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# Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

## PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, You have brought us to this season of great expectations as we prepare our hearts to welcome Your intervening in human affairs.

Lord, use our Senators to bring peace and unity to our Nation and world. Inspire them to embrace optimism as they serve You and humanity. Help them yield to the inflow of Your insight, vision, and guidance.

Lord, we also pray for the millions who live in constant deprivation: the homeless and hungry, the oppressed and persecuted. Teach us how to share our more than enough with those who rarely have enough.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

## RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The Senator from Nevada.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 (Ms. ROSEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Atul Atmaram Gawande, of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

## MOTION TO DISCHARGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, pursuant to S. Res. 27, the Committee on the Judiciary being tied on the question of reporting, I move to discharge the Senate Committee on the Judiciary from further consideration of the nomination of Holly A. Thomas, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit from the Committee on the Judiciary.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the provisions of S. Res. 27, there will now be up to 4 hours of debate on the motion, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with no motions, points of order, or amendments in order.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

### TRIBUTE TO JACK REED

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Madam President, I want to begin today with some celebrations.

Recently, our dear colleague and friend Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island cast his 8,000th vote as a Senator—a remarkable milestone for one of the most beloved and respected Members of this body.

A lifelong Rhode Islander, a graduate of West Point, and the dean of the Rhode Island congressional delegation, Senator REED is one of America's best examples of doing politics and public service the right way: no fuss, no nonsense—just results.

Over the years, he has been a mentor, a friend, and an invaluable resource for countless Members on both sides of the aisle. Few in this Chamber can match his expertise on matters of national defense, veterans affairs, and the military. I would also add that the same can be said about matching his attendance. Over the years, he has missed just 38 votes on his way to 8,000—good for an attendance percentage of 99.5 percent. Wow.

As the Senate has undergone change over the years, Senator REED has remained the same: focused on Rhode Island, focused on our country, focused on keeping this Chamber working on behalf of the American people. We are lucky to call Senator REED our colleague and friend.

And so congratulations, JACK, on this milestone, and here is to 8,000 more votes to come.

### NOMINATIONS

Madam President, last night, I filed cloture on 22 of President Biden's nominees who, to date, have been pointlessly stalled by Republican obstruction—22. We are going to work until they are all confirmed by this Chamber, and we may need to add more.

In past years, many of these nominees would have sailed through with consent and cooperation, but, this

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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year, a handful of Republicans have hijacked the rules of the Senate to slow the process down. It is cynical; it is entirely pointless; and worst of all, it is damaging—seriously damaging—to our national security.

This is the consequence of Republican obstruction. We are going to work on getting these nominees confirmed as long as it takes, and we could be back here in the near future doing this whole thing over again.

For all the tortured logic we hear coming from the other side for why these nominations remain frozen, the fact is that my Republican colleagues who are holding these nominations up are deliberately making the American people less safe and making it harder for the administration to address the national security and economic challenges that face our Nation.

It is unacceptable, and we are going to work to confirm these important nominees.

VOTING RIGHTS

Now, on voting rights, Madam President, as we continue working to bring the Senate to a position where we can move forward on Build Back Better, Senate Democrats have spent the past few weeks engaged in a separate discussion on addressing another critical and urgent priority—protecting the right to vote and safeguarding our elections.

Yesterday, I joined with a number of my colleagues in detailed conversations about how the Senate will get voting rights done in time for the 2022 elections, including advancing the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

In State after State, Republican-led legislatures are approving the most draconian voter registration laws that we have seen since segregation, and they are doing it on an entirely partisan basis. Let me repeat that. Republicans at the State level are passing the most egregious restrictions on voting rights that we have seen since segregation, and they are doing it on an entirely partisan basis.

Senate Democrats are working to find a path forward to respond to these attacks by passing legislation like the Freedom to Vote Act and the Voting Rights Advancement Act. Part of that conversation involves finding ways to restore the Senate so it can, once again, work as it is supposed to, as it has worked for generations before the gridlock of the past decade or so.

These conversations are ongoing. The fight to protect voting rights is far from over in the Senate. Just because Republicans will not join us to defend democracy does not mean that Democrats will stop fighting. This matter is too important not to act, even if it means we must act alone to get the Senate working.

TRIBUTE TO SARA SCHWARTZMAN

Madam President, finally, a farewell—as anyone who has been here a while knows, the U.S. Senate is more than just the sum of its elected Members. Making this institution work is a daunting and awesome responsibility, and while the spotlight often falls on the men and women who stand behind these desks, this place would quickly unravel without the staff who work their magic behind the scenes.

Today, we say goodbye and thank you to one of those incredible staffers, Sara Schwartzman, who will soon leave the Senate to pursue an opportunity with NASA.

I join with all of my colleagues and with the rest of the Senate staff in saying thank you, Sara, and best of luck on the road ahead.

Thirteen years ago, Sara came to the Senate as a legislative support clerk with the executive clerk's office. Over the years, she climbed up the ranks, thanks to her skill and to her dedication, eventually becoming bill clerk in 2015.

For those who don't know, the bill clerk is one of the first gatekeepers for all new bills and resolutions that are introduced to the Senate. It is the bill clerk who brings order and sequence to the actions of this body, recording the Senate's legislative activities, assigning numbers to every bill and resolution, cataloging the status of each.

In good times, this is difficult and precise work. But over the last few years, as we all know, Sara fulfilled her duties in the midst of a global pandemic and has had to adapt in unprecedented ways. Through it all, she never missed a beat.

After 13 years, Sara deserves her gleaming sendoff as she pursues her next adventure in life. And as we say goodbye, we hope she knows she can always call this place home, and we will forever be grateful for all she has done to make this Chamber come to life.

So to Sara, thank you. Thank you for everything. We will miss you, and we can't wait to see what the future has in store for you.

(Applause.)

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

KENTUCKY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Western Kentucky is still reeling from last weekend's devastating storm, but support is rolling in from around the Commonwealth, our region, and the country as well.

Yesterday, I spoke with the CEO of LifePoint Health. They operate 10 hospitals in Kentucky, including one in hard-hit Mayfield. Miraculously, their Jackson Purchase Medical Center survived the tornado mostly intact. Now it is offering much needed medical services right there in Mayfield.

Nurses and doctors have worked literally day and night. LifePoint Health shipped water tankers to their facility to bolster local supply, and the company has pledged a million dollars to help Kentucky rebuild.

Across our region, individuals and companies are opening their hearts, homes, and wallets to help.

We have received important assistance from here in Washington as well. Yesterday, the President announced the Federal Government will fund the entire cost of debris removal and emergency protective measures in the eight counties hardest hit by the storm for the next month. Local officials won't need to worry about overstretching budgets. They can just focus on rebuilding.

My team and I are working hard to continue connecting Kentuckians with the resources they need. I have set up a portal on my Senate office website to help my constituents access government assistance. It has a full list of services provided by our disaster response Agencies.

Because of the Federal Government's swift action in the past week, victims of these tornadoes can access housing assistance, legal aid, crisis counseling, and more.

I recommend every impacted Kentuckian take advantage of these resources, and my office is here to help you navigate.

I will travel back to Kentucky tomorrow to visit several of the communities that were hit hardest and meet with local leaders who are spearheading recovery efforts. I will listen to their concerns and bring their stories back to Washington to ensure that they get the help they desperately need.

The scene on the ground in Western Kentucky is still devastating and quite discouraging. For far too many families, this Christmas will be tragically abnormal. But we will continue to work together to provide Kentucky with the resources it needs to recover, bigger and better than before.

BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

Now, Madam President, on an entirely different matter, two in three Americans want the Federal Government to ''cut back on spending and printing money.'' That is two out of three Americans want the Federal Government to cut back on spending and printing money. But our Democratic colleagues spent the last several months trying as hard as possible to do exactly—exactly—the opposite.

Washington Democrats have spent months trying to borrow, print, and spend trillions more dollars, right into the teeth of the worst inflation in almost 40 years.

They have sought to turn their monthly welfare entitlement with no work requirements from a temporary COVID measure into a permanent policy—cash welfare with no work requirements, literally forever.

Seventy-six percent of Americans say these handouts haven't helped their families at all. Yet Democrats want to dump many billions more.

Just step back and look at all the ways their leftwing wish list could hurt a young family in middle America.

First, they would need to cross their fingers that the private or employer-sponsored insurance they chose to

meet their family's specific needs isn't shoved off a cliff in Democrats' latest lurch toward more socialized medicine. And they will have to hope their war on the medical innovation sector doesn't prevent the development of lifesaving cures their family might have relied on some years down the road.

Say the family has one or two young kids. Maybe their ideal arrangement is a church-based daycare. They would need to say a prayer their faith-based center isn't sued and chased out of business thanks to Washington Democrats' toddler takeover.

Their plan would give nothing to full-time parents, grandparent caregivers, nanny shares, or neighborhood co-ops. It would push faith-based providers out of the public square by design, and it could inflate daycare costs—listen to this—by up to $12,000 or $13,000 per child per year.

If Democrats get their way, let's hope neither parent is one of the many Americans who work in our domestic energy sector. Our colleagues' bill has a huge pile of new redtape aimed at putting their industry literally out of business.

But no matter where they work, they will face inflated prices to heat their homes and fill up at the gas pump.

For all of these bad ideas and many more, our colleagues wanted to spend trillions upon trillions more dollars right into the teeth—into the teeth—of runaway inflation that they have already caused.

Yesterday, we got indications the far left's slapdash sprint may be hitting the pause button. Well, that would certainly be great news for the American people. The best Christmas gift Washington could give working families would be putting this bad bill on ice.

SENATE RULES

Madam President, now, on another matter, as cracks keep forming in the Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree, some of our colleagues seemed to channel their frustration into even more radical attempts to attack our government institutions.

In the span of a few hours, one Senate Democrat had renewed calls to ''nuke'' the Senate and break the rules, and another published a national op-ed arguing that Democrats should attack the rule of law and pack the Supreme Court—two frontal assaults on two branches of government proposed in the space of about 2 hours. Entire generations of statesmen would have seen either one of these unhinged proposals as Armageddon for our institutions. Ah, but apparently today's Democrats try both at once and just call it Wednesday.

We have heard false claims that the Senate obeying our rules to address the debt limit somehow paves the way for radicals to break the rules.

Madam President, I would ask unanimous consent that an additional statement on that subject be printed in a different place in the RECORD.

ELECTIONS

Madam President, so, look, we have discussed over and over again why Democrats will not be allowed to federalize our elections and lord over all 50 States like a self-appointed board of elections on steroids. My colleagues across the aisle have pushed absurd bills that would do things like neuter voter ID laws; make every State legalize ballot harvesting; turn the Federal Election Commission into a biased, partisan body; and even send taxpayer money to political campaigns.

It isn't about ''voting rights''; it is a naked power grab. Democrats have been pushing the same kinds of bills literally for years, even as their stated justifications have changed wildly. When Republicans win elections or start polling well, Democrats and the media say our democracy is badly broken, on death's door, and needs a radical overhaul. The answers presented are these policies. When Democrats win elections, Democrats and the media say our democracy is sterling, beyond reproach, and just needs modest safeguards to protect the status quo, but, again, the answers presented are the very same policies.

Lately, their pretext has been demagogic attacks on State voting laws and proposals. If any State scraps any of the temporary pandemic procedures that Democratic operatives favor, the radical left says the sky is falling. But outside of the liberal bubble, nobody buys this nonsense. The country is not buying the hysteria.

On election day last month—listen to this—even in deep-blue New York, voters rejected liberal ballot measures that would have liberalized no-excuse absentee voting and loosened up the rules on voter registration. Both those were voted down in New York. Not even blue New York wants these policies to weaken their elections. But some Democrats want to break the Senate and trash its rules to force these sorts of things on all 50 States? It is beyond absurd.

I understand my colleagues are frustrated they may not get to spend $4.9 trillion on the way out the door for Christmas, but, believe me, lashing out at our democracy, at the Supreme Court, and at the Senate itself is not going to solve anything.

SENATE RULES

Madam President, last week, bipartisan majorities in the Senate and House passed S. 610 and the President signed the bill into law.

This law prevented painful Medicare cuts and established a one-time, expedited, simple-majority process to make Senate Democrats raise the nation's debt limit with only Democratic votes.

This week, some far-left activists and Senate Democrats who have spent months agitating to ''nuke'' the Senate are pretending that S. 610 represented some novel watershed for the Senate that gives them license to attack the institution.

These are factual claims, and they are false.

First, S. 610 needed to clear and did clear a 60-vote threshold. Sixty-four Senators voted to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House amendment. The Senate's consideration and passage of the bill fully obeyed the Standing Rules of the Senate.

By contrast, ramming through a different fast-track procedure—or any other piece of legislation—with 50 votes over the objections of Senators requesting the 60-vote threshold would mean ''going nuclear,'' shredding the rules, and destroying the filibuster.

Last week, the Senate followed the rules. The far left wants Democrats to break the rules. There is no comparison.

Second, there was nothing novel about S. 610 establishing a new, limited, expedited, simple-majority Senate procedure via statute.

The Senate has passed many such laws creating many such procedures. Examples date back at least to the 1930s.

The much-used budget reconciliation process—with its limited, expedited, simple-majority Senate procedure—is a statutory creation of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 and its amendments.

Other examples include the Trade Act of 1974, the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990, the Congressional Review Act of 1996, the Budget Control Act of 2011, and the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015. In all these instances, the Senate passed laws that set up new, limited, expedited, simple-majority Senate procedures for considering specific issues within specific parameters.

In this historical context, the one-time Senate process that S. 610 created was notably limited and minimalistic. It could only be accessed once, during a narrow stretch of time, for one specific purpose, with no other provisions or amendments permitted.

In sum, the Senate's recent action on the debt limit did not change the filibuster any more than BRAC, TPA, or the Budget ''Super-Committee'' changed the filibuster—which is to say, not at all.

As the widely admired and acclaimed expert on Senate procedure Marty Gold summarized last week, ''this expedited procedure will be created in accordance with the Standing Rules of the Senate, through passage of a regular order bill. The entire process must begin with 60 votes. [And] if it becomes law, it will be the narrowest expedited procedure ever passed.''

Last week's episode did not give radicals any pretext to wreck the Senate. Just the opposite. The Senate's functioning confirmed again that the current Senate rules generate bipartisan compromise when the country needs it.

TRIBUTE TO SARA SCHWARTZMAN

Madam President, now on one final matter, when the Senate does adjourn

for the holidays, we will also bid farewell to a talented Senate staff leader who has kept our institution running.

Sara Schwartzman is one of the Senate's finest. Sara has been a familiar face around the Senate and on the dais for more than a decade, and the most visible parts of her work as the Senate's bill clerk have certainly made her ''C–SPAN famous.''

For years, she was among the foremost experts on the pronunciation of ''Mr. Alexander.'' More recently, she has become well practiced in the delivery of ''Ms. BALDWIN.'' But Sara's speaking role barely scratches the surface of her crucial responsibilities as the bill clerk. Day in and day out, she and her team are the traffic cops for mountains of legislative text and amendments. Sara tracks the paper and the records. Before the Senate can formally pass anything, it has to make a stop at her desk.

As if these core duties weren't enough to keep even the most meticulous multitasker busy, Sara has generously made herself available to folks throughout the institution as an informal resource. Bill status? Procedural hurdles? Sara's encyclopedic expertise has been just a phone call away. It is safe to say her colleagues will miss this other sort of Senate hotline.

As for Sara, one might worry that someone whose job is a part of every late-night vote and weekend session would struggle to fill her newfound free time, but I understand that, in this case, the Senate's loss is another storied institution's gain. Sara is leaving Washington but staying in public service, working in an exciting role with NASA.

So, Sara, thank you for your years of service, and good luck in the exciting chapters ahead.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, let me first echo the comments of Senator MCCONNELL, as well as Senator SCHUMER earlier, in wishing Sara Schwartzman the very best in her next undertaking.

Whatever the challenge may be, I hope the hours are better because I know that the sacrifices made by you and members of our staff because of our peculiar scheduling in the Senate have caused some strains and stress and pressure and hardship.

But thank you so much for making the Senate better with your service every single day.

LITHUANIA AND BELARUS

Madam President, I have tried to visualize this experience so many times: It was in July of 1911, and a ship arrived in Baltimore from Germany. A family came down the gangplank. One of the members of the family was my grandmother, and she brought her three children. One of them was a 2-year-old little girl—blonde-haired—named Ona, my mother.

How they managed to navigate their way through Baltimore and catch a train to East St. Louis, IL, I will never know because there were virtually none of them able to speak English, but they did. They arrived, and I grew up the son of a Lithuanian immigrant who was proud of what her family left behind and prouder still of what they found in this great country as Lithuanian Americans.

I have had a special attachment and interest in the Baltic States—and particularly Lithuania—ever since. It has been my good fortune to follow their history from Soviet occupation and oppression to freedom and democracy today.

If you go on a search engine on your computer and type in the word ''fearless,'' don't be surprised if the map of Lithuania pops up. This small nation, 2.6 million in population, has done some remarkable things in history and remarkable still in modern history.

For half a century, millions lived under the tyranny and oppression of the Soviet Union. Before I was elected to public office, I went to visit Vilnius in Lithuania in 1978, and I saw Soviet rule firsthand. I am glad I did because it is such a sharp contrast to the Lithuania of today.

In the late 1980s, things began to change, particularly in the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Who can forget when 2 million people—2 million people—joined hands across these three nations to form a 420-mile Baltic Chain of Freedom in August of 1989. Not long thereafter, in February of the following year, Lithuania held its first free elections since World War II, voting for the country's first post-war noncommunist government. Immediately thereafter, the new Parliament voted to make Lithuania the first occupied Soviet republic to declare independence. Lithuania's bold move was followed later that year by Latvia and Estonia.

These brave efforts culminated a year later in February of 1991 when the Lithuanian people voted for independence. Those brave Lithuanians 30 years ago, including my friend, music professor, and national leader Vytautas Landsbergis, led that country back to democracy.

That Lithuanian effort three decades ago is still alive today. As a vibrant and vital member of the European Union and NATO, this small and brave nation is standing firm against renewed Russian aggression and now Chinese economic intimidation and defending heroic efforts to end tyranny in Belarus. It is one of the most vocal countries on Earth in defending democratic values and norms. Is it because they have a nuclear stockpile? No. A massive army? No. They are just determined, principled people who are courageous.

Some years ago, I visited the Lithuanian town of Rukla, where U.S. and German forces were rotating through as part of the European Reassurance Initiative aimed at keeping the Baltic safe from Russian aggression. There was good reason for it. They knew they had to take seriously what Putin might do against them.

Russia, under Vladimir Putin, has undertaken regular military, cyber, and political efforts to destabilize Lithuania and the Baltic States, but Lithuania will not be bullied. And I am glad that in the just-passed National Defense Authorization Act, we reaffirmed our commitment to Baltic security in the amendment that I offered.

Lithuania is also standing firm against the giant nation of China, which is trying to cut off supplies and punish the Lithuanian economy simply because the Lithuanians have established trade ties with Taiwan. Yet again, Lithuania will not be bullied.

On Lithuania's immediate border, there is a heroic struggle to end the last dictator in Europe, Lukashenko in Belarus. Most of us remember last year when this Belarusian dictator, Lukashenko, once again, after the bogus election results were announced, proceeded to jail those who had the temerity to run against him in the election. That has become normal with this man. This dictator, if somebody shows the nerve to run against him, will announce that he has beaten them by 80 percent-plus and then put them in jail.

When popular social media personality Sergei Tikhanovsky found himself arbitrarily jailed, his wife Svetlana Tikhanovskaya courageously stepped in to run in his place. She probably won that election, but of course Lukashenko would never allow those results to be announced. So what did she do after the election, her husband in jail? She fled Belarus. Where did she go for safety for herself and her children? Lithuania. Not surprisingly, Lithuania. She found a welcoming nation next door, and she continues her struggle for a free and democratic Belarus out of Vilnius, Lithuania.

Belarus and Russia have retaliated against Lithuania with cruel and manufactured migrant flows and other intimidation, but once again, Lithuania will not be bullied.

Secretary of State Blinken understands the importance of this Lithuanian nation and continues to make sure they know they have friends in the United States. He recently hosted Lithuanian Foreign Minister and grandson of Vytautas Landsbergis at the State Department and then traveled to the Baltic States to reaffirm American solidarity.

Blinken said clearly at the State Department that Foreign Minister Landsbergis ''has been such a strong voice for democracy and human rights not just in Lithuania, but around the world.'' I couldn't agree more. I couldn't be more proud.

So let's use this 30th anniversary of Lithuanian independence to stand firm with our brave ally and recommit to our continued support for our Baltic allies through economic and security cooperation. Doing so will help ensure

the next 30 years of the longstanding U.S.-Baltic friendship are equally strong and fruitful.

In early 2011, a trip through these same Baltic countries gave me one more extraordinary experience in my Senate career. I went on a road trip from the free, democratic Lithuania back in time to the closed, totalitarian nation of Belarus. Crossing over that border was like driving onto a Hollywood movie set. I looked along the roads for telephone poles or evidence of electricity and found none. It looked like a bucolic, rural village, mile after mile after mile, indicating how economic development has still yet to arrive in Belarus.

You see, this last dictatorship of Europe held a Presidential election in December 2010, and I wanted to be there in 2011 to meet with the families of those who had the temerity to run against Lukashenko and were in jail. So I drove from Vilnius to Minsk to meet with those family members. They had been arrested by the security services of Belarus, which are still called the KGB.

It was a sobering meeting. Many tears were shed. Fortunately, over time, by working at it doggedly, we eventually saw the release of all the brave Belarusians who had been jailed at that time.

Yet, tragically, the Belarusian people found themselves in the same outrageous situation last year when Lukashenko jailed these candidates with the courage to run, including Sergei Tikhanovsky.

Some of you may have read the outstanding profile about his wife, Svetlana, in this month's New Yorker. It is entitled ''The Accidental Revolutionary Leading Belarus's Uprising.'' It describes how her campaign speeches galvanized boisterous crowds. She had a very simple message to the Belarusian people and the courage to say it. She said she was ''fed up with living in humiliation and fear'' in Belarus. Lukashenko, this mighty dictator, didn't even have the courage to debate this woman.

She likely won that election, as we know, but we will never know the official outcome because Lukashenko wouldn't allow it.

I was proud to host her last year with my Senate colleagues Senator SHAHEEN and SULLIVAN. And I am glad to see that President Biden met with her as well.

She is a brave woman, soldiering on, despite the fact that the Belarusians announced just a week ago that her husband has now been sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Tragically, since Lukashenko stole that most recent election, he has continued to double down on his outrageous behavior, including forcing down a commercial airline in May to arrest the Belarusian activists and just this week, after months of closed hearings, that 18-year prison sentence for her husband.

Five other defendants, including another Presidential candidate and a journalist from Radio Free Europe, received an equally outrageous sentence from Lukashenko. What a waste; what an outright theft of the Belarusian people's future.

These people must be freed, and we must continue to support Ms. Tikhanovskaya's effort, and her husband, and the thousands upon thousands who peacefully protest on her behalf.

LITHUANIA

Madam President, this morning I was listening to the news, as I came in, on National Public Radio. And I will close by just noting that the most recent report led me to make this statement on the floor today.

It seems that the Lithuanians have been compelled to close their Embassy in Beijing. The Chinese Government will no longer promise the most basic tenet of ambassadorial representation: diplomatic immunity. They are still angry because this little country of 2.6 million people is establishing trade relations with Taiwan.

The Chinese have said they are cutting off all exports and imports to Lithuania, putting pressure on them for their political courage. It won't work, I might say, to Prime Minister Xi. These people are not going to be bullied or pushed around. They have shown an extraordinary amount of courage. And I hope all of the world, particularly their great allies here in the United States, understand that these Baltic States—and my mother's country of Lithuania—are standing up for values which we all treasure as Americans.

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

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

ECONOMY

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, Democrats' push to pass their tax-and-spending spree continues to throw into sharp relief the difference between Republicans' and Democrats' vision of government. And it is about a lot more than just the amount of money we want to spend. Of course, the amount of money we are spending matters, but it is also about what that money represents.

In general, more money means more government. And more government usually means less freedom. Republicans don't oppose Democrats' tax-and-spending spree just because it would cost a lot of money or drive up our national debt.

It would do both of those things, of course, with negative consequences for our economy and the prosperity of American families. And the negative economic consequences alone are sufficient reason to oppose Democrats' ''Build Back Bankrupt'' plan. But it is a lot more than just about excessive spending.

With their ''Build Back Bankrupt'' plan, Democrats envision a society which government is intimately involved in nearly every aspect of Americans' life—from, to quote a New York Times article, ''cradle to grave.'' And that is not a vision Republicans share, primarily because a government that is intimately involved in nearly every aspect of your life is a government that is going to exert control over your life. More government inevitably means more government control.

Take Democrats' childcare plan in their Build Back Better legislation. To hear Democrats talk about it, you might think this plan involves nothing more than cutting checks to American parents to help with their childcare bills, but that is not the case.

First, of course, Democrats take the opportunity to add a lot of new childcare mandates and regulations. According to one estimate, Democrats' childcare subsidy measure could drive up the cost of daycare by somewhere around $13,000 per child. Good luck working that into your family budget.

Democrats' government subsidy program is set up to favor certain kinds of childcare and childcare providers. It is set up to favor institutional childcare, rather than home care or other models like neighborhood co-ops, and it is set up to place religious providers at a disadvantage.

That is right. Despite the fact that a majority of working families who use center-based care opt for faith-based centers, Democrats' program is set up to put these providers at a disadvantage. It denies them facilities funding that is granted to secular providers.

And it would disqualify—I should say, it could disqualify many providers with traditional religious beliefs like those shared by millions upon millions of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim families around the country.

It could even disqualify a provider simply because the provider gave placement preference to families of its own faith. So if you are a Catholic Church with a childcare program and you give preference to families who attend your church, you could be accused of discrimination and disqualified from receiving government subsidies.

And if you are a parent who can't afford that program without those government subsidies—thanks to government mandates and regulations that have hiked up the childcare bill—you are out of luck. If you need those government subsidies, you will have to send your child to one of the providers the government prefers.

The childcare program in the Democrats' tax-and-spending spree provides a perfect example of what happens when government gets involved. And it is about a lot more than how much money the government is spending.

With government money comes government control. The decision is no longer just in the individual's hands. And the more substantial the government involvement, the larger the government's role in decision making is likely to be—whether the issue is childcare, healthcare, education, or anything else.

In his 1967 inaugural address as Governor of California, Ronald Reagan said:

> Freedom is a fragile thing and it's never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people.

Freedom is a fragile thing.

Here in the United States, we have enjoyed an unprecedented degree of individual liberty—a liberty that it is very easy for us to take for granted. But that liberty is not guaranteed. It is something that must be fought for and protected.

And that doesn't involve simply safeguarding our liberty from external threats from foreign powers; it involves ensuring making sure that our government doesn't start to exceed its proper role.

The loss of freedom can come dramatically or it can come quietly through a steady increase of government encroachment.

And it is important to remember that freedom can be eroded or taken away by the well-meaning, and not just those who are actively hostile to it.

I believe that my Democrat colleagues likely do not see their ideas for dramatic government expansion as threatening Americans' personal freedom. The problem is that when you expand the reach of government, the diminishment of liberty is inevitable. Expand the reach of government into Americans' lives, and it is inevitable that you are going to transfer some of Americans' decision-making power over to politicians and bureaucrats in Washington.

Democrats' tax-and-spending spree—and its major expansion of government—is far from the only threat to Americans' liberties that we are seeing from the Democratic Party.

I am increasingly disturbed by Democrats' tendency to play fast and loose with religious liberty and the First Amendment—whether that involves disadvantaging religious childcare providers, threatening individuals' right to live according to their conscience, questioning judges' fitness for office based on religious belief, or, as we learned recently from a courageous whistleblower FBI agent, even opening the door for the FBI to collect information on parents voicing their opposition to local school policies during school board meetings.

I am also disturbed by Democrats' clear belief that Americans should defer to government and Democrat-approved experts, as spectacularly evidenced in the Virginia Governor's race, which was unquestionably decided based partly on the Democrat candidate's repeatedly expressed belief that parents shouldn't be involved in the content of their children's education.

I am puzzled as to why Democrats are so convinced—so convinced—that Washington elites or Democrat-approved experts are better at making decisions than ordinary Americans.

As Ronald Reagan said in that same speech:

> [I]t's hard to explain those among us who even today would question the people's capacity for self-government. I've often wondered if they will answer, those who subscribe to that philosophy: if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else?

I believe that the American people are capable of governing themselves—of making their own decisions—and that they are actually generally going to be better at it than a bunch of bureaucrats in Washington.

And I strongly oppose efforts to substitute the judgments of Washington bureaucrats—or Democrat politicians—for the judgment of individual Americans.

It states in the Declaration of Independence that governments are instituted to preserve our unalienable rights, including the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Preserving liberty is a fundamental purpose of government, but, of course, before you can enjoy liberty, you have to enjoy the right to life. For a long time now, the Democratic Party has consistently denied the right to life to a whole segment of the American population: unborn Americans.

There is no better example of their aggressive pro-abortion extremism than the so-called Women's Health Protection Act the Democrats in the House passed in September. This legislation, which would more accurately be termed the ''Abortion on Demand Act,'' would eliminate almost every democratically passed State abortion restriction, no matter how mild. It would endanger the religious and conscience rights of doctors and nurses, and, of course, it ignores the clear position of the American people, a strong majority of whom support restrictions on abortion.

Apparently, Democrats are not content with joining repressive regimes like China and North Korea as one of a tiny handful of nations that allow elective abortion past 20 weeks of pregnancy. No, they want to remove even the mildest and most widely supported restrictions on abortion. That is yet another example of Democrats' tendency to think they know better than the American people.

The Republican vision—the conservative vision, the vision that I share—is a vision that foregrounds liberty, not government; that believes individuals acting freely generally tend to do a better job of making decisions than a small handful of politicians and bureaucrats in Washington.

We believe in government as a backstop, not Big Brother. A system of permanent government dependence erodes individual liberty, to say nothing of the ways in which it undermines prosperity, robs individuals of the purpose and pride that comes with work and achievement.

Government should create the conditions in which freedom, opportunity, and prosperity can flourish, not attempt to secure particular outcomes or to dictate the paths that Americans should take.

We are privileged to live in the freest country the world has ever known. It is not a privilege we can or should take for granted, and it is a privilege that we can all too easily lose. Our liberty is, as Ronald Reagan said, ever only one generation away from extinction.

I will continue to make safeguarding that liberty that we have been given one of my most cherished priorities, whether that involves fighting for the right to life of unborn Americans, opposing attempts to restrict religious liberty, or fighting against an expansion of government that would push out parents and put the government in the driver's seat on way too many issues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The senior Senator from Maryland.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, on March 3 of this year, over 9 months ago, President Biden nominated Dilawar Syed to be the Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Mr. Syed has spent decades building and scaling successful businesses, as well as advocating for struggling entrepreneurs and small business owners in underserved areas. It is clear that he is eminently qualified to help lead the SBA at a time when the Agency is providing unprecedented assistance to help small businesses survive and recover from the ongoing COVID–19 pandemic.

Last April, during Mr. Syed's hearing before the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, my Republican colleagues raised concerns about PPP and EIDL loans received by Lumiata, the company for which Mr. Syed served as CEO. As chairman of the committee, I gave a commitment to work in a bipartisan manner to secure additional information from the SBA about these loans.

I kept my word. On June 8, the SBA made materials on the loans available for my review, for the ranking member's review, and for the review of every Member of the committee. The materials proved that there was absolutely nothing irregular about these loans. In fact, the company did the right thing and repaid the forgivable PPP loan after its lenders determined

that the company did not require that level of government assistance. You wish more companies would have followed the lead that this company did.

But then, a week later, a new issue arose. Republican Members accused Mr. Syed of having anti-Israel bias because of his involvement with Emgage, a nonprofit organization that supports the Muslim American community. This accusation was completely unfounded. As the American Jewish Committee wrote:

> The unsupported accusation that somehow Jewish businesses or those with ties to Israel may not fare as well under Mr. Syed's leadership in the Small Business Administration (SBA) has no factual grounding. Indeed, he has specifically disavowed support for the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement, which seeks the dissolution of Israel.

The AJC went on to say that Republican accusations against Mr. Syed were ''un-American.''

Two weeks later, after the AJC released its statements, Republicans on the committee concocted yet another reason to block Mr. Syed's nomination. This time it was Planned Parenthood. Committee Republicans announced that they would boycott all votes on the nomination because Planned Parenthood affiliates received loans under the Paycheck Protection Program, despite the fact that these loans were made during the Trump administration and had nothing to do with Mr. Syed.

In response to Republican demands, on November 24, Administrator Guzman sent the committee a detailed four-page response that gave a full explanation of SBA's policy on providing PPP loans to nonprofits, including Planned Parenthood. The SBA provided the specific data on the number of loans to Planned Parenthood affiliates, as well as the total dollars loaned and forgiven. The Administrator's letter makes clear that the SBA is implementing affiliation standards for Planned Parenthood in the same manner it is implementing the affiliation standards for other nonprofits such as United Way, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Goodwill.

Then there was another request for information and, once again, the SBA sent another detailed letter to our committee to the ranking member, Senator RAND PAUL, dated December 15, 2021. That letter spells out the specifics on every loan given out by the SBA—again, under the Trump administration, initially—to the Planned Parenthood affiliates: the numbers that apply for PPP; the numbers that withdrew those applications; the total dollar amounts; the loans that were forgiven under the original PPP amount and the total dollar amounts; the amount of PPP No. 2 loans given out requested by Planned Parenthood; the number that were withdrawn; the dollar amount that was given out; the dollar amount that has been forgiven. All that has been made available to our committee by the Small Business Administration.

Quite frankly, I don't know what else we can do. The SBA is required to carry out the laws that Congress passed. We made it clear we wanted nonprofits eligible for the help under the small business loan programs that we created. We made it clear that the affiliation rules would be applied, and the affiliation rules were applied the same way they were applied to all nonprofits that have a national affiliation. And the initial determination made under the Trump administration was reviewed under the Biden administration to make sure that those affiliate rules were applied and they were applied fairly to all nonprofits.

Thanks to the hard work of the SBA personnel, tens of millions of small businesses and nonprofits have received Federal assistance to keep their doors open and their employees on staff. The SBA has provided relief through multiple rounds of the Paycheck Protection Program, EIDL loan program, targeted grant programs, the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program, and the Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

Unfortunately, the SBA has had to implement these programs without the benefit of a Deputy Administrator, the person whose job it is to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Agency, and it gives us an opportunity to have a confirmed person at the SBA who is answerable to Congress and the American people.

Many nonpartisan, small business organizations support the nomination of Mr. Syed, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Small Business Investor Alliance, and the Small Business Entrepreneurship Council. I could read into the record numerous recommendation letters from the whole gambit of the stakeholder community.

In April, the Chamber of Commerce wrote to the committee stating:

> The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the nomination of Dilawar Syed to be Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). We believe that it is essential for SBA's senior leadership team to be in place to deliver on the agency's COVID–19 small business emergency relief responsibilities and we believe Mr. Syed is well qualified for this position.

I agree. That is why, again, I am going to ask that the nomination be discharged from the Small Business Committee and Mr. Syed receive an up-or-down vote on this nomination. I might tell you that we have had action in our committee. So this is not inconsistent with the action of our committee.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Small Business Committee be discharged and the Senate proceed to the following nomination: PN231, Dilawar Syed, of California, to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration; that the nomination be confirmed; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any related statement be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Reserving the right to object, the Hyde Amendment was passed in 1976. This amendment prohibits Federal funds from going directly to pay for abortion. For 40-some-odd years, this has had some effect on trying to prevent money directly going from the taxpayer to fund abortion.

The reason for this amendment was that many people have profound religious beliefs that their money, their taxpayer dollars, shouldn't go to kill the unborn. This is a big deal, the Hyde Amendment.

Right now, currently, appropriations for the last 40 years have always had Hyde Amendment protections. But now we discover, under duress, the Small Business Administration admits that $100 million has been given to Planned Parenthood without Hyde protections.

So this $100 million, which is essentially about one-third of what they get every year from the Federal Government, has no Hyde prescriptions, no Hyde restrictions, and this money can go directly to those performing abortions. So the abortionist that does thousands of abortions each year is getting money directly from the Federal Government to pay his or her salary. This is a first in 40 years, and it is not a small matter.

This is an extraordinary thing that the Federal Government, for the first time in 40-some-odd years, is directly paying for abortions. This shouldn't happen.

This is worth a debate, and we only discovered this because of holding up a nominee to try to get information. The Small Business Administration has steadfastly hidden this information, tried not to reveal it and is slowly, little by little, giving some, which they gave yesterday a little bit more, but they have been resisting and resisting and resisting.

