

To me, the future of the U.S.-Mexico relationship is important. It is one that we all ought to care about. I think the opportunities are there for us to engage in strategic partnerships with Mexico in a number of ways—for example, dealing with the asylum problem that Secretary Nielsen has already begun to negotiate.

Through our partnership, we can work together to solve this migrant crisis by improving the economy and the opportunities that people have to live and work in their home country, as well as to protect trade, which supports so many jobs here in the United States.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Justin George Muzinich, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, the Senate will soon cast the first procedural vote on the nomination of Justin Muzinich to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. I am going to oppose this nomination, and I would like to lay out exactly why, beginning with a basic rule that I intend to maintain going forward.

If a Treasury nominee says the Trump tax handouts will pay for themselves, I intend to oppose them. The reason why is that by sticking with this debunked claim, you are basically laying out the economic policy version of being a flat-earther. You are either peddling an idea you know is untrue, or you can't do math. Either way, you shouldn't have a pivotal, powerful job at the Treasury Department.

When Mr. Muzinich came before the Finance Committee for his nomination hearing, it was a titanic battle just to try to get him to offer any kind of substantive answer on pretty much anything. One question he finally answered straight up was whether he agreed that the Trump tax handouts would "pay for themselves and reduce our deficits." There he gave a one-word response, which was "yes."

Some call this trickle-down economics. Others call it voodoo economics. I call it, plain and simple, rainbow and unicorn math. No matter what you call it, it just isn't connected to reality. The Trump tax handout will not pay for itself, and even after independent, nonpartisan economic analyses demonstrated that was the case and even after months of data were released showing that the Trump tax law has failed to live up to the administration's fantasy land promises, Mr. Muzinich continues to cling to this false claim.

I will give him credit. He has what my relatives call—what Jewish people call—chutzpah, but that sure isn't going to win him my support.

In my judgment, it also raises a fundamental question of honesty. Before his nomination hearing, newspaper reports ran glowing quotes about him from several key officials at the Treasury Department. They praised Mr. Muzinich's financial expertise, and they talked about the expansive role he would play in a whole host of areas at the Treasury Department—not just tax policy but debt management. Republican committee members talked all about the work he had put into the development of the Trump tax law.

I was pretty interested in Mr. Muzinich's substantive views on these big questions because I had read these glowing tributes from his colleagues, and I thought, well, if we are going to have someone promoted to this important position, we really ought to get a sense of what he believes on the really important, substantive economic issues. So I began to ask the nominee about these questions, and he, as I indicated, just put any response sort of in the "well, I couldn't possibly get into that" category.

I wanted to know why because, eventually, we got around to his saying that he really wasn't going to get into these issues because he said if he was confirmed, he would just be, in his words, a "building manager."

A building manager is somebody who doesn't get praised by his colleagues as being an expert on debt management and tax policy. Building managers have important responsibilities. They are involved in things like acoustics and ventilation. They have responsibilities. That is what building managers do. They certainly don't have duties like those described by Mr. Muzinich's colleagues.

I had some real difficulty reconciling the way his own colleagues described him in these important publications and what he told me about his responsibilities as the building manager. I think he really is not reflecting what his job is all about, and the fact that he would misrepresent that to me in our discussions prior to his nomination—he misrepresented to the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee in charge of the nomination—is, in my view, very troubling.

I also have had very serious questions about the way Mr. Muzinich re-

sponded to my questions about the Trump administration's new policy—really, just a couple of months old—that would open the floodgates to more foreign dark money in American elections. We all know from this last election about what dark money means.

We had our airwaves and TV sets, from sea to shining sea, dominated by television commercials that had a tag line on it—something akin to "Americans for high school football" or "Americans who believe in our flag," or various other things that none of us would possibly disagree with but that would in no way reflect who actually paid for that commercial that found its way to our TV sets.

There were increased floods of dark money commercials through the past November election, and right before that, the Trump administration adopted a rule that would make it even easier for foreign dark money to make its way into our elections.

We will be talking about that rule later this week. There is going to be an effort with Senator TESTER and me to overturn that flawed policy, but the fact is that this is something that an individual who was nominated for the important position Mr. Muzinich seeks would have some views about and particularly because the rule change—the rule change made by the Trump administration to allow more dark money in American elections—was announced just hours after the American people learned about the illicit activities that an accused Russian spy Maria Butina had used to infiltrate conservative groups and undermine our democracy.

