survive the pandemic, and most important of all, send paychecks to their employees.

Since the program was created last year, more than $718 billion in forgivable Small Business Administration loans have been approved, securing tens of millions of jobs in this country.

The program has also been responsible for bringing approximately $3 billion to the State of Maine in forgivable loans that have allowed our small businesses, particularly those in the hospitality industry, to survive the pandemic and continue to send paychecks to their employees.

The current application deadline for the PPP is March 31. That is just days away. I continue to hear about the urgent need for more PPP assistance from Maine's small businesses and to hear from others who are eligible for assistance but whose financial institutions are getting error messages from the Small Business Administration's computer system.

Originally, the SBA had used the E-Tran system. For some reason, it switched computers for this round of PPP, and we understand that there are more than 190,000 applications that are pending for approval that are likely eligible for assistance but are held up because of computer glitches or other errors.

The bill before us today mirrors the legislation that I introduced with Senators CARDIN and SHAHEEN in that it provides for a clean extension of the PPP application deadline. It would simply extend the application deadline for PPP loans from March 31 to May 31, just 2 more months, and then it would provide an additional 30 days for the SBA to process pending applications.

So if a small restaurant, for example, applied for a second PPP loan for which it is eligible because its revenues are down by 25 percent, comparing similar quarters in 2019 and 2020, it would not lose out because it applied in May and the SBA did not get time to process the application.

Our bill has been endorsed by more than 90 organizations, including the Nation's largest small business advocacy group, the National Federation of

Independent Business, which is key voting this vote. It has also been endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Hotel & Lodging Association, the International Franchise Association, the National Restaurant Association, the U.S. Travel Association, and the Independent Community Bankers of America.

The House passed this clean PPP extension last week by an overwhelming margin of 415 to 3.

With the House now in recess and the Senate leaving this week, advancing a clean extension through the Senate ensures the continuation of this vital relief for our small businesses and their employees. We simply have to get this done.

I agree with my colleagues that there are further improvements that could be made to PPP, such as addressing an issue facing certain sole proprietors. Unfortunately, the new administration changed the rules, so sole proprietors who applied early when the program reopened in January were treated differently than sole proprietors who are applying now. That obviously doesn't make sense. We should have the same rule.

I have talked with the new SBA Administrator about this problem. She agrees that it is unfair and needs to be fixed and has committed to working with all the sponsors and with the House and Senate Small Business Committee to find a solution to ensure that the program is implemented as Congress intended.

But in order to ensure that there is adequate time to develop and implement these improvements, we must first, without delay, pass H.R. 1799 to keep the PPP open for another 2 months.

I urge all of my colleagues to support cloture and passage of this important bipartisan legislation. It truly is bipartisan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MURRAY and I be permitted to complete our remarks prior to the vote for up to 5 minutes each.

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

NOMINATION OF DAVID TURK

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, today the Senate is going to vote on the nomination of David Turk, who will be serving as Deputy Secretary of Energy. If confirmed, he is going to play a critical role in our Nation's energy agenda and in leading the Department.

His experience in energy policy is extensive. He served in leadership positions at the International Energy Agency, the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Department of State, and the National Security Council. He is an expert in the field, and his qualifications are very clear.

It is also clear from his nomination hearing that he is dedicated to all types of American energy. This is critical if we are going to keep America an energy-dominant nation. I especially appreciated his commitment to advance nuclear and carbon capture utilization and sequestration technologies.

During his hearing, he said that there are huge opportunities on carbon capture utilization and sequestration if we can work together and really go to scale. He also emphasized the need to construct CO_2 pipelines to move the captured carbon, and I agree. Carbon capture technologies hold the key to major emission reduction while enabling America to use the tremendous natural resources with which we are blessed.

This issue has broad bipartisan support. Last Congress, I worked with Democrats, including SHELDON WHITEHOUSE and TOM CARPER, as well as Republicans, including SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, to pass the USE IT Act into law. This bipartisan law will support the development of carbon capture and direct air capture techniques.

This kind of groundbreaking research is already happening in Wyoming. The Integrated Test Center located outside of Gillette, WY, is hosting carbon capture research teams today. These research teams are looking at how we can take captured carbon emissions and transform them into marketable products like building materials, clothing, and even hand sanitizer. So I would welcome Mr. Turk and Energy Secretary Granholm to come to Gillette to see the fantastic research taking place there.

Mr. Turk was also very responsive to the committee's questions for the record. That has not been the case with every one of President Biden's nominees so far.

If he is confirmed, Mr. Turk must prioritize policies that take advantage of the enormous economic and national security benefits generated by America's oil, natural gas, and coal resources.

The Biden administration has taken a sledgehammer to the economies of Wyoming and other Western States by declaring war on these natural resources. Let me be very clear: Coal, oil and natural gas are not going away. America is going to rely on these resources for decades to come. We need to use and promote every kind of American energy and the thousands of jobs that come with them.

Coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear power, and renewables are all essential to America's energy mix. Mr. Turk demonstrated that he understood that reality during his nomination hearing. He can be sure that I will hold him to the commitments he made during his nomination hearing to expand carbon capture as well as nuclear power. I am going to continue to hold the Biden administration accountable as well.

As I did in committee, I will support Mr. Turk's nomination on the floor today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

NOMINATION OF RACHEL LELAND LEVINE

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I rise today to strongly urge my colleagues to support the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine. She is a highly qualified public health expert to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health.

As the highest ranking health official in Pennsylvania, she led the State's COVID–19 response by focusing on transparency and clear, science-based communication; giving daily briefings on the status of the pandemic; and advocating for the resources and support Pennsylvanians needed.

Dr. Levine has been on the frontlines of this pandemic, which is why she knows firsthand what our States and communities need from the Department of Health and Human Services. Even before this crisis, Dr. Levine established herself as a trusted voice to the people of Pennsylvania on matters of public health through her work to establish opioid prescribing guidelines and education for medical students, make lifesaving treatment for opioid overdoses widely available, combat eating disorders, increase health equity, and help the LGBTQ community get healthcare.

She was confirmed to both of her positions in the State with broad bipartisan support. She passed out of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee with support from Republican colleagues last week, and I hope she will be confirmed today in a strong bipartisan vote as well.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge what her confirmation today would represent for our country because, in addition to being a high qualified nominee, Dr. Levine is also a historic one. Upon confirmation, she will be the highest ranking openly transgender official in our government and the first one ever confirmed by the Senate.

I have always said the people in our government should reflect the people it serves, and today we will take a new, historic step toward making that a reality.

I am proud to vote for Dr. Levine and incredibly proud of the progress this confirmation will represent for our country and for transgender people all across it who are watching today. I hope all my colleagues are as well.

I would also say how glad I am that yesterday we voted to confirm Dr. Murthy as Surgeon General.

During his last tenure as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy established himself as a trusted voice on matters of public health, helped see our Nation through the Zika outbreak, and published groundbreaking reports on the opioid epidemic and rising youth tobacco use.

I am pleased to have Dr. Murthy returning to the role of Surgeon General at this critical time.

When it comes to ending this pandemic, we have a lot of work to do and