The Small Business Administration originally ruled that Planned Parenthood was a big business—an extraordinarily big business, a business with 16,000 people. Planned Parenthood themselves calls them ''affiliates.'' They count their income all together. They pool their income and put out documents saying this is how much we have all together.

Thirty-eight of these Planned Parenthoods were sent a notice saying: You have illegally obtained this money. You are not a small business, and you should return it.

Supposedly, these entities then protested and appealed the process.

The Small Business Administration, after months and months and months, still refuses to reveal the appeals process or what the complaints were. We have not gotten those documents, although we asked repeatedly for these documents.

This nomination does directly have to do with this because, whoever is in charge of PPP, you would want someone to be an honest broker who says: By golly, this looks suspicious. How come this information is not being revealed to Congress? How come Congress is not allowed to see this?

The Small Business Administration will say it is confidential. That does not apply to Congress's oversight. That might apply to releasing it to the public, but that doesn't apply to Congress's oversight of the Small Business Administration.

This is an extraordinary thing that has happened—$100 million given directly to pay for people to do abortions. It is outside the scope and contrary to the scope of the Hyde Amendment, and it is something worth having a significant and prolonged and protracted battle until all the documents are revealed.

Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The senior Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. I certainly regret that an objection has been made, but let me at least correct the record. PPP money, Paycheck Protection money, does not go to healthcare services. It goes to personnel costs. It goes to related expenses. It does not go to healthcare services.

The law that we pass is the law that the administration implemented. There were no restrictions referenced to what Senator PAUL is referring to included in the Paycheck Protection Program. The restrictions on a nonprofit dealt with affiliation rules. Those affiliation rules were applied to Planned Parenthood as they were applied to similar organizations that I already put into the RECORD.

What Senator PAUL is complaining about could have been taken up during the debate of the Paycheck Protection Program, but it was not.

The bill was passed with Republican majorities in this body and with President Trump signing it into law. It would have been against the will of Congress for the Trump administration under the SBA or under the Biden administration under the SBA to use its own judgment and not the judgment of the policymaking branch of government—the legislative branch of government.

So I just want to put on the record that the response by Senator PAUL is not the factual circumstances that we are dealing with. We are dealing with a qualified person who should be confirmed by this body, and the administration is carrying out the will of Congress in the way that it has implemented the Paycheck Protection Program.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. 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.

UKRAINE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, the eyes of the world are on Russia as it stages a military buildup on the Ukrainian border. Russia could literally invade Ukraine at any time. And the United States and the international community need to take strong, decisive action to dissuade a Russian offensive from invading Ukraine. I was glad to see the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, denounce Russia's action earlier today, but clearly words are not enough. Statements of support are not enough to counter an invasion. The United States and our NATO allies must provide additional support to Ukraine as they defend their borders, and time is of the essence.

Senator DURBIN, the Senator from Illinois, and I have introduced a resolution to provide complete clarity on the U.S. Senate's position on this imminent conflict. Our resolution affirms the unwavering support of the United States for a secure, democratic, and independent Ukraine, but it also asserts the need for action. Our resolution calls on the Biden administration to provide additional lethal aid to Ukraine to counter ongoing Russian aggression.

Senator DURBIN and I have been proud to notch a long list of bipartisan cosponsors, and I hope the Senate will pass this resolution before we break at the end of the year.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Madam President, on another matter, the first year of the Biden Presidency and the Democratic-majority controlled Congress is quickly coming to an end. Looking at everything that has happened so far this year, it is tough to imagine the American people are happy with how things are going.

President Biden raised all of our hopes and expectations during his inauguration, as he built his campaign and then spoke at his inauguration on a simple theme: unity. He talked about the need for people across the country to come together and empathize with one another and to work together. He promised to be a uniting force in Washington, DC, and pointed to his service in the U.S. Senate as evidence of his ability to work across the aisle to broker bipartisan deals.

Clearly, this message was welcomed by the American people. After all, they gave him the job in the first place. But just because voters picked a Democratic President doesn't mean they signed off on a radical transformation of our country. The American people elected a 50–50 Senate and lessened the Democratic majority in the House.

In short, Americans selected a President who promised to work across the aisle and a closely divided Congress—and gave us a closely divided Congress to ensure that he kept his word, but the American people have not gotten what they expected.

Right from the start, there were clear signs of where things were headed. At the beginning of the year, the two party leaders negotiated an organizing statement to determine how the 50–50 Senate would function. In light of the far-left's newfound obsession with eliminating the filibuster, Leader MCCONNELL asked for assurances from Leader SCHUMER that the filibuster would remain intact. After all, it is not unreasonable to ask your negotiating partner to commit to not breaking the rules.

Even though Senator SCHUMER once said we should ''build a firewall around the legislative filibuster,'' he refused to agree to leave it alone, which was not very encouraging. Fortunately, two of our Democratic colleagues have committed to protect the filibuster, which ensures that there will be something that maybe is a little unnatural for human nature—to try to force us to work together to build consensus to do things like we did yesterday: pass the National Defense Authorization Act. That is not necessarily our first instinct.

But protecting the filibuster is important. It provides stability and continuity and predictability in our Nation's laws and to make sure that we don't add to the chaos by, every 2 years, after every election, reversing everything that had been done the previous 2 years.

We saw how tempted our Democratic colleagues were to use their newfound powers in the majority. That meant, unfortunately, forget working across the aisle or striking bipartisan deals—Senator SCHUMER made clear he wanted an easy path for purely partisan legislation.

The first item on his agenda was a $2 trillion liberal wish list unconvincingly disguised as pandemic relief. It included things like backdoor funding for Planned Parenthood, a blank check for mismanaged union pension systems, and money for climate justice. This had very, very little to do with COVID–19 and the pandemic, which is how it was sold.

The Democratic leader got a taste of partisan legislating and decided that he wanted more of it, so he tried to break the two Democratic Members on his side of the aisle who were protecting bipartisanship and consensus building. He lined up votes on some of our colleagues' most controversial bills, all of which were designed to fail. There was a bill that exploited the cause of pay fairness to line the pockets of trial lawyers. Unsurprisingly, it did not pass.

Senator SCHUMER forecasted votes on two bills that were so unpopular among Democrats that they didn't even make it to the Senate floor. One was to erode the American people's Second Amendment rights, and another would punish

schools and hospitals that refused to comply with ''woke'' social norms.

But without a doubt, the most dangerous legislation Democrats have pushed is to overhaul America's election system. The version of the bill we voted on this summer was so bad that I was surprised Democrats even had the gall to hold a vote on it.

The bill would have turned the bipartisan Federal Election Commission into a Democratic-controlled, partisan body. It would have seized States' constitutional authority to draw their own congressional districts, instead handing all the power to independent redistricting commissions. It would have federalized ballot harvesting—literally vacuuming up ballots and delivering them to a paid campaign staffer and political operatives who had a stake in the outcome of the election. The only thing it would have done for the people is decide the outcome of virtually every future election and—spoiler alert—make sure that Democrats would never lose.

If this bill weren't so dangerous, it would have been laughable. It is no surprise that the only bipartisan thing about this bill was the opposition. In both the House and the Senate, Republicans and Democrats joined together to defeat this bill.

Still, our Democratic colleagues refused to throw in the towel. They rewrote the bill, tried to rebrand it, and brought it up for another vote in October. Once again, it failed. The Democratic leader has said this partisan legislation will resurface again sometime before the end of next year, but I don't expect the outcome to change.

Of course, amid all the partisan jockeying, there has been a large, dark cloud looming overhead known as the Build Back Better—or, rather, I think more accurately, ''Build Back Bankrupt''—bill. This legislation would drive up the cost of childcare for families and cut healthcare for the uninsured. It would hurt our energy security and increase the already sky-high energy costs. It would put taxpayers on the hook for massive handouts to blue State millionaires, organized labor, trial lawyers, wealthy media corporations, and a host of powerful friends of the Democratic Party.

Our Democratic colleagues have used every trick in the book to make the price of this spending spree look as small as possible. One of our Democratic colleagues even acknowledged the disingenuous advertising.

Fortunately, the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Tax Committee have provided an honest score of the bill that passed the House and that has been proposed here in the Senate—one which ignores the gimmicks our colleagues initially tried to use. The Congressional Budget Office says that this bill would cost $4.9 trillion in the first 10 years alone—not zero, as President Biden has disingenuously claimed; not $1.75 trillion, as our Democratic colleagues have claimed; but $4.9 trillion, nearly triple the price Democrats have previously been willing to acknowledge. And deficits—money that would have to be repaid by the next generation and beyond—would increase by a staggering $3 trillion over the next decade.

As it turns out, spending trillions of dollars on unnecessary programs and dolling out handouts for the wealthy is not an easy sell. Senator SCHUMER apparently can't convince all 50 Democrats to vote for the bill.

While our colleagues have focused on these wholly partisan endeavors, they have ignored clear opportunities to work together in a bipartisan effort.

For example, Members of both parties agree that something must be done to bring down prescription drug prices for the American people. This was a major focus last Congress, and there are a range of bipartisan bills that support this goal, including one I have introduced with Senator BLUMENTHAL from Connecticut. So far, we have made no progress for the American people on high prescription drug costs.

Then there is the crisis at the border. On President Biden's watch, annual border apprehensions have hit an all-time high. For most of the year, though, Democrats refused to acknowledge that any sort of problem actually existed at the southern border. They adopted the same rules as ''Fight Club''—they just didn't talk about it. Vice President HARRIS, named ''border czar'' by President Biden, didn't even visit the border until late last June, long after the humanitarian crisis had ballooned to unimaginable heights, and even then, she stayed away from the hardest hit sectors.

Senator SINEMA, a Democrat from Arizona, and I have introduced legislation with commonsense reforms to address the crisis, but the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator DURBIN, has declined to mark up the bill or even convene a hearing of the Judiciary Committee to investigate the border crisis and explore possible responses to it.

Democrats and Republicans have shown a willingness to work together to put DACA recipients on a strong legal footing. These are young people known as Dreamers but frequently referred to as DACA, deferred action on childhood arrival, which is the name of the administrative process used by the Obama administration to provide them some legal standing in which to stay in the country. But they have been embroiled in 10 years of unnecessary litigation, and they are uncertain about the outcome of their case. I think this is an area where we could work together to provide them some certainty and some finality.

There are other things we could and should be doing, like securing our most critical supply chains, encouraging innovation in the energy sector, and solving many of the challenges American families are facing every day. But rather than work across the aisle to address these bipartisan priorities, our colleagues have wasted a year on purely partisan exercises. Again, this is not what the American people thought they were getting when they elected Joe Biden President and when they gave the Senate a 50–50 split.

The 2020 election wasn't an invitation to codify a liberal wish list; it was a call to work together. And there is no better place for the work that can be done than in the U.S. Senate. There is a lot we can and should accomplish next year, but this sort of partisan, unilateral approach to governing has made that nearly impossible. You can only hope for better next year.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle got what they wanted, which was a Democratic majority, given the tie-breaking vote of the Vice President. They have been given the keys to the kingdom, and now, next year, we will see how long they can hold on to them, or perhaps they can change course and return to bipartisan legislating and consensus building for the benefit of the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CRIME

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the rising crime in America and specifically in Democrat-run cities.

This year, 12 American cities have already broken records for murder, and the year isn't even over. Every one of those cities is run by Democrats.

Last summer, Democrat cities adopted a rallying cry, and that cry was ''defund the police.'' Joe Biden said America was ''systemically racist.'' He said police funding should be ''redirected.'' NANCY PELOSI talked about ''shuffling . . . money around.'' KAMALA HARRIS, our Vice President, said America should ''reimagine public safety.''

Well, lots of Democrat cities put those slogans into practice. Bill de Blasio, the mayor of New York City, cut the New York City Police Department by $1 billion. The Los Angeles City Council voted to cut police funding by $150 million. San Francisco cut $120 million from police over 2 years. Nearly two dozen cities across the country defunded the police. Again, these are all cities run by liberal mayors and administrations. As a result, last year, America experienced the largest surge in homicide ever recorded.

According to the Major Cities Chiefs Association, 63 of America's 66 biggest cities saw at least 1 category of violent crime go up last year. Minneapolis cut police funding, and homicide nearly

doubled. New York City police funding and homicide went in opposite directions: The funding for police went down, and homicide went up by half. Last year's historic increases in homicides was evident. This year, homicide has gone up even more. The number of police killed in the line of duty is also up.

Here in Washington, DC, President Biden has effectively endorsed the ''defund the police'' movement. He did that by stacking his administration with supporters of defunding the police.

The Secretary of Labor of the United States, confirmed by this Senate, cut funding for police when he was mayor of Boston.

The No. 3 official at the Department of Justice, confirmed by this Senate, the Democrats in this Senate, testified that she supports ''calls from Black Lives Matter . . . activists to decrease police budgets and the scope, role, and responsibility of police in our lives.''

Joe Biden's Secretary of the Treasury called for an economics professor to be fired because the professor said he opposed defunding the police. It had nothing to do with what he was teaching. It wasn't because of a problem with his work in the classroom. But Janet Yellen said his comments against defunding the police were ''extremely troubling.''

She went on to say:

> It would be appropriate for the University of Chicago . . . to review [that professor's] performance and suitability.

Well, Janet Yellen is not known for being a crime expert. She is a well-connected, well-known liberal. The university bowed to Janet Yellen and put the professor under investigation. This is Janet Yellen, who was confirmed to be Secretary of the Treasury under Joe Biden.

In October, Joe Biden was asked if police officers should be fired if they weren't vaccinated. He didn't hesitate. He immediately said: Yes, fire them. These are officers who have been putting their lives on the frontline every day since day one of the pandemic. Joe Biden's mantra for the police: Vaccinate or terminate.

This is happening all across America. For example, more than 150 Massachusetts State Police have resigned over the vaccine mandate. Joe Biden would rather see unvaccinated police sit at home than let them continue doing the job they have done all through the pandemic. The last thing we need to do right now is reduce the number of police officers on our streets.

Last week, Democrats in this body gave another promotion to an anti-police liberal. Every Democrat—every Democrat—in this Senate voted to confirm Rachael Rollins as the top prosecutor in the State of Massachusetts. Why does this matter to anybody outside of Massachusetts? Well, because Rachael Rollins is the face of the rogue prosecutor movement. This is the movement led by George Soros and other powerful liberals. They have invested millions of dollars in electing radical prosecutors. They have succeeded in major cities. We have seen it in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Philadelphia. Once these prosecutors get into office, they impose radical leftwing policies. The result has been chaos and carnage from coast to coast.

As the district attorney in Boston, Rachael Rollins announced she would not prosecute 15 different crimes, laws on the books. She would not prosecute 15 different crimes, including shoplifting, trespassing, and resisting arrest. Rachael Rollins is supposed to be a prosecutor. Her job is to enforce the law. Instead, she has nullified the law.

Joe Biden saw this lawlessness, and he was so impressed that he gave her a big promotion. Every single Democrat in this Senate has given her their stamp of approval. So has Vice President HARRIS. Every Republican voted no on this radical nominee, so the Vice President was needed to come to the Senate to break the tie. There is already talk of Rachael Rollins' getting even more promotions in this very radical, extreme, dangerous, and scary Democratic Party.

Mark my words: Rachael Rollins is the first rogue prosecutor to be given a Federal job. She will not be the last. With Democrats in charge in Washington, Rachael Rollins' policies are coming to a neighborhood near you.

So it is worth asking, how are these policies working out in liberal big cities? Not well, no. San Francisco followed the Rachael Rollins model. They tried legalizing shoplifting; how about that? Now San Francisco looks like a city from the Dark Ages.

Here is how the Associated Press described it last week:

> San Francisco residents and visitors scurry past scenes of lawlessness and squalor.

In August, San Francisco broke city records with 3,700 reports of retail theft. Now there is a mass exodus of retail stores from San Francisco.

Last year, twice as many people in San Francisco died from drug overdoses than from coronavirus. The local news reported this week about people leaving their cars unlocked in San Francisco to prevent their windows from getting smashed out. Even the Democrat mayor spoke recently about the ''rein of criminals who are destroying our city.''

San Francisco is one of the wealthiest cities in the world. It is the hometown of the Speaker of the House and is now a homicide haven on the west coast. Yet, in just a few years, liberal policies have turned what had been a beautiful city into a war zone.

NANCY PELOSI, the Speaker of the House, admitted just yesterday that ''there is an attitude of lawlessness in our country'' today. Then she added, ''It springs from,'' as she said, ''I don't know where.''

Well, NANCY PELOSI should look at her own city. It is painfully obvious. The fact that roars out from liberal city to liberal city is this: The lawlessness comes from the policies of the Democratic Party. Criminals seek opportunity, and when criminals see that opportunity, they pounce.

Look at Los Angeles. This is another city with a rogue prosecutor. In just 10 days last month, looters stole $340,000 worth of goods from stores. In one case, police arrested 14 of the looters. And then what happened? They were all released. Now they are all walking free.

Austin, TX, made some of the largest police funding cuts last year. This year, Austin has seen a 70-percent increase in murder. It is one of the largest increases in homicide in America.

In KAMALA HARRIS's hometown of Oakland, the city council voted to defund the police in June. Now murder in Oakland, the Vice President's hometown, is up by two-thirds since just 2019.

Last month, a toddler was shot and killed while he slept in the back of his mother's car on the Oakland freeway. Even leftwing Oakland has now had enough. The city is now planning to reverse the cuts to police. For the toddler, it is too late. The damage that took that innocent life from that family can't be undone, can't be repaired. The family will never be reunited.

It is time for the Democrats to wake up, to wake up before it is too late for so many others.

Democrats have controlled the Senate now for 10 months. Yet they have done nothing to improve law enforcement in America. They have done nothing to reduce crime. In fact, Senate Democrats have only tried to reward criminals. Forty-nine Senate Democrats sponsored a bill to give voting rights to felons as soon as they walk out of their jail cells.

The American people reject this bill and Democrats' entire agenda. Voters are speaking out. Just last month, voters rejected defunding police in the cities of Buffalo, New York, and even in Minneapolis.

New York City has just elected a former police officer as its mayor who used the issue of crime and law and order as a winning issue in the campaign. People are tired of what the Democrats are force-feeding the American people.

The lessons should be screamingly obvious. The American people don't want Democrats' soft-on-crime agenda. Americans want safe communities. They want Democrats and all Americans to stop coddling criminals, to stand for public safety, and to stop this reckless Democrats' war on police.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VOTING RIGHTS

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, the foundation of American democracy is built upon the sacred right to vote, and there is no doubt that right is under attack today.

This year alone, 550 voter suppression bills have been introduced in State legislatures across the country. In Texas, it is now illegal to compensate workers who help voters who don't speak English and for election officials to encourage eligible voters to apply to vote by mail.

In Fulton County, GA, a county that historically votes Democratic, the number of ballot boxes has been reduced from 38 to 8. That is one ballot box for every 100,000 voters.

And in Florida, ballot dropoff boxes can only be utilized during early voting hours, and boxes must be located at either a county's elections office or early voting sites.

Before President Trump, Republicans at least tried to pretend their laws weren't blatantly discriminatory, but now they aren't even attempting to hide the fact that they are purposefully trying to make it darn near impossible for Black people and other people of color, elderly individuals, students, working families, and people with disabilities to vote.

The fact that Republicans continue to claim that these voter suppression tactics are necessary to protect election integrity would be laughable if it weren't so deeply dangerous to our democracy. We all know that countless investigations have uncovered absolutely no evidence of systemic or widespread voter fraud. We all know that the 2020 election was the most secure election in our country's history. And we certainly all know this is not about voter fraud. It is about advancing a political agenda by denying large swaths of Americans their fundamental right to vote.

If this isn't un-American, I don't know what is, which is why voter suppression is the most urgent crisis facing our country today and which is why it is the single most pressing issue the Senate must address.

Yes, we need to pass Build Back Better, and we need to fight against attacks on a woman's right to make decisions about her own body, attacks on the LGBTQ community, attacks on unions, and much more because battles for rights that we thought we had won don't stay won. But we won't succeed in preserving these hard-won rights if we don't protect the right to vote.

To quote my friend and colleague Senator WARNOCK, ''Voting rights are preservative of all other rights.''

We are nearing the 1-year anniversary of the attack on the U.S. Capitol. This violent insurrection and mob violence was the direct result of blatant lies told by the former President and his supporters about systemic fraud and a stolen election.

We are still learning the consequences of what happened that day, but we know for certain this act of domestic terrorism was an attack on free and fair elections in this country. Yet Republicans continue to spread the same lies about election fraud and continue to push through legislation at the State level to silence Americans across the country.

Congress must take action to restore the integrity of our voting system and make sure every American's voice is heard and counted. And we have tried. We have tried four times to stop these unconstitutional, State-level laws from undermining our elections.

We have tried to pass commonsense reforms that would, for example, allow all eligible voters to vote by mail; make election day a Federal holiday so all working families can vote; and establish Federal criminal penalties for deceiving voters with false and misleading information about voting.

And most importantly, we have tried to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would give the Department of Justice the tools to keep these blatant voter suppression laws from being enacted in the first place.

Only one Republican joined us in voting for this bill—the same bill that was being touted as bipartisan.

It is crystal clear by now that Republicans have absolutely no interest in protecting the right to vote. For Republicans, voter suppression and gerrymandering is their path to victory

Democrats cannot sit back and allow a political party to maintain power by denying Americans their right to vote.

I want to quote Senator WARNOCK again. He said:

> [A]s we cast that vote to begin addressing the debt ceiling, this same Chamber is allowing the ceiling of our democracy to crash in around us.

We figured out a way to save our economy; we can surely figure out a way to save our democracy.

Filibuster reform is the path Democrats need to take to fight back against the Republicans' all-out voter suppression assault on our democracy. I call on my Democratic colleagues to act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

INFLATION

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, there are so many problems going on right now in the country. As I interact with people in Oklahoma, they are frustrated with where things are going with the economy. The rising inflation is literally inflation we have not seen for 40 years.

People who are 40 years old and younger have never experienced an economy like we are experiencing right now. But for those who lived during the time of Jimmy Carter, they all remember extremely well what it was like—what it was like to literally every single week when you go to the grocery store for prices to be higher, to be able to watch prices accelerate month after month after month.

The policies that have been put in place this year by the Biden administration and folks in this body have led directly to rampant inflation across our Nation and are causing a major problem.

The debt ceiling was voted on just days ago here in this body. It was $2½ trillion. That $2½ trillion has been set aside for the next 13 months or so.

There is an enormous gathering of debt. We continue to be able to see the inflation continue to rise. And in the middle of it is a conversation about this bill that is called Build Back Better.

Now, we haven't seen all the bill yet. It is 2,000-plus pages. But the pages change every week, and they have for weeks and weeks. We still have large sections of the bill that is being dropped out that just says: ''We will add in more information here later.''

But the sections that we do have, and that have been scored, there are major problems here. This is not just a Republican-Democrat conversation; this is the direction-of-the-country conversation. Is this really what we want to do and the direction that we want to go?

This bill—it was scored independently by CBO, looked at this bill and said if it looks out over 10 years with these policies in place, it would add $3 trillion more in debt.

Now, as it is written, with all the budget gimmicks and everything in it, they say: Well, it actually will only add $365 billion in debt—though the White House continues to claim that it is all paid for; it is all paid for; it is free; it is free; it is free.

The more we dig into it, the more problems we see. Some of those are philosophical changes. This bill changes what has been entitlements in the past. Entitlements have been connected to actually work to incentivize people to be able to work, knowing that people don't grow out of poverty by constantly getting government benefits. You are trapped in poverty. Work is what actually helps people escape out of poverty.

That is what Bill Clinton talked about often, about changing welfare as we know it. This bill actually changes it back to welfare as we knew it and shifts back entitlements to say you don't have to actually be working to receive all these government benefits. In fact, this bill even says you don't even have to be an American citizen to receive all these benefits; that if you are illegally present in the country, you get thousands and thousands of dollars in government benefits. If you are not working, but you are able to work and you choose not to, you get thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars in benefits.

I have to tell you, for the folks I know who leave for work at 6 a.m. and head to work, they are a little frustrated that their tax dollars are going to people still in bed, who are not engaging. But that is what this bill does;

it changes us from a situation where we incentivize work to we incentivize not working.

Part of that is in the child tax credit that is being discussed. I and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle voted to change the child tax credit for this year that was already in place, that already incentivizes work, that helps individuals with small children who need help. That has been in place in the Tax Code. In fact, Republicans also voted for that in the past with a work incentive.

That was changed in March of this year in a straight partisan vote. And it was done for a temporary basis because of COVID, to actually allocate dollars to families, regardless of if they are working or not during the time of COVID.

Now, the conversation is, that needs to be extended, not just through COVID but to just keep extending it, to take away the work requirements, to take away the requirement to be a citizen of the United States to receive these dollars, and to actually make it where you are getting a monthly check rather than just a tax incentive at the end of the year based on if you were working or not.

And the working requirement is not high. It is, literally, if you worked and earned $2,500 in a year, you qualify for the tax credit. But they take away even that requirement for your family.

The childcare piece has been interesting because I have heard a lot of my Democratic colleagues talk about, well, we are going to give free childcare to folks.

The problem is—a multitude of issues with this. One is, if you are a faith-based entity for childcare, you are excluded from this, which about half of the childcare facilities around the country are provided by churches and faith-based nonprofits—rural and urban areas, they are all cut out.

The other challenge is, while they talk about free childcare, free childcare, free childcare, a very liberal think tank just did the math on this, what it would mean for middle-class families who actually do childcare at that same facility. Middle-class families who are paying right now for childcare would, after this bill is put in place—they estimate that it would cost $13,000 more a year for childcare if you are not getting the subsidies.

So if you are getting the subsidies, it is free. If you are a dollar past the subsidies, you are going to pay $13,000 more a year for your childcare.

I hope you are tracking the cost of natural gas as it is raised because it is about to go up again. If this bill—what I call the ''Build Back Broke'' bill—passes, the cost of natural gas and the cost of heating across America will go up because there is a new fee on methane.

I could go on and on and on with the issues that are in this bill that are content, that are philosophical issues, that are issues that affect people who live in my State and will raise the cost for them.

Some people ask me: Who are the folks who actually like this bill?

Well, there are quite a few folks who like this bill. The folks who are in wealthy Democrat-run States, they love this bill because the wealthiest individuals in the highest tax States—and those are the blue States—the wealthiest individuals in the highest tax States, they get a huge tax break in this bill. For the wealthiest individuals, they get an $80,000-a-year cut in their taxes, what they call State and local taxes. So if you are in New York or New Jersey or Illinois or in California and you are in the top 1 percent, you get an $80,000 cut in your taxes. They like this bill.

Somebody else who likes this bill are the wealthy who actually buy electric vehicles—incredibly expensive, beautiful vehicles, many of them, but they get $12,500 off of their vehicle based on this bill.

The environmental activists love this bill because billions of dollars actually go directly to these environmental activist groups. Many who were active in the Biden campaign, they get additional billions of dollars coming in. In fact, there are billions of dollars to create a new Civilian Climate Corps—a group of young people who will travel around the country actually promoting environmentalism, paid for with Federal tax dollars. They like this bill. Unions like this bill because, currently, if you donate to a nonprofit, you are able to take some of that off of your taxes. But under this bill, that goes away, and it is replaced with if you pay union dues, you get to write this off your taxes. So unions definitely like this bill.

And the folks who really, really like this bill—reporters and journalists. Reporters and journalists love this bill. So some of them are not talking about the content of this bill. The reason I say that, because this bill pays half the salary for reporters and journalists all over the country. This bill puts in place that half the salary of reporters and journalists in every city and every community across America will get half of their salary paid for by the Federal tax dollars.

Let's see, government-paid reporters and journalists—what could go wrong with that?

There are a lot of issues in this bill. And as we talk through this bill, and as, thankfully, this bill is slowing down dramatically so that people are able to see the contents of this bill, I have more and more people who catch me and say: I have a major concern with this bill and, I have to tell you, I have had for months. And we continue to be able to speak out on issues that change the direction for our Nation that are actually built into this bill.

CHRISTMAS

Mr. President, it is the middle of December, and we are still hanging out in DC. We are actually past the date that we were supposed to not be here any longer, according to our official calendar, but there is work to be done. And we continue to be able to do the work. It is a contentious body and, at times, a contentious nation.

I was with a group of folks yesterday for an early morning breakfast. And as we prayed together, one of them looked at me and said: I need a little ''Prince of Peace'' right now.

So can I just for a moment in this Chamber pause and just do a quick reminder of what is coming over the next couple of weeks, not about the heat of battle in this room but where we are in this season?

Reading from the Book of Isaiah, Isaiah 9:6 says: For a child will be born to us. A son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders, and His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. And there will be no end to the increase of this government or of his peace. It sounds like this in Luke, Chapter 2:

> Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.
>
> In the same region there were shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, ''Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'' And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ''Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.''
>
> When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, ''Let's go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.'' So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told to them.

A little peace on Earth will be helpful to this body and to our Nation on this day.

Merry Christmas to you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

## ENSURING THAT GOODS MADE WITH FORCED LABOR IN THE XINJIANG UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA DO NOT ENTER THE UNITED STATES MARKET

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, we have come down to the floor multiple times in the last few weeks trying to push the passage of our bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

For those who are not familiar with it at this point, it basically says that you can't import products into the United States that are made by slave labor in Xinjiang or entities that are associated with the government of that region. If you are a company that is manufacturing in that area, you need to prove that slaves didn't make it; the presumption is on you.

It is already illegal, by the way, to bring goods made with slave labor. It has been that way since the thirties. Yet it still happens, and we know it is happening at an alarming, horrific rate, with the genocide that we now witness being carried out by the Chinese Government in the Xinjiang region.

This bill, which we hope, here in a few moments, passes today, will head to the President and will become law, and it will help tremendously in stopping that from happening.

Many companies have already taken steps to clean up their supply chains, and, frankly, they should have no concerns about this law. Yet for those that have not done that, they will no longer be able to continue to make Americans—every one of us, frankly—unwitting accomplices in the atrocities and genocide that are being committed by the Chinese Communist Party.

As if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6256, which was received from the House; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Reserving the right to object, first, let me thank the Senator from Florida for doing such great work, along with Senator MERKLEY and others, on this incredibly important piece of legislation. We are going to be able in a few moments to speak together, Republicans and Democrats, on our commitment to ending genocide in China.

I want to thank the Senator for working with me to make sure that, as part of his unanimous consent request, we are going to be able to make sure we have personnel in place to properly implement this policy. We have dozens of State Department and Department of Defense nominees pending on this floor—more so than we have ever had at the end of a first-term, first-year Presidency—and we will, hopefully before we leave—we have to, before we leave, make substantial progress on this list in order to adequately protect our country.

At the very least, as we put forward this important new policy, it does make sense to accompany it and its passage with three key personnel who will be in charge of implementing it.

I believe we are going to be able to modify this request in the following manner. I would formally ask Senator RUBIO to modify this request that he has made to include the following request.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. MURPHY. I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, if applicable, at 4:30 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to the following nominations: Executive Calendar No. 525, R. Nicholas Burns, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China; Calendar No. 626, Ramin Toloui, of Iowa, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Economic and Business Affairs); and Calendar No. 619, Rashad Hussain, of Virginia, to be Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom; that there be 10 minutes for debate equally divided in the usual form on the nominations en bloc; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that if the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the modification?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I have no objection to the modification.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request, as modified?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 6256) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

## RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:52 p.m., recessed until 2 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SCHATZ).

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, this is Holly Durben from Shenandoah, IA. Holly was someone who loved animals and loved nature. She was a people person. The thing that she loved most in the world was her family.

But tragically, Holly took her last breath on the morning of July 18, 2009. Brian Davis murdered her in a small farmhouse just south of Shenandoah. Holly is one of the hundreds of women murdered annually by a current or former intimate partner—nearly three women a day.

Americans are being devastated by a wave of violent crime. Night after night, folks turn on their local news and hear of yet another tragic story of murder, of rape, and violent crimes of all natures that are ravaging their community.

In October, the United States recorded its highest spike in homicides in modern history. Last year the murder rate in this country rose by 30 percent. These murders are not being committed by law-abiding citizens. They are being committed by extremely dangerous and violent criminals, like Brian Davis.

The reality is victims like Holly Durben and violent criminals like Brian Davis have been locked in homes together for nearly 2 years during this pandemic. Violent convicted criminals like Brian Davis, who murdered Holly, his fiancee, should not have access to firearms.

Law-abiding Americans need the ability to protect themselves from violent criminals like Brian Davis. Iowans are common sense. We are pragmatic. We take our Second Amendment rights incredibly serious. We value the safety of our communities, and we think it is right to punish violent criminals when they break the law and are convicted.

This isn't some crazy idea. Under current Federal law which has been on the books for decades and in State codes all across the country, there are violent crimes that result in consequences like the inability to possess a firearm. For example, someone convicted of a felony forfeits many of their rights. Felons can't be on a jury. They can't work for the Federal Government or serve in the military.

Felons, like murderers and drug kingpins, lose these rights when they commit and are convicted of their crimes. A fugitive from justice is not permitted to have a firearm; the same for those who are in this country illegally.

Under current law—current law—individuals who have been convicted of a misdemeanor domestic-violence crime are also on this list. As of today, if two individuals are married, the convicted abuser is held accountable, and that makes sense. But if they are not married, the convicted violent abuser is not held accountable.

I believe we need to get tough on crime, and I believe law-abiding gun owners in this country agree with me. Brian Davis, a violent, convicted criminal is not law abiding.

I want to be crystal clear about a few things. One, what we are talking about

here depends on a conviction—a conviction of domestic violence. That is a guilty verdict after a just trial, an adjudicated-fairly trial. Due process is completely intact, fully present, and I will not be compromised on that, I can promise you.

Two, domestic violence does not mean emotional distress. Domestic violence does not mean a verbal argument. Domestic violence means a violent crime.

Three, not a single innocent or law-abiding gun owner will or should be impacted. Today there are women trapped in relationships with violent criminals, our daughters and mothers, our friends, and our neighbors.

Convicted violent criminals have proven themselves to be unfit to fully participate in our society. We can't choose to just protect women with a ring on their finger from violent abusers. We must hold violent criminals accountable. Let's protect our daughters and punish the criminals.

Speaking from personal experience, domestic violence is a crime worth being tough on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to share my support of the ongoing bipartisan efforts to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

As you know from the prior speaker, the distinguished Senator, negotiations to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act on a bipartisan basis have been ongoing now for three years. Since the beginning of this year, my office has been working closely with Senator ERNST's, Senator DURBIN's, and Senator MURKOWSKI's offices to negotiate bipartisan agreement to reauthorize this important and critical law. I am thrilled that we are now able to share that we have reached a bipartisan framework which will strengthen, modernize, and reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

We are committed to introducing this bill next month. This bipartisan agreement would reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act through 2026 and provide important opportunities to modernize the law that has been so critical to protecting and supporting survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Our bipartisan agreement would enhance and expand services for survivors of domestic violence—including survivors in rural communities, LGBT survivors, survivors with disabilities, and survivors who experience abuse later in life.

Our agreement would reauthorize and strengthen the criminal justice response to domestic violence, including by improving the Justice Department's STOP grant program, closing the ''dating partner loophole'' on a prospective basis, and strengthening the ability of Tribal courts to address instances of domestic violence on Tribal land.

Our agreement would also invest in prevention education efforts. It would expand access to emergency housing support for domestic violence survivors, and it would improve the healthcare response to sexual violence across the country.

These protections are urgently needed, and the time to act is now. I have been here for a while. I have never seen the coming together of the two sides of the aisle any stronger than it is now to work together to solve this problem. So I look forward to participating in the introduction of this bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act next month.

NOMINATION OF HOLLY A. THOMAS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I would, if I could, also like to speak briefly in support of Holly Thomas, who has been nominated to serve as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Judge Thomas is an experienced appellate litigator and currently serves as a judge of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. And I hope my colleagues will support her.

Mr. President, I rise today in support of the nomination of Holly Thomas to serve as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Judge Thomas is an experienced appellate litigator and sitting State court judge in California. I believe she would make an outstanding addition to the NinthCircuit.

Her credentials are impeccable. She is a graduate of Stanford University and Yale Law School.

After law school, Judge Thomas spent more than a decade gaining experience and insight into the Federal appeals courts as a litigator whose primary focus was on appellate cases. She has served as a public interest lawyer with the NAACP, in the Federal Government as an appellate attorney with the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, and in State government in both California and New York.

Though she began her career as an appellate litigator, Judge Thomas has been fascinated by judicial service since her childhood. When she was a young child, her mother—who was a bookkeeper—would take her to the San Diego courthouse to watch the legal proceedings in court.