So if that were a coincidence, that the Trump administration announced this new rule to make it easier for foreign dark money to make its way into our elections—announced just a few hours after the American people learned about Maria Butina—I have to tell you that it is a coincidence for the ages.

The Trump administration and other officials, of course, say that Maria Butina was just an innocent college student attending American University. I don't know of many college students who go to South Dakota with an NRA political operative to set up a shell company. That is not common behavior for an American college student. Yet, given the fact that the Trump administration had made it easier to get foreign dark money into our elections—and a common vehicle for doing that would be one's using a shell company—it certainly, again, raises very troubling signs that a nominee for this key position will take no position whatsoever on something so important as that of protecting our elections.

The fact is, with this new policy, the President is essentially blinding law enforcement and telling foreigners and dark money groups that it is open season for election cash to flow.

I asked Mr. Muzinich about this. I asked: What do you think about this

problem in terms of preventing foreign influence and enforcing election law? I couldn't get a straight answer. Finally, he told me: "The intent was to further efficient tax administration."

I can tell you something. I don't think Maria Butina was interested in anything that had to do with efficient tax administration. I don't think she was interested in anything close to that when she went to South Dakota with an NRA operative to set up a shell company. Maybe this was just Mr. Muzinich's way of dodging the question. If not, then he is basically suggesting that it is just fine with him for special interests and foreign actors to buy American elections because they may be able to sell the American people on the proposition that makes tax reporting easier.

I have said before that I don't agree with every Treasury nominee on every issue from the Trump administration. I realize that. Then there have been individuals on key economic questions whose nominations I have supported. I thought Jerome Powell, who was Donald Trump's nominee, was a very wise choice to head the Federal Reserve. I have supported the President on important economic positions, and I voted for plenty of Republican nominees to the Treasury Department before. Yet I do expect nominees to be straight with me and with the committee. After all of the bobbing and weaving on issue after issue, this is a nominee who doesn't come close to passing that bar. In my view, he has not met the commonsense, basic test of giving some sense of where he stands on the important issues.

I see my good friend and seatmate on the Finance Committee who is here, and we talk often about these issues.

I will just say to my colleagues that the proposition that Mr. Muzinich is going to be the building manager for the Department of the Treasury is just a little bit much to swallow when you look at what his colleagues said he had talked about in the past with respect to tax management and tax reform and other important questions.

Finally, in Mr. Muzinich's claiming that the Trump tax handouts will pay for themselves, he has failed on that issue by \$1.5 trillion. I am not going to support a nominee for this position who is going to bring unicorn and rainbow fantasies to tax policy and to these key questions that are so important to the American people. I urge my colleagues to oppose the nomination of Mr. Muzinich.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

AMERICA'S SPACE PROGRAM

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I rise to speak on a subject that our colleagues know is very dear to my heart—America's space program. Although this is the last of many, many floor speeches I have made on the subject, I stand before the Senate with a heart that is full of gratitude, joy, and

hope for the future of our space program.

I have been extremely privileged to have witnessed and in some cases to have participated in the extraordinary triumphs of our Nation's 60-year quest to explore the heavens. I flew to orbit and marveled at the beauty, fragility, and seemingly peacefulness of Mother Earth, our planet.

I had the honor of making that trip with one of the finest crews to have ever flown in America's space program. There was CAPT Robert "Hoot" Gibson, our commander, as well as Maj. Gen. Charlie Bolden, Retired, our pilot, who flew five missions—four as commander. Of course, General Bolden ultimately became the Administrator of NASA for the entire time of the Obama administration. There was Dr. George Nelson, otherwise known to all in the astronaut office as Pinky. There was Dr. Steve Hawley, Dr. Franklin Chang-Diaz—the first Hispanic-American astronaut—and Bob Cenker, who was an engineer at the time with RCA, which was the satellite that we launched while in orbit.

It was a profound and humbling experience that reinforced my belief that we needed to not only be good stewards of our planet but that we should always try to treat others with whom we may differ culturally, ethnically, or socially with dignity, compassion, and respect.

In looking back at Earth from the window of a spacecraft, you don't see political divisions, racial divisions, religious differences. You don't see the suffering or the injustice that face those back home on the planet. Instead, you quickly realize that we on this planet, our planet Earth, are all in this together.