So it is fitting that in 2018, she was appointed to serve as a judge on the California Superior Court for Los Angeles County. Judge Thomas works in the Family Law Division, where she hears between 10 and 30 cases on average each day, including a mix of hearings and trials. She has also served on a temporary basis as a State appeals judge on the California Court of Appeal for the Second Appellate District.

Judge Thomas has a breadth of experience and knowledge that would make her well-suited to sit on the Ninth Circuit. If confirmed, Judge Thomas would be the first Black woman to serve on the Ninth Circuit from California and only the second Black woman to ever serve on the Ninth Circuit.

I encourage all my colleagues to vote for her confirmation.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am pleased to be on the floor today with my colleagues, both the Senator from Iowa behind me and the Senator from California, because I want to thank them publicly for their leadership as they work to address these issues of domestic violence. They have been leaders in this arena for years, and I appreciate that.

I am pleased to have worked with them on this framework that has been discussed by both Senators and to acknowledge the work of Senator DURBIN as part of this initiative as well.

I think as both of them have spoken, it is recognized that this is a matter of urgency. This is a matter for all of us, on a bipartisan basis. Domestic violence, unfortunately, knows no political bounds, and our response to those who are truly among the most vulnerable of us—that response—should also be bipartisan.

So I want to commend Senator ERNST, Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator DURBIN for their work in really coming to find common ground on this very important matter. It has been years——

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Permit me a moment to interrupt you.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Please.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. One of my great joys is to work on a bipartisan basis, and the Senator from Alaska has been just wonderful. She is a 10, in my book.

You have listened to us on this side. Our staffs have been able to work closely together, and I think, thanks to you, we have a workable, bipartisan product. So I just want to say thank you. I wish the Senate could be more like this all the time, but I think we made a great notch in the right track. So thank you very much.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Well, thank you.

Again, it takes a lot of people, and the years that Senator ERNST has been working this initiative on this side of the aisle is something that, again, we want to build on, and we need to build on it together.

It has been years in the making. The last time we had a VAWA reauthorization was VAWA 2013, and so we are high past time to be addressing this very significant matter.

No compromise is perfect. I think everyone recognizes that. But what has been developed through this framework is a proposal that will really help to prevent violence, to support our survivors, and to hold perpetrators to account.

The effort to be here where we are today on the floor, speaking to this, is one thing, but we all want to get to that next step, which is filing the legislation so we can get it moving through this process, and I look forward to doing that in the new year.

I can tell you, as a Senator from Alaska, this is an extraordinarily pressing issue in my State. As the vice chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, I can affirm that this is a very real need across Native lands, and it is the disproportionate victimization of Native people that I want to focus my comments on today.

By now, I would hope that every Senator understands the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We refer to this as MMIW. That is why we passed Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act.

I want to acknowledge my colleague, who has been working this issue with us for so long, Senator CORTEZ MASTO.

I think we recognize that we have made good progress there, but to fully address the root causes of this crisis—the high rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking, the violent crime in Native communities—we have an awful lot more to do.

The rates of violence experienced by Alaska Natives are particularly horrific, and the statistics should shock us all. I repeat them a lot, and they still shock me. According to a report prepared by the Indian Law and Order Commission, Alaska Native women are overrepresented by nearly 250 percent among female domestic violence victims around our country.

Putting it in context here, a couple years ago, there was an investigation that was conducted by Anchorage Daily News that determined that one in three Native communities in rural Alaska has no local law enforcement that is physically present, leaving Native women and children at greater risk of violence. Think about what that means for just a minute, to live in a community where there is no one to turn to, no law enforcement presence to turn to. Maybe you are able to share your story with a local health aide there, but that is about as far as you can go.

Beyond that, you have many Alaskan Tribes that lack the tools they need to address violence in their communities.

A couple years ago, the Attorney General at the time, William Barr, was invited to the State and came up, and we said: We need to get you out to one of these remote villages.

He saw firsthand, and he was so dramatically impacted after his just multiple hours on the ground there, he declared a law enforcement emergency—a law enforcement emergency—after hearing directly from those who had suffered due to lack of public safety. He said at the time that it was harder for him to imagine a more vulnerable population than the women and children he saw in rural Alaska. He took that back to DC with him and acted on it. His declaration was based on the fact that Alaska has the highest per capita crime rate in this country, and, of course, we face very unique geographic and jurisdictional landscapes.

Then comes COVID–19, and you have a pandemic where you have to be in your social bubbles, you have to be inside, and you have to be where it is safe to be away from the virus, but that safe place was not a safe place for far too many people.

Last summer, rural Alaska saw five domestic violence homicides in 10 days. Again, these are small, rural communities—five homicides in a matter of 10 days; domestic violence. In the 5 weeks after the State of Alaska declared a public health disaster due to the coronavirus pandemic, calls to our domestic violence shelter increased by 52 percent.

You cannot let this go unaddressed. We have an opportunity here in this Congress to build on our previous work with VAWA 2013, where we have taken steps to resolve jurisdictional complexity when it imperils the safety of people. The jurisdiction issues should not deny justice. It just should not.

In the 2013 reauthorization of VAWA, Congress recognized the inherent authority of Tribes to prosecute and punish certain domestic violence crimes committed by non-Indians against Indian people.

At the time, that was described as unprecedented, and some Members of Congress and the media as well pushed a narrative that Tribal governments somehow were not going to be fair, that they would not safeguard the rights of non-Indian defendants. We knew that was going to be far from the truth, and nearly 8 years later, despite all of the horror stories that were predicted, the record shows that non-Indian defendants experienced a Tribal justice system that treats them fairly and in some ways with more attention than State or Federal systems.

So I think now what we need to focus on, folks, we need to focus on the real horror story, and that horror story is the acts of violence being perpetrated against Native women and children. So I have set out to do that through the Tribal title that will be included in this larger VAWA reauthorization once it is introduced.

Chairman SCHATZ, on the Indian Affairs Committee, and I have worked on this together. We posted our text to the committee website last week. Our title closes loopholes and builds upon the success of the 2013 reauthorization, and we include specific solutions to protect Alaska Native people.

The Tribal title will further restore and improve the implementation of the special Tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who commit violent crimes in Native communities, and it will do so by allowing Tribes that exercise this special jurisdiction to charge defendants with crimes that are adjacent to domestic violence, such as violence against children or assault on law enforcement.

I think it is important to know that children were involved in 58 percent of all incidents of domestic violence in these VAWA 2013 cases. This is according to a report by the Federal Government a couple years ago, in 2019. By empowering Tribal courts this way, we can help combat this major public safety issue.

American Indians and Alaska Natives are the victims of rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence in numbers far out of proportion to the level these crimes are committed outside of Native communities. This is a moral imperative. It is a wrong that we must make right, and we also need to do it in a way that recognizes the unique situation we have in the State of Alaska.

You are going to hear later discussion about ANCSA. Two days from now is the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. ANCSA created a new approach to Tribal land tenure that is very, very different from the lower 48 reservation system. While Alaska is home to almost 40 percent of the Tribes in the country, we have only one Indian reservation in the State.

After the Supreme Court decision in the Venetie case in which the Court held that ANCSA lands are not ''Indian Country,'' it became the State's duty, largely alone, to provide for public safety and justice for Alaska Natives.

The Tribal title that we have developed includes an Alaska solution to a complex jurisdictional situation. It includes an Alaska pilot program which builds on previous legislation that I have introduced and will empower a limited number of Alaskan Tribes to exercise special criminal jurisdiction over certain crimes that occur in villages in Alaska.

Similar to how the pilot rolled out for the lower 48 Tribes, Alaskan Tribes will have to meet certain criteria, including having a Tribal justice system that can adequately and appropriately safeguard the rights of defendants.

In addition to the provisions essential to bringing justice and safety to Alaska Native people, our critical legislation will ensure that VAWA's tools and resources will better serve the needs of survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

I am proud to have authored text that will help to address this ongoing epidemic that Alaska faces with violence, which has left long-lasting trauma for too many of our women, our children, and our families. Congressman YOUNG on the House side has introduced similar language to help in this. We simply cannot allow survivors and the needs of the most vulnerable to go unmet.

Very quickly, I want to just outline a couple different provisions that are contained in this bipartisan framework that recognize some of the matters we have been working on in Alaska.

There is a provision named in memory of an Alaskan, Breanna Moore. Bree's Law is what we call it. In 2014, Cindy and Butch Moore experienced a tragedy that no parents should ever have to experience. They received a call that their 20-year-old daughter had been shot by her boyfriend in Anchorage. In the wake of that devastation,

they turned their energy to and they put their hearts and their passion into working around the State and now at the Federal level to ensure that education is provided to teens to prevent future tragedies. So Bree's Law drives education initiatives to enable youth, parents, and advocates to recognize, prevent, and mitigate teen dating violence.

Another provision addresses support services for victims. We know it is difficult to access the necessary medical forensic services in Alaska. These allow for evidence collection and aid in a survivor's journey to justice.

While we have very troubling statistics on sexual assault and domestic violence, Alaskans have also been on the frontlines of innovation, offering solutions. The Alaska Comprehensive Training Forensic Academy, which is a pilot program run through the University of Alaska Anchorage, is making a difference in the lives of Alaskans who have experienced interpersonal violence.

Built on the belief that all victims of violence deserve evaluation and care from forensically trained healthcare providers, I have been able to secure some provisions in our VAWA proposal that will allow other universities and States to model the successful program and expand access to trauma-informed care.

There is clearly a public safety crisis that we are dealing with in rural Alaska and across Indian Country, but we have an opportunity in this Congress to work together across the aisle to find solutions and to restore justice. I look forward to building strong, bipartisan support for VAWA reauthorization that will make a positive difference in the safety of Native communities and for victims of domestic violence and entire communities in Alaska and, of course, across the country.

We must let our women, children, and families who have been affected by devastating violence know that you are heard and that we stand with you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I just want to join the comments of Senator MURKOWSKI and Senator ERNST and Senator FEINSTEIN. I want to thank them for allowing me to join a pretty power-packed team working on the Violence Against Women Act.

Senator FEINSTEIN is our lead sponsor on the Democratic side. I am happy to work with her all the time. I want to especially thank Senator ERNST on the Republican side, who has been designated as the official negotiator on the reauthorization of VAWA for the last 3 years, and, as you have just heard, a passionate supporter of our efforts, Senator LISA MURKOWSKI of Alaska—we worked closely together on other legislation, and this one is extremely important.

This afternoon, Senators ERNST, FEINSTEIN, MURKOWSKI, and myself have announced that we have reached a bipartisan agreement and that we will be introducing an updated version of VAWA next month when we return. We are coming together in supporting the simple premise that VAWA will save lives. We need to ensure every survivor, whether they live in rural Alaska or urban Illinois, can reach out for a lifeline in a moment of crisis.

We still have work to do. We still need cosponsors. We are going to be working individually, Member to Member, to make sure this important legislation passes.

It is a statistic that should shock us all: Nearly one in three women living today—nearly one in three—has experienced some form of physical or sexual violence. That finding came from the WHO, surveying women in more than 160 countries across the globe. It proves that this crisis of sexual and domestic violence touches every community in the world. But our responsibility, first, is here at home, in all of the 50 States, to make sure that we are doing everything we can to protect women who are vulnerable.

Let me tell you about one of those survivors; her name is Meaghan. And she reached out to my office to share her story. Five years ago, Meaghan was brutally assaulted by her ex-husband. The beating was so violent that, today, she is still suffering from hearing loss.

While Meaghan was being attacked, her 2-and-half-year-old son—who is on the autism spectrum—ran over to help her. Her ex-husband responded by throwing the child through a closet. Meaghan says the experience was so traumatizing that her son didn't speak for a full year after the attack.

When Meaghan finally broke free from her ex-husband, she packed her bags, buckled her two children into the car, and fled for her life. But he continued tracking her, requiring Meaghan and her children to move 10 times in the last few years.

As Meaghan and her family have begun to heal from this horrifying ordeal, she says they have found much-needed compassion and support in the detectives and social workers that came to their aid.

She wrote that service providers ''were patient with me and didn't push me, [they] only showed me they cared, and most of all didn't give up . . . with their support and guidance I found the light at the end of the tunnel and I fought my way out of the darkness that my ex-husband had cast . . . on my life.''

Meaghan's story illustrates how laws like VAWA have the potential to change—and even save—lives. In her case, VAWA provided critical resources to law enforcement and social service agencies that helped her and her family escape a perilous situation.

And today, at a moment when sexual and domestic violence are on the rise in America, we need to do more than reauthorize VAWA. We need to build on its achievements—and we need to do it on a bipartisan basis.

I thank the group for allowing me to join them.

We have work to do, and I am looking forward to doing it with you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes prior to the vote.

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

NOMINATION OF HOLLY A. THOMAS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, the next vote is going to be a motion to discharge from the Judiciary Committee Judge Holly Thomas for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. I am going to vote no because I have not had the opportunity to actually meet Judge Thomas.

In a remarkable undermining of senatorial tradition, the Biden administration White House is now saying that no Senator is allowed to meet a circuit court judge prior to the confirmation vote of that judge.

The Presiding Officer might be tilting his head at me like that seems crazy. Well, it is crazy. Every Ninth Circuit judge—a court of appeals that has enormous power over my State—who has been nominated by any President since I have been a U.S. Senator, I have met with to discuss issues. This is part of our advice-and-consent role. Yet this White House is now saying no Senator can meet with a circuit court judge, even for an hour, prior to the vote despite the fact that they are getting ready to have life tenure.

This is in line with this administration and with, unfortunately, some of my Democratic colleagues who are just smashing institutional norms in this body that have significant bipartisan support.

We saw the junior Senator from Massachusetts yesterday saying she wants to pack the Supreme Court. I am sure that is going to lead to a charge of other Democrat Senators. My colleagues are all very focused on getting rid of the filibuster despite the fact that more than half the Democratic conference, in April of 2017, wrote a letter to the majority and minority leaders of the Senate, saying: Don't get rid of the filibuster. Now only JOE MANCHIN and KYRSTEN SINEMA seem to be the ones defending it. I would love it if the press asked questions of the other 26 of my Democratic colleagues who, just 4 years ago, said: Don't do this. But this norm that is being undermined right now—of Senators being able to meet with nominees to circuit courts—is a new low.

I raised this with senior Biden administration White House officials just last week, and they said they would look into it. They seemed a little confused. The White House Counsel for the President finally called me back after I had been trying to get ahold of her because I had heard it was her idea. Then I asked her ''Why are you doing this?''

By the way, the Trump administration didn't do this. To the contrary,

their White House Counsel actually tried to get Republican and Democrat Senators to meet with circuit court nominees to help maybe get bipartisan votes. So it wasn't the precedent of the previous administration.

The White House Counsel actually told me—she used this language: ''We are doing it to protect the judges''—''to protect the judges.'' From what—Senators doing their constitutional duty? What are they hiding? Are they really that unimpressive that they have to have their own nominees being protected from us here in the Senate?

So the bottom line is that all of this is patently absurd, and I think many of my Democratic colleagues actually agree with me. I have talked to a number of them, and I don't think this is a precedent that anyone who is a U.S. Senator should want, whether you are a Democrat or a Republican.

Remember, these judges are going to have enormous power over the people we represent, and they are going to have life tenure. It is not like voting for an Assistant Secretary who will be 2, 3, 4 years on the job. This is life tenure, and they can't take an hour out of their time prior to the vote to meet with Senators.

I asked these judges in a speech just last week: Hey, give me a call. You don't have to get permission from the White House. This is actually a first test of your judicial independence. Call me. I want to talk to you.

We didn't hear back from any judges, and the White House is still blocking it.

What is really surprising is that the current President is the former chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I wonder if he actually knows what is going on with his senior staff of his White House Counsel where, right now, no Member of the U.S. Senate who is trying to do his advice-and-consent constitutional role can even meet—can even meet—with a circuit court judge. I am pretty sure most of my colleagues don't agree with this.

What I am hoping for is to get the White House to change its outlook on this, to follow the example of the Trump administration—I know that might be a hard swallow—and have these judges meet with us.

When I meet with them, I talk about Alaska legal issues, and if you are a judge who grew up in L.A. and you are an L.A. judge, you don't know anything about Alaska, but you will have an enormous impact on the people I represent.

So I think what you are going to see until we get some cooperation with the White House is that I hope most of my colleagues, Republican colleagues, whether they think these nominees are qualified or not, are going to vote no. They are going to vote no, and the reason is a core principle: We should be able to do advice and consent.

If there were a Republican President in the White House and if some of my Democratic colleagues said ''Hey, can you help me get a meeting with a circuit court nominee who is going to have big impacts on my State?'' I would certainly do it. Like I said, we didn't have to do it the last time because that was the Trump administration's standard operating procedure.

I hope we can get to an agreement on this, and I hope all Senators can agree with this. I am hopeful that you are going to see, at least with my colleagues, that there are going to be no ''yes'' votes on any of these nominees, and that is not good. These circuit court judges want a bipartisan confirmation. Well, they are not going to get it until we are able to do our constitutional duty of advice and consent for judges, life-tenured judges, who have enormous power over the people we represent.

I am hopeful that every Member of this body can work with us, work with me, work with the White House, maybe even call the President and say: Do you know what? This is probably a standard principle that you guys want to get rid of. Making sure U.S. Senators cannot meet with judges who are going to have lifetime tenure is smashing a bipartisan institutional norm. That is not going to serve this body well at all.

I yield the floor, and I encourage my colleagues to all vote no in the upcoming vote to discharge this nominee until we can actually talk to her and see what kind of judge she would be. This is a very, very reasonable position, so I strongly urge a ''no'' vote from all of my colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Judge Holly Thomas is a nominee for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. She went through the Senate Judiciary Committee. It is a bipartisan committee of 11 to 11. She was before the committee, available for questions and available for written questions soon afterward.

If the Senator from Alaska or any other Senator has a grievance with the White House's procedure on how to handle his nominees, so be it, but is she going to be punished because that decision was made at the White House level? She went through the committee, as we asked her to, and made herself available. She has an extraordinary record as a jurist, and to dismiss her because of a disagreement with the White House on the procedure on his nominees, I don't think it is fair. I think she deserves to be judged on her merits, and on her merits, she should be sitting on the Ninth Circuit.

Mr. President, today, the Senate will consider the nomination of Judge Holly Thomas for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Judge Thomas is a highly qualified nominee. Her extensive experience as an appellate litigator and a California State court judge will serve her well on the Ninth Circuit.

And, if confirmed, she would be the first Black woman from California to serve on that court.

A San Diego native, Judge Thomas was drawn to a career in law at a young age. Her mother—a bookkeeper—used to take her to the San Diego courthouse to watch the proceedings. That experience inspired her to pursue a law degree at Yale Law School—which she did after receiving her undergraduate degree from Stanford University with Honors and Distinction.

After law school, Judge Thomas began her legal career as a clerk for Judge Kim McLane Wardlaw on the Ninth Circuit.

She then began an expansive appellate litigation career, initially working at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, where she focused on education and issues related to criminal justice.

In 2010, Judge Thomas joined the Justice Department, where she worked as a Senior Attorney in the Appellate Section of the Civil Rights Division. In this role, she argued appeals on behalf of the United States before multiple U.S. Courts of Appeals—including the First, Second, Fourth, Fifth, and Ninth Circuits.

After 5 years at the Justice Department, Judge Thomas went on to work for the Office of the New York Solicitor General, where she served as special counsel. In this role, Judge Thomas argued multiple cases before the Second Circuit and in the State courts of New York.

In 2016, Judge Thomas became the deputy director of the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, where she helped enforce State and Federal civil rights laws.

Since 2018, she has served on the Los Angeles County Superior Court—with the exception of this past summer. In May, the chief justice of the California Supreme Court chose Judge Thomas to serve as judge pro tem on the California Court of Appeals. And she returned to the LA County Superior Court earlier this year.

During her time on the bench, Judge Thomas has handled hundreds of cases that have gone to verdict or judgment, and she has presided over thousands of hearings. As judge pro tem on the California Court of Appeals, she sat on numerous appellate court panels and authored seven opinions, all of which were unanimous.

In short, Judge Thomas has demonstrated that she is a fair, impartial, and evenhanded jurist.

She has extensive experience as a both a trial and appellate court judge. And before her appointment to the bench, she represented a wide range of litigants.

The American Bar Association unanimously rated Judge Thomas as ''Qualified'' to sit on the Ninth Circuit.

And she has the strong support of her home State senators—Senators FEINSTEIN and PADILLA.

Additionally, as only the second Black woman to ever serve on the Ninth Circuit, Judge Thomas will help

bring much needed diversity to our Federal judiciary.

Given her varied professional background, years of appellate experience, and her accomplishments on the bench, Judge Thomas will be an excellent addition to the Ninth Circuit. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting her nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask my friend and colleague from Illinois, who is the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, if he could actually work with us—I have already reached out to him and some other Democrat Senators—on this very reasonable request. He has been here a lot longer than I have. But every time there is a Ninth Circuit judge who has been nominated, I have met with him because it is so important to my State. Alaska has 1 Ninth Circuit judge, and there are 29 judges on the court.

So I would ask, respectfully, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee to work with me because this is a precedent that I don't think any Senator, Democrat or Republican, wants.

Literally, you are going to have the White House saying ''You know what? You are not on the Judiciary Committee, so your advice-and-consent role under article II, section 2, is null and void'' because the White House Counsel wants to ''protect the judges''? Protect them from what?

So I want to work with my colleagues—all of them—particularly the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, as he has a lot of influence, I am sure, with the White House and the White House Counsel's Office, but, again, I encourage my colleagues to vote no until we start getting meetings and are able to do our duty. This is going to benefit my colleagues on both sides of the aisle over the long term, and it will strengthen this body, not weaken it, which is what is happening right now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me in closing say: I think we should be respectful and try to work with one another and cooperate. That also includes the over 100 nominees sitting on this calendar who have been obstructed by two or three Republican Members for weeks, if not months. If there is going to be fairness, let's make sure that the road travels in both directions.

I yield back all remaining time.

VOTE ON MOTION TO DISCHARGE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to discharge the nomination of Holly A. Thomas, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

The yeas and nays have been previously ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Lousiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 502 Ex.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—46

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Barrasso | Grassley | Risch |
| Blackburn | Hagerty | Romney |
| Blunt | Hawley | Rubio |
| Boozman | Hoeven | Sasse |
| Braun | Hyde-Smith | Scott (FL) |
| Burr | Inhofe | Scott (SC) |
| Capito | Johnson | Shelby |
| Collins | Kennedy | Sullivan |
| Cornyn | Lankford | Thune |
| Cotton | Lee | Tillis |
| Crapo | Marshall | Toomey |
| Cruz | McConnell | Tuberville |
| Daines | Moran | Wicker |
| Ernst | Murkowski | Young |
| Fischer | Paul | |
| Graham | Portman | |

NOT VOTING—4

| | |
|---|---|
| Cassidy | Lummis |
| Cramer | Rounds |

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The nomination is discharged and will be placed on the calendar.

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I come to the floor to speak in support of legislation that is critical to our democracy—the Freedom to Vote Act. And this is a bill that was the product of work by many, many Senators from across the country with different views but all committed to one thing: our democracy.

And I want to thank Senator SCHUMER for bringing the group together as well as the other Senators: Senator MANCHIN, whose name is on the bill, whose experience as secretary of state really was so helpful to us in forming this bill and also realizing the differences between so many jurisdictions, including world jurisdictions, that have different staffing levels and different needs; Senator MERKLEY, an expert on election law; Senator PADILLA, also a former secretary of state; Senator KING, bringing his independent spirit from the State of Maine; Senator KAINE, former civil rights lawyer; Senator TESTER, who sees this and understands all of this firsthand in the State of Montana, where, by the way, for decades they have had same-day registration, which when you look at the States, whether they are red or blue—States that have same-day registration, like my State—tend to have some of the highest voter turnouts in the country, and, sadly, they have disposed of that in the State of Montana recently; and Senator WARNOCK, from the great State of Georgia, who was the host, along with Senator OSSOFF, of a Rules Committee field hearing we recently held in Georgia, where we saw firsthand why so many leaders in the business community across the country and in Georgia have voiced their concern about a bill that recently passed there that would literally say that you cannot vote on weekends during the runoff period, during a critical period of votes in Georgia.

That was a group that came together, different views, different levels of experience, but all committed to one idea: that democracy will prevail.

The freedom to vote is fundamental to all of our freedoms. That is why this bill is called the Freedom to Vote Act. It ensures that people are part of the franchise and that government is accountable to the people, but this fundamental right that is the very foundation of our system of government is under attack.

Since the 2020 election, we have seen a persistent and coordinated assault on the freedom to vote in States across the country. These attacks on our democracy demand a Federal response. The Constitution anticipated that perhaps we would need a Federal response when, in the words of the Constitution, as written by our Founding Fathers, that Congress can make or alter the rules regarding Federal elections.

The need for action could not be more serious. It has been almost a year since the violent mob of insurrectionists stormed into this Chamber and desecrated our Capitol. They came into this very room, rifled through the desks, were up there right on the dais where the Presiding Officer now presides. They came here, but what they did was not just an attack on a building, it was an attack on our Republic—an attack on our Republic.

I still can picture it like it just happened. Senator BLUNT and I were the last two remaining Senators in the Chamber at 3:30 in the morning, along with the incredible staff from the Parliamentarian's office, with the pages, along with Vice President Pence, and the two young women with that mahogany box filled with the remaining electoral ballots. We made our way over to the House of Representatives, where glass was smashed against the sides, where there was still spray paint on statues and on columns, and we finished our job.

Two weeks later, as we stood on that inaugural stage—Democrat and Republican leaders from both parties from this Chamber, all the Senators from this Chamber, leaders nationally—Republicans, Democrats stood on that

stage under that beautiful blue sky with little flakes of snow, and it was like everything was in technicolor. I said that day, this is a moment where democracy brushes itself off, stands straight and moves forward, one Nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

Maybe I was naive. I thought this was the moment in the middle of this raging pandemic that we were going to move forward as a country. And we did, but lurking—lurking—in the background were claims, false, incredibly dangerous claims that somehow the election was invalid and, along with that, a coordinated effort across the country to introduce bills—over 425 of them now—to make it harder, not easier, for people to vote.

What has been the result of this democracy on fire? What happened here in the Capitol is that canister of bear spray has been replaced by bill after bill after bill. Those flagpoles that were used to poke and jab at our brave officers who are here to defend us, resulting in several of their deaths—that has been replaced by repeated efforts to lie about the results of the election.

What has happened to our democracy? Members in this Chamber know well. This year alone, Capitol Police have responded to nearly 9,000 threats against Members of Congress since the beginning of the year—9,000 threats. That is nearly double the threats faced by Members just 3 years ago.

Election officials across the country have also been targeted by an overwhelming increase in the number of threats. Senator BLUNT and I held a Rules Committee hearing on this deeply disturbing trend this fall. We heard from the Kentucky Republican secretary of state who said if we do not act, States and localities will be unable to retain or recruit people to administer future elections. He talked about the need to make it very clear that local elected officials who are administering the election should be safe; that they should not be threatened.

Then we heard from others. Republican Philadelphia City Commissioner Al Schmidt shared some of the horrifying threats that he and his family have received after he stood up to lies about election fraud, including a message that said: ''Tell the truth or your three kids will be fatally shot,'' with the names of his 7-year-old son and his 11- and 14-year-old daughters, their address, photos of their house out on the internet.

Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, received a voice mail saying:

> I am a hunter—and I think you should be hunted.

These aren't just a few examples; this is happening across our country. This is why we have united on this side of the aisle behind the Freedom to Vote Act. It takes these threats against these election officials head-on by establishing a right to vote and have every vote counted and protects election officials from improper removal by partisan actors. You have to have—malfeasance has to occur to be removed.

There are protections against sham audits like the ones we saw in Arizona and the ones being advanced in Wisconsin, Michigan, Texas, and Pennsylvania and strengthens the protections for election workers by making it a Federal crime to ''intimidate, threaten, or coerce'' election workers.

It was during Senator Bob Dole's funeral service in Washington that President Biden reminded us what Senator Dole had once said. You see, Senator Dole stood against the tide. He supported civil rights legislation when that was a really hard thing to do. He supported the Martin Luther King holiday. And the words he said at that time ring true today. He said this:

> No first-class democracy can treat people like second-class citizens.

> No first-class democracy can treat people like second-class citizens.

His warning is exactly what is going on today: efforts to treat some Americans as second-class citizens by making them stand for hours and hours and hours to vote in lines; by telling them: Oh, by the way, you are not going to be able to, like you did before, get water or food from certain people who might give it to you while you are standing in line. That is the story we heard in Georgia; by telling them—like a bill that passed in Wisconsin that would have been put into law except for the Governor there. It said we are only going to have one dropoff box in the entire city of Milwaukee; or like what we saw in the last election in Texas, in Harris County, a county that has about as much people as my entire State: We are only going to have one dropoff box there in that county; taking away options for registering to vote; making it harder for people with disabilities or elderly voters to receive the assistance they need to make their voices heard; telling people: Oh, hey, if you have COVID and you are in the hospital and you want to apply for a mail-in ballot because you obviously aren't going to be able to go in and vote, you need to get a notary public to sign the application. South Carolina had taken that requirement away, and then they put it back in.

Over 400 bills were introduced in nearly every State to limit the freedom to vote, and over 30 already were signed into law. That is why we must now establish national standards for voting—completely allowed for in the Constitution—to make sure all voters can cast their ballots in the way that works best for them, regardless of what ZIP Code they live in.

The need for Federal action is urgent. Redistricting is underway to draw congressional maps that will define our democracy for the next decade. You know how many of these maps do not come close to reflecting, on a nonpartisan basis, what goes on in the State.

We know what has been happening in Wisconsin. Actual—actual—ideas and actual proposals are supported by someone in this very Chamber to take away the right of the bipartisan election board to count the ballots and instead have them counted by the legislature.

With 19 States having enacted laws this year to roll back the freedom to vote, we can't simply sit back and watch our democracy be threatened.

As Senator Rev. RAPHAEL WARNOCK has said, What is this all about?

> Some people don't want some people to vote.

Whether our democracy is threatened with bear spray, crowbars, and axes, or long lines, no dropoff boxes, and secret money, it is still under siege, and we must stand up and do what is right. We want trust in our government—trust regardless of where people are politically.

You know, my State has one of the highest voter turnouts in the country, if not the highest every single time. We have elected a Republican Governor with those standards in Tim Pawlenty; we have elected a Democratic Governor in Tim Walz; and we have elected an Independent Governor in Jesse Ventura. What is the difference? People are part of the franchise. They come up, and they say: Look, I didn't vote for you, but I agreed with you on that; I didn't like what you did on that. They are part of the franchise.

As we have seen in States like Georgia, Florida, Iowa, Montana, and Texas, we are up against this coordinated attack. Our democracy cannot wait.

The infamous new law in Georgia says you can't vote on weekends, as I mentioned, in the runoff or register to vote during the runoff, and there are limitations when it comes to dropoff boxes for voting by mail and a new requirement—one that used to be in that was taken out for the pandemic because it was so confusing, and then it was put back in with this law—that you have to put a date on the outside of your inside envelope. What date would you think that would be? Anyone casting the ballot would think the date that I am voting. No, no. It is your birthday that has to be put on the outside of the envelope when you put that ballot in.

In Iowa, a new law cut the days of early voting by 9 days and will close the polls an hour early. This was after the State, in the words of its own Republican secretary of state, had ''shattered'' its voter turnout record last year.

Why do that except that you are trying to make it harder for certain people to vote. The words of a court about a North Carolina law years ago: Discrimination with surgical precision.

A new law in Montana that I noticed says you can no longer register to vote on election day after that having been an option in the State for 15 years.

In Texas, another new law eliminates drop boxes and puts new restrictions on vote-by-mail by also empowering partisan poll watchers.

That is why we need the Freedom to Vote Act, which builds on the framework put forward by our colleague and the former West Virginia secretary of state, JOE MANCHIN, in June. It includes key reforms like ensuring voters have access to at least 2 weeks of early voting and same-day registration and that voters can cast a mail-in ballot without an excuse.

Increasing transparency through the DISCLOSE Act. I don't care if you are a Democrat, Republican, Independent—whatever party you are in—you don't want to have money coming in an election, dark money that you can't even figure out where it is from, telling you stuff that you can't even figure out if it is true. This part of the bill would simply require super PACs and issue advocacy groups to disclose donors who contribute more than $10,000 so at least we know who is putting in all that money to run ads so you understand why they are doing it.

It would prohibit partisan gerrymandering so voters choose their elected officials, not the elected officials choosing who votes for them.

And we need to enact the bill now to give States time to implement these reforms.

As I noted, the Freedom to Vote Act has the support of all 50 Senate Democrats. We have talked to our Republican colleagues about this as well as the John Lewis bill. Why have we done that? Well, for decades voting rights has been a bipartisan issue. In 2006, the Voting Rights Act was reauthorized by a vote of 98 to 0. Yes, 2006; it is not that long ago—98 to 0.

This bill already includes bipartisan profiles that included many of our Republican colleagues. I know the Honest Ads Act is in this bill. That is a bill I did first with John McCain, whom we so dearly miss, and now with Senator GRAHAM; the Secure Elections Act, which is about backup paper ballots and making sure that we don't have foreign interference on our elections. That is the bill Senator LANKFORD and I introduced together with the support of Senators BURR and WARNER and Senator GRAHAM.

But in October, when we had a vote to open debate on the Freedom to Vote Act, not a single one of our Republican colleagues voted to even debate the bill. I see Senator MURKOWSKI is here who did allow a vote to open debate on the John Lewis bill, which is very important to our country. She stood up and said: Look, I may not agree with everything in this bill, but we should allow for debate.

Let's be clear again, article I, section 4 of the Constitution of the United States of America empowers Congress to make or alter rules for Federal elections at any time. I believe this provision was designed to help us in times like these, in times where we are seeing an assault on elections, where people are increasingly starting to distrust the results of elections.

In the face of complete obstruction on something so fundamental as the Freedom to Vote Act, we must restore the Senate with rule changes that will allow us to debate this bill.

Now, I just want to briefly address this. Throughout Senate history, rules governing debate have changed multiple times.

We just somehow found a way to vote on what was good, and that was the debt ceiling vote—hmm, a little bit of a change to allow us to do that with a 51-vote margin. In fact, there are already 161 exceptions—exceptions to the filibuster.

Even the number of votes needed to end debate has changed. In 1975, Senator Mondale led the successful and bipartisan effort that reduced the cloture threshold from 67 to 60 votes.

There have been cries for standing debates—standing—what is called a standing filibuster. Why is that? Because instead of an empty Chamber right now, except for me and Senator MURKOWSKI and the Presiding Officer from the great State of Nevada, there is no one else here.

And yet we have so many serious things before us. We have a continuing raging pandemic. We have climate change that is causing weather events we never thought possible, including thunderstorms in the middle of the State of Minnesota in the middle of December. Never in history have we had a tornado warning in our State in the middle of December.

We have had tragedies across the Midwest with storms of magnitude we never thought possible. We have rising—no. Are we discussing that? No. Are we discussing voting and what is happening in this country right now, except for me giving this long speech? No, we are not.

So I think we know that this isn't the Senate that is supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body, that is supposed to allow us to have votes on amendments and discussions on serious issues, not to ram through things but to have discussions on serious issues so we can make decisions.

Do you think the rest of the world isn't watching what is going on here right now? Simple attempts to do something about childcare or preschool or reducing the prices of prescription drugs, when we pay more in our country for prescription drugs than any other country in the world, and we are getting blocked from bringing those bills forward to have actual discussions on them or trying to fit them in little boxes of how they fit some archaic Senate rule.

Even Senator Robert Byrd said, when he was advocating for rule reforms way back in 1979: ''Certain rules that were necessary . . . must be changed to reflect changed circumstances.''

Well, I think an all-out assault on our democracy—that is a changed circumstance, where at least we should be debating the solution in this Chamber. I think being unable to advance things that we know we have to tackle, not just immediate crisis, because we are pretty good at those—we are pretty good when a financial crisis occurs or when we have storms or floods or tornadoes or hurricanes. We are pretty good at getting the funds out and rescue help out there.

But not everything is an immediate crisis. It is just a crisis about to happen, and our job, our duty when we take that oath is to protect the Constitution. That is what we want to debate right now on this floor, instead of in another empty Chamber. And with the standing filibuster, requiring people to be here and debate and speak, it is not just an old movie, then; it is real life. Requiring people to actually be here and do their jobs—big surprise, news bulletin—we are here debating real issues and legislation and voting on amendments and doing our jobs, instead of just running back in here every four hours and making a vote and then going back out and making phone calls.

Protecting the freedom to vote has never been easy. Throughout our country's 245-year history, we have had to course-correct to ensure that our democracy for the people, by the people actually lived up to its ideals. Voting is how Americans control their government and hold elected officials accountable.

So for anyone watching this at home, do you want to hold people accountable? It is by making sure that they have the right to vote, so they can exercise their right to vote, and their views at the polls in a safe way, across this Nation.

And do you want to hold them accountable? It is by actually having votes on bills and actually debating the issues of our time as the rest of the world watches what should be the beacon of democracy.

It strengthens our hand with the rest of the world. It makes us stronger when our democracy is functioning and working, and not when we have a bunch of people in here with bear spray and bayonets going after our police officers.

That is the vision, I am sorry to say, that much of the world saw less than a year ago. And that is not the lasting vision that we want of this Chamber or of this democracy.

Americans have fought and died to protect our freedom to vote. They have done so on the battlefield and in marches during the civil rights movement, and 56 years after the Voting Rights Act was passed by this Chamber and signed into law, we still continue this fight.

But just as we know from those trying to keep their fellow Americans from voting, those trying to undermine our very system of government in State after State across the country, they are not going to stop until we make clear that there is something larger than ourselves. As John McCain used to say, there is nothing more liberating than a cause larger than yourself.

That cause, my friends in this Chamber, is our very democracy, and that is why we won't stop. Our Nation was founded on the ideals of democracy, and we have seen for ourselves in this building how we can't afford to take it for granted.

We have a lot of work to do in rebuilding our country. And, no, we should not go home tomorrow. No, we should not, not when this is at stake. We must stand up for the salvation of our democracy.

And each day that we delay, it gets harder and harder to undo what is being done. We owe it to our country and to the future generation of Americans to take care of this country.

We are the stewards, my friends, of this Nation right now and our democracy. So many people before us have found a way to do the right thing. And in the words of Bob Dole, in a first-class democracy, the people deserve better than being treated like second-class citizens.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I have come to this floor to speak on a matter that is very local to Alaska, very important to Alaska. But before I begin my comments, I want to acknowledge a few of the comments of my friend from Minnesota.

Clearly, we share some of the same passions about the protections of our democracy, and I would absolutely agree that key and most fundamental is that right to vote. And I have clearly expressed that we, as lawmakers, need to be there to ensure that our elections are free, fair, and accessible to all, that barriers to voting need to be addressed.

She has noted that I have joined with others to try to address what I believe are some of those impediments to voting through a measure that has been proposed to the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. It is not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, in my view, but I do think that it is something that is worthy of the debate. I was going to call it grand debate on the floor, but as she appropriately points out, there is not a lot of grand debate that goes on. More often than not, it is individuals who are speaking to those who are taking the time out of their day to tune in to C–SPAN.

But these are important discussions for us to have. But I also recognize that enduring legislation comes about not because one party is able to make that happen on their own. Enduring legislation, whether it is the Civil Rights Act or whether it was the Voting Rights Act—the enduring legislation that stays with us for generations and decades—is that that is achieved when we have come together.

We will never—it is very, very difficult to get entire consent of the body. But when we can achieve that bipartisan support and a recognition that this is good for both parties, good for all areas of America, this is when we do our best, when we come together to address these.

And I hear the clear frustration that she has expressed, but I also recognize that how we do what we do is important. And if we peel away the last vestiges of protection for minority rights in the Senate, the Senate becomes a smaller version of the House, where you are able to effectively move things through just by the raw numbers.

And so these are hard, these are challenging, these are worthy of our further and additional efforts. But I would remind us that as we are seeking to make these generational differences, as we are seeking to provide for these enduring protections for democracy, that how we get there is also a matter of importance to this body.

(The remarks of Ms. MURKOWSKI pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 482 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). The Senator from Utah.

VACCINES

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I am here on the Senate floor now for the 21st time specifically to oppose President Biden's sweeping vaccine mandates.

I have introduced over a dozen bills to one way or another limit, clarify, or counteract the mandates. Every time I have come to ask the Senate to pass what should, frankly, be uncontroversial matters, one of my colleagues or another from the other side of the aisle has come to object. This is unfortunate. It is unfortunate, really, for a number of reasons.

These mandates, while currently being challenged in court in a number of jurisdictions, show the terrible power that even the threat of a vaccine mandate can wield. Businesses across the country are suspending, punishing, and firing employees who haven't had the COVID shot. The threat of the mandate is making it harder for everyday American families just to put food on the table and to do so, moreover, in increasingly difficult economic times.

Now, these are not our enemies. These are not people to be feared. These are not people to shun or loathe entirely, as the mandates seem to suggest. No. No. These are our friends and our neighbors. These are mothers and fathers. These are people who, like far too many Americans, are just struggling to get by.

I am going to continue to fight for them and to protect them because they understand something that President Biden has yet to accept even though, deep down, I know he does know it, and that is, this isn't right. It is not right for him to do. It is not right constitutionally for about a dozen reasons, but it is also just not right morally.

It is a morally unacceptable proposition to suggest that someone should get fired just because they don't conform to Presidential medical orthodoxy. It is immoral to tell someone that their ability to put food on the table for their children depends on whether they get a shot—a shot that they may or may not want; a shot that may or may not conflict with their religious or sincerely held beliefs, that might be contraindicated by one or more conditions, resulting in their doctors advising them not to get the shot.

This is not something that anyone should do. In fact, the American people agree. According to a recent Axios poll, only 14 percent of Americans—just 14 out of every 100 Americans—agree with the apparent position of the President of the United States that if someone doesn't get the shot, they should be fired. I would imagine it is even fewer than that. Fourteen out of a hundred isn't very many to begin with, but I am pretty sure it is even fewer than that—far fewer—who would say that it is OK for one person within the Federal Government to decide to fire everyone who doesn't comply within the government and also to tell private employers that they will receive crippling, company-destroying fines—that no company, not even the wealthiest out there, could live with—if they don't fire every one of their employees or otherwise take adverse action against them in their declining to take the shot. It is not OK.

In this effort, I have, to be sure, been supremely clear. I am not in any way against the COVID–19 vaccinations—quite to the contrary. I have been vaccinated. I have encouraged people to seek out all the relevant information and be vaccinated. I believe that the COVID–19 vaccines are keeping countless Americans safe from the harm threatened by the COVID–19 virus.

This is different than that. As a matter of fact, there is an undercut, and it can't offset the fact that this mandate is pushing government control beyond the constitutional limits and into the private decisions of the American people.

That is why I am against all of these mandates for all age groups, and that is why I have come to the Senate floor repeatedly to help and to call on my colleagues and President Biden himself to end this madness once and for all, to end it before it is too late, to end it before irreparable harm is inflicted on those who, for whatever reason, can't or are otherwise inclined not to comply with his directions.

I have even offered a bill, one that should be unusually, uniquely uncontroversial, but even that one met objection. It was a simple reaffirmation of parental rights that our government has respected and honored and even protected from the beginning.

My Parental Consent for Vaccination Act would simply require that any COVID–19 vaccine mandate issued by the Federal Government—to be clear, it shouldn't be issuing any at all, but any of them that it happens to issue must be a mandate that includes a requirement that informed parental consent be provided before the shot can be administered to a minor.

Now, this one is so far afield from the broader question of whether we should have these mandates at all. It is the slightly narrower question of whether the President of the United States should administer them. It really should not be controversial.

Now, allow me to put this issue in some context here. Parental consent is required for all sorts of things. Parental consent, as every parent with school-aged children knows, is required for field trips. Parental consent is required for pretty much all extracurricular activities. For that matter, it is required for many in-class activities. Parental consent is required before most schools can administer so much as a Tylenol or a baby aspirin to a child. Everyone knows that. None of that is happening without parental consent.

That is, to be sure, the right approach. It is as it should be. Despite what some candidates have said in some recent political campaigns, parents should be informed and involved in their children's education and certainly in their child's health decisions, in matters of medical treatment.

Parents, it is important to remember, are simply better equipped to make these decisions. Parents know their children, and they know their children's medical histories. Parents know their moral, their religious, and their health requirements that are, in many cases, unique to their families. It is certainly something that no government and no school can keep track of in the same way that a government or a school does. Parents also love their children—that is important here—and parents, because they love their children, have their children's best interests at heart when they make decisions affecting them.

The government can't do any of those things. It certainly can't do any of those things anywhere close to as well as a parent could. The reason for that is fairly simple. It is because government doesn't have arms with which to embrace children. The government doesn't have a heart with which to love children. The government doesn't even have eyes to see or ears to hear because government, of course, when reduced to its essence, when we really define it as what it is, is simply force. It is legally authorized violence.

Now, thank Heaven that God and the law have always assigned the primary care of their children to parents and not to government. Government is just the official actual or threatened use of force. We need government. It is also one of the many reasons we have to be careful with it just like other things that we rely on in so many ways—things like electricity, like moving water, like fire. They are all necessary to our day-to-day lives, and yet when left uncontrolled, they are dangerous and quickly become fatal when we don't exercise due caution.

This has, of course, been acknowledged for millennia. It has been written about widely for many, many centuries, even centuries before the founding of our Republic. And it has been acknowledged since the very earliest days of our Republic.

George Washington himself warned the people about this, warning that government is itself forced and is therefore dangerous and has to be carefully managed. That is why we have a Constitution. That is why we have all these rules about government.

If men were angels, we wouldn't need government. If we had access to angels to run our government, as James Madison described it in Federalist 51, then we wouldn't have to bother about government abusing its power, and we wouldn't need all these rules.

But we are not angels. Men and women are not angels. And we don't have access to angels to run our government, and so we have to have rules governing the use of government. And it is for our own safety.

Nowhere is this more important than with respect to our children. That is where we can really see laid bare the essential, core facts of what government is, which is the actual or threatened use of coercive force.

Now, I also thank heaven above that God didn't assign the anonymous masses on the internet to care for children. The pressure children receive through social media, through news publications, and common video sites lacks nuance and any specific understanding of a child's health condition or history or religious beliefs.

There are even reports in prominent magazines of children being advised to commit fraud or cross State lines to be vaccinated specifically against their parents' advice, circumventing parental authority.

There is a reason why the FDA requires the fine print and the sometimes very painfully exhaustive and descriptive side-effect warnings on pharmaceutical advertisements and why those ads always encourage viewers to consult their doctors. But in the brave new world of Big Brother healthcare, students aren't encouraged to consult their parents, let alone their doctors.

Unfortunately, in some places, like here in our Nation's Capital, government has completely lost the plot. In the District of Columbia school system, for example, minors can receive medical procedures without the school even informing the parents. In other places across the Nation, this slippery slope is already leading governments to consider life-changing, school-provided medical procedures without parental notice and without parental consent.

As a parent, this thought sends shivers down my spine. I know I am not alone in that respect—far from it. Most Americans, regardless of what part of the country they come from, regardless of creed, political affiliation, socioeconomic status, or any other single factor, if they are parents, they are going to feel the same way. They don't like the idea of someone else taking over the raising of their child. They don't like the idea of government taking over control of medical decisions on behalf of their child. You see, that is supplanting their role. That is moving them out of the way.

School-aged kids are also some of those least at risk of contracting, spreading, and suffering long-term or serious effects from COVID. The data has shown this all along. The vaccines, on the other hand, may pose a more serious risk to some young people than they do the general population. Various countries, including France and Germany, have ceased recommending some COVID vaccines to those under the age of 30 because of complications.

Again, I am not against the vaccines, but the thought of schools, social media, or, heaven forbid, government pressuring students into vaccination without parental consent is rightfully troubling. It is downright chilling, and it should not happen—not here, not in the United States of America.

While the Federal Government has almost no legitimate role in influencing local education decisions, we can make sure that the Federal Government does not endorse or, heaven forbid, mandate this dangerous approach to medical decisions for minors. That is not too much to ask. That is not something that should be controversial here in the U.S. Senate. That is not something that is remotely controversial among the good people of this country—left and right, rich and poor.

If they are parents, they are deeply disturbed by the thought of the cold, impersonal force that is government pushing them out of the way to make these medical decisions for them and for their children.

So let's provide assurance to parents and children. Let's reaffirm our commitment to supporting parents in making decisions for their children. Let's protect kids, and let's end these mandates.

They are illegal. They are unconstitutional, and they are morally indefensible.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 20 minutes and Senator MENENDEZ for up to 5 minutes before the scheduled rollcall votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. SULLIVAN pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 482 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

Mr. SULLIVAN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 2 minutes on the next three nominations.

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, fellow Senators, I rise today to urge an affirmative vote on all three of the next appointments that are up.

The first one is Nicholas Burns to be Ambassador to China; and next is Mr. Toloui, who is up for Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs; and also Mr. Hussain, who is up for Ambassador for International Religious Freedom. The Foreign Relations Committee has looked at all three of these very closely.

Let me spend just a moment with Mr. Burns. I have known Mr. Burns since his postings in Europe many, many years ago. If you are looking for a bipartisan person to put in the position, this is your guy. When I knew him, he was working for an administration, a Republican administration.

He has done an outstanding job, has an outstanding reputation amongst the cadre of Ambassadors, and I would urge that we confirm him and have him in place in China. This is a tough posting, as we all know, at the current time. We have got a lot of issues that exist between us and China, and certainly Ambassador Burns is the one to carry our water there.

The other two I can tell you that, without hesitation, both have been scrubbed by the committee and been asked the questions that are appropriate for both of these positions. We feel very comfortable in recommending them to the body.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know we are about to go to the vote. Frankly, with what my distinguished colleague just said, I don't know why these aren't all voice votes.

But I understand Senator MENENDEZ is on his way here and wishes to speak. Otherwise, I would move that it be a voice vote. But out of respect for him and his committee, I will 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. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, while we are waiting for the Senator who wishes to speak, I would note that I appreciate those who worked very hard, including my friends on the floor, on the National Defense Act. Yesterday, that passed with a pretty overwhelming majority, and I voted for it. But as I have noted, that does not provide money; that provides an authorization.

Right now, if we go on continuing resolutions, the Department of Defense will see a multibillion-dollar cut in what is available for them, as will nondefense matters.

So I would urge Senators to work with our leaders and get the appropriations bills done. They could all be done in an omnibus by the end of January, the 1st of February. I would urge Senators to do that. Otherwise, there is going to be a dramatic cut in defense and nondefense matters.

I yield to the senior Senator from New Jersey.

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the following nominations, en bloc, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of R. Nicholas Burns, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China; Ramin Toloui, of Iowa, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Economic and Business Affairs); and Rashad Hussain, of Virginia, to be Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from New Jersey.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to express my support for the nominations of Ambassador Nicholas Burns to be Ambassador to China, Mr. Ramin Toloui to be an Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, and Mr. Rashad Hussain to be Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

These are a superb group of highly qualified nominees, deserving of the positions for which they have been nominated, and I will speak briefly about them.

Ambassador Burns is an outstanding public servant, one of the Nation's best, and I am pleased to support his nomination as the next Ambassador to China. He has a long and distinguished record in public service, including as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs under the Bush administration and U.S. Ambassador to NATO.

If there is a place that we need an Ambassador, it is China. We have spent so much time, both in committee and on the floor, hearing about the challenges of China, but we don't have a U.S. Ambassador to help us meet those challenges.

It is no secret that the China of today is challenging the United States and destabilizing the international community in almost every dimension of power—political, diplomatic, economic, military, and even cultural. That is why Ambassador Burns' experiences and skill will be crucial as he confronts the monumental task ahead of him.

I am also pleased to be supporting Mr. Ramin Toloui's nomination to be the Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs at the State Department. His experience and skill set, including as a former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Finance, where he represented the United States in forums like the G7 and the G20, will be necessary in order to be an effective Assistant Secretary, especially one who will play such a critical role in our economic diplomacy vis-a-vis China and as we must reinvigorate the instruments of our economic diplomacy at home. I believe Mr. Toloui represents the importance of getting our economic statecraft right.

Lastly, I am also pleased to support Mr. Rashad Hussain to be our Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. Throughout his impressive public service, Mr. Hussain has demonstrated his strong commitment to protecting the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, including as the U.S. Special Envoy for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, where he led efforts to counter anti-Semitism and protect Christian minorities in Muslim-majority countries.

Religious freedom, like every human right, is universal, but for many people around the world, this right is out of reach, and religious persecution is on the rise. That is why it is important that we confirm Mr. Hussain.

While it is positive news that we are confirming these three nominees today and a few more, I hope, in the next day, I am deeply concerned that we have more than 50 nominees who will remain pending on the Senate floor, having passed the committee, almost all of them by strong bipartisan votes, who are subject to delays and obstacles.

We are less safe when our national security Agencies are so short-staffed. We owe it to the American people to fix this problem so that we can be represented abroad.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. We yield back also.

Mr. MENENDEZ. We yield back any other time we had.

VOTE ON BURNS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Shall the Senate advise and consent to the Burns nomination?

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. ERNST), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. FISCHER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. LUMMIS), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 75, nays 18, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 503 Ex.]

YEAS—75

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Baldwin | Grassley | Reed |
| Barrasso | Hassan | Risch |
| Bennet | Heinrich | Romney |
| Blumenthal | Hickenlooper | Rosen |
| Blunt | Hirono | Sanders |
| Booker | Kaine | Sasse |
| Brown | Kelly | Schatz |
| Burr | Kennedy | Schumer |
| Cantwell | King | Shaheen |
| Capito | Klobuchar | Shelby |
| Cardin | Leahy | Sinema |
| Carper | Luján | Smith |
| Casey | Manchin | Stabenow |
| Collins | Markey | Sullivan |
| Coons | McConnell | Tester |
| Cornyn | Menendez | Thune |
| Cortez Masto | Merkley | Tillis |
| Crapo | Moran | Toomey |
| Cruz | Murkowski | Van Hollen |
| Daines | Murphy | Warner |
| Duckworth | Murray | Warnock |
| Durbin | Ossoff | Warren |
| Feinstein | Padilla | Whitehouse |
| Gillibrand | Peters | Wyden |
| Graham | Portman | Young |

NAYS—18

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Blackburn | Hoeven | Paul |
| Boozman | Hyde-Smith | Rubio |
| Braun | Inhofe | Scott (FL) |
| Cotton | Lankford | Scott (SC) |
| Hagerty | Lee | Tuberville |
| Hawley | Marshall | Wicker |

NOT VOTING—7

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cassidy | Fischer | Rounds |
| Cramer | Johnson | |
| Ernst | Lummis | |

The nomination was confirmed.

(Mr. WHITEHOUSE assumed the Chair.)

VOTE ON TOLOUI NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Toloui nomination?

Mr. WARNER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST), the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).

The result was announced—yeas 76, nays 13, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 504 Ex.]

YEAS—76

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Baldwin | Cardin | Duckworth |
| Barrasso | Carper | Durbin |
| Bennet | Casey | Gillibrand |
| Blumenthal | Collins | Graham |
| Blunt | Coons | Grassley |
| Booker | Cornyn | Hassan |
| Brown | Cortez Masto | Heinrich |
| Burr | Crapo | Hickenlooper |
| Cantwell | Cruz | Hirono |
| Capito | Daines | Hoeven |
| Hyde-Smith | Murray | Stabenow |
| Inhofe | Ossoff | Sullivan |
| Kaine | Padilla | Tester |
| Kelly | Paul | Thune |
| Kennedy | Peters | Tillis |
| King | Portman | Toomey |
| Klobuchar | Reed | Van Hollen |
| Luján | Romney | Warner |
| Manchin | Rosen | Warnock |
| Markey | Rubio | Warren |
| McConnell | Sanders | Whitehouse |
| Menendez | Schatz | Wicker |
| Merkley | Schumer | Wyden |
| Moran | Shaheen | Young |
| Murkowski | Sinema | |
| Murphy | Smith | |

NAYS—13

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Blackburn | Hawley | Scott (FL) |
| Boozman | Lankford | Scott (SC) |
| Braun | Lee | Tuberville |
| Cotton | Marshall | |
| Hagerty | Sasse | |

NOT VOTING—11

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cassidy | Fischer | Risch |
| Cramer | Johnson | Rounds |
| Ernst | Leahy | Shelby |
| Feinstein | Lummis | |

The nomination was confirmed.

(Mr. KING assumed the Chair.)

VOTE ON HUSSAIN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hussain nomination?

Mr. WARNER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST), the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 505 Ex.]

YEAS—85

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Baldwin | Durbin | Menendez |
| Barrasso | Gillibrand | Merkley |
| Bennet | Graham | Moran |
| Blackburn | Grassley | Murkowski |
| Blumenthal | Hassan | Murphy |
| Blunt | Hawley | Murray |
| Booker | Heinrich | Ossoff |
| Boozman | Hickenlooper | Padilla |
| Brown | Hirono | Peters |
| Burr | Hoeven | Portman |
| Cantwell | Hyde-Smith | Reed |
| Capito | Inhofe | Romney |
| Cardin | Kaine | Rosen |
| Carper | Kelly | Rubio |
| Casey | Kennedy | Sanders |
| Collins | King | Sasse |
| Coons | Klobuchar | Schatz |
| Cornyn | Lankford | Schumer |
| Cortez Masto | Lee | Scott (FL) |
| Cotton | Luján | Scott (SC) |
| Crapo | Manchin | Shaheen |
| Cruz | Markey | Sinema |
| Daines | Marshall | Smith |
| Duckworth | McConnell | Stabenow |
| Sullivan | Van Hollen | Wicker |
| Tester | Warner | Wyden |
| Thune | Warnock | Young |
| Tillis | Warren | |
| Toomey | Whitehouse | |

NAYS—5

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Braun | Paul | Tuberville |
| Hagerty | Shelby | |

NOT VOTING—10

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cassidy | Fischer | Risch |
| Cramer | Johnson | Rounds |
| Ernst | Leahy | |
| Feinstein | Lummis | |

The nomination was confirmed.

(Ms. ROSEN assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

The Senator from Delaware.

## ACCELERATING ACCESS TO CRITICAL THERAPIES FOR ALS ACT

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3537, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3537) to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to support research on, and expanded access to, investigational drugs for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. COONS. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing none, the bill having been read a third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 3537) was passed.

Mr. COONS. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The Senator from Washington.

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor tonight because I want to remind our colleagues and the people of the United States of America that we did pass an infrastructure bill, and it was bipartisan.

But we are here tonight because the very people that it takes to implement that bill, the very people that work at the Department of Commerce, the very people who work at the Department of Transportation are being held up in not

being able to be fully confirmed by this body to do the work that it takes to implement that legislation.

I know this is incredibly important to people across the United States of America because we know how popular that bill was. My colleagues are with me tonight—two members of the Commerce Committee—who worked hard and contributed mightily to the Surface Transportation Act that passed out of the Commerce Committee in a robust bipartisan fashion to come here to the floor. It was added with other legislation from other committees.

So we are here tonight—myself, my colleague from Montana, who has a State as big as any State in the United States. It probably is the largest State. All I know is it takes me at least an hour to fly over it. So I guarantee you that is a lot of roads, that is a lot of bridges, that is a lot of railroad, that is a lot of infrastructure. If it is not fixed and it is not taken care of, then the Montana economy is hurt.

My colleague from Wisconsin is here, and she played a major role in the infrastructure bill as well. She made sure that we focused on at-grade crossings and the safety of our rail system. Why? Because we have to move products from the Midwest to reach Asian markets. If they can't get there because they are stuck in congestion, then, we aren't going to be competitive as a nation.

It is ridiculous that we are in this position tonight, ridiculous that there are dozens of nominees from the Department of Transportation and the Department of Commerce that the majority of our colleagues support, but they are being held up by one or two people who don't want to see them move through the process.

I am talking about nominees that are part of the Federal Railroad Administration—the Administrator. We are giving a bunch of money to the Federal Railroad Administration so they can put grants out, authorize this new program for at-grade crossings to improve the speed of moving our product, and people don't want the FRA, or the Federal Railroad Administration, to have an Administrator. I don't know what possibly could be wrong with that.

Someone doesn't want us to have the CFO for the Department of Transportation. The CFO—you don't want us to have a CFO? How political could the CFO of the Department of Transportation be? I guarantee you, not very political. The CFO is a person who is going to make sure that we spend the money correctly, administer the new programs as they get set up, and make sure the money goes out the door. It is hard to imagine a lot of money will go out the door of the Department of Transportation if we don't have a CFO.

There are other people here that are part of the transportation system on analysis. There are people I am pretty sure my colleague from Montana will talk about.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration—why? Again, because I guarantee you there are a lot of trucks in Montana. There is a lot of moving of product. You have to have trucking safety, and you have to have help in administering that. And if you have to have help administering that, then, you need to have an Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

These are basic positions. These are positions that are part of the infrastructure that we need for the Department of Transportation and, as I mentioned, the Department of Commerce. These are issues that are important to us.

Let me just say a few words about Commerce nominees. We have someone who is supposed to do the analysis of industry for the Department of Commerce. We have someone who is supposed to help us with trade and international matters.

I am pretty sure my colleague from Florida, who is objecting to some of these nominees, is going to say: It is about the supply chain.

These are the very people that we need for the supply chain. You need the analysis and the construct of the Department of Commerce to say: These are the problems that we have with the Department moving forward on various issues that we have with a major focus on our infrastructure.

The infrastructure bill provided $1.2 trillion in funding for transportation, for energy, for disparities that we have in our infrastructure and that has to get spent, and it has to get spent as soon as possible.

Markets in China and India are expected to be worth $26 trillion by 2030, but some people think: Well, we will just take that money we gave to move ahead on our infrastructure—something that has been dilapidated for a long time.

That is what people don't understand. Over several administrations, our investment in transportation infrastructure fell to less than 1 percent of GDP, and we didn't correct it. The last administration didn't correct it, but this administration came in—a Democratic administration—and said we are going to correct that because economists will tell you that you are not keeping pace if your infrastructure investment is less than 1 percent. Now President Biden is going to get that number up over the next several years, and that is the kind of investment we need to make.

We don't need to slow down because there is a big world economy, and 95 percent of consumers live outside the United States. But, OK, let's just take our sweet time in implementing this bill and getting U.S. products to international markets, when 95 percent of consumers are outside the United States. Let's just take our sweet time because someone wants to object to these nominees—the CFO, the Administrator, these people who have been moved out of committee in a bipartisan fashion.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime, once-in-a-generation investment that we have to make. But they have to have people over there to make the investment and they have to have people to be fully staffed. And we have to make sure that these important steps that the President is taking on supply chain are met. That is why these issues of working on various logistics of operations, of pricing, of transparency, and overseeing shippers and making sure that some of our largest shippers are committed to moving cargo during off-peak hours are important.

My colleagues on both sides of the aisle know how important agricultural products being delivered to market on time is. And we need to make sure that our farmers, our people who have U.S.-manufactured products, like in the State of Wisconsin, are getting a fair deal on their shipping.

And that is why we also have to have the nominee for the Federal Maritime Commission and get somebody on the Commission who is going to hold people accountable to make sure that our products get somewhere safely and securely and in a timely fashion.

So these issues that we are facing on the supply chain are complex. They are not going to be fixed overnight, but they have to have people in the jobs. They have to have people who are going to answer the questions, work together, and to get this done.

So I would ask my colleagues, who I know are going to join me in making several nominations, I ask unanimous consent to consider the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 315, Karen Jean Hedlund, of Colorado, to be a Member of the Surface Transportation Board for a term expiring December 31, 2025; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the Record; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hedlund nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 550, Max Veckich to be the Federal Maritime Commissioner for a term expiring June 30, 2026.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object, as my colleague is aware, I have an outstanding request with the Commerce Committee, which

my colleague chairs, for us to hear testimony from Commerce Secretary Raimondo and Transportation Secretary Buttigieg or their Senate-confirmed leadership about the supply chain crisis.

I have been clear that until we hear from these Agency leaders, either in the Commerce Committee or in an open meeting, that I would be holding all Department of Transportation and Department of Commerce nominees from moving forward in an expedited manner.

We have had crisis after crisis due to the failed leadership of President Biden and his appointees. Just look at the inflation crisis caused by the Democrats' reckless spending that is hurting families and putting too many Americans in the position of deciding whether to fill their gas tank, heat their house this winter, or put food on the table.

Just this week, I spoke with a veteran in Land O' Lakes, FL. He is a small business owner, and he has seen prices on raw materials rise by 50 percent just this year. Even though he has seen greater demand, he is not making more money because of the rising prices.

If he tries to pass those costs on to his customers, he will lose business. On top of that, rising gas prices are making it difficult to afford taking his kids to basketball and karate practices.

I have also talked to an operator of a food bank in Osceola, FL. She used to see 15 families each day, and now she is seeing upward of 70 families each day.

Food prices have gone through the roof, making it more expensive for her to get food to give to people who are hurting at the very time demand is up. I talked to a mom in Punta Gorda, FL. Her gas costs have more than doubled, and her monthly grocery budget doesn't go as far as it used to.

Recently, she has started visiting her local food pantry once a month so she has enough to feed her kids. That is something she has never had to do before. These are real Floridians who are hurting. Thank goodness for organizations like food pantries and everyone else who is helping families who are struggling because the Biden administration has spent months doing nothing to solve this crisis.

In fact, they are actively hurting them as inflation rises to record highs and is threatening to rise even more as Biden pushes his reckless tax-and-spend agenda.

I cannot and I will not consent to allowing these nominees to move forward in an expedited manner. We should take a vote so every Senator can get on the record with their support or opposition to these nominees.

Therefore, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I think my colleague knows darn well the President of the United States has been doing something about this. That is why he used his leadership to make sure that we made major infrastructure investment so we could move products. That is why he has gotten the ports to work 24 hours to move product more expeditiously.

That is why he has been focused on all of the infrastructure needs in moving our country forward and continuing to deal with chokepoints, whether they are on the highways, our ports, or our rail system.

My colleague knows, too, that the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Commerce—whom I am sure he has talked to—are working very diligently on this. I am sure they are willing to talk to him.

There is no secret here. There is the administration and a bipartisan group of people who are working together to try to solve these issues, but there are those on the other side of the aisle, probably those who didn't support the infrastructure investment, who also don't support having people spend the money and make the investments.

I am going to yield to my colleagues who are also here to try to move some of these important nominees to make this investment work in the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Shortly, I will request unanimous consent to confirm the nomination of Mr. Chris Coes to be Assistant Secretary for Policy at the Department of Transportation.

As we have discussed, we face supply chain challenges created by several compounding factors, increased demand for goods, a growing reliance on e-commerce, as well as production and labor market disruptions caused by the COVID–19 pandemic.

Additionally, we have underinvested in our freight infrastructure for decades. The bipartisan infrastructure law reverses that trend. It provides a historic $567 billion for the Department of Transportation. This includes $37 billion for freight infrastructure investments.

The Department of Transportation will be responsible for implementing and managing these funds, including INFRA and the Port Infrastructure Development Program. The Department needs leaders like Mr. Coes to coordinate implementation of these programs and get the funding Congress has approved out to the States and local governments.

Mr. Coes is very qualified to serve as Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy for the Department of Transportation, having served as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy.

He received strong and bipartisan support in the Commerce Committee. In fact, there are several nominees, including Mr. Coes, who have been passed out of the Commerce Committee with bipartisan support for key posts at the Department of Transportation, the Department of Commerce, the Surface Transportation Board, and the Federal Maritime Commission who all play integral roles in addressing the ongoing supply chain issues.

And yet some of our Republican colleagues are refusing to provide these Agencies with the leadership resources necessary to help address the supply chain crisis.

The issues facing our supply chain are complex and have been years in the making. They will not be fixed overnight, and that is why it is important to have confirmed, sustained leadership at the Agencies responsible for helping to address these multifaceted issues over the next several years.

So I ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 549, Christopher A. Coes to be Assistant Secretary of Transportation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I still can't understand, if the Biden administration is doing so many things, why wouldn't they want to come brag about it? Why wouldn't they want to tell all Americans exactly what they are doing?

The reason they don't want to do it is it is not getting better. I am still hearing day in and day out from people all over my State who are hurting because the Biden administration is not doing anything to solve the supply chain crisis.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of Meera Joshi to be the head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Now, there may be some folks out there who are not familiar with this Agency, but I can tell you Montanans are. I can tell you commercial truckers are because this is an Agency that is critical to tackling our supply chain issues and lowering costs for American families. Let me repeat that again because this issue has been brought up before.

This Agency, of which Ms. Joshi is to be the head of, is critical to attacking our supply chain issues and lowering the costs for American families.

In my real life, I am a farmer. I use a Peterbilt truck to get my product to market, my food to market, so I know more about this than the average person who serves in the Senate.

And I know what a huge role that trucking plays in our supply chain and our economy. And I am going to tell you, the American trucker is one of the hardest working people in this country. I know that because I tried to do it for a while. It is hard work.

They have been on the frontlines of this pandemic delivering goods to every corner of this country. And a strong and a stable, safe trucking workforce that offers good-paying jobs

to millions of truckdrivers is a critical lifeblood of our economy.

Our quality of life in this country is simply not possible without the hard work that truckdrivers put in day and night. They deserve more credit than they get.

And there are a lot of challenges out there: our outdated infrastructure, the COVID–19 pandemic, a historic—a historic—volume of goods moving through our economy that have strained capacity across our supply chain, including trucking.

The Agency is critical in ensuring that goods moving by truck do it safely and efficiently.

Now, as the chairman of the Commerce Committee has already pointed out, the President last month signed the bipartisan infrastructure package into law. It included $568 billion in transportation funding that will improve freight bottlenecks, ease chokepoints across ports, rails, and highways.

The middle-class markets in China and India are expected to be worth a combined $26 trillion by 2030. Now, if we want to grow this U.S. economy, maintain our position as an economic world leader, we must be able to grow our reach to those huge market opportunities.

The bipartisan infrastructure package also included parts of my HAULS Act. The HAULS Act will cut burdensome hour-of-service requirements so that Montana's egg and livestock haulers can do their jobs and do their jobs safely, but we need a head of the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration to be able to say that earnestly.

If we are going to effectively implement these new guidelines that will boost our economy in rural America and across this country, we need to confirm Ms. Joshi as soon as possible, which is why I am here tonight.

Ms. Joshi is a qualified nominee to lead this Agency. She passed through the Senate Commerce Committee with overwhelming bipartisan support. She is backed by the trucking industry.

It is unfortunate that a few of my colleagues—a minority of the minority—are blocking this confirmation at a time when we need transportation and commerce Agencies fully staffed and empowered to carry out their work, reducing costs for families, smoothing the supply chain, and growing our economy.

The Senate has had an opportunity to address supply chain issues and lower costs by confirming this nominee. I am going to say it again. The Senate has an opportunity tonight to address supply chain issues and lower costs by confirming this nominee.

There is absolutely no reason to keep this critical position vacant, and I urge my colleagues to support her confirmation tonight.

Mr. President, I would also ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 464, Meera Joshi, to be Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, you know, my father was an over-the-road truckdriver. He drove for Admiral Freight Line. My uncle was an over-the-road truckdriver. He drove for a consolidated freight line.

I watched the difficulties my father and my uncle had performing their jobs, and it was at a time when truckers weren't paid well, and, actually, most truckers were laid off by Thanksgiving because most of the goods were there for the Christmas season.

In my father's case, I don't remember a Christmas that my dad was actively working. So I think it is very, very important that we do everything we can to help truckers, and I am glad that truckers today are paid better than they were back when my father and my uncle drove.

My uncle actually died in a trucking accident. So I think it is very important that we do everything we can to support our truckers. And what I still can't understand is why the Commerce Committee does not want to hear exactly what the Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary of Commerce is doing to help our truckers. What are they doing to improve the supply chain?

You would think they would want to come down here to say exactly what they have done to make the life of truckers better so that we get more people in trucking rather than less.

So I think we should—I cannot allow these nominees to go forward in an expedited manner. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. So if you truly want to help the trucking industry, and it sounds like you have personal experience with it—the good Senator from Florida—putting the head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration would be a great start. If you want to reduce the problems with our supply chain, putting a head into the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration would be a great start. If you want to make our roads safer for everybody—truckers, cars, everybody—I would say putting in the head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration would be a good start.

I am going to tell you that the objections of the good Senator from Florida ring hollow. I have heard the good Senator from Florida stand up in committee and stand up on this floor and talk about how the administration—this administration—has failed. Yet that very same person who claims that this administration has failed is standing up here and perpetuating the problems that we have because we can't get Agencies staffed up. This is ridiculous.

So you ask yourself: Why can't the Department of Transportation and Department of Commerce come before the committee?

Look, we are all U.S. Senators here. Pick up the phone. Give him a call.

With this kind of attitude—you talked about the fact that food was going up. Why aren't we demanding the Secretary of Agriculture show up?

You said there are small business problems. Why aren't we demanding the Small Business Administration show up?

This could go on forever.

If you really want to fix a problem, let's look for solutions. And the solutions we have here tonight—this one—is to confirm Ms. Meera Joshi to the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration.

We can make excuses all the time about why we are going to do this, why we are going to do that. Pick up the phone. Give them a call. Ask them to meet with you.

That is all it would take. You don't need to shut down the whole administration, shut down the Motor Carriers by not putting the head in.

This is ridiculous.