I have been filled with wonder over some of the greatest scientific discoveries of our age—the discovery of the signs of water; the discovery of, perhaps, even life on Mars; the discovery that our galaxy is full of countless planets—many of them, very possibly, inhabitable; and the discovery that our universe is being driven apart by mysterious forces known as dark energy and is filled with a mysterious material known as dark matter.

Along with my fellow Americans, I grieved when, tragically, we lost two space shuttles and the brave astronauts aboard. I have grieved as we have lost astronauts along the way, even in the Apollo 1 fire. I grieved with America as we thought *Apollo 13* was lost and how, miraculously, in one of NASA's greatest success stories—with three humans on the way to the Moon when the explosion occurred and not having any idea how we could get them back—the whole NASA team came together. The engineers, the mathematicians, the astronauts on the ground, the controllers, and the contractors all devised a way to bring back Jim Lovell's crew.

As everyone in NASA's family is keenly aware, navigating the heavens is as dangerous now, if not more so, than the crossing of the oceans was 100,

200, 300 years ago. Leaving the relative safety and comfort of home to explore new frontiers is every bit as important now as it was then. We must proceed with caution lest we foolishly put the lives of the explorers at risk, but we must also proceed with courage lest we risk remaining stuck on the ground.

I have also had the honor of collaborating with heroes like John Glenn, Tom Stafford, and Neil Armstrong on the future of our space program. I have been very proud to have played a little part in the establishment of our thriving commercial space industry with the drafting and passage of the Commercial Space Launch Acts of 1984 and 1988, back when I was a young Congressman, and to have witnessed the rise of and contributions of present-day space entrepreneurs like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos.

At the same time, I appreciate the steady hand and transformative contribution of the NASA leaders, like Charlie Bolden, Bill Gerstenmaier, and Bob Cabana. I can't help but remember the guiding hand of George Abbey—that was so strong—at the Johnson Space Center, and I have celebrated the long overdue emergence of female superstars, like Marilyn Hewson and Gwynne Shotwell, amongst the space industry leadership.

It has been a pleasure working in Congress with a number of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance the space ambitions of our country because, as I have said many times before, space is, and should always remain, a nonpartisan issue. NASA is a nonpartisan Agency.

I am also encouraged by NASA Administrator Bridenstine's leadership in his early tenure at the helm of this Agency, and I wish him much success. I applaud him for continuing to make good on his promises to keep NASA out of partisan politics and to heed the advice of the Agency's talented and experienced space professionals and scientists.

NASA is a unique Agency, the head of which is like the Department of Defense. The Secretary of Defense is not looked upon as partisan; neither is the Administrator of NASA.

I could not be more gracious and humbled to be here today and to tell you, as we celebrate NASA's 60th birthday this year, our space program has a spectacular and an exciting future. It is a future full of opportunity, and it is a future that will require everyone—industry, Congress, and the Agency, as well as our international partners—pulling in the same direction to make it a reality.

If you go back a few years to 2010, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and I recognized back then that we had set NASA's human space flight program on its current dual path, to build private sector capabilities in low-Earth orbit and a government-led program for deep space and, ultimately, Mars. We recognized some of the misdirection and lack of direction the space program

had; it needed direction. Once Kay Bailey Hutchison and I passed the NASA authorization in 2010, that dual-path approach started to bear fruit, including our recapturing of a majority of the global commercial launch market—a market we had almost completely lost to overseas competitors.

We are also constructing the building blocks of the systems that will take us to Mars. In the last administration, President Obama said: We are going to Mars. Within a year, we should have two different U.S. vehicles safely transporting our astronauts to and from the International Space Station, which will allow us to increase the number of crew aboard the station and dramatically bolster our research there. It is research that will ultimately help us on our journey to Mars with humans.

I remain confident that we will continue to operate the ISS well past the middle of the next decade. As a matter of fact, Senator CRUZ and I are still trying, in this Congress, to get the date for the International Space Station extended to the end of the decade. It would be foolish to dispose of the orbital laboratory—designated a national laboratory, which is our toehold on the space frontier—just as it is reaching the most productive period, and that is what it is doing in its research on orbit.

There is still a lot more work to be done. We must focus our technology investments to ensure that the journey to Mars is safe, productive, and affordable. We need new propulsion systems to get us to Mars faster. Those are in the stages of research right now. As we begin conducting human missions farther and farther from Earth, we must ensure that each activity gets us closer to achieving the goal—which President Obama laid out for the decade of the 2030s—of “boots on Mars.”