Mr. President, I now want to speak of my support for the nomination of Amitabha Bose to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration.

Consisting of almost 140,000 miles of railroad track, the U.S. freight rail network is the largest in the world and carries 1.4 billion tons of freight every year worth $430 billion to our economy.

Some estimate that the global demand for freight will triple by 2050, which is why we need to improve the capacity for our system to meet the supply chain needs of today and prepare for the future.

Last month, as the chair of the Commerce Committee has already pointed out, the President signed my bipartisan infrastructure package into law that included $567 billion in transportation funding that will improve freight bottlenecks, ease chokepoints across our ports, railways, and highways. It will lower costs for families. It will grow our economy.

Gosh, does this sound familiar? It is awful lot like the last nominee.

And this legislation also includes the Right Track Act, which I support and which I sponsored. My bill addresses blocked rail crossings—by the way, a bipartisan bill—which improves rail safety at rural train crossings and addresses instances of blocked highway railroad crossings across the United States that put our families in danger and slow down our economy.

I point that out because all too often we have accidents involving a train and a car. Get this person confirmed, and we can hold people accountable.

The infrastructure package also included $15 million to study Amtrak's long-distance passenger rail travel service, including authorization to form working groups, like the Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Working Group, to study and advocate for increased access to long-distance passenger rail travel.

These freight rail programs are administered by the FRA, and grants must get out the door as quickly as possible if we are going to get the bang for the dollar, if the taxpayer is going to get the bang for the dollar.

Holding up Amit Bose's nomination risks delaying these critical resources from reaching local communities.

Now, that might make some people in here happy. There was a bunch of folks—it passed by 69 votes, but there were 30-some folks that voted against it. So maybe they don't want this. Maybe they don't want infrastructure. Maybe they want to turn the keys of the economy over to China. Maybe that is what they want.

But the fact is that these critical resources will end up enriching our communities, improving our freight rail service, and growing our economy.

Additionally, the FRA is working closely with railroads to provide regulatory expertise and assistance to ensure that significant operational changes—including setting up new rail yards that can help move goods across our country, solving the supply chain problem—is done both quickly and safely.

Mr. Bose is a very qualified nominee to lead the FRA, having previously worked in multiple roles at FRA, including Deputy Administrator, Chief Counsel, Senior Adviser, and Director of Governmental Affairs.

He, too, received a strong bipartisan support in committee and, in fact, advanced by a voice vote.

Once again, it is unfortunate—and maybe it won't happen on this one—that some of my colleagues are blocking nominees from confirmation at a time when we can't afford to leave our Agencies understaffed, and they are blocking it because of supply chain issues and because of the high costs for small business. And with the blockage of these nominees, what is ending up happening is that the supply chain issues will get worse, which, maybe, that is what they want.

But that is not why I am here. I am here to get things done, to move this country forward. I know what China is doing right now, and it is why we had 69 people vote for the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

But if we leave the Agencies understaffed, then maybe that is going to help somebody. I don't know who it is going to help. But there is no reason to keep this critical position vacant, and I would urge my colleagues to support his confirmation.

Therefore, I would ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 465, Amitabha Bose to be Director of the Federal Railroad Administration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, you know, my colleagues keep talking about the infrastructure bill. The difference between their infrastructure bill and what we did while I was Governor of Florida is this: I actually spent our infrastructure money on roads, bridges, airports, and seaports, and, at the same time, we spent $85 billion in 8 years in one State doing that. We also cut taxes and fees 100 times, and we actually reduced our debt by a third, over $10 billion.

The infrastructure bill—the so-called infrastructure bill—had less than 50 percent of it in infrastructure. People said it was paid for, and it wasn't.

So I am glad people want to keep saying that it is a so-called infrastructure bill, but let's remember: It wasn't paid for; they said it was. And it wasn't all for roads, bridges, airports, and seaports, which is what they said it was in the beginning.

So, therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, facts are a nasty thing. Do you know that?

I would ask the good Senator from Florida to read the damn bill. This bill is to put money into roads and bridges, to put money into our electrical grid, to put money into our ports, to make our ports safer, to put money into water systems—the list goes on and on and on.

For you to say that 50 percent of this bill is all that goes into infrastructure is not factual at all, and I will debate you on that until midnight tonight and longer—until Christmas Eve, because it is not factual.

But I will tell you what is factual: The fact is that you, the good Senator from Florida, have stopped Amit Bose from being Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, thereby stopping any sort of improvements in the supply chain that we have, thereby stopping any sort of lowering of costs for small businesses and working families in this country. That is a fact.

And if you would like to respond to that, I would be more than happy to yield.

That is a fact. The truth is the same people who stand up here and say this administration has got problems are creating those problems, because a minority of the minority are stopping good people from being in positions in this administration. That is a fact.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, first of all, facts are facts. Less than 50 percent of the bill had anything to do with roads and bridges, airports and seaports.

We were told all along it was going to be paid for; it wasn't. The Congressional Budget Office confirmed that.

So facts are facts.

On top of that, the majority leader could have, if these were important nominees, as my colleagues keep saying they are, they could have filed cloture and done these nominees.

I mean, think of what we have done this last 2 weeks that we have been up here. Very few nominees have come through.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Very crafty—fifty percent is used on roads, bridges, and seaports, and you make it sound like the rest isn't used on infrastructure.

Since when did water not become infrastructure? Since when did improving our transmission lines not become infrastructure?

The fact of the matter is this bill is a really good bill, and that is why 69 people in this Senate voted for it, and it did not raise taxes on a single American family.

You can make excuses all you want, but the facts are this: That infrastructure bill will help set us up for a vibrant economy for generations to come, and the most important thing that infrastructure bill will do is it will help us compete with China, unless you want to give the reserve currency to them.

And the fact of the matter is, unless the Agencies are staffed up, we can't implement that infrastructure bill. And if that is the impetus for this, shame on the folks who have objected to this, because the last time I checked, we are U.S. Senators, and we are not here for ourselves. We are here for this Nation, to make this Nation great, to keep this Nation great, to move this Nation forward.

Our forefathers worked to do that. They didn't have these kinds of silly arguments on the Senate floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, so I think my colleague doesn't understand that when you borrow money, you eventually have to pay it back.

The government doesn't produce income. It takes money from people. That means that when that bill—the so-called infrastructure bill—runs deficits, somebody's taxes are going up. Whether they go up today or tomorrow, they are going to go up.

And, by the way, it is part of why the Democrats had to raise the debt ceiling by $2.5 trillion, and that is $2.5 trillion that Americans families are going to have to pay for.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. So are you suggesting we shouldn't raise the debt and not pay our debts and default? Is that the suggestion?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I would do what I did in Florida. I walked into a $4 billion budget deficit. I balanced the budget. I cuts taxes and fees 100 times. I paid off a third of the State debt. I never increased my State debt. I actually cut it by $10.5 billion. That is exactly what we ought to be doing here. We can't keep wasting money because somebody is going to pay for it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Did the good Senator vote for the CARES Act?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Say again?

Mr. TESTER. Did the good Senator from Florida vote for the CARES Act?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Absolutely.

Mr. TESTER. Was it paid for?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Part of it. Last year, what we did was suspend the debt ceiling.

Mr. TESTER. Yes, it wasn't paid for. It added to the debt. Had the good Senator been here when we passed the Trump tax cuts, that also added $2 trillion a year to the debt, and he would have justified that.

If you want to talk about building our economy, there are two things you could do to build our economy: No. 1 is to invest in infrastructure, and the other one is to invest in education and workforce training.

If we are going to get the infrastructure part of this stuff out the door, we cannot have a minority of the minority on the other side continuing to object to people in the very Agencies that will help get this infrastructure built up. That is the truth.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, my experience is totally different than my colleague from Montana's experience.

My experience is you build your economy by growing jobs. You build your economy by investing in education, where you get a return. So, in my 8 years as Governor of Florida, we added 1.7 million jobs. We cut taxes and revenues grew. It allowed us to make record investments in education, in transportation, and in the environment. By the time I left office in Florida, we had the second lowest tuition of higher education in the country. According to the U.S. News & World Report, we were No. 1 in education, but we did it by getting a return on all of the dollars. We didn't do it by just spending money without getting a return.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I heard the Senator from Florida just say that he invested in education, workforce training, and infrastructure. If he would have not had an administration that would have been able to have gotten that money out the door, then he wouldn't have been able to have succeeded. All we are asking is that we offer the President of the United States and this Nation, as a whole, that same opportunity.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, my colleague from Montana is making some great points in this debate.

I can't emphasize this enough to my colleague from Florida, a member of our committee. He knows how hard we have all worked on these. He knows how bipartisan this effort was. He knows that he is not joined by a bunch of other colleagues here tonight, you know, in making these objections. It is because they want these nominees. They voted for them.

To come from a State like mine, where one in four jobs is related to trade, it is all about infrastructure. It is about our ports, our airports, our railroads, our roads. It is about getting the products from Montana out to the Pacific and to those destinations. It is all about making this infrastructure investment, and we finally have a President who is willing to put everything on the line to get us back to making an infrastructure investment that is more than 1 percent of GDP and who is smart enough to know that those ports and everything else are not going to function well and that we are not going to be competitive with Canada or with South America or with other places if we don't make this investment.

Well, now we have made it. We have made the investment. Now, we just need the people to execute on it, and our colleague doesn't want those individuals to be part of this process. He is not ready for them.

Everybody gets frustrated with the position of an administration. Everybody wants to hear from a nominee. I have called nominees. You would think that some of those people might call me, but, no, I have had to pick up the phone and call them and say: Here is what my concern is. Where are you going to be on this issue? What are you going to do about this problem?

Did I have everything guaranteed? Did I have every policy that I wanted to see for that nominee? No, but I picked up the phone and got the commitment that I needed to see things through and get things moving.

So, now, the fact that we have these nominees who continue to be held, as my colleague said, by a minority of the minority because they don't want to see the infrastructure investments that we have already voted on put in place is just really holding up government. It is just holding it up.

I think the President deserves to have his nominees. We deserve to get to vote on them. We deserve to give the President of the United States our opinion, but we also deserve to have these nominees voted on and not held in this process so that the government—so the actual functioning of the infrastructure bill—can't be implemented even though the majority of the Senate voted that way.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request of Executive Calendar No. 468, Mohsin Raza Syed, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

Let's remember why I am here.

For weeks, I have been asking the chair of the Commerce Committee to invite the Secretaries of Transportation and Commerce to come tell us what they are doing to fix this supply chain crisis. We still have 100 cargo ships off the coast of California. Is it getting better? No, it is not getting better. I was on a call this week, and I did not hear one thing that has been done to solve this supply chain crisis.

When I was the Governor of Florida, we had hurricanes. We had to work hard to make sure we didn't run out of fuel. To make that happen, what we would do is we would put everybody together. I often went to the ports to make sure that we got the fuel through, and we did. We got it done.

I have not seen the Secretary of Transportation go out to the Port of Palm Beach to solve any problems at all. I have not heard of anything the Secretary of Commerce has done to go out to California and solve this supply chain crisis. On these nominees, cloture could have been filed by the majority leader. For whatever reason, the majority leader decided not to do it.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, my colleague knows very well that, just yesterday, the Deputy Secretaries of Commerce, Transportation, and Agriculture met with—and it may have been on a Zoom call or on the phone—Senators to talk about exactly what is going on to help work on the supply chain. The Senator knows very well. Now, he may not have liked exactly what he heard in the outcome, but there are no harder working people than the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Transportation in implementing the things that need to be implemented to keep our country moving.

The problem, I think, is that the Senator from Florida may not understand that there is a huge upside. We just had a hearing yesterday with all of the airlines, and we acted on the Payroll Support Program. The end result of that has been a big boon to our economy because they were there and in place to capture the upside when the vaccines worked and the flying public returned. So we, the United States of America, have outdone Europe and Asia and Canada. Basically, the upside is having our air transportation system now back up to 90 percent of capacity. We did that because we acted. We made an investment, and the investment is paying off, and it kept a workforce that otherwise would have been on unemployment benefits.

So this administration is working. This administration is working, and it needs people to help them implement the bill we just passed. The administration has been working with major ports to have night and weekend cargo operations. It has been working with companies to improve the transparency of

logistics and pricing. It has been working with shippers to get the cargo and containers in and out of the ports faster.

He is urging some of the largest shippers—Walmart, Target, Home Depot, Samsung, FedEx, and UPS—to commit to moving cargo during off-peak hours and making those commitments.

Two major railroads—Union Pacific and BNSF—have announced that they will create new incentives for cargo owners to move cargo on the weekends.

CMA CGM—one of the largest carriers—has begun providing $100 discounts on the containers if they are picked up immediately, which is helping move them off the docks. One of the problems is that empty containers have been left on the docks, and this has caused congestion at the ports. So the administration has worked with these carriers to help incent people who have been part of the shipping system to get that product off of the docks. We have begun to see positive results from this.

This month, the CEOs of the major retailers told President Biden that the supply chain conditions have begun to show signs of improvement. This is from the major retailers.

As to the issues that we are focusing on here, we are talking to two people who are out fixing the problem. The Senator had a chance to talk to their Deputies about this. These are people who are definitely available to be talked to about this problem. Yet they are asking us to continue to have a workforce.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 469, Victoria Marie Baecher Wassmer, of the District of Columbia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Transportation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

First, I want to thank my colleague from Washington for holding the hearing with the airlines, and there are two things about that.

I was surprised that I didn't get a very good answer from the airlines about, did we get a return on the—what?—$54 billion we provided the airline industry? I was extremely disappointed that United Airlines was cavalier with the employees in my State who were basically let go or laid off without pay only because they decided not to get the vaccine for religious purposes.

In coming back to this issue, I still am waiting for the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Commerce to come to a public event so all of our constituents in my State can hear exactly what they are doing to solve the supply chain problem. I can tell you that I was on this phone call, and this problem is not getting better. There are still 100 cargo ships off the coast of California. I want to hear exactly what they are doing and so do the citizens of my State.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, these nominees we are talking about are nominees who are literally just the people who are going to help get these things done within the Agencies. The Senator is basically denying people the ability to have analysis, to talk about competition, to talk about the effective strategies that we need to put in place.

The Commerce Committee has had three hearings on the supply chain. In fact, we had some fabulous testimony, starting in—I think it was—February or March, about the supply chain. It was a fabulous panel of experts, and it was about the complexity of what was happening to the supply chain and what our problems were going to be.

The one thing that is clear is that this isn't an issue for just COVID; that this isn't an issue for just this administration; and that this isn't an issue even for the next, you know, few years. This is an issue about the fact that, in the world economy in 2019, prior to the pandemic, something miraculous happened: The majority of the population of the world reached middle class. That meant the majority of people outside the United States was going to be a huge market opportunity for our goods and our products. It is a huge economic opportunity that 95 percent of consumers are outside the United States. That means we have to get things to those markets cost-effectively and competitively.

For us in Seattle, the Port of Seattle has to compete with the Port of Vancouver. The Port of Vancouver and the infrastructure of—Canada has made all sorts of infrastructure investment all across Canada with rail and port investment so that they can have the state of the art and so that it can be cheaper to ship through Canada than the United States. The same thing is happening in South America and other parts of the world. This is about who is going to reach the Asian market and how fast they are going to reach the Asian market.

The infrastructure investment was critical. It was critical to making sure that our railroads worked, that our ports worked, that our motor carriers had the right people and had the right safety. This was, literally, upgrading our infrastructure that had been ignored—basically kept on life support—for so long, and now, we have a President and a bipartisan group of people who are going to make the investment. So the fact that those Agencies now need people—even the next nominee we are talking about—it is just literally about making investments so that they can figure out the strategy and the strategy moving forward on these individuals.

I don't understand why so many of these nominees my colleague has to object to because these nominees are individuals who are part of our infrastructure investment and, in this case, are part of where we are with the Department of Commerce in understanding what is even happening in the supply chain and what we also want to do.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 355, Grant T. Harris, of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President reserving the right to object.

I want to be clear. I like infrastructure. I spent $85 billion on infrastructure. With $10 billion a year, we had a dramatic increase in infrastructure. It is part of the reason we added 1.7 million jobs. I also did a lot of work to try to make sure we increased trade in Florida. We have 15 seaports. I believe in all of this.

I also believe we have a supply chain crisis right now. It is not getting better. I am shocked that my colleague does not want to ask the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Commerce to explain to the American public why this is not getting better.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. We are here on whatever today is—December 16. We are here, you know, as Congress careens toward trying to get some work done before we break for the holiday season.

I am sure that my colleague knows very well where the administration is on getting its nominees. We are not even the only committee that is out here on a weekly basis complaining about the number of nominees who are not allowed to serve. Even though they come out of committee with bipartisan support, they are not being allowed to be taken up and acted upon.

We have had people out here from the Foreign Affairs Committee. We have had nominees. We have had various committees—the HELP Committee. So we are just here now talking about the Transportation Committee.

So, yes, we have a minority within the minority that doesn't want the administration to have the nominees it needs to get things done. In this case, it is infrastructure. The importance of that is that the majority of people voted for infrastructure. The majority of people have voted for these nominees, and these nominees deserve to get in their place so that individuals can do their work.

If the Senator from Florida doesn't want to support—didn't want to support the infrastructure bill, doesn't believe that it was done just like he

would do it, I would ask him to consider the fact that his colleagues, the majority of whom did support it, are now going to be delayed in getting those resources out the door.

Now, maybe that is what he wants. Maybe he is playing a game of the calendar. He is just hoping that those nominees won't ever get into these spots, that it will take forever for us to get these programs implemented. Our economy can't wait for that. Our economy and the investments that we all decided to make can't wait for this kind of gamesmanship. The small businesses that my colleague from Montana talked about can't wait for that gamesmanship.

I guarantee you those Secretaries will be in front of the Commerce Committee in the new year at some point in time. I guarantee it. That is what happens around here. I am pretty sure they will be asked these questions. I am sure they are asked these questions every single day. I am pretty sure they would take a call from my colleague tonight or tomorrow. I am pretty sure they would have the input from him that he would want to give in these situations.

But this is an issue about whether you are for the infrastructure investment and whether you are for making that a reality by having the people whom it takes to implement it. And if you don't have CFOs, if you don't have the Administrators of the Agencies, if you don't have the people who are targeted to do the investment, I am not sure how you can do it.

One of those nominees, Arun Venkataraman, currently serves as a counselor to the Secretary of Commerce on trade and international matters. He has more than 20 years of experience in working on these issues and is somebody who could benefit us in this analysis of the challenges that we are facing to get our products into these markets and get them into these markets quickly.

So I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 586, Arun Venkataraman to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object, the one thing that has not been addressed is, if this were so important, why didn't my colleagues go to the majority leader—same party—and ask him to file cloture on these nominees?

I still also have never been told why, when I have been asking for this for weeks, these two Secretaries won't show up and tell my citizens why they can't solve the supply chain problem. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I think we have had a good discussion of exactly what these individuals—the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Transportation—have been doing. They have been making their deputies available for conversations about supply chains. We have had supply chain hearings. We will continue to address this issue. I am pretty sure they will take his phone call.

I am pretty sure that the reason we are out here is because when the other side of the aisle holds up so many nominees, there are only so many cloture motions that you can file. But I guess we will be here this weekend, and we will find out exactly how many cloture motions and how long it will take to continue to get these nominees.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

ELECTIONS

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a grave threat that we face, a threat to the very idea of America.

By law, every 2 years, Americans cast their votes for Federal office on a Tuesday in early November. Like many Americans, I have always treasured that day. I have gone to my polling place, and I have cast my vote. When I have left, usually from a townhall or a school, I have done so with the confidence that the votes would be counted, a winner declared, and my town, my State, and my country would move forward, accepting the results not because of which candidates won but because of our confidence that the election system was run impartially by people who believe in our democracy and believe that democracy is about free, fair, and impartially administered elections.

This great democracy of ours depends on the existence of a free and fair casting and telling of the votes and the public's acceptance of that result. That is the prerequisite for a functioning democracy, and every other piece of our society, from our economy to our national security, depends on it.

Without free, fair, and impartially administered elections, the United States of America as we know it would not exist. Yet, right now, our beloved democracy is under attack.

In States around the country, partisan lawmakers are proposing to ignore properly cast votes, essentially trying to throw out the votes and silence the voices of those with whom they disagree. These partisans are more concerned about losing power than protecting the rights of citizens and preserving the foundation of our country.

Here in Washington, a set of arcane Senate rules are being used as an excuse not to act. This cannot stand. We must change the rules to allow a simple majority of this body, as our Founders intended, to pass laws that will protect the right to vote and protect American democracy.

In States across the country, partisan politicians are calling into question the sacred American right to free, fair, and impartially administered elections. These politicians are trying to reject the will of the people, trying to interfere with elections and, yes, overturn results. This is not an idle threat; it is happening right now.

As the Presiding Officer well knows, earlier this year in Georgia, a new law enabled the legislature to seize control of the State election board, allowing elected legislators to install a partisan majority beholden to that legislature, with the ability to suspend and replace local election officials.

In Arizona, legislators have proposed a bill that would enable the State legislature to override an election certification with a simple majority vote.

These efforts threaten the integrity of our election system. That, in turn, threatens our peace, stability, and certainty—the very rule of law that makes individual liberty, a vibrant economy, and, yes, the peaceful transfer of power possible.

There is no single aspect of American life that isn't related to free, fair, and impartially administered elections. We have public schools, safe neighborhoods, access to healthcare, support for small businesses, and access to the great outdoors all because ordinary Americans can make their voices heard and hold their government—a government of, by, and for the people—accountable.

In America, as imperfect as we are, everybody has the opportunity to succeed because everyone has the opportunity to vote. But that all changes when our election system is corrupted by politicians who are more interested in clinging to power than being responsive to the people whom they were elected to represent.

When those in power work to create a partisan electoral system where the focus is not on ensuring that every vote is counted but is instead on ensuring a predetermined outcome, those in power become less and less responsive to the will of the people. And as citizens become disenfranchised and angry, those in power increasingly rely on authoritarian methods to stay in power. That is the road that we risk going down if this systematic undermining of our elections and our democracy continues.

Authoritarian regimes like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea would like nothing more than to see our great American experiment fail, to see Members of this Congress stand by while our democracy withers on the vine. When Americans lose trust in our democracy, when the integrity of our elections is thrown into doubt, neither Republicans nor Democrats win; our enemies do.

But we in the Senate can stop this threat to our democracy by acting to

protect the fundamental right to vote. The Constitution gives Congress the power to oversee Federal elections. That means that Congress has the authority to protect democracy and the right to vote, and we have a constitutional and moral obligation to do so. That was part of the oath I swore, to ''support and defend the Constitution'' and ''bear true faith and allegiance to the same.''

Congress has a responsibility to act now to ensure that the right of every American to vote is never taken away. We must pass legislation to prevent partisan politicians from rejecting the will of the people and overturning election results. Because that effort here in Congress is being blocked by a minority, which is abusing its power, I believe the time has come to change the Senate rules to allow a straight up-or-down majority vote on this fundamental issue of democracy.

Our Founders understood that our democracy was a fragile thing that we would always have to fight to protect. Across every generation, Americans have signed up to serve not just to protect our physical security but to protect our freedom.

American soldiers, like my father, fought in World War II. They saved the world from Hitler, preserving freedom around the globe. My dad fought in the Battle of the Bulge. When I was growing up and we were having breakfast, Dad would sometimes look up at my brother, my sister, and me, and he would say, ''So what are you going to do for freedom today?'' Sounds like kind of a big question to ask a kid, but he was serious because every single American has a responsibility to help protect our democracy, including and perhaps especially U.S. Senators.

We must change the Senate rules to protect the right to vote because if we don't, we face a very different kind of election day than the one we have now. If the partisans who are attacking our democracy have their way, our Tuesday election day in early November will be different. We will wake up, cast our vote, drop our kids at school, and go to work. We will tune back in at the end of the day to see the election results, only to learn that the vote tally is being ignored, that our votes don't matter much. We will learn that our legislatures are going to throw out the results and pick their own winner. We will see an election day that is a charade just like in countries where democracy doesn't exist.

Our democracy is too important to allow a minority of this body to let it slip away. We must pass legislation to protect American democracy. Our country depends on it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the following nominations en bloc: 622, 629, 630, 595, 596, 607, 608, and all the nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Army, Foreign Service, and Space Force; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the en bloc nominations of Thomas Barrett, of Wisconsin, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg; Shannon Corless, of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of the Treasury; Kurt D. DelBene, of Washington, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Information and Technology); Lisa W. Wang, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce; Maria Louise Lago, of New York, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade; the following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601: To be Vice Admiral Rear Adm. Collin P. Green; the following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 154 and 601: To be Admiral Adm. Christopher W. Grady; PN1461 ARMY nomination of Todd E. Moszer, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of December 7, 2021; PN726 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (35) beginning Arthur W. Brown, and ending Peter C. Trenchard, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of June 22, 2021; PN728—1 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (153) beginning Rahel Aboye, and ending Kyra Turner Zogbekor, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of June 22, 2021; PN1317 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (228) beginning Adam Jeffrey Abramson, and ending Jessica Torres Yurcheshen, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; PN1318 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (6) beginning Mario D. Ambrosino, and ending Cristobal Zepeda, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; PN1320 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (53) beginning Nicholas R. Abbate, and ending Maria E. Snarski, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; and PN1463 SPACE FORCE nominations (8) beginning MARC D. DANIELS, and ending JAY M. STEINGOLD, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of December 7, 2021?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

## VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for the information of the Senate, while I was necessarily absent for the confirmation votes of Ramin Toloui and Rashad Hussain, I want the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to reflect my support for their confirmations. Had I been present, I would have voted in the affirmative.

Ramin Toloui is nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs. He is the professor of the Practice for International Finance at Stanford University, and the Tad and Diane Taube Policy Fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. His teaching and research focus on international economic policy, financial crises, and the economic impact of artificial intelligence. He began his career as a civil servant at the Department of the Treasury. His nomination was favorably reported by the Foreign Relations Committee, and he is superbly qualified to hold this position.

Rashad Hussain is nominated to be Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom. He is a senior counsel at the Department of Justice's National Security Division. He previously served as President Obama's Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation—OIC—as U.S. Special Envoy for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, and as Deputy Associate White House Counsel. In his role as OIC Envoy, Professor Hussain helped develop U.S policy and deepen and expand partnerships with Muslim-majority countries, civil society organizations, and the OIC, the world's second largest multilateral organization after the UN. As Special Envoy for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, Professor Hussain led an interagency body that worked with international partners to amplify credible narratives in countering terrorist propaganda. Having been reported favorably by the Foreign Relations Committee, I have no doubt of his qualifications for this position.

## CELEBRATING ITALIANS IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, those who know me, and even those who don't, are well aware of the pride I have in my Italian heritage. My maternal grandparents emigrated from the Friuli region of Italy, coming to South Ryegate, VT, to work in the granite quarries. Since the 1880s, many Italians have followed this same immigration pattern, settling across Vermont, where the beautiful hills and lakes remind them of their ancestral home. Today, Vermont boasts a strong community of Italian Americans, many of whom, including me, are members of the Vermont Italian Cultural Association, VICA. Led by President Lisa DeNatale, the association preserves and promotes Italian culture in Vermont, hosting language and travel groups, presentations, movies, cooking classes, luncheons, and bocce socials. Last year, Marcelle and I were delighted to join VICA and Trattoria Delia for a virtual wine-tasting. Joining with dear friends online helped us, like so many Vermonters, get through the earliest and harder months of the pandemic.

It is nearly impossible to travel across our State without seeing the influence of the Italian-American community. In Northfield, the streets outside of La Panciata smell of Carrara, Italy, where founder Glenn Loati learned the ancient art of baking Latin leavened breads. In Burlington, Trattoria Delia serves traditional Neapolitan pizzas baked in an imported Acunto oven. And of course in Barre, where so many Italians immigrated, the Societa di Mutuo Soccorso provides community support, and the Vermont Salumi and Alimentari Roscini Market keeps us fed with some of the best cured meats in the State.

Some Italian philosophies have also made their way to Vermont. The Slow Food movement, founded by Carlo Petrini in Turin, Italy, found a welcoming home in our State less than 10 years after its conception. The practices of growing and producing good, clean, and fair food certainly weren't new to Vermonters, but Slow Food Vermont has become an important part of our local food economy.

I am proud to be a member of VICA and so grateful for the rich culture that Italian Americans have fostered in Vermont. The Green Mountain appreciation for artisanal products created with craftsmanship and traditional methods will always remind me of my Italian ancestors. I look forward to being back in Vermont, breaking bread and sharing wine, with this incredible community.

''We the Italians'' recently interviewed VICA President Lisa DeNatale. Her comments so resonated with me. I recognize many of the businesses, friends and communities she references. Even when far from Vermont and at work in Washington, these kinds of interviews take me home.

I ask unanimous consent that the recent interview with Lisa DeNatale be printed in the RECORD.

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

[Dec. 7, 2021]

WE THE ITALIANS: INTERVIEW WITH LISA DENATALE (PRESIDENT OF THE VERMONT ITALIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION)

If since the beginning of the pandemic I personally have not yet had the opportunity to physically travel back to visit any of the many friends of We the Italians scattered across the United States, thanks to our interviews I often have the chance to take a virtual trip and get to know the various Italian communities both in the most famous areas of America and in the lesser known ones here in Italy.

Vermont may be not that famous in Italy, but Italian emigration to the Green Mountain State was very important and I am pleased to thank and host Lisa DeNatale, President of the Vermont Italian Cultural Association and also Ambassador of We the Italians in Vermont. I'm hosting her on We the Italians, but by telling me about the history and present of Italy in Vermont, it's a bit like she's also hosting me in Burlington and Barre. Are you ready? Come with me

LISA, PLEASE TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOU AND YOUR ITALIAN HERITAGE

My grandparents, Maria Tripi and Salvatore DiNatale emigrated from Pietraperzia, Sicilia in 1910. They married and settled in Boston, eventually buying a home, and raising their six children in Everett, Massachusetts.

Giuseppe Salvatore DiNatale, my father, was born in 1924. He was deeply proud of his Sicilian heritage and often sang songs and occasionally spoke to his children in Italian (not dialect). If the truth be told, he mostly spoke in the imperative! ''Vieni qui''; ''lasciala''; ''mangia''; ''andiamo subito'' are some of the phrases I recall.

I had a large extended family which gathered at my grandparent's home for Pasqua, Natale, Onomastici and almost any other occasion. I remember celebrating my father's Onomastico with zeppole in honor of San Giuseppe. Each celebration included more people than there were chairs, crowded around tables in my grandparent's home. As children we played bocce alongside the grape vines and pear trees in their yard and danced the tarantella.

From a young age I recall attending the Feast of Maria Santissima Della Cava, patroness of Pietraperzia, one of the many feasts celebrated in Boston's North End each summer. In 1967 my parents and grandparents traveled together to Sicily and Italy, reestablishing family connections and invigorating our ties to Sicily. Upon returning my father began a life-long focus on preparing authentic Italian foods such as risotto milanese, calamari, polenta, pesto and panettone, well before these gained popularity in the US.

In my twenties I began to visit Italy and have since traveled there dozens of times, including twice to Sicily. It may be surprising to hear that on my first trip to Sicily, I was struck by how many of my childhood friends surnames corresponded with places in Sicily such as Siracusa and Mondello, and how many more had relatives buried in the Cimitero di Pietraperzia. I understood then how much of my childhood was inextricably tied to Sicily.

I am currently pursuing my Italian citizenship and am awaiting my appointment at the Boston Consulate schedule for March 2022.

YOU ARE THE PRESIDENT OF THE VERMONT ITALIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT THE HISTORY AND THE ACTIVITIES OF THIS ASSOCIATION

The Vermont Italian Cultural Association was founded in 1983 by Italians and Italian Americans many of whom had relocated to Vermont in the late 70's. Dr. Ken Ciongoli, an Italian American born in Philadelphia and Dr. Mario Morselli, born in Bologna, were lecturing about Italy in Burlington, Vermont and attracted interest from the community and in particular from other Italians and Italian Americans in the area. Some of the early VICA members were new to Vermont and sought an Italian community in which to continue their family traditions and celebrate their Italian heritage. In time, a small group formed, drawn together by a mutual passion for preserving and sharing Italian culture. During the early years the group met in living rooms and later, in restaurants and community centers that could accommodate the growing numbers. Membership extended south to Barre and Rutland; communities steeped in Italian heritage. The growing community shared the bond of family and Italian traditions and preserved these for generations to follow.

VICA has for many years celebrated Epifania with a visit from La Befana and Carnevale which included a mask making activity. In addition, VICA has sponsored trips to Italy as well as opera excursions to Montreal, a short 90-minute drive from Burlington. Programs and activities have expanded over the years, ranging from lectures on art, travel and genealogy to film, cooking, dance, language groups and bocce tournaments. Monthly amici lunches bring together members for socializing, and Italian conversation groups have continued in classrooms, in coffee shops and on zoom.

More recently, VICA has turned to virtual events which have proven to be very popular. These include book readings hosted by Phoenix Books, a VICA partner, featuring Vermont authors Vincent Panella, Jay Parini and Charlie Nardozzi, along with travel author Carla Gambescia. A recent lecture on Slow Food with the Slow Food Vermont chapter attracted over 100 people and earlier this year VICA held two virtual presentations entitled In Pursuit of Italian Citizenship, attracting over 200 VICA and community members.

And because Vermont winters can be cold and snowy in December 2020, and almost bimonthly since then, we've co-hosted virtual wine-tastings with VICA partner Trattoria Delia, showcasing Italian wines from every region. In celebration of Women's History Month in March we featured wines produced by women in Italy. Participants were treated to personal video messages sent from three producers: Cinzia Sommariva, Elisa Sesti and Giulia Negri. Each event includes a selection of hand-curated antipasti prepared locally. These events have proven to be enormously popular, engaging our members and successfully recruiting others to VICA. Upcoming events include virtual cooking classes, opera lectures and a trip to Puglia in October 2022.

Promoting knowledge and appreciation of Italian culture in our community is at the heart of the Vermont Italian Cultural Association's mission. Each year VICA awards small grants and scholarships to support projects and endeavors consistent with VICA's mission. The VICA Scholarship and Grants Fund encourages those who are seeking to broaden their knowledge of Italy, including the Italian American experience, the Italian experience, its language, arts, music, history, and culture to apply. Most recently (prior to covid) two scholarships were awarded. One went to a University of Vermont student who participated in an archaeological

and agronomic research project at an ancient Roman villa in the commune of Mompeo in the Lazio region. The other recipient, also a UVM student, attended an archaeological field school in Badia Pozzeveri in Tuscany, where she participated in the excavation of the remains of a thirteenth century church. At the conclusion of each project, the scholarship recipients gave presentations to VICA members and the broader community.

In the last year VICA has become a big part of my life. On January 1st, 2021, my father passed away at the age of 96, and I wondered how I might hold onto the traditions and heritage he shared so proudly with his family. While I have only been a VICA member since 2015, and only recently was elected President, I am delighted for the opportunity to honor my father in my role. His absence has left me with a deeper commitment to VICA's mission, and that in truth, VICA is the key to keeping my own heritage alive.

WHAT'S THE STORY OF THE ITALIAN EMIGRATION TO VERMONT?

I am not a historian, so I have relied on resources and information found in news articles, historical societies, and other documents. I am grateful to those writers who have shared their knowledge and perspective so that we remember the contributions of Italian immigrants to Vermont's economy and culture. My response is based on articles from two sources and used with permission from Vincent Feeney, Vermont Historian and The (Barre-Montpelier) Times Argus.

Many people are surprised that Vermont had such a large Italian immigrant population, but one need look no further than the granite and marble quarries to understand the immigrant story. Vermont welcomed Italian immigrants beginning in the 1880's. The first Italian stone workers came from Carrara to work at the Vermont Marble Company in Rutland. They were skilled marble carvers who were drawn to America for economic reasons and specifically to Vermont because its hills and lakes reminded them of their ancestral home.

Italians came to Barre, from 1890 to 1910 as stonecutters to work in the granite quarries. By the turn of the century there were several thousand Italians in Barre. By 1910, about 14 percent of Barre's population was Italian, and Barre was the home of Vermont's largest Italian population. Most immigrants to Barre came from the granite area around Viggiù and Bisuschio in Lombardy as well as from the marble area around Carrara in Tuscany. Some of Barre's outstanding pre-World War II carvers and sculptors were Italian immigrants: Carlo Abate, Joseph Calcagni, John Comi, Elia Corti, William Corti, Enrico Mori, Samuel Novelli, Augusto Sanguinetti, and Geno Tosi.

Other Italian immigrants came from the north as businessmen or landowners. Others from southern Italy first worked for U.S. railroads and then migrated to Barre establishing a variety of businesses. Novelli & Corti was established by Samuel (''Sandro'') Novelli and Elia Corti in 1901 and also included John (''Crosta'') Comi and William (''Bigin'') Corti. Novelli & Corti became Barre's premier sculpture and carving studio of the early 1900s. There are many outstanding examples of the skill of Barre's carvers in monuments throughout Barre. And a walk through Hope cemetery, where many Italian immigrant stonecutters are buried, is a testament to their skills.

Later, due to a shortage of skilled granite workers a small number of master sculptors and carvers were lured from Italy through substantial wage increases to work in Barre. These artists led a renaissance of stone art in Barre and trained a whole new generation of Barre sculptors and carvers. Some of Barre's outstanding post-World War II carvers and sculptors include Angelo Ambrosini, Angelo Bardelli, Giuliano Cecchinelli, Alcide Fantoni, Flavio Furloni, Frank Gaylord, Ernesto Malnati, Orazio Marselli, Gino Sassi, and Lambruno Sarzanini.

Italian immigrants were also settling in Burlington's urban core in large numbers, as laborers working on the railroads and others in the lumber yards. Some became peddlers selling fruit and vegetables, later opening markets to serve the growing Italian population. For the Italians of this Burlington neighborhood—despite the hardships of the Great Depression—the pre-World War II years were something of a social/cultural ''Golden Age.'' Their businesses dotted the neighborhood. For groceries in general, but particularly for pasta, salami, and olives, neighbors shopped at Colaceci's, Izzo's and Merola's. For a night out people dined at Bernardini's Cafe, and beginning in 1941 and continuing for the next 70 years Bove's was the restaurant to treat family and friends to an inexpensive Italian dinner.

The neighborhood was also home to Italian institutions. In 1933 Italian men of Burlington joined with their fellow countrymen of Winooski to form the Twin City Italian Club (TWIC). Its professed purpose was to ''raise the standards'' of the Italian community and to prepare immigrants for citizenship, but it was also a place where old-country Italian men could socialize, talk about news from home, and perhaps make job connections. By 1936 the club was sufficiently prosperous that it bought a vacant lot and built a social hall. The hall was the center of Italian social life in Chittenden County for the next dozen years. Italian women socialized in an organization called Regina of Mount Carmel, a group that attended Mass together once a month. The Regina of Mount Carmel was Mary, who for centuries had a devoted following in the impoverished south of Italy from where so many Italians had emigrated.

YOU'VE ALREADY MENTIONED A FEW, BUT ARE THERE OTHER IMPORTANT ''ITALIAN'' PLACES IN VERMONT?

Barre is one of the most Italian places in Vermont, and is home to The Società di Mutuo Soccorso, founded by Italian immigrants in Barre in 1906 as a fraternal and community support group. Along with the Società, are several businesses including Vermont Salumi and (Alimentari Roscini) AR Market in downtown Barre. Peter Roscini Colman, born in Assisi to an Italian father and American mother is the founder and proprietor of both. Pete grew up on an organic farm in Vermont and spent summers in Umbria with his babbo's family. There, he used to ''warm up'' for lunch at his grandparents' house by eating prosciutto. He loved it so much he decided he wanted to learn to make it himself. His uncle Franco introduced him to Pepe, who introduced him to Francesco and David. Soon, he was apprenticing with these norcini, the famed butchers of Umbria, who taught him the methods, techniques, and centuries-old traditions of salumi-making.

There's also Campo di Vino an authentic grocery, chock full of Italian specialties made on the premises. Refrigerators are stocked with homemade pastas including ravioli, gnocchi, tagliatelle, and more; freshly stuffed luganiga and sausages as well as cannoli and pies.

Not far from Barre, located in Northfield is La Panciata, a family owned and operated wholesale bakery. Founder Glenn Loati learned the ancient art of making Latin leavened loaves of bread in Carrara, Italy where he traveled in 1992 to work in the bakery of a local market. Today the bakery is owned and operated by Glenn's son Justin. La Panciata produces and distributes a wide variety of breads including Pane Siciliano, Pane Altamura, Focaccia and an assortment of biscotti.

Perhaps one of the most important and representative Italian places is Hope Cemetery located in Barre. Strolling through the cemetery, it's impossible not to notice the gradual refinement of granite tombs over the course of the 20th century. The earliest gravestones are rough and weathered, as though the earth had coughed them from the ground. Many stonecutters died performing their craft, having succumbed to the ''American disease'' silicosis. Because the climate in Italy was milder, workers labored in sheds with open sides, naturally ventilating the area, allowing the fine dust to escape. One such stonecutter, Louis Brusa, died in 1937 at age 50 from silicosis. His monument is one of the most unusual (and disturbing) in Hope Cemetery. Brusa is shown exhausted and slumped backward with his wife Mary comforting him. His chest is merged into the granite base symbolic of his lungs filled with granite dust. Looking around, the names on the tombstones conjure far-away places: Columbo, Benvenuti, Peduzzi, Corti, and more. More than a few are engraved in Italian: Nata Novembre 1872, Mo11a Febbraio 1936. There are prominent mausoleums where generations of Italian families are buried side by side, close in death as in life.

Not so much a place but a philosophy is Slow Food, the movement founded by Carlo Petrini in Turin in 1989. Vermont led the US, establishing the first Slow Food chapter here in 1998. Good, clean, fair food is a practice that has long been at the root of Vermont agriculture, respect for the land, the animals, and workers. In 2000 Carlo Petrini visited Vermont, and in 2008 Vermont began sending a delegation to Terra Madre, the most important international Slow Food event.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE MOST REPRESENTATIVE ITALIANS WHO MARKED A SPOT IN THE HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN PRESENCE IN VERMONT?

I've already mentioned many of the sculptors who have made their mark in the cities, towns and public spaces in Vermont and elsewhere having created lasting monuments with their hands. One of the most notable Italian Americans is Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, whose maternal grandparents were Italian immigrants. Senator Leahy is the most senior member in the US Senate and Vermont's longest-serving Senator. He and his wife Marcelle are also VICA members.

IS THERE AN ITALIAN FESTIVAL IN VERMONT?

To my knowledge there has not been an Italian festival in Vermont, however we would like to plan one for the future. I'm certain there would be a great deal of interest from Vermonters, including many from the business community. One of Vermont's family owned and operated businesses, Torronecandy.com would be very popular. Since 1988, the Andriola family has attended a number of Italian festivals throughout the Northeast, offering delicious Italian sweets and treats from their traveling cart. Absent a festival in Vermont, we can still order delicious imported treats shipped to our homes, or we can invite Anne Marie Andriola, Torronecandy.com founder and VICA member to a meeting!

YOU ARE AN EXPERT IN MARKETING AND BRAND DEVELOPMENT. HOW WOULD YOU PROMOTE MADE IN ITALY IN VERMONT?

Soon after joining VICA's marketing committee, I created the tagline ''Discover Italy

in Vermont'' which I think lends itself very well to our mission. For many, there is joy in discovering the individuals, businesses, small producers, and artisans who are preserving the traditions and craftsmanship made famous by Italians both in Italy and here in Vermont. For example, there are many businesses valued for their commitment to sharing Italian culture as business owners, native-born Italians, Italian Americans and purveyors of Italian food, wine and Italian made products. And like Italy, Vermont has its own brand with its reputation built on local production, appreciation for quality and craftsmanship.

Vermont and Italy share similar values and I believe there is already a deep appreciation for Made in Italy. We are fortunate to have Italian farms like Agricola, a small diversified farm in Panton, VT run by Alessandra and Stefano. Both native Italians they are continuing the traditional methods for making authentic Italian salumi and have established Monti Verdi Salumi. More recently Trenchers Italian Farmhouse began producing and selling home-made pastas, sauces, bomboloni, focaccia and more at local farmers markets. Jenny and Giacomo Vascotto are also sharing traditional Italian techniques, practices and delicious food with a growing number of devoted followers. So you see, in some ways Made in Italy is also Made in Vermont.

## RECOGNIZING DAN & WHIT'S GENERAL STORE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in Vermont, the general store is the epicenter of a community. It is where people not only buy their groceries and newspapers, but also tools and hardware, mittens and hats, axes and chainsaws, gas for their cars, and too many other things to name. But just as important, general stores are where Vermonters meet their neighbors, and when the weather is good, pass the time and talk about their families, things going on in town, or the state of the world.

Marcelle and I have been to just about every general store in Vermont, and each one has its own history and character. One of them, Dan & Whit's, stands out. Located in Norwich about halfway up the eastern side of the State bordering on the Connecticut River, the store that became Dan & Whit's has been operating since 1891. It was originally called Merrill's Store, and the old Merrill's sign is still affixed to the front. The same neon clock, mounted high on the front of the store's façade, has told the time to the town since the 1950s. Made by the Electric Neon Clock Co. in Cleveland, it was recently restored and made energy efficient.

In 1955, Dan Fraser and Whit Hicks, who had both worked at the store for over 20 years, bought it from Mr. Merrill. Since then, Dan & Whit's has been open for business 365 days a year, including a half day on Christmas and a half day on Thanksgiving. Dan and Whit ran the store as partners, and Dan's wife Eliza, known to all as ''Bunnie'', did the bookkeeping in the raised office near the stationery and greeting cards until Whit retired and sold out in 1972.

Dan, who from what I am told hardly took a day off during all those years, retired in 1993, and turned the management of the store over to his sons George and Jack, and their sister Jane pitched in off and on. George's wife Susan took over Bunnie's job in the office, which hadn't changed in decades, except the typewriter was replaced by a computer. Ownership of the store is currently shared between George and his two sons Dan and Matt. Dan, after a 14-year career as a special education teacher, has taken over the day-to-day management.

Most townspeople have an account, so they can simply sign the register and pay the bill at the end of the month. At no charge for local calls, anyone can use the push-button phone with its long cord by the ice machine, and before cell phones, it was a vital link from the magical abundance of the store to the outside world: ''Do we need anything at Dan & Whit's?''

There is a reason why the sign in the store window says, ''If we don't have it, you don't need it,'' because when you walk in and keep walking, the store never seems to end. Dan & Whit's has got absolutely everything, at least everything a person could reasonably want or need. There is fresh fruit and vegetables, a selection of wines, kitchen utensils, bins of nails and boxes of screws, fishing tackle, ladders and rakes, paint, bags of horse feed, maple syrup and candy, toys, ice cream scooped on the premises in summertime, home-brewed beer, bright orange hunting caps, snow boots, plumbing and electrical supplies, shovels and wheelbarrows, wood stoves, birdseed, the local and national newspapers, a deli, gasoline pumps and an electric vehicle charging station, and lots more. The place is kept warm in the winter by a wood-fired furnace in the basement, requiring cords and cords of wood—delivered, split, and stacked behind the Frasers' homes, and there are solar panels on the roof. Dan & Whit's has long been a favored stop for hikers on the Appalachian Trail, which passes through the center of Norwich.

Over the years, Dan & Whit's has hired local high school students to run the cash registers, and there was a time not that long ago when the employees who stocked the shelves and helped you find what you were looking for were long-timers like Larry Smith, who worked there for over 50 years.

Recently, like so many other businesses in our State and around the country, it has been hard to find help. In fact, Dan & Whit's was facing the real possibility of closing, which would have been devastating for the people of Norwich, as well as countless others who come there to shop, as well as former residents of Norwich who stop at the store just to be sure that it is the same as it always was.

As many have remarked, Dan & Whit's is the heart of Norwich, and losing it would have changed everything. I can't imagine Norwich without Dan & Whit's, and I suspect just about everyone who knows the store feels the same way. Real estate listings for property sales in the town include the distance from Dan & Whit's. Hundreds of notices are along the wall by the entrance: dog lost, secondhand items for sale, yoga lessons, a free concert, snow plowing. It all happens at the general store.

Fortunately, but not surprisingly, when word got out that the store might close, the people of Norwich came to the rescue, and Dan & Whit's has not lost a day of business. I want to add my thanks to Dan and the volunteers who saved the heart of Norwich. They have reminded us of what is best about Vermont and, in doing so, have set an example for people everywhere.

I ask unanimous consent that a piece written on December 7 by Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, be printed in the RECORD.

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

THE HEART OF A COMMUNITY: A SMALL BUSINESS

(By Robert Reich)

I've got a special place near my heart for Dan & Whit's general store in Norwich, Vermont. It was there for me during my undergraduate years in college in nearby Hanover, New Hampshire—often on snowy evenings when I couldn't get supplies elsewhere. Years later, when my parents moved to Vermont for their retirement, Dan & Whit's was there for them, too.

Like many places around the country, Vermont has been struggling with finding enough workers to fill jobs. But unlike most urban centers, where the obvious answer is to pay workers more, rural towns can't always count on higher wages to elicit more job applicants because populations are thin and often declining. And unlike profitable national retail chains, mom-and-pop businesses can't just absorb higher labor costs. And they can't simply pass them on to customers in higher prices, because small-town customers might not have the ability to pay.

So when Dan & Whit's owner Dan Fraser recently put up a ''Help Wanted'' sign, the inhabitants of Norwich knew it was bad news. (I never met the younger Dan but I'm sure I met his grandfather, who passed the store on to his father, who passed it on to Dan.) After three generations, Dan would have to close the place down if he didn't get help. So what was he to do? I heard the rest of the story on the radio. It turned out that Dan didn't need to do anything. Word went out. Soon, Dan's customers began applying for the jobs. Rick Ferrell, a local doctor, took on a shift at the register. A retired finance director applied for the deli counter. A nurse, a teacher, a psychology professor, a therapist, a school principal—nearly two dozen customers have stepped up to stock shelves, do the inventory, and clean up the place, so that Dan & Whit's can remain open. (Virtually all of these new hires are donating their hourly wages to some of Dan's favorite charities.)

I've spent a lot of time over the years examining what happens to communities when important businesses close or abandon them—often because some bean counters back in headquarters hundreds or thousands of miles away decide it's not worth the cost of keeping the businesses going where they are. Economists often praise capitalism's wondrous ''efficiencies'' at moving assets to their ''highest and best uses.'' Well, there's

something to that. But what's left out of the equation are the social costs of these moves. They can be quite high.

When asked why the people of Norwich stepped in to help Dan & Whit's keep going, employee Dianne Miller said it was ''because Dan & Whit's is the heartbeat of this community.'' Others described it as the ''heart of the town.'' That's the best quick summary of the social benefits of a place like Dan & Whit's I've ever heard. Communities do have hearts. When businesses at those hearts disappear, more is lost than an economic asset. The community loses a place that allows it to be a community—a place where people meet up, congregate, exchange gossip and information, barter, learn about common problems, sometimes decide to take action.

I remember Dan & Whit's as such a place. I can't imagine Norwich without it. Luckily, it won't have to be. But this isn't just a ''feel good'' story about one country town coming together to save an iconic general store. It seems to me there's an important lesson here for all of us, wherever we live.

American capitalism is the harshest form of capitalism in all of the world's advanced economies. It takes almost no account of social costs and benefits. Businesses swoop in and swoop out wherever and however profits can be maximized and losses minimized.

But communities are different. They aren't nearly as footloose as financial capital. They're built on social capital, which often takes years to accumulate and can't be cashed in.

I think people owe something to businesses that are the hearts of our communities. Maybe we shouldn't allow big chains or Walmarts to drain our main streets of the commerce they need to survive. (Even if Walmart's items are cheaper, the social costs of losing the small businesses that undergird our community are often way higher.) Maybe we should donate some of our own time and labor to account for the importance of these core businesses. Maybe those of us who can afford to should buy shares in them, to give them an added financial cushion. At the very least, we owe them our patronage—rather than, say, the Waltons or Jeff Bezos.

What do you think?

## NOMINATION OF DILAWAR SYED

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today to reiterate my strong support for Dilawar Syed to serve as Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

For those who are unfamiliar with Mr. Syed, he is a highly qualified and widely-supported nominee for Deputy Administrator, who has the backing of numerous business groups and organizations. In many ways, he is the very picture of the American Dream, a businessowner, entrepreneur, and job creator who was born in Pakistan and educated in the United States. Mr. Syed also has firsthand experience dealing with challenges small businesses have faced during this pandemic.

As Deputy Administrator, he would largely be responsible for running the day-to-day operations at SBA. He has repeatedly made himself available to discuss any concerns Republicans may still have related to his background and qualifications, things that actually matter in his ability to do his job. However, for reasons completely unrelated to his background and qualifications, Republicans on the Small Business Committee have continued to block his nomination, for months.

Earlier this summer, they disputed the results of a committee meeting we held to advance the nominee based on a technicality, even though Mr. Syed was approved during that meeting by voice vote. Since then, they have taken a different approach, deciding to boycott committee meetings on five separate occasions, denying a quorum to consider the nominee. We are now at the point where Senate Republicans, even on this normally very bipartisan committee, will not even show up to provide fair consideration for this nominee. Not one Republican will show up.

Over the course of the process, Republicans have changed their reasons for blocking the nominee. First, they were concerned about SBA loans his company received during the pandemic, even though these loans were lawfully obtained and fully repaid before he was even nominated to be Deputy Administrator.

Then, they insinuated he was somehow anti-Jewish and anti-Israel, despite broad support he has received from within these communities.

Now, they are concerned about lawful SBA loans to Planned Parenthood health centers. Just to be crystal clear, these health centers lawfully received loans through bipartisan COVID legislation that was signed by President Trump. It is unacceptable to unfairly and unlawfully target organizations for political reasons. And it is even worse to then stall a qualified nominee because of this.

When it comes down to it, Mr. Syed would be an asset to SBA and the businesses they serve. He deserves fair consideration in the U.S. Senate.

If Republicans actually cared about helping the small businesses struggling during the pandemic, they would stop blocking nominees to fill positions that are critical to helping them.

Republicans should do their job and let us consider his nomination. Every day they continue this obstruction, they are doing a disservice to businesses in our country, which cannot afford uncertainty at this time.

Enough is enough.

## NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2022.

The National Defense Authorization Act provides crucial resources for our Armed Forces and our national defense, including a 2.7 percent pay increase for our servicemembers and DOD civilian employees, parental and bereavement leave for servicemembers, and the creation of basic needs allowance. I am glad that the Senate was able to come together on a bipartisan basis to pass this legislation to support our servicemembers, strengthen our national security, and invest in critical projects in my home State of Maryland, including over $500 million in authorized military construction projects across the State. This legislation also includes several important pieces of legislation that I introduced to strengthen our Foreign Service, ensure that all students have a fair shot at attending one of our Federal service academies, and support our Federal firefighters. While there are parts of this legislation that I have concerns with and important priorities that were left out, I believe that, on balance, this bill serves our national interest.

In particular, I am pleased that this NDAA includes the Foreign Service Families Act of 2021, which I introduced with Senator Sullivan, with whom I cochair the Foreign Service Caucus. As the son of a Foreign Service Officer, I know the challenges that Foreign Service families face in accessing education and employment when they accompany our diplomats abroad. That is why I introduced this legislation, which authorizes expanded employment services for the spouses of Foreign Service officers serving overseas. It also extends in-state tuition at public colleges and universities for Foreign Service members and their families after 30 days of residency in a State and allows Foreign Service families to terminate leases without penalty when ordered to move for work. This legislation will make a real difference in the lives of our Foreign Service families and will help reduce attrition and attract the talented and diverse diplomatic workforce we need to compete on the global stage. It is modeled after benefits we extend to military families, who also have to move frequently in service to our country.

I am also glad that this legislation includes the SERVE Act, which I introduced with Senator CARDIN and Representative BROWN. This bill ensures that high school students applying to attend one of our Federal service academies do not lose out on opportunities to be nominated because of a vacancy in Congress. After the tragic loss of my friend and colleague, Representative Elijah Cummings, my office learned that nomination slots at our service academies, like the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, cease to exist if a seat in Congress is vacant at the time nominations are due. This meant that a student from Congressman Cummings' district had one-third fewer opportunities to receive a nomination to a service academy. As a result of this new law, Senators may make nominations on behalf of a vacant seat, ensuring that students do not lose an opportunity to serve their country through no fault of their own.

Further, I am glad Armed Services Committee agreed to include the Federal Firefighter Flexibility and Fairness Act, which I introduced with Senators TESTER, COLLINS, and CARPER and Representatives SARBANES and WITTMAN. This legislation grants additional

flexibility to our Federal firefighters that their State and local counterparts have enjoyed for many years. As a result of this bill, Federal firefighters will be able to trade shifts across pay periods without negatively affecting their pay.

This NDAA also establishes a consortium on irregular warfare threats, a critical step in the transfer of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism—START—from the sponsorship of the Department of Homeland Security to the Department of Defense, which has the resources to maintain this national security research. I previously worked to secure funding for this transition in the FY21 defense appropriations bill. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, better known as START, is a university-based research and education center based at the University of Maryland and comprised of an international network of scholars committed to the scientific study of the causes and human consequences of terrorism in the United States and around the world.

I am also glad the NDAA incorporates the Enhancing Military Base Resilience and Conserving Ecosystems through Stormwater Management Act, which I introduced with Senators KAINE, CARDIN, and WARNER. This bill authorizes the Defense Department to carry out stormwater management projects on military installations. These projects will improve installation resilience and essential infrastructure that supports military installations and protect nearby waterways like the Chesapeake Bay. In August, I worked to secure language in the FY22 Military Construction-VA Appropriations bill encouraging the Department of Defense to use Energy Resilience and Conservation Program funds to support stormwater management projects in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in order to better protect and conserve the health of the bay.

I also want to thank my colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee for working with me to address the Army's incorrect application of the law pertaining to the Prisoner of War Medal, which has negatively affected a Maryland veteran. In 2020, I asked the Army to award the POW Medal to Marylander Ronald Dolecki for his military service in Ethiopia in 1965, which he has been denied for over a decade. Mr. Dolecki clearly qualifies for the Medal under the criteria established by Congress in the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, but the Army continued to incorrectly apply the previous standard to his case. I am grateful to Chairman REED and Ranking Member INHOFE for including language directing the Army to rectify its incorrect application of the law to ensure that this Marylander who served his country with honor and distinction and others like him are appropriately recognized.

Lastly, this bill includes funding and language that is critical to supporting Maryland's military installations, including more than $350 million for Fort Meade, more than $150 million for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, and more than $30 million for Joint Base Andrews. The bill also includes report language ensuring the Army's continued support for the demolition of contaminated facilities at Aberdeen Proving Ground and provisions to continue responding to the recent crisis in privatized military housing which affected installations in Maryland and across the country.

While I am pleased with many of the provisions included in this bill and voted for its passage, I do have significant reservations.

I appreciate that this bill codifies the GAO's recommendations related to tactical vehicle rollover accidents in response to the tragic loss of 1LT Conor McDowell, a U.S. marine who lost his life in a training accident at Camp Pendleton. 1LT McDowell showed extraordinary bravery, saving the life of a fellow marine, and Congress has a responsibility to ensure that these preventable crashes end. The bill also includes a directive that the Department of Defense report on the cost and feasibility of a pilot program that Senators CARDIN and Representatives BROWN and WITTMAN and I proposed in the the 1LT Hugh Conor McDowell Safety in Armed Forces Equipment Act of 2021. This simple, straightforward bill directs the Departments of the Army and the Navy to jointly implement a 5-year pilot program to evaluate the prospect of using data recorders to monitor, assess, and improve the readiness and safety of the operation of military tactical vehicles. This commonsense program will improve the safety of our men and women in uniform and save lives. I believe we could have proceeded with this pilot today, but look forward to receiving the mandated report no later than March 1, 2022, as directed, and I will continue to advocate vigorously for the implementation of this program.

I am disappointed that the NOAA does not include my amendment to prohibit the use of funds for the research and development, production or deployment of the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile—SLCM–N—and its associated nuclear warhead. The United States already possesses an array of nonstrategic nuclear capabilities that fulfill our theater nuclear deterrence missions and reassure our allies of our extended deterrence commitments. In its 2019 cost estimate of U.S. nuclear weapons programs, the CBO projected that the SLCM-N would cost $9 billion through 2028. This projection does not account for production costs after 2028, nor does it factor in costs associated with integrating the missile on ships, nuclear weapons training for personnel, and storage and security for nuclear warheads on naval bases. Not only is the program a waste of money, it will also dangerously raise the risk of nuclear miscalculation and escalation.

I also believe that this bill fails to tackle the long-term budget challenges facing our country. In the midst of a pandemic that has taken the lives of more than 800,000 of our fellow Americans, we simply cannot afford to continue this level of investment in defense at the expense of other critical national priorities. I oppose the decision to invest an additional $25 billion over the President's budget request for defense while we continue to underinvest in diplomacy, development, and a wide range of critical domestic priorities.

Lastly, I am disappointed that the bill did not include my amendment with Representative JACOBS to close a loophole that allows some U.S. security assistance to foreign forces without being subject to Leahy law restrictions that bar U.S. military assistance to units credibly believed to have engaged in gross violations of human rights. This is a simple, straightforward matter of the United States living up to our most basic commitments as a member of the international community. The accompanying NDAA report language does require the presentation of a report detailing the processes through which the Defense Department seeks to ensure that consideration is given to any credible information relating to violations of human rights by such entities, before support is given to them. I will be reviewing that report closely to determine what further action is necessary to safeguard human rights and ensure that no U.S. security assistance is exempt from these commonsense restrictions.

While I am opposed to some of the provisions in this bill and disappointed by the omission of others, I believe that, on balance, the NDAA will strengthen our national security and advance other important national priorities. For that reason, I voted in support of final passage.

## REMEMBERING DR. SHERIF R. ZAKI

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of Dr. Sherif R. Zaki, an exceptional leader at the CDC who passed away on November 21, 2021.

Dr. Zaki, who joined the CDC in 1988, was the founder and branch chief of CDC's Infectious Disease Pathology Branch, IDPB. During his tenure at CDC, Dr. Zaki's vision and determination took the pathology laboratory to the forefront of the Agency's work in responding to public health threats posed by various infectious disease agents and established this team to be as one of the most highly respected infectious disease pathology laboratories in the world.

Dr. Zaki was an internationally recognized expert in infectious disease pathology, whose work over the past several decades transformed CDC's approach to the integration of pathology

as a core component of outbreak investigations. The rigorous and innovative laboratory work carried out by his team has advanced infectious disease experts' knowledge of many pathogens and their role in the human disease process. These included investigations of hantavirus, leptospirosis, West Nile virus, anthrax, SARS coronaviruses, avian and human influenza viruses, Ebola virus, Zika virus, and numerous transplant-associated infections, to name only a few. As an author of hundreds of publications and numerous textbook chapters, he is widely considered to be among the most influential infectious disease pathologists of his generation.

As chief of IDPB, Dr. Zaki is widely recognized for his personal leadership, scientific contributions, and commitment to CDC's public health mission. Among his many awards are the HHS Secretary's Awards for Distinguished Service, which he received nine times and is the highest honor at HHS. Known and respected for his humbleness, Dr. Zaki was uncomfortable with personal accolades and always quick to point to the efforts of his IDPB colleagues and others. Dr. Zaki was a generous teacher and mentor of younger scientists, friends, and former colleagues.

My prayers are with Dr. Zaki's wife Nadia, his two children, and friends during this difficult time. I am grateful for his dedication at the CDC, and I am honored to recognize his extraordinary contributions today.

## TRIBUTE TO CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT JASON JENKINS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize CMSgt Jason Jenkins for his dedicated service to the U.S. Air Force and the Senate as a Legislative Defense Fellow. Jason served as a vital part of my team in 2020. He was a trusted adviser on issues relating to the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Jason's effort and reliability distinguished him as a valuable member of my legislative team. In particular, Jason played an integral role in the recovery of Fort Smith native and World War II combat pilot Lt. Henry Donald Mitchell's remains, a mission 77 years in the making.

Jason took his responsibility to bring his fellow airman home very seriously. His steadfast dedication and persistence were crucial to its success. He worked tirelessly to ensure the United States and Austrian officials, private landowners, and Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency leaders coordinated and engaged to achieve the right outcome. It would not have been possible without the efforts of Jason. He helped bring closure and resolution to Lt. Mitchell's community and loved ones, allowing them to close that chapter and find the comfort that been so elusive after his remains were buried in the Fayetteville National Cemetery.

Jason also diligently worked to help secure resources for our servicemembers, their families, and Arkansans through his support of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee and the successful passage of the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. His passion to serve veterans and their families was demonstrated through his contributions to veteran legislation he advised on, including the John Scott Hannon Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019.

I also want to thank Jason's wife, Jami, and his children, Mike and Skyla, for their support of Jason's continued service to the U.S. Air Force. As the son of an Air Force master sergeant, I understand service to the Armed Forces is a family affair and is impossible without their sacrifice and unconditional support. Jason's son Mike has followed in his dad's footsteps and is currently serving in the U.S. Air Force in London.

A special highlight during Jason's time in my office was his promotion to chief master sergeant, a testament to his family, unlimited potential, and passion to serve others.

Jason, thank you for your continued service to the U.S. Air Force and for your time working in my office. It was our privilege to have you as a part of our team. My office will always welcome you. I know that you will be an asset to whatever future endeavors you pursue, and I wish you and your family the best.

## TRIBUTE TO SENIOR MASTER SERGEANT CARLOS SANCHEZ

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize SMSgt Carlos Sanchez for his dedicated service to the U.S. Air Force and the Senate as a Legislative Defense Fellow. Carlos has served as a vital part of my team since January 2021. He has been a trusted adviser on issues relating to the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Carlos enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 2002. His continued service is a reminder of the sacrifices necessary to maintain the opportunities available to us as U.S. citizens.

Carlos's effort and passion to serve distinguished him as a valuable member of my legislative team. His determination was evident and helped lead to passage of the transformative SAVE LIVES Act, which allowed the VA to provide COVID–19 vaccinations to all veterans and their spouses. When preparing for a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing earlier this year, Carlos posed a question that led to the introduction and passage of this critical legislation.

Carlos was also instrumental in the final months of the effort that led to the recovery of World War II combat pilot Lt. Henry Donald Mitchell. After years of work by Lt. Mitchell's brother, Bob Mitchell, and my office to locate and return this Fort Smith native home, Carlos helped ensure the authorities could access and correctly identify Lt. Mitchell.

His desire to serve his fellow airmen was demonstrated through his work in coordinating the first visit by Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Jo-Anne Bass to Little Rock Air Force Base. Because of that experience, I believe the needs of our airmen and their families were further elevated and will result in an even higher prioritizing of getting them the resources and support needed to successfully execute their mission.

Carlos's steadfast dedication to serve and support the people of Arkansas has been inspirational. While in Arkansas, he spoke with and listened to the concerns of Arkansan veterans and their families, then worked tirelessly to ensure their concerns were heard and issues were resolved.

We have been very fortunate during Carlos's time in my office. I also want to thank his wife, Laura, and his daughters Sophia and Isabella, for their support of Carlos's time in uniform. As the son of an Air Force master sergeant, I understand service to the Armed Forces is a family affair and is impossible without their sacrifice and unconditional support.

Carlos, thank you for your continued service to the U.S. Air Force and for all your heartfelt, committed work as a member of my staff. It was our privilege to have you as a part of our team, and our office will always welcome you. I know that you will remain an asset to our military and veterans in addition to any other endeavors you pursue, and I wish you and your family the best.

# ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

## TRIBUTE TO MARIA GOMEZ

• Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to an extraordinary leader, a visionary healthcare advocate, and a tireless champion for the people of my state and for citizens across the National Capital Region: Maria Gomez. Ms. Gomez is retiring this month after 33 years as the president and CEO of Mary's Center, a renowned federally-qualified health center that she founded in 1988, and which has transformed the lives of countless individuals and families throughout our region. Her tireless efforts to improve the health and well-being of underserved families and individuals in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area have left an indelible mark on our communities, and her lifetime of service has inspired a new generation of activists, advocates, healthcare leaders, and public servants. I would like to share her story today and have the course of her life forever written into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Ms. Gomez immigrated to the United States from Colombia with her mother

at age 13 to escape violence and find new opportunities. Together, they built a life in Washington, DC, through hard work, courage, and the determination to succeed. By means of her own grit and skill, along with the support of a loving mother, Ms. Gomez obtained a bachelor of science in nursing from Georgetown University and a master of public health from the University of California at Berkeley. Following graduation, she returned to the District of Columbia to empower the very same community that had empowered her when she first arrived in the United States.

After first working at DC Health, the Red Cross, and the Visiting Nurses Association, Ms. Gomez founded Mary's Center with a group of health advocates and the DC Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs. Her goal was to help immigrant women fleeing war and poverty in Central America. But what began as the shared vision of one person and a small group of community and government partners would soon grow into a nationally renowned health center that has touched the lives of thousands.

Under Ms. Gomez's leadership, Mary's Center went from serving 200 participants in a small basement with a budget of $250,000 to serving more than 60,000 participants across seven locations in DC and Maryland, with an annual budget of $76 million in just over 30 years. The center and the people who work there are committed to providing the highest quality of care to each and every patient, regardless of their ability to pay, and the mission of Mary's Center is guided by core principles of care, education, social justice, and respect. I have had the privilege of visiting Mary's Center locations in my State of Maryland while serving in the Senate, and I have witnessed, firsthand, the extraordinary attention, compassion and professionalism that the entire Mary's Center family brings to everything they do. It is because of their work that so many within our communities can receive support and critical services.

That is Maria Gomez's legacy, and our State and our Nation are deeply grateful for all she has given to our fellow citizens in need. Her extraordinary achievements have made Ms. Gomez one of the most effective and highly regarded leaders in the region and throughout the country. It was Ms. Gomez's hard work and dedication that led First Lady Michelle Obama to choose Mary's Center for her first official visit to a nonprofit organization in February 2009. In 1995, First Lady Hillary Clinton also visited Mary's Center during National Immunization Week in recognition of the center's efforts to get children vaccinated and ready to learn and thrive in school. What is more, President Barack Obama selected Maria Gomez as one of the 18 recipients of the 2012 Presidential Citizens Medal, the Nation's second-highest civilian honor, as a testament to her leadership and service.

Ms. Gomez has accrued decades of wisdom over the course of her distinguished career, and she has always been willing to share that wisdom and knowledge with those who seek it. DC Mayor Muriel Bowser, as well as former Mayors Vincent Gray and Adrian Fenty, named her to their mayoral transition teams. She currently serves as cochair of the Human Services, Social Services, and Health Committee of the DC Mayor's ReOpen DC Advisory Group for COVID–19, and she is a member of the Mayor's Commission on Healthcare Systems Transformations, which makes recommendations on strategies and investments necessary to transform healthcare in the District of Columbia.

Ms. Gomez also shares her expertise by serving as a board member for the DC Primary Care Association and the Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County. She is a member of the Suburban Hospital Board of Trustees, is cochair of the Latino Health Steering Committee of Montgomery County, and serves on the advisory boards for the Smithsonian American Women History Initiative, the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, and the AmeriHealth Caritas National FQHC Initiative. In addition, she is a member of the Washington Housing Conservancy—WHC—Board.

While Ms. Gomez is the recipient of numerous well-earned awards and accolades, no medal or trophy that we can give to her can truly speak to all that she has given us throughout her inspiring life and career. She has been a beacon of hope for so many families in need over the past three decades. She leaves behind a legacy of deep compassion for all whom she has met and known and helped and served. Ms. Gomez's colleagues regard her as a strong leader, a dedicated mentor, and a friend to all, and the entire Mary's Center community treasures the warmth, grace, and respect she has imparted throughout the organization these past 33 years.

Our Nation's Capital is healthier and stronger because of Maria Gomez's many years of visionary leadership and dedicated service. I ask my colleagues to join me in expressing our deepest gratitude to her and in extending our best wishes to her and to her husband Michael Rexrode and daughter Amalia—as she begins the next chapter of her life of service to her community and her country.●

## EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–2833. A communication from the Secretary of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department's Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2834. A communication from the Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Semiannual Report of the Inspector General and a Management Report for the period from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2835. A communication from the Chair, Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2836. A communication from the Board Members, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's Performance and Accountability Report for fiscal year 2021, including the Office of Inspector General's Auditor's Report; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2837. A communication from the Chairman of the Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2838. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department's Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2839. A communication from the Chairman, Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Performance and Accountability Report for fiscal year 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2840. A communication from the Acting Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Increasing the Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors'' (RIN1235–AA41) received in the Office of the President pro tempore of the Senate; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2841. A communication from the Chairman of the United States International Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2842. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 24–238, ''Sense of the Council Medicare for All Support Resolution of 2021''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2843. A communication from the Director, Office of Personnel Management, the President's Pay Agent, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the extension of locality based comparability payments; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2844. A communication from the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Administration's Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021 and the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for the report; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2845. A communication from the Chairman, Board of Governors, United States Postal Service, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Postal Services' Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021; to

the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2846. A communication from the Secretary of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's Office of Inspector General's Semiannual Report to Congress and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation Management's Response for the period from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2847. A communication from the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Agency's Semiannual Report of the Office of Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2848. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Chief Financial Officer, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 8, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2849. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Semiannual Reports from the Treasury Inspector General and the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration for the period from April 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2850. A communication from the Treasurer, National Gallery of Art, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Gallery's Performance and Accountability Report for the year ended September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2851. A communication from the Director, Congressional Affairs, Federal Election Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2021 received in the Office of the President pro tempore of the Senate; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2852. A communication from the Director of Financial Management, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department's Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2021; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–2853. A joint communication from the Secretary of Labor and the Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Corporation's Annual Report for fiscal year 2021 received in the Office of the President pro tempore of the Senate; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–2854. A communication from the Register of Copyrights and Director, United States Copyright Office, Library of Congress, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the extension of adjustments to certain timing provisions of the Copyright Act for persons affected by the COVID–19 pandemic; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–2855. A communication from the Regulation Development Coordinator, Office of Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Awards Under the Nehmer Court Orders for Disability or Death Caused by a Condition Presumptively Associated with Herbicide Exposure; Implementing Court Order'' (RIN2900–AR40) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC–2856. A communication from the Regulation Development Coordinator, Office of Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Release of Information from Department of Veterans Affairs' Records'' (RIN2900–AR39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC–2857. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Kosakonia cowanii strain SYM00028; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance'' (FRL No. 9216–01–OCSPP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–2858. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Trichoderma harzianum strain T–78; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance'' (FRL No. 9218–01–OCSPP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–2859. A communication from the Director, Regulations Management Division, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Biofuel Producer Program for Fiscal Year 2021'' received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–2860. A communication from the Director, Regulations Management Division, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loan Program'' received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–2861. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Management Directive 12.6, NRC Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) Program'' received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2862. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; Rhode Island; 2015 Ozone NAAQS Interstate Transport Requirements'' (FRL No. 8967–02–R1) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2863. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Significant New Use Rules on Certain Chemical Substances (20–2.5e)'' ((RIN2070–AB27) (FRL No. 7842–02–OCSPP)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2864. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act, 1 U.S.C. 112b, as amended, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties (List 2021–0146 - 2021–0153); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–2865. A communication from the Assistant Legal Advisor for Treaty Affairs, Department to State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of International Agreements other than Treaties entered into with Taiwan by the American Institute in Taiwan; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–2866. A communication from the Acting Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Assistance Provided to Foreign Aviation Authorities for FY 2020''; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2867. A communication from the Deputy Division Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018'' ((FCC 21–119) (Docket Nos. WC18–336)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 30, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2868. A communication from the Deputy Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Procedures for Commission Review of State Opt-Out Requests from the FirstNet radio Access Network'' ((FCC 19–155) (PS Docket No. 16–269)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 30, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

## PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petitions and memorials were laid before the Senate and were referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM–99. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan urging the United States Congress to take action to mitigate the depletion of the Social Security and Medicare trust funds; to the Committee on Finance.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 157

Whereas, Social Security benefits are paid to more than 65 million Americans, including some who use the financial resource to stay out of poverty. Approximately 21.7 million Americans would have been in poverty in 2020 without Social Security benefits. Vulnerable individuals, including the aging population and people with disabilities, depend on Social Security to supplement other forms of income. The Social Security Administration reports that Social Security benefits account for at least one-third of the income of the elderly; and

Whereas, Medicare helps pay medical costs for over 57 million individuals per year on average. Medicare allows for individuals to receive medical care and prescription drugs that they otherwise may not be able to afford. Many people enrolled in Medicare live with health problems and almost half of enrollees have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Estimates showed that 19 percent of Medicare beneficiaries had no other form of supplemental insurance in 2016; and

Whereas, Projections in Social Security and Medicare trustees reports estimate that Social Security will only be able to pay 78 percent of scheduled benefits by 2034, and

Medicare will only be able to pay 91 percent of full costs by 2026. Americans will suffer without essential benefits paid by these programs, despite paying tax dollars towards Social Security and Medicare. Lacking full Medicare benefits, many Americans will not be able to afford crucial medical services. The depiction of these social safety nets poses a great threat to not only current beneficiaries, but all those who may benefit in the future; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives*, That we urge the United States Congress to take action to mitigate the depletion of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds; and be it further

*Resolved*, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

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POM–100. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Ohio urging the United States Congress and the President of the United States to, with haste, take action to bring home the missionaries who have been taken hostage in Haiti; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 147

Whereas, Seventeen missionaries were kidnapped by a gang in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, as they were leaving an orphanage; and

Whereas, Local authorities said the group that was kidnapped included sixteen Americans and one Canadian; and

Whereas, Haiti has been in a state of political upheaval for years, and kidnappings of the rich and poor alike are alarmingly common; and

Whereas, Violence is surging across Port-au-Prince, which is controlled by gangs. By some estimates, gangs now control roughly half of the city; and

Whereas, The kidnappers have released a video threatening to put a bullet in the heads of the hostages, including an eight-month-old baby if their demands are not met; and

Whereas, The fate of the hostages should not be left in the hands of kidnappers who have no regard for human life; and

Whereas, An evaluation of the nation's conscience demands that the federal government use any and all means available to ensure that the seventeen missionaries, who without fault were acting in good faith to help Haitians in need, be brought to safety; now therefore be it

*Resolved*, That we, the members of the Ohio House of Representatives of the 134th General Assembly of the State of Ohio, urge the United States Congress and the President of the United States, with haste, to take action to bring home the missionaries who have been taken hostage in Haiti; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Clerk of the House of Representatives transmit duly authenticated copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Secretary of the United States Department of Defense, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, each member of the Ohio congressional delegation, and the news media of Ohio.

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POM–101. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Michigan urging the federal government to allow persons under the age of 21 to operate commercial vehicles on interstate routes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 89

Whereas, In most states, including Michigan, drivers 18 years and older may obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) to operate commercial vehicles within state lines. However, federal regulations prohibit persons under the age of 21 from operating a commercial motor vehicle across state lines; and

Whereas, Since the start of the COVID–19 pandemic, trucking companies have lost between 5% to 15% of their drivers. Age restrictions on interstate trucking has made it more difficult to replace outgoing drivers exasperating an already tight labor market; and

Whereas, The Developing Responsible Individuals for a Vibrant Economy Act (DRIVE Safe Act) has been introduced in the United States Senate to address the shortage of truck drivers across the country. Introduced in March 2021, the DRIVE Safe Act would direct the U.S. Department of Transportation to create regulations to implement an apprenticeship program for licensed commercial motor vehicle drivers under the age of 21; require apprentice drivers to complete at least 400 hours of on-duty time and 240 hours of driving time with an experienced driver; and require all commercial motor vehicles used in the apprenticeship program to be equipped with safety technology. This legislation would ensure that individuals between the ages of 18 and 21, many of whom are already licensed and driving in their resident states, are trained and available to address the truck driver shortage. Further, the act will create additional career opportunities for young adults at the time they are entering the workforce; Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate*, That we urge the federal government to allow persons under the age of 21 to operate commercial trucks on interstate routes; and be it further

*Resolved*, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States Senate, and members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

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POM–102. A petition from a citizen of the State of Texas relative to amending federal laws; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

POM–103. A resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco, California, urging the President of the United States to extend funding assistance from FEMA to maintain non-congregate shelter in place hotels through the year of 2022; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. MANCHIN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. 172. A bill to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 117–49).

S. 491. A bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain river segments in the York River watershed in the State of Maine as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 117–50).

By Mr. MANCHIN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment:

S. 535. A bill to authorize the location of a memorial on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces that served on active duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 117–51).

By Mr. MANCHIN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

H.R. 1664. An act to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 117–52).

By Ms. CANTWELL, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, without amendment:

S. 15. A bill to require the Federal Trade Commission to submit a report to Congress on scams targeting seniors, and for other purposes.

By Ms. CANTWELL, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with amendments:

S. 115. A bill to direct the Secretary of Commerce to conduct a study and submit to Congress a report on the effects of the COVID–19 pandemic on the travel and tourism industry in the United States, and for other purposes.

By Ms. CANTWELL, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 120. A bill to prevent and respond to the misuse of communications services that facilitates domestic violence and other crimes.

S. 163. A bill to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.

S. 381. A bill to establish the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization Council, and for other purposes.

S. 576. A bill to amend title 14, United States Code, to require the Coast Guard to conduct icebreaking operations in the Great Lakes to minimize commercial disruption in the winter months, and for other purposes.

S. 735. A bill to amend the Scientific and Advanced-Technology Act of 1992 to further support advanced technological manufacturing, and for other purposes.

By Mr. PETERS, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, without amendment:

H.R. 767. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 40 Fulton Street in Middletown, New York, as the ''Benjamin A. Gilman Post Office Building''.

H.R. 1170. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1 League in Irvine, California, as the ''Tuskegee Airman Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Friend Memorial Post Office Building''.

H.R. 1444. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 132 North Loudoun Street, Suite 1 in Winchester, Virginia, as the ''Patsy Cline Post Office''.

By Mr. DURBIN, from the Committee on the Judiciary, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2340. A bill to improve the safety and security of the Federal judiciary.

By Mr. TESTER, from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, without amendment:

S. 2514. A bill to rename the Provo Veterans Center in Orem, Utah, as the ''Col. Gail S. Halvorsen 'Candy Bomber' Veterans Center''.

By Mr. PETERS, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, without amendment:

S. 2932. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 430 South Knowles Avenue in New Richmond, Wisconsin, as the ''Captain Robert C. Harmon and Private John R. Peirson Post Office Building''.

H.R. 3210. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1905 15th Street in Boulder, Colorado, as the ''Officer Eric H. Talley Post Office Building''.

## EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. WYDEN for the Committee on Finance.

*Neil Harvey MacBride, of Virginia, to be General Counsel for the Department of the Treasury.

By Mr. DURBIN for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Bridget Meehan Brennan, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio.

John H. Chun, of Washington, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Washington.

Charles Esque Fleming, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio.

David Augustin Ruiz, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina (for himself and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 3411. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include expenses for certain athletic supplies in the above-the-line deduction for eligible educators, and to allow such deduction to interscholastic sports administrators and coaches; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. HAWLEY, Mr. HOEVEN, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LANKFORD, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. MORAN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 3412. A bill to prohibit the use of Federal funds to enforce the rule submitted by the Department of Health and Human Services relating to COVID–19 vaccine and mask requirements for Head Start programs; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself and Mr. PORTMAN):

S. 3413. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the credit for health insurance costs of eligible individuals; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MARSHALL (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. INHOFE, Mrs. BLACKBURN, and Ms. ERNST):

S. 3414. A bill to require the Government Accountability Office to evaluate the policies and actions of the National Institutes of Health with respect to research involving the enhancement of potential pandemic pathogens and related activities; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE:

S. 3415. A bill to ensure that the United States, States, and local governments are liable for monetary damages for constitutional violations by law enforcement officers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MURPHY (for himself and Mr. BRAUN):

S. 3416. A bill to expand the enforcement authority of the Food and Drug Administration with respect to counterfeit devices; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BENNET (for himself, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. TESTER, and Ms. SMITH):

S. 3417. A bill to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities who need long-term services and supports, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. CASEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. SMITH, Mr. BROWN, Mr. HEINRICH, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 3418. A bill to provide emergency assistance to States, territories, Tribal nations, and local areas affected by substance use disorder, including the use of opioids and stimulants, and to make financial assistance available to States, territories, Tribal nations, local areas, public or private nonprofit entities, and certain health providers, to provide for the development, organization, coordination, and operation of more effective and cost efficient systems for the delivery of essential services to individuals with substance use disorder and their families; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. SCOTT of Florida):

S. 3419. A bill to require the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to reform policies and issue guidance related to health and safety accountability, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. WARNOCK:

S. 3420. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Freedom Riders, collectively, in recognition of their unique contribution to Civil Rights, which inspired a revolutionary movement for equality in interstate travel; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. RISCH):

S. 3421. A bill to clarify that section 107 of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act applies sanctions with respect to unmanned combat aerial vehicles following a 2019 change by the United Nations providing additional clarity to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. PADILLA):

S. 3422. A bill to establish a grant program to support schools of medicine and schools of osteopathic medicine in underserved areas; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. SINEMA (for herself, Mr. HAGERTY, and Mr. LANKFORD):

S. 3423. A bill to implement merit-based reforms to the civil service hiring system that replace degree-based hiring with skills- and competency-based hiring; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. BENNET (for himself and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 3424. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow early childhood educators to take the educator expense deduction, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MANCHIN:

S. 3425. A bill to extend the authorizations for certain National Heritage Areas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. COONS, and Mr. MURPHY):

S. 3426. A bill to promote diversity at the Department of State, to direct the Secretary of State to review the termination characterization of former members of the Department who were fired by reason of their sexual orientation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. LUJAN):

S. 3427. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a Neuroscience Center of Excellence; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MANCHIN (for himself and Mr. BARRASSO):

S. 3428. A bill to require the Secretary of Energy to establish a program to provide Federal financial assistance to support advanced nuclear reactors and associated supply chain infrastructure, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 3429. A bill to establish an Alaska Salmon Research Task Force; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. HOEVEN (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. DAINES, Mr. LANKFORD, and Ms. LUMMIS):

S. 3430. A bill to maintain the National Coal Council in the Department of Energy to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Energy on matters relating to coal and the coal industry, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

## SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. PORTMAN, Ms. ERNST, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. RUBIO):

S. Res. 480. A resolution to support an independent and democratic Ukraine against any further Russian military invasion, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. PADILLA, Ms. WARREN, Mr. LUJÁN, and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. Res. 481. A resolution urging the Secretary of the Interior to recognize the historical significance of Roberto Clemente's place of death near Pinones in Loiza, Puerto Rico, by adding it to the National Register of Historic Places; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. Res. 482. A resolution recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the lasting impact of that Act on the State of Alaska and Alaska Native people; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 46

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 46, a bill to reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 and to establish the United States Coral Reef Task Force, and for other purposes.

S. 335

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 335, a bill to reauthorize the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 1998.

S. 596

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 596, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the coordination of programs to prevent and treat obesity, and for other purposes.

S. 602

At the request of Mr. COTTON, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 602, a bill to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking in persons for purposes of the removal of organs, and for other purposes.

S. 697

At the request of Ms. ROSEN, the names of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) were added as cosponsors of S. 697, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the Bicentennial of Harriet Tubman's birth.

S. 764

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 764, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to encourage State Medicaid programs to provide community-based mobile crisis intervention services, and for other purposes.

S. 773

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. 773, a bill to enable certain hospitals that were participating in or applied for the drug discount program under section 340B of the Public Health Service Act prior to the COVID–19 public health emergency to temporarily maintain eligibility for such program, and for other purposes.

S. 801

At the request of Mr. THUNE, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 801, a bill to identify and address barriers to coverage of remote physiologic devices under State Medicaid programs to improve maternal and child health outcomes for pregnant and postpartum women.

S. 860

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 860, a bill to develop and deploy firewall circumvention tools for the people of Hong Kong after the People's Republic of China violated its agreement under the Joint Declaration, and for other purposes.

S. 951

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 951, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants to eligible organizations to provide service dogs to veterans with severe post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes.

S. 984

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. 984, a bill to amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act to reduce the production and use of certain single-use plastic products and packaging, to improve the responsibility of producers in the design, collection, reuse, recycling, and disposal of their consumer products and packaging, to prevent pollution from consumer products and packaging from entering into animal and human food chains and waterways, and for other purposes.

S. 999

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 999, a bill to amend the title XVIII of the Social Security Act to preserve access to rural health care by ensuring fairness in Medicare hospital payments.

S. 1106

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1106, a bill to prohibit the sale of shark fins, and for other purposes.

S. 1141

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1141, a bill to amend title 28, United States Code, to allow for twelve associate justices of the Supreme Court of the United States.

S. 1175

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1175, a bill to categorize public safety telecommunicators as a protective service occupation under the Standard Occupational Classification System.

S. 1273

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1273, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a credit to small employers for covering military spouses under retirement plans.

S. 1342

At the request of Ms. HASSAN, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1342, a bill to establish an interagency committee on the development of green alert systems that would be activated when a veteran goes missing, and for other purposes.

S. 1385

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) were added as cosponsors of S. 1385, a bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to establish additional requirements for dealers, and for other purposes.

S. 1443

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1443, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permit treatment of student loan payments as elective deferrals for purposes of employer matching contributions, and for other purposes.

S. 1451

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1451, a bill to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to implement policies to end preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths globally.

S. 1468

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1468, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expand the Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs and to direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study to assess certain mental health care resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs available to veterans who live in rural areas.

S. 1478

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1478, a bill to protect and promote the freedom of the press globally.

S. 1486

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) and the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1486, a bill to eliminate discrimination and promote women's health and economic security by ensuring reasonable workplace accommodations for workers whose ability to perform the functions of a job are limited by pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition.

S. 1536

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1536, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand the availability of medical nutrition therapy services under the Medicare program.

S. 1692

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1692, a bill to provide better care and outcomes for Americans living with Alzheimer's disease and related to dementias and their caregivers, while accelerating progress toward prevention strategies, disease modifying treatments, and, ultimately, a cure.

S. 1813

At the request of Mr. WARNER, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1813, a bill to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to support research on, and expanded access to, investigational drugs for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and for other purposes.

S. 1947

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1947, a bill to authorize the position of Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism, to statutorily establish the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, and for other purposes.

S. 2003

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2003, a bill to authorize appropriations for the Department of State for fiscal years 2021 through 2023 to provide assistance to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras through bilateral compacts to increase protection of women and children in their homes and communities and reduce female homicides, domestic violence, and sexual assault.

S. 2013

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2013, a bill to provide for the coverage of medically necessary food and vitamins and individual amino acids for digestive and inherited metabolic disorder under Federal health programs and private health insurance, to ensure State and Federal protection for existing coverage, and for other purposes.

S. 2069

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2069, a bill to expand the Medicaid certified community behavioral health clinic demonstration program and to authorize funding for additional grants to certified community behavioral health clinics.

S. 2102

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2102, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Under Secretary for Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide mammography screening for veterans who served in locations associated with toxic exposure.

S. 2129

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2129, a bill to promote freedom of information and counter censorship and surveillance in North Korea, and for other purposes.

S. 2340

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 2340, a bill to improve the safety and security of the Federal judiciary.

S. 2556

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2556, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to protect beneficiaries with limb loss and other orthopedic conditions by providing access to appropriate, safe, effective, patient-centered orthotic and prosthetic care, to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse with respect to orthotics and prosthetics, and for other purposes.

S. 2652

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2652, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to clarify congressional intent and preserve patient access to home infusion therapy under the Medicare program, and for other purposes.

S. 2710

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) were added as cosponsors of S. 2710, a bill to promote competition and reduce gatekeeper power in the app economy, increase choice, improve quality, and reduce costs for consumers.

S. 2834

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2834, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to preserve access to rehabilitation innovation centers under the Medicare program.

S. 3018

At the request of Mr. MARSHALL, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3018, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish requirements with respect to the use of prior authorization under Medicare Advantage plans, and for other purposes.

S. 3039

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3039, a bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to establish an interagency council on social determinants of health, and for other purposes.

S. 3071

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3071, a bill to protect our Social Security system and improve benefits for current and future generations.

S. 3147

At the request of Ms. ROSEN, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3147, a bill to provide members of the reserve components access to the Tour of Duty system.

S. 3164

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3164, a bill to require non-Federal prison, correctional, and detention facilities holding Federal prisoners or detainees under a contract with the Federal Government to make the same information available to the public that Federal prisons and correctional facilities are required to make available.

S. 3201

At the request of Mr. COTTON, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3201, a bill to establish a joint United States-Taiwan Infectious Disease Monitoring Center to serve as an early warning center in the case of an infectious disease outbreak in the Indo-Pacific region.

S. 3233

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3233, a bill to help increase the development, distribution, and use of clean cookstoves and fuels to improve health, protect the climate and environment, empower women, create jobs, and help consumers save time and money.

S. 3318

At the request of Mr. COTTON, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3318, a bill to deter foreign financial institutions from providing banking services for the benefit of foreign terrorist organizations and from facilitating or promoting payments for acts of terrorism.

S. 3349

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3349, a bill to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to provide applicants for certain loans and grants with updates

with respect to those applications, and for other purposes.

S. 3356

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3356, a bill to effectively staff the high-need public elementary schools and secondary schools of the United States with school-based mental health services providers.

S. 3375

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3375, a bill to promote travel and tourism in the United States, to improve the health safety and security of international flights entering the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 3382

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3382, a bill to prohibit the Administrator of the Small Business Administration from directly making loans under the 7(a) loan program, and for other purposes.

S. 3403

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) were added as cosponsors of S. 3403, a bill to prohibit the disbursement of Federal funds to State and local governments that allow individuals who are not citizens of the United States to vote in any Federal, State, or local election.

S. 3407

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3407, a bill to promote security partnership with Ukraine.

## STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. HAWLEY, Mr. HOEVEN, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LANKFORD, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. MORAN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 3412. A bill to prohibit the use of Federal funds to enforce the rule submitted by the Department of Health and Human Services relating to COVID–19 vaccine and mask requirements for Head Start programs; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 3412

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the ''Preventing Mandates on Toddlers Act''.

**SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON FUNDING THE HHS RULE ON HEAD START COVID VACCINE AND MASK REQUIREMENTS.**

Notwithstanding any other law, no funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Health and Human Services shall be obligated or expended to—

(1) implement or enforce the rule submitted by the Department of Health and Human Services relating to ''Vaccine and Mask Requirements To Mitigate the Spread of COVID–19 in Head Start Programs'' (86 Fed. Reg. 68052 (November 30, 2021)); or

(2) promulgate, implement, or enforce any rule, regulation, or other agency statement, that is substantially similar to the rule described in paragraph (1).

By Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. PADILLA):

S. 3422. A bill to establish a grant program to support schools of medicine and schools of osteopathic medicine in underserved areas; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, communities of color and those living in rural and underserved areas face significant barriers to healthcare, including physician shortages that have only been exacerbated during the COVID–19 pandemic. Unfortunately, in many communities of color and rural areas, there are few pathways to enter the medical profession. While medical school enrollment is up by 30 percent, the number of students from rural areas entering medical school declined by 28 percent between 2002 and 2017, with only 4.3 percent of all incoming medical students coming from rural areas in 2017. Similarly, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students face several barriers to matriculate and graduate from medical school, and there is significant underrepresentation of these students at all U.S. medical schools with the exception of historically Black medical schools. These medical schools represent 2.6 percent of all medical schools but 15 percent of Black medical students, indicating the important role that these institutions play in increasing the diversity of the physician workforce. Health outcomes for patients of color improve when they receive care from doctors of their own racial or ethnic background, and the shortage of providers of color exacerbates the barriers to care that these communities experience. The COVID–19 pandemic worsened long standing health inequities, and it is critical that we expand the diversity of our physician workforce to tackle these rampant disparities and the systemic biases within our health care system.

This is why I am introducing the Expanding Medical Education Act, which aims to tackle the lack of representation of rural students, underserved students, and students of color in the physician pipeline by encouraging the recruitment, enrollment, and retention of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The bill would provide grants through the Health Resources and Services Administration, HRSA, to colleges and universities to establish or expand allopathic or osteopathic medical schools in underserved areas or at minority-serving institutions, including historically Black colleges and universities, HBCUs. These grants can be used for planning and construction of a medical school in an areas in which no other school is based; hiring diverse faculty and staff; recruitment, enrollment, and retention of students; and other purposes to ensure increased representation of rural students, underserved students, and students of color in our physician workforce.

Our rural communities and communities of color face significant challenges accessing healthcare. It is time our physician workforce reflected these communities. We need to diversify our physician pipeline and change the disparity in representation, and this bill will help get us there. I am proud to reintroduce this important legislation to help us get one step closer to ensuring communities across Virginia and the Nation have access to the medical professionals they need. I hope the Senate passes this legislation quickly.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. LUJÁN):

S. 3427. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a Neuroscience Center of Excellence; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President I rise today with my colleague, Senator BEN RAY LUJÁN, to introduce the Neuroscience Center of Excellence Act of 2021, legislation that would establish a Neuroscience Center of Excellence at the Food and Drug Administration, FDA. This program would be modeled after FDA's Oncology Center or Excellence, which was authorized through the 21st Century Cures Act. Building off that successful and bipartisan model, I hope we can make critical advances for those living with neurological diseases.

In July, FDA's Director of the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research testified that neuroscience is an area of medicine where there is tremendous unmet need, and neurodegenerative diseases are particularly challenging from both a research and a drug development perspective. I have seen this firsthand as founder and cochairman of the Senate Alzheimer's Disease Caucus. I have vigorously advocated for record funding increases to support additional NIH research over the past 25 years. Over the past year, many have noted the success of Operation Warp Speed and wondered why we can't achieve the same rapid progress in other health conditions.

The Neuroscience Center of Excellence would encompass more than 20 neurological diseases, including conditions that are very rare. For example, Huntington's disease is an inherited

disease characterized by the progressive loss of brain and muscle function. It has sometimes been described as having ALS, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's simultaneously. It is an autosomal dominant condition, so families with a history of Huntington's disease can see it appear in every generation. In Maine, Nancy Patterson has seen Huntington's disease in four generations of family. In addition, I lost a friend and coworker in former Senator Bill Cohen's office to this devastating disease. Sadly, there is no cure.

Through our bill, this new Neuroscience Center of Excellence would establish several programs aimed at supporting innovation. The first is to identify some of the current and emerging regulatory science and public policy challenges associated with developing medical products for neuroscience diseases and disorders through a series of public meetings and guidances. The Center of Excellence would also establish a program to facilitate both the collection and the systematic use of patient experience data in the development of medical products for neuroscience diseases and disorders.

Another component of the Center's work would be around using digital technologies, an area of much promise. In 2018, the National Academies of Medicine Forum on Neuroscience and Nervous System Disorders hosted a workshop on using mobile technology to advance research and treatment of central nervous system disorders. As Dr. William Marks, head of clinical neurology at Verily Life Sciences, observed, the current state of assessing brain disorders is ''exquisitely crude'' and there is a large unmet need for better measures of disease burden that are objective, quantitative, more frequently measured, and in the context of normal life.

Finally, the center would help promote inclusion of traditionally underrepresented populations in the research and development of medical products for neuroscience diseases and disorders through public meetings and industry guidance. Senator LUJÁN and I have worked together on this issue before as part of our Equity in Neuroscience and Alzheimer's Clinical Trials Act of 2021. Whether the barrier to participation is a distrust of the medical community or logistics concerns like time and travel, we need to overcome those hurdles in order to ensure the best possible science.

Researchers from the University of South Florida looked at the nine most prevalent and costly diagnosed neurological disorders and found the annual cost totaled nearly $800 billion. We desperately need to change this trajectory and renew our focus on these critical unmet needs. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

## SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

### SENATE RESOLUTION 480—TO SUPPORT AN INDEPENDENT AND DEMOCRATIC UKRAINE AGAINST ANY FURTHER RUSSIAN MILITARY INVASION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. PORTMAN, Ms. ERNST, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. RUBIO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.:

S. RES. 480

Whereas, on August 24, 1991, the Ukrainian parliament voted overwhelmingly for independence from the Soviet Union and set December 1, 1991, for a national independence referendum;

Whereas, on December 1, 1991, more than 90 percent of Ukrainians voting in the referendum supported independence;

Whereas, by December 25, 1991, the United States joined more than 20 countries, including Russia, in recognizing Ukrainian independence;

Whereas the newly independent Ukraine, while rich in natural resources and human talent, also inherited endemic corruption, an aging Soviet infrastructure, government mismanagement, and significant economic challenges;

Whereas the newly independent Ukraine also inherited one of the world's largest nuclear weapons arsenals;

Whereas, on December 5, 1994, Ukraine joined the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom in signing the ''Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances,'' in which it agreed to remove all nuclear weapons from its territory in exchange for assurance that Russia would respect its sovereignty;

Whereas, on February 8, 1994, Ukraine was the first member state of the Commonwealth of Independent States to join the Partnership for Peace program of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and has since been recognized as an Enhanced Opportunities Partner;

Whereas, on November 22, 2004, Ukrainians peacefully took to the streets in protest of a fraudulent presidential election, beginning the Orange Revolution and resulting in new free and fair elections;

Whereas, on November 21, 2013, peaceful protests began on Independence Square (Maidan) in Kyiv against the decision by then-President Viktor Yanukovych to suspend signing the Ukraine-European Union (EU) Association Agreement and instead pursue closer ties with the Russian Federation;

Whereas the Maidan protests quickly drew thousands of people and broadened to become a general demonstration in support of Ukraine's integration with the European Union and against widespread Yanukovych regime corruption;

Whereas, from February 18-20, 2014, an estimated 104 people were killed and 2,500 injured as a result of violent crackdowns by authorities against protesters;

Whereas, beginning February 20, 2014, the Russian Federation clandestinely invaded Ukraine, with Russian troops claiming to be Ukrainian separatists, and since then have militarily occupied the regions of Crimea and Donbas;

Whereas, on February 22, 2014, and following months of protests, the Ukrainian Parliament voted to remove President Yanukovych and hold early presidential election in May;

Whereas, on May 25, 2014, President Petro Poroshenko was elected on a message of strengthening Ukraine's territorial integrity, negotiating with Russia, and strengthening ties with Europe;

Whereas, on July 17, 2014, Russian-backed separatists shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine with Russian missiles, killing all 298 people on board;

Whereas, on September 5, 2014, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) signed the Minsk Protocol aimed at ending the conflict, which the Russian Federation continued to violate;

Whereas, on February 12, 2015, a new package of measures to end the conflict in Ukraine was signed, known as Minsk II, provisions of which have still not yet been fully implemented;

Whereas at least 14,000 Ukrainians have been killed defending their homeland and millions more displaced since the conflict with Russia began;

Whereas, on September 1, 2017, the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement came into force;

Whereas, on April 21, 2019, President Volodymyr Zelensnky was elected on a platform of fighting corruption and restarting peace talks with Russian-backed separatists;

Whereas, on July 16, 2019, the United States Senate unanimously passed S. Res. 74 (116th Congress), marking the fifth anniversary of Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity by honoring the bravery, determination, and sacrifice of the people of Ukraine during and since the Revolution, and condemning continued Russian aggression against Ukraine;

Whereas, in early and again in late 2021, Russia deployed a massive troop and weapons buildup on the border with Ukraine;

Whereas, on December 1, 2021, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that if Russia decides to once again ''use force against Ukraine, then we have made it clear. . . during the NATO Foreign Minister meeting in Latvia today that Russia will then have to pay a high price; there will be serious consequences for Russia. . .And that's a clear message from NATO.'';

Whereas, on December 7, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden warned Russian President Vladimir Putin that the West would impose ''strong economic and other measures'' if Russia invades Ukraine; and

Whereas, on December 12, 2021, at a meeting in Liverpool, delegates of the Group of Seven (G7) released a joint statement saying, ''Russia should be in no doubt that further military aggression against Ukraine would have massive consequences and severe cost in response. . . We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the right of any sovereign state to determine its own future.'': Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved,* That the Senate—

(1) denounces the current Russian military buildup on the Ukraine boarder as provocative, reckless, and contrary to established international norms;

(2) reaffirms unwavering United States support for a secure, democratic, and independent Ukraine free to choose its own leaders and future;

(3) reaffirms unwavering United States and NATO commitment to support the continuing efforts of the Government of Ukraine to restore its territorial integrity by providing consistent political and diplomatic support and additional lethal and non-lethal security assistance to strengthen the defense capabilities of Ukraine on land and sea and in the air; and

(4) calls on the Government of the Russian Federation to abide by commitments agreed to in 2014 and 2015 in the Minsk agreements.

## SENATE RESOLUTION 481—URGING THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO RECOGNIZE THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ROBERTO CLEMENTE'S PLACE OF DEATH NEAR PINONES IN LOIZA, PUERTO RICO, BY ADDING IT TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. PADILLA, Ms. WARREN, Mr. LUJÁN, and Ms. DUCKWORTH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

S. RES. 481

Whereas Roberto Clemente was a renowned baseball player born on August 18, 1934, in Carolina, Puerto Rico;

Whereas Roberto Clemente started playing for the Pittsburgh Pirates of the National League in Major League Baseball in 1955, and went on to play for them for 18 seasons, becoming a baseball legend;

Whereas Roberto Clemente won the 1960 and 1971 World Series Championships with the Pittsburgh Pirates, the 1971 World Series Most Valuable Player Award, the 1966 National League Most Valuable Player Award, 15 All Star selections (1960-1967, 1969-1972), 12 consecutive Gold Glove Awards (1961-1972), 4 National Batting Titles (1961, 1963-1965, 1967, 1969), and hit the only walk-off, inside-the-park grand slam home run in professional baseball history on July 25, 1956;

Whereas Roberto Clemente became the first Latin American ballplayer to reach 3,000 career hits on September 30, 1972;

Whereas Roberto Clemente enlisted into the United States Marine Corps in 1958, and served as an infantryman for 6 years until 1964, when he was honorably discharged;

Whereas Roberto Clemente embodied the values of a model citizen through his acts of service and humanitarian efforts toward those in need, regardless of their location;

Whereas Roberto Clemente was on his way to selflessly provide humanitarian aid to earthquake-ridden Nicaragua when he died;

Whereas the plane that Roberto Clemente was on crashed into the ocean shortly after taking off from Isla Verde International Airport/Aeropuerto Internacional de Isla Verde on December 31, 1972;

Whereas Roberto Clemente was only 38 years old when he passed away;

Whereas Roberto Clemente was the first Puerto Rican inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973;

Whereas Buenaventura Boulevard was designated as the Roberto Clemente Memorial Roadway by the Osceola County Board of County Commissioners in 2015;

Whereas Stonewall Jackson Middle School was renamed Roberto Clemente Middle School by the Orange County School Board in September 2020;

Whereas Stonewall Jackson Road, a mile-long stretch of road off of Semoran Boulevard, was renamed for Roberto Clemente by the Orlando City Council in June 2021;

Whereas a portion of Route 21 in Newark was designated as the Roberto Clemente Memorial Highway by the New Jersey Legislature in June 2016;

Whereas the Paterson School District, the City of Paterson, and New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation inaugurated the New Roberto Clemente Middle School in April 2005;

Whereas the Paterson School District designated an elementary school the Roberto Clemente Elementary School in September 1975;

Whereas the Newark Board of Education designated an elementary school the Roberto Clemente Elementary School;

Whereas The Roberto Clemente Little League in Branch Brook Park in Newark, New Jersey, is named in his honor;

Whereas Roberto Clemente was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Presidential Citizens Medal, and the Congressional Gold Medal for his civic and charitable contributions; and

Whereas the crash site in the adjacent area to Playa Aviones in the municipality of Loíza, Puerto Rico, was the last place where Roberto Clemente graced this world 49 years ago: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved,* That the Senate requests that the Secretary of the Interior recognize the crash site of Roberto Clemente's airplane and the adjacent land by adding the site to the National Register of Historic Places.

## SENATE RESOLUTION 482—RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALASKA NATIVE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT AND THE LASTING IMPACT OF THAT ACT ON THE STATE OF ALASKA AND ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE

Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs:

S. RES. 482

Whereas the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) (referred to in this preamble as ''ANCSA'') was signed into law on December 18, 1971, to settle longstanding issues of Alaska Native aboriginal land claims in the State of Alaska (referred to in this preamble as the ''State'');

Whereas the 1970s welcomed a new era of Federal Indian policy, one of economic and self-determination, with the passage of ANCSA;

Whereas title to 44,000,000 acres of land and $962,500,000 were transferred to Alaska Native people as a result of the land claims settlement under ANCSA, including—

(1) title to property in the clearly defined traditional homelands of Alaska Native people; and

(2) money to help compensate for the land Alaska Native people would not receive;

Whereas the purpose of the land claims settlement under ANCSA was to ensure the social and economic well-being of Alaska Native people without creating a lengthy wardship under the Federal Government;

Whereas ANCSA mandated—

(1) the creation of—

(A) 12 land-owning and for-profit Regional Corporations covering all of the State; and

(B) 1 non-land-owning Regional Corporation for non-residents of the State; and

(2) the incorporation of over 200 Village Corporations and Urban Corporations within each region of the State, either as for-profit or nonprofit corporations, with the land, assets, and businesses of those corporations to be owned by Native shareholders;

Whereas ANCSA redefined Alaska Native land ownership by conveying Native-owned fee simple title to the newly-created Native Corporations and, through those Corporations, to Alaska Native shareholders of each Corporation, rather than using the land ownership model used in the 48 contiguous States of designating reservations held in trust by the Federal Government;

Whereas, recognizing the uneven distribution of natural resources in the State among the 12 regions in the State, subsections (i) and (j) of section 7 of ANCSA (43 U.S.C. 1606) include provisions that reflect the Alaska Native values of sharing and cooperation;

Whereas, under section 7 of ANCSA (43 U.S.C. 1606)—

(1) 70 percent of the annual revenues of each land-owning Regional Corporation derived from the land of that Regional Corporation are required under subsection (i) of that section to be shared with all other Regional Corporations; and

(2) Regional Corporations are then required, under subsection (j) of that section, to share 50 percent of the revenues described in paragraph (1) with—

(A) the Village Corporations and Urban Corporations that are located in the same region as the applicable Regional Corporation; and

(B) the at-large shareholders of the applicable Regional Corporation;

Whereas each Regional Corporation, at times, has received more shared revenue under section 7(i) of ANCSA (43 U.S.C. 1606(i)) than internally produced revenue, demonstrating the importance of incorporating the Alaska Native values of sharing and cooperation into ANCSA;

Whereas, under ANCSA during the 50-year period preceding the date of adoption of this resolution, Alaska Native people have managed their land successfully, fostering sustainable businesses and creating employment opportunities for all Alaskans, Native and non-Native, and people across the United States and around the world;

Whereas ANCSA has benefitted all Alaskans—

(1) through diversifying the economy of the State; and

(2) by bringing revenue and expertise back to the State through Native Corporation business ventures in the national and international realms;

Whereas ANCSA has been amended by almost every Congress since the enactment of that Act in 1971, with some of the most significant and lasting amendments being enacted in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Amendments of 1987 (Public Law 100–241; 101 Stat. 1788) (commonly known as the ''1991 amendments'') (referred to in this preamble as the ''1991 amendments'');

Whereas among the provisions in the 1991 amendments was an extension of the prohibition on the sale of Native Corporation stock in perpetuity unless a majority of all shareholders of the applicable Native Corporation voted to remove that restriction, which—

(1) enabled shares to be held mostly by the Alaska Native people; and

(2) allowed Alaska Native people to pass that stock from 1 generation to the next and, as a result, increase the number of Alaska Native shareholders in a Native Corporation;

Whereas another provision in the 1991 amendments allowed shareholders of each Native Corporation to vote to include descendants of original shareholders born after the date of enactment of ANCSA to become shareholders regardless of date of birth;

Whereas the pioneering work of Alaska Native leaders of the mid-20th century created a lasting legacy of professional, personal, and historic economic success;

Whereas Alaska Native people have prospered from their own initiative and innovative approaches to fostering economic development through self-determination;

Whereas Alaska Native resiliency, leadership, and relentless work ethic have developed and supported some of the previously

most underserved regions in the United States into some of the most thriving, improving life expectancy and health conditions in those very regions;

Whereas subsequent to ANCSA ushering in the era of self-determination in Federal Indian policy, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.) (referred to in this preamble as the ''ISDEAA'') was enacted in 1975;

Whereas the ISDEAA defined Native Corporations as Indian Tribes for the purposes of that Act;

Whereas, because of the ISDEAA, federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes and Native Corporations have worked together to serve as providers for health, housing, and other Tribal services;

Whereas, beyond monetary benefits to shareholders, Native Corporations, through the structure and mandates of ANCSA, provide countless additional benefits, including—

(1) scholarships;
(2) burial and funeral assistance;
(3) internships;
(4) language revitalization programs;
(5) careers; and
(6) culture camps;

Whereas education has, and continues to be, a key focus for Regional Corporations, which is evidenced by the fact that all 12 land-owning Regional Corporations have—

(1) education foundations to help support shareholders and descendants who want to advance their educational endeavors; and

(2) as of the date of adoption of this resolution, awarded more than 54,000 individual scholarships;

Whereas Alaska Native people hold numerous positions of leadership in the State and beyond, inspiring younger generations of Alaskans;

Whereas further improvements to ANCSA must continue in order to fulfill all of the promises of ANCSA and all of the promises made by the Federal Government to Alaska Native people;

Whereas the dedication and enthusiasm of the next generations of Alaska Native leaders honors the previous generations of Alaska Native leaders who worked diligently to achieve the most significant Native land settlement in the history of the United States;

Whereas, with the adoption of Senate Resolution 351, 112th Congress, agreed to December 17, 2011, the Senate recognized the importance of ANCSA; and

Whereas the people of the United States have reason to honor the tremendous educational, social, political, economic, and cultural achievements of Alaska Native people over the past 50 years: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved,* That the Senate—

(1) recognizes December 18, 2021, as the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) (referred to in this resolution as ''ANCSA'');

(2) commemorates the extensive achievements made by Alaska Native people through the implementation of ANCSA, while simultaneously maintaining their culture, traditions, and ways of life, during the 50-year period preceding the date of adoption of this resolution; and

(3) celebrates the successes of Alaska Native people during that 50-year period, with optimism for the next 50 years and beyond.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I mentioned that I came to the floor to speak about a significant matter for Alaska. It is a significant milestone for my State. Just 2 days from now, on December 18, we will mark the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act being signed into law by President Nixon back in 1971.

For those who are not familiar with Alaska's history, ANCSA, as we call it, is one of the foundational laws for my State. It settled aboriginal land names. It chartered hundreds of Alaska Native corporations to own lands and to empower their Alaska Native shareholders.

Now, this structure is very unique. I think most of us think about a corporation and you think about an IBM or a General Electric, but an Alaska Native corporation and the shareholders who are part of them are very, very different from the corporate structure that most know.

This approach that was arrived at with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was new. It was a clear, clear departure from the reservation model in the lower 48. It ushered in a new level of economic self-determination through private land ownership.

Alaska Native leaders took a look at the reservation system that was throughout other parts of America, and in most of them—not all, but most of them—decided on another path, saying: That is not the route that we would take.

They wanted to manage their lands, manage their resources on their own terms, and to have greater economic prosperity and independence.

So in Alaska, we have 229 Tribes in the State, and, as someone who comes from a State where you do have many Tribes, I think it always gets people's attention when I say we have about 40 percent of the Tribes in the Nation that are located in Alaska.

ANCSA established more than 200 village corporations along with regional and urban corporations. And under this settlement, Congress transferred some 44 million acres of land in Alaska to the private ownership of these newly created corporations. They also appropriated $962 million in compensation. So there was the transfer of ownership, as well as the conveyance of dollars.

So as shareholders, the Alaska Native people would then be able to decide for themselves how to use, how to protect, and how to guide development of their lands and their resources. As Marlene Johnson put it, ANCSA meant that Alaska Natives ''were able to surround and put their arms around the land that belonged to their forefathers and will belong to their grandkids,'' and she said, ''That is really important.'' It really is.

Today the economic success of ANCSA is as self-evident as it is self-determined. ANCSA has positively impacted not just Alaska Native people but Alaska as a whole. ANCs, as we call them, have become key economic drivers, creating jobs and industry in Alaska but also across the country and even around the globe.

ANCs consistently rank as the top 10 Alaska-owned businesses by gross revenue, and many of the largest office buildings and employers in Anchorage and Fairbanks and Juneau are home to ANCs.

They also provide important services for their people, like scholarships and cultural stewardship, often through their nonprofit foundations. Because of ANCSA, significant investments have been made in real estate, construction, tourism, workforce development, professional services, and so much more.

We have also seen the very clear benefit of resource development. We see this up in the NANA region with the Red Dog Mine. We are hoping that can be replicated at prospects like Donlin Gold in the Calista region. Revenue sharing—very, very unique within ANCSA—revenue sharing with village corporations and leadership in the area of cultural resource protection—we see that down in the southeast region. These are just a few of the examples of where ANCSA really got it right.

As we look back at ANCSA, we recognize that there were many, many people who helped to make it happen—not just President Nixon, as I mentioned, the congressional delegation, of course, but more importantly, the many strong Alaska Native leaders, like Emil Notti, Etok Edwardsen, and John Borbridge, among many, many others.

We are fortunate that some of the key ANCSA advocates are still with us today, but, sadly, many of the visionary leaders who were so instrumental in the negotiations have passed on, and there are far too many to mention here, but I will share the story of one of them.

Don Wright, this individual right here, was born in Nenana back in 1929. He is shown here with Ted Stevens, over to the right. This is Don's wife Carol, and this is the Senator from Vermont, Senator Stafford.

Don was known for his charisma and his skill as a negotiator and a political leader. Many Alaska Natives at the time were just very, very personally invested in this effort, and he was one who really led in this. He personally contributed to the advocacy effort, both in time and money. Don led that, along with others.

He and others spent nights sleeping on the streets here in Washington, DC, or in the Halls of Congress. They maxed out credit cards to pay for the long trips all the way from Alaska to come here to DC to the Capitol. Don once paid the way for 20 Alaskans to travel with him to lobby for the legislation. He was really all in. He fought tirelessly to secure Native land rights.

He was president of the Alaska Federation of Natives when ANCSA actually became law. He was able to meet with President Nixon in 1971 to encourage passage of the bill and was truly a driving force behind the effort.

He framed it well by saying that year:

> The President and the Congress must decide whether this last chapter is to be written in dignity or dishonor.

I think, thanks to Don Wright and many other Native leaders, it was written in dignity.

I am really very, very humbled by all of the incredible people who helped

shape ANCSA, many of whom I am fortunate to know and to call my friends. It is a privilege to be able to honor and thank them here on the Senate floor for their fortitude, their determination, and their perseverance.

I remain unwavering in my commitment to help today's leaders as we continue to improve ANCSA and ensure that the Federal Government upholds its promise to Alaska Native people.

Now, we say around here all the time that there is no law that we have written and passed that is perfect, and ANCSA is certainly no exception. It is really a living document, if you will, still changing, still evolving. There are gaps; we recognize that. There are shortcomings, and we still have unfinished business, important issues that we have to resolve. One of these is recent, unfortunately, and it does not involve amending ANCSA, but, instead, it calls for flexibility for the unique corporations it created.

After the COVID pandemic struck our country, those of us in Congress came together. We were seeking to pass the CARES Act to provide relief across the spectrum. As part of that—and I was really very pleased to be able to be part of that effort that was able to dedicate significant funding for Tribes and Tribal entities. It was $8 billion that was dedicated for Tribes, Tribal entities, including ANCs.

But ANCs' eligibility for that funding was quickly challenged despite the very clear intention here in Congress. The case ultimately went to the Supreme Court. It wasn't decided until June 25 of this year, when they ultimately prevailed.

As a result of that litigation, ANCs received their allocations under that CARES funding, but they only recently received this. So they got the litigation through, and they received their allocation but very late. But now we have a new problem. The new problem is, that CARES Act money needs to be spent by December 31—a matter of a couple weeks. That is just not right. That is not fair here. It is clearly not long enough to be able to responsibly utilize these very important funds, and it is really not fair as a result of the litigation they faced.

So the congressional delegation—Senator SULLIVAN, Congressman YOUNG, and I—is seeking to extend the deadline through the end of next year. We are basically saying: Look, fair is fair. ANCs should have the time that they need and that others had.

While the Senate has agreed to pass a broader bill that includes this extension, it is stalled over on the House side and really has left us with no clear path forward, even at this very late hour. So that is something I am asking my colleagues and the administration for their support on in gaining this flexibility.

Another top priority for me is something that was left out of ANCSA all those years ago. Five communities in Southeast Alaska were missing from its text and therefore unable to create what we call urban corporations. Today, this is a 50-year injustice for these five Alaska Native communities of Haines, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, and Tenakee. I have had the privilege to live in Wrangell and to be born in Ketchikan, so these are communities that are pretty close to my heart.

The situation in terms of being left out was challenging enough. It is not made easier by their location in the Tongass National Forest. But I would remind the Senate that they and their ancestors lived in this area. They took care of these lands long before the Federal Government came along and made the designation of a national forest.

That nearly all of their region has since been taken and classified as a Federal forest is no reason to refuse to acknowledge and work with us on this. So I have recently reintroduced legislation to allow those five southeast communities to receive their rightful land entitlements under ANCSA.

I would urge my colleagues, take a look at this. Recognize that this is a matter of the Federal Government making good on its promise to thousands of Alaska Natives. I would ask that you would join me and Senator SULLIVAN and Congressman YOUNG as we work to advance this bill into law, as we, again, continue to address unfulfilled promises within ANCSA.

A third matter is a provision in ANCSA that, quite honestly, is just outdated, no longer needed.

Congress, in trying to do the right thing, required village corporations to take a portion of the lands they received under ANCSA and give them to the State of Alaska to hold in trust for future community needs.

Fast-forward some 50 years, and many of these lands are simply being held in trust now even though they are not needed for municipal purposes and quite likely will never be. It is just time to end that requirement and enable the village corporations to receive these lands back if they so choose.

We also have to remember that this is a land settlement, but it is not fully implemented. Keep in mind—it has been 50 years now. It is a land settlement that hasn't been implemented fully after 50 years. A total of 5.5 million acres are still under interim conveyance, and another 1.5 million acres remain unconveyed from the original entitlement.

We have to provide the resources to the Department of the Interior to complete this very important work.

There are at least four more issues that we need to help resolve as well that I will mention.

The first here on this list is really concerning to me, and it is actually really very devastating when you think about it. This is the matter of contaminated lands. This problem is not only not going away, it is getting worse.

It really pains me to say, but significant lands in Alaska, including formerly used defense sites, were contaminated. The Federal Government knew they were contaminated, but they were still conveyed to the ANCs as contaminated lands, and the government is saying: OK. This is part of your land settlement. We are going to give you these lands, but you can't use these lands because they are contaminated.

There are horrible consequences that we are seeing to this. We have clusters of illnesses, cancer. I just had a report that was presented to the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention just this past week. This is causing real suffering, true consequences, death in these communities.

It is no fault of the people who live there and received these lands in settlement from the Federal Government. It is a Federal responsibility for us to take care of this, so we have a plan we have—we have a plan in the sense that we have identified where these contaminated lands are, but what we need is a comprehensive plan in terms of the action, what we are actually going to do to clean up the land and make it right and make it right as soon as possible.

Another issue that we need to resolve is the issue of ''afterborns.''

The day that ANCSA became law, December 18, 1971, was kind of an arbitrary deadline, if you will, for Alaska Native people to be included in its benefits. So if a Native person was alive on the date of enactment, December 18, 1971, they were included as an eligible shareholder in the ANCSA corporation that aligned with their traditional Tribal homelands. But if a Native person, even from the same family—same area, same family—if they were born after December 18, 1971, they were not included, and they did not receive shares in any Native corporation. So what you had, you created two distinct classes of Native people. You had original shareholders and nonshareholder descendants—they call them afterborns—who were effectively disenfranchised from the benefits that Congress intended for them.

There was a past amendment to ANCSA that dealt directly with this issue but didn't sufficiently solve this problem. This was an effort that we advanced several years ago, a decade or so. Congress has allowed ANCSA corporations to open enrollment to descendants through an affirmative vote of their current shareholders. As a result, what we have seen is that about 5 regional corporations have opened enrollment, and about 5 of the more than 200 village corporations have done the same. Unfortunately, so many of these small village corporations that want to open enrollment simply can't afford this process. It is a relatively complicated process.

This is a problem that we are probably going to have to address legislatively—not by directing Alaska Natives on what to do but by providing some support and resources so that

they can make that choice at their discretion.

One of the more significant promises made to Alaska Native people dealt with the issue of subsistence.

In Alaska, subsistence is hunting, it is fishing, and it is gathering. It is inextricably tied to Native culture. It is food security for places where grocery stores simply don't exist, or if they do exist, the food is so expensive that the average family can't afford it. So this is, again, something where we need to find fair solutions for Alaska Native subsistence rights.

The last issue I will bring up today is something too significant not to acknowledge. ANCSA was meant to be a fair and just settlement, accomplished rapidly, with certainty and in conformity with the real economic and social needs of Native people without litigation. Congress wrote that into ANCSA itself. Yet, in reality, ANCSA severed Alaska Tribes from the Tribal land base.

While many Alaska Native people are owners in Native corporations that manage Native traditional homelands, Alaska Tribal governments were not a consideration in the law. Alaska Tribes, whose collective aboriginal land rights led to the creation of ANCSA, were left without a viable resource stream to effectively govern. They, too, need tools and resources to create opportunities, and that is also an issue that we must consider in going forward.

But all of this—all of this—requires education and understanding. That is going to be key, and that has been, unfortunately, lacking—severely lacking—as we have seen, repeatedly, misguided attacks from Members here in Congress against ANCSA and its corporations. I will tell you, it is hard to express how frustrating that is, how infuriating these attacks truly are. But one additional benefit of this 50th anniversary is the opportunity that it provides us to help Congress, to help the administration, to help, really, the American public understand ANCSA and the promises that were made within that settlement act.

Alaska Pacific University and the Wilson Center's Polar Institute have held a series of events that are free for anyone who wants to learn and understand more about ANCSA. The Ted Stevens Foundation is developing a documentary on this. Indian Country Today, First Alaskans magazine, Alaska Public Media, and the Anchorage Daily News, among others, have all published long-form articles, exploring ANCSA's history, its meaning, its impacts, and its future. So I would encourage folks to take a look at that.

I think it is also important to remember that, while ANCSA's passage ushered in a period of self-determination and self-governance for Alaska Native communities, it provided opportunities for these communities to really look to the future. In short, ANCSA was designed to address the past by looking to the future.

At the annual meeting of the Alaska Federation of Natives, which, I mentioned, just took place earlier this week, I reflected and recognized the generation of Alaska Native leaders who fought for the passage of ANCSA. It was their efforts that helped pave the way for the many Alaska Native youth who may be watching back in Alaska, across the country, and maybe even around the world. I want them to know about the work that was done to pass this historic law and how it is appreciated. As I reflect here today on the passage of this important law, I am hopeful about what ANCSA will represent for our Alaska Native youth in the future.

My colleague Senator SULLIVAN and I have introduced a resolution to ensure that the U.S. Senate recognizes the 50th anniversary of ANCSA. Our resolution acknowledges the incredible accomplishments that Alaska Native people have made through their ANCs over these past 50 years. There are many successes to acknowledge and to celebrate, but in its text, we also reflect on the work that is left ahead and the promises left unfilled—the promises the Federal Government has made to Alaska Native people that must be honored.

So I thank Senator SULLIVAN for standing with me to submit this important resolution, which acknowledges the tenacity of the Alaska Native people and the success of ANCs over the past 50 years. I know that the dean of the House, Congressman YOUNG, joins with us in acknowledging this golden anniversary.

I would certainly encourage all of those who have had an opportunity to hear my comments—I know my colleague Senator SULLIVAN is going to speak later as well—to just take a bit of time to better understand this foundational law for Alaska Natives' self-determination.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, today I introduced a resolution with Senator MURKOWSKI celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act—ANCSA, as we call it back home in Alaska—which was an enormously consequential piece of legislation that, after years and years of debate right in this body, passed the House, then passed the U.S. Senate, and then was signed into law by President Nixon on December 18, 1971, almost exactly 50 years ago to this day. It was a great day for Alaska.

I know Senator MURKOWSKI was on the floor earlier talking about ANCSA and why it is so important and why in Alaska, right now, we have been celebrating 50 years of this important piece of legislation.

I want to go back in time a little bit to help explain, because part of what Senator MURKOWSKI and I do here is we are constantly talking about and educating our colleagues about this very unique legislation, which happened right here in the U.S. Senate.

If you go back in time to 1867, that is when the United States purchased Alaska from Russia. Within the agreement, there was acknowledgement of the Alaska Native people and their lands, but, still, almost 100 years after the purchase from Russia, even following statehood for Alaska, the claims settlement that the Native people had to their own lands was still in limbo.

It got a kick and a turbo charge when oil was discovered on Alaska's North Slope during a worldwide shortage, which created new urgency to develop Alaska for our resources but to do so by settling these land claims.

There were allies in the Federal Government who were helpful, but it was truly the Alaska Native people and their determination to themselves and to future generations and their resiliency and brilliance which led to the passage of ANCSA 50 years ago, which became the largest and, certainly, most innovative indigenous land settlement, certainly, in U.S. history, and it is no exaggeration to say probably in the world—44 million acres of land going to the Native people of my State.

It brought tremendous educational, social, political, economic, and cultural achievements for the Alaska Native people. It certainly wasn't perfect, but this body played a very important role.

Now, there were obstacles, challenges. In fact, when you look back on the history over 50 years ago, it was kind of a classic David-and-Goliath story.

Let me spend a few minutes going back in time to set the stage for what was happening in Alaska.

In 1954, the U.S. Department of the Interior did a health survey on the Native people of Alaska. Here is a quote from that survey: ''The indigenous people of Native Alaska are the victims of sickness, crippling conditions and premature death to a degree exceeded in very few parts of the world. . . . health problems are nearly out of hand. If . . . Americans could see for themselves the large numbers of the tuberculosis, the cripple, the blind . . . the malnourished, the desperately ill among [this] relatively small [Native] population,'' it would have a profound impact on them. And it did.

Even in the face of these crippling conditions, the Alaska Native people joined hands, joined hearts and said: This is our land. We need rights to it.

They did this by coming together. In the mid-1960s, they formed the Alaska Federation of Natives—AFN, as we call it back home—an entity that is very important to our communities.

Of course, the Native people in our State looked for potential allies. In the lower 48, they gave speeches. They wrote columns. They formed their own newspaper, The Tundra Times, edited by legendary Howard Rock, which was highly read throughout the State, celebrated throughout the globe, and had an enormous impact on bringing people together.

A few years ago, my team and I combed through some of the hearings

that led to ANCSA. It was many years in development. There were field hearings that took place in Alaska in 1968, 1969—3 years before the passage of ANCSA.

Incredibly proud and determined first peoples from all over the State—Tlingit, Haida, Athabascan, Inupiat, Yupik, Aleut—travel to Anchorage, to Fairbanks to give their testimony in field hearings to U.S. Senators. Some of them had never even left their villages. Some of them didn't even speak English.

Many were veterans—and I am going to talk briefly about that. Dozens and dozens of young men and women, old men and women, all of them testifying before U.S. Senators and Congressmen, telling their stories of how they lived off the land and the rights that they needed for thousands of years on the land.

They told stories of strong and resilient people who had been able to thrive in some of the harshest conditions in the planet. But as I mentioned earlier, they also told stories of health challenges.

The first AFN president, Emil Notti, who is still a great leader in Alaska, then only 36 years old, spoke with passion at these hearings and heartbreak about the conditions in rural Alaska.

He said to a group of Senators in a hearing:

> The indigenous people of Native Alaska are the victims of sickness, crippling conditions and premature death to a degree exceeded in very few parts of the world.

He told the committee then that life expectancy for the average Native Alaskan was 34 years old. This is in the late 1960s. The average life expectancy in the United States at that time was 69—34 years old to 69.

Many spoke of how much they had sacrificed for their country. And this is an issue I never tire of talking about. Alaska Natives serve at higher rates in the U.S. military than any other ethnic group in the country. So they are fighting for their country in World War II and Korea and Vietnam, and they are coming home and they are being denied fundamental rights themselves.

Here is what Jerome Trigg, a leader and a marine from Nome, had to tell U.S. Senators who were in Alaska. His testimony was said to have brought tears to the eyes of many. He looked at the U.S. Senators and said this: We have showed our patriotism as proudly as any Americans on Earth. We have answered the call of duty with pride in serving in our military. In World War II, we answered the call 100 percent. Every man—old and young—in every village volunteered with the Alaska National Guard.

On Vietnam, which was raging at the time, he said: I have never heard of an Alaska Native burning their draft card or our Nation's flag. We love our land, and we will sacrifice and fight to protect it.

He concluded with this thought, which I love: ''Sometimes I think the wrong people are running this hearing and taking our testimony,'' he said to the Senators. ''It seems that [maybe] we should be on the bench and you people should be . . . giving [us] the testimony.''

I love that—strong words from Marine Jerome Trigg, who had a very important point to make.

So many in our communities testified in front of Congress. One happened to be a beautiful, young Alaska Native woman in her thirties from the village of Rampart named Mary Jane Fate, who not only worked on this but came to Washington, DC, to lobby U.S. Senators to pass ANCSA. I had the very great privilege of being the son-in-law of that great Native woman who, unfortunately, passed away recently. That was my mother-in-law, Mary Jane Fate, who came to this body and made sure Senators understood what was happening in Alaska and got them to vote for ANCSA 50 years ago.

So here is what it did in a nutshell. As I mentioned, it was the largest indigenous land settlement in the history of the country: 44 million acres of land, almost a billion dollars from the State and Federal Government to transfer land in fee simple—not the reservation system like you have in the lower 48, which was a huge innovation at the time. They own this land. It is theirs. It is not held in trust by the United States like it is in the lower 48 on Indian reservations.

Congress mandated the creation of for-profit Alaska Native corporations solely owned by Alaska Native shareholders. Twelve of these regional corporations and 200 village ANCs were created by the Congress. Sometimes people talk about ANCs as if they were some foreign entity. They were actually created right here 50 years ago.

What did all of this do? It provided economic opportunity. These were not typical entities, but they were more than just corporations. They were kind of a combination: social, cultural, economic. They passed on the values to the different shareholders.

One of the great things about ANCSA was that it required, actually, the sharing of revenues. Some of these regional corporations did very well; others didn't. There were provisions early on that said, if these corporations are doing great and these aren't, there is going to be some sharing. It was called the 7(i) provision. These provisions have been critical to the survival of ANCs, which regional ANCs at times, as I mentioned, were receiving more revenue than others.

So that day 50 years ago—December 18, 1971—was really an important day for our State. How has it worked out? It has worked out well, but, of course, we always have more work to do.

Over the last 50 years, the Alaska Native people have managed their lands to foster sustainable businesses, created employment opportunities for all people—Native and non-Native—in Alaska, across the country, and across the globe. They have become the heart and soul of our economy in Alaska, employing thousands of both Alaska Native and non-Native people.

And they have prospered with their own initiative and with innovative approaches to fostering economic development through self-determination. And beyond the economic benefits, these ANCs, these groupings, these shareholders in these Alaska Native entities created right here on this floor, provided benefits in terms of culture, language revitalization, scholarships, burials, funeral assistance, and an enormous focus on education. Over 54,000 individual scholarships were given to younger Alaska Native people.

And, importantly, this law, passed by this body, gave the Native people the opportunity to thrive; to continue to live on their land, practice their culture, create leaders throughout the State. In what was once one of the most impoverished places in the country are now, in many areas, strong, dynamic—health, education, housing, food security, and sanitation have all improved immensely.

We have a long way to go. There is still a lot of misunderstanding. In Alaska, you have Tribes, Tribal members, you have ANCs, and shareholders. These are the Native people. You have crossover. And sometimes there is a misunderstanding.

For example, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act specifically excluded tens of thousands of Alaska Natives because they were members of an organization that Congress created. My own view was that was outrageous.

So that is why we need to keep educating our colleagues here. But overall, this was a story of success, of resilience, of what can happen when you allow people to take charge of their own destiny. It is a story of self-determination and, in many ways, heroism, and it is a story for the ages.

I am honored to represent these people, wonderful people—many of whom the leaders are still alive who made this happen 50 years ago—and their children and grandchildren. We have more work to do, but 50 years ago, on December 18, 1971, it was the start of a new, positive, innovative chapter in the history of Alaska. And that is why Senator MURKOWSKI and I wanted to celebrate this very important milestone this afternoon.

## AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have 3 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standng Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Senate on Thursday, December 16, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on a nomination.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 16, 2021, at 9 a.m., to conduct an executive business meeting.

## APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to Section 1295b(h) of title 46 App., United States Code, as amended by Public Law 101–595, and upon the recommendation of the Chairman of the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, appoints the following Senators to the Board of Visitors of the United States Merchant Marine Academy: The Honorable MARIA CANTWELL of Washington (ex officio as Chair, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation); The Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH of Illinois (Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation).

## ORDERS FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Friday, December 17; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Gawande nomination; further, that the cloture motions filed during yesterday's session of the Senate ripen at 10 a.m.; and that if any of the nominations are confirmed during Friday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, for the information of Senators, the first vote of the day is expected at 10 a.m. We expect additional rollcall votes throughout the day.

## ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senator SULLIVAN.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO SHARI DAUGHERTY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, it is Thursday. The Senate is still very busy here. We have a lot of work to do, as we are all trying to get home for the holidays. And I thought it was still the appropriate time to come down and talk about somebody who is making our State such a great State, somebody who is contributing to the community, somebody who I refer to as our Alaskan of the Week.

Now, we have been doing this for, gosh, going on almost 6 years, maybe 5 years. But it is always one of my favorite times of week, even when the speech is late. So I appreciate the majority leader and the Presiding Officer letting us stay open here for one more speech. And I know the pages—I mean, they love the Alaskan of the Week. So this is a little bit of a treat.

But I always start this speech with a little bit of an update on what is going on in Alaska. So right now, Utqiagvik, formerly known as Barrow—that is Point Barrow. That is the northern most community in North America. They haven't seen the sun in nearly a month. The sun went down, and it is not rising again until January 23. So they get a lot of darkness. There are 66 days of darkness. Great people up there. Wonderful people up there. I love it up there.

We have had some pretty significant cold spells already. That, for now, doesn't seem to be lifting. It was 40 below 0 in Fairbanks yesterday. In Anchorage, the high was 4 degrees above 0. Forty below is chilly. Tough people throughout the State. Four degrees above is pretty cold for Anchorage.

But everybody is excited because Christmas is right around the corner, and it is, of course, a great time to be in Alaska. We do have a place—I was just talking with the Presiding Officer and the majority leader. We have a great community in Interior Alaska called North Pole, AK. Santa actually lives there. We have a city council member in North Pole named Santa Claus, and a reindeer there.

And, of course, I am like everybody else here, looking forward to getting home, going to Midnight Mass, eating my special Alaska seafood Newburg, having friends over, and family, of course. And I think we all know we are very fortunate. I, certainly, believe I am a very blessed man.

And we are blessed in Alaska because of people like Shari Daugherty, who is our Alaskan of the Week. And so I want to talk a little bit about Shari because what she has done is literally the definition of the Christmas spirit.

For the last month, as she has done for the last 30 years, she has been working pretty much around the clock, volunteering her time for the nonprofit Share the Spirit. Share the Spirit—that is the nonprofit that Shari helped found in 1992—30 years.

Share the Spirit's mission is to make sure that hundreds of less fortunate families in Homer, AK, her hometown, get all of the ingredients for a proper Christmas dinner and presents for the kids.

Share the Spirit—it sounds pretty simple, but, as you can imagine, this is no easy task. And Shari would tell you that it involves so many others in Homer to make sure that the children in the community, who might not otherwise have anything under the tree, can experience the magic of Christmas that every child deserves.

So who is Shari, this great volunteer who has been doing incredible work in Homer? Originally from Chico, CA, Shari and her parents moved to Homer when she was in the 10th grade. Her father was a fisherman.

And for those of you who have been to Homer or want to come to Homer, I will tell you, it is one of the most stunningly beautiful places in all of America—really, in all of the world. It is known as the ''Halibut Fishing Capital of the World.'' But anyone who goes there falls in love with Homer. It is surrounded by the glistening waters of Kachemak Bay, jagged mountains, glaciers, snowcapped volcanoes, and a great tight-knit community.

After college at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, Shari moved around a little. But in 1991, she came back home with her daughter. She did so because she had family there in Homer. And even if she didn't, as she put it, she had a whole town full of family in Homer.

Now, volunteering was in her blood. She said her mom stressed the importance of giving back to the community since she was a young girl. So she almost immediately joined the Emblem Club. That is the unofficial auxiliary of the Elks. And during one of their first meetings, it was announced that a Christian minister's group that every year provided food and presents for people in the community was actually going to disband.

A meeting was called. The talking lasted for a very long time—at such volunteer meetings, that can happen, of course—until Shari finally cut in and said: Hey, guys, we are really burning daylight here. Here is what needs to happen: We need to form a committee, form a plan, form a nonprofit, and get busy—get busy.

And as such things go, she and another woman, Norma Foust, were put in charge. And boy, did they make a difference. That year, with Christmas only weeks away, a nonprofit was formed and a fundraiser to organize with the help of a strong community. They put together 57 baskets of food: turkey, stuffing, potato, sugar, salt, eggs, celery, pie crusts, cards with recipes on them—all the fixings for a nice

Christmas dinner. And then there were the presents for more than 100 children. There were 220 gifts that first year, 30 years ago.

And the program has grown ever since. Hundreds of families each year are referred to Shari's program by social agencies, including food banks and anywhere people go for help. The information is passed on to Shari and the whole Share the Spirit team. Each family is identified by their needs: a family of three, say, with a 4-year-old girl who needs boots and would like a princess costume. They are then assigned a number that goes onto a Christmas decoration and put on one of the numerous trees posted by local businesses in Homer. Homer residents pick up a decoration and buy the presents. It is pretty well organized.

And Shari and the volunteers then get busy organizing a huge spaghetti feed to raise the funds, and then they go shopping for the food.

A few days before Christmas, the group stages the location, normally at the high school. The presents and the food baskets are then disbursed.

As I mentioned, Shari has done this for 30 years—30 years—and throughout the years, many stories and people stand out.

This is Alaska. So, of course, this was the year of the huge blizzard. Nobody could drive. So they enlisted a club of snow machine riders to deliver the presents and the food throughout the area.

There is the woman who now lives in Pennsylvania, who lived in Homer for a while, with a young child. That child, because of the group, was able to experience Christmas. And now, like clockwork, this woman sends a quarterly donation to Share the Spirit.

You see how the spirit is literally being shared all over the country: Alaska, Homer, Pennsylvania.

There are many people now adults, some with children of their own, who got help, who got presents because of Share the Spirit and are now regular volunteers. Shari knows of many people who got presents as children because of her group's efforts and decided to stay in Homer, have families of their own, and now help out at Share the Spirit. She said: They decided that this is where they were going to live. This is the town they are going to live in and to contribute to, because this is the place that took care of them when they were young and needed it.

Shari is retiring this year from both the program and from her job as a medical biller at South Peninsula Hospital. She will be leaving Share the Spirit in good hands, though: Kelly Glidden, who began volunteering as a sixth grader in 1993; John Adams, who started when he was 8 years old volunteering; and Emmy Olsem Drye, who has been involved in Share the Spirit since she was 3, and who is also Shari's daughter. They will take on the mantle of this great volunteer effort, focused on the Christmas spirit, that Shari started.

And there are those who have been there since the beginning: DeeDee Shoultz and Fran Van Sandt.

And then there is the great community of Homer—a community that takes care of its own.

So thank you, Shari, for all you have done throughout the years—three decades to keep the Christmas spirit alive. Thank you for making our State a much better place, a more generous place, a caring place for all, and touching the lives of so many, and especially for making sure that children in Homer and across Alaska—and really across America—experience the joy and the magic of Christmas. Congratulations, Shari, on being our Alaskan of the Week, and Merry Christmas.

I yield the floor.

## ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8:37 p.m., adjourned until Friday, December 17, 2021, at 9:30 a.m.

## DISCHARGED NOMINATION

The Senate Committee on the Judiciary was discharged from further consideration of the following nomination pursuant to S. Res. 27 and the nomination was placed on the Executive Calendar:

HOLLY A. THOMAS, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT.

## CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 16, 2021:

### SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

KAREN JEAN HEDLUND, OF COLORADO, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD FOR A TERM EXPIRING DECEMBER 31, 2025.

### DEPARTMENT OF STATE

R. NICHOLAS BURNS, OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA.

### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

LISA W. WANG, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE.

MARIA LOUISE LAGO, OF NEW YORK, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE.

### IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

*To be vice admiral*

REAR ADM. COLLIN P. GREEN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 154 AND 601:

*To be admiral*

ADM. CHRISTOPHER W. GRADY

### DEPARTMENT OF STATE

RASHAD HUSSAIN, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

THOMAS BARRETT, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG.

RAMIN TOLOUI, OF IOWA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS).

### DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

SHANNON CORLESS, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INTELLIGENCE AND ANALYSIS, DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY.

### DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

KURT D. DELBENE, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY).

### IN THE ARMY

ARMY NOMINATION OF TODD E. MOSZER, TO BE MAJOR.

### IN THE SPACE FORCE

SPACE FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MARC D. DANIELS AND ENDING WITH JAY M. STEINGOLD, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON DECEMBER 7, 2021.

### FOREIGN SERVICE

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ARTHUR W. BROWN AND ENDING WITH PETER C. TRENCHARD, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JUNE 22, 2021.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH RAHEL ABOYE AND ENDING WITH KYRA TURNER ZOGBEKOR, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JUNE 22, 2021.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ADAM JEFFREY ABRAMSON AND ENDING WITH JESSICA TORRES YURCHESHEN, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON OCTOBER 27, 2021.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MARIO D. AMBROSINO AND ENDING WITH CRISTOBAL ZEPEDA, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON OCTOBER 27, 2021.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH NICHOLAS R. ABBATE AND ENDING WITH MARIA E. SNARSKI, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON OCTOBER 27, 2021.