We also need to prepare workers for the high-tech, good-paying jobs of the 21st century. It has been one of my singular achievements to have worked with other leaders in government and in industry to help bring about the dramatic modernization of the historic launch infrastructure at Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center.

All of these exciting developments would not have been possible without the talent, dedication, and commitment of the thousands of workers who poured their hearts and souls into the space shuttle and the space station. That same dedication and pride of accomplishment continue today with the building of new spacecrafts like Dragon, Starliner, and Orion.

A few short years ago, business at the cape was much different than it is today. Commercial launch companies were looking elsewhere to take their business, despite all of the available infrastructure and the amazing workforce on the Space Coast. Too much bureaucracy stood in the way of progress.

To address the problem, I convened the top leaders from the Air Force, NASA, and the FAA in Chairman

Rockefeller's office. I brought an aerial photo of all of the abandoned launch pads at the cape and got their commitment to work together with the private sector to bring these pads back to life. It is just amazing from that photograph to see all of those launch pads—all of which the older generation will remember gave so much inspiration to America in its early space days—abandoned. They are now roaring back to life with launches and landings on those very same pads.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge, as I already have, Senator CRUZ and his leadership, along with many of my colleagues here, for joining me in the fight to pass legislation to force the Agencies to reduce the overlap and duplication in regulations. I am grateful to have worked with so many to pave the way for the exciting future that lies ahead for commercial space endeavors.

I thank the Appropriations Committee, and I thank the leadership of the Appropriations Committee, including the Senator here on the floor, the Senator from Vermont. The proof is in the pudding how, over the years, they have provided the appropriations as we have brought NASA back to life on this dual track of commercial launches, going to and from low-Earth orbit, as well as exploring the heavens, which is NASA's mission.

I can also say that proof is in the pudding of the space launches coming back to life because Cape Canaveral hosted two-thirds of the nearly 30 American launches last year. The day is fast approaching when we will see multiple launches on the same day, as well as the largest, most powerful rocket ever assembled lifting off from the launch pad, beginning our journey to Mars.

Quite simply, jobs and ingenuity are soaring because rockets are soaring. As go Florida's Space Coast and the Houston area, so goes the U.S. space industry as a whole.

As we continue to move forward, it is also imperative that we continue our world-leading science and aeronautics activities. NASA pursues some of the most challenging and enduring questions facing humanity: How does life come to exist? Are we alone? What is to become of us and our planet? Engaging and empowering the U.S. science community should remain a top priority, enabling us to find new discoveries and to inspire and motivate future generations of scientists and engineers.

History has shown us that the nations that cease to explore begin to decline and collapse. It is our very nature, as Americans, to explore. Would humanity still exist if humans had not spread from Africa, to Asia, to Europe, to the Americas, and eventually to the remote reaches of the Arctic and the isolated islands of Polynesia? Would we, as a nation, have fulfilled our destiny if we did not push our frontier forward? I think not. Will humanity still

exist far in the future if we choose to stop exploring now?

The cosmos offers us limitless opportunities to expand—not just to survive but to thrive. Imagine the first baby boy or girl born away from planet Earth. Imagine the first artist to paint a sunset on Mars. Imagine our solar system inhabited by 100 billion dreamers, innovators, and creators. Imagine a future where those people—perhaps the grandchildren or great-grandchildren of those in primary school today—look back on our era as the time when humanity began to journey outward.

I believe that as we discover and experience the wonders of the cosmos, we will achieve the greatest outcome of all. We will find that our home planet Earth and all of the life and love that inhabits it have become even more beautiful and all the more precious to us.

With that I say, resoundingly, onward and upward. As the command given from the ground after the space shuttle has passed through maximum dynamic pressure, as the main engines have throttled back and the shuttle has ascended into the atmosphere and the mission can press forward to orbit, the command is given: Go at throttle up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, of course, the senior Senator from Florida can speak from experience because he has been there—something no other Senator currently serving has ever done.

I believe they are bringing a chair over. If not, I will go get it.

On Friday, December 21—coming up fairly soon, just 11 days from today—the continuing resolution, what we call a CR, under which much of the government currently operates, is going to expire. Now, if we don't pass the remaining seven appropriations bills—bills that I believe the Senate is prepared to pass—the government will shutter the doors of nine Federal Departments and dozens of Agencies, and services the American people rely on will grind to a halt, coincidentally, just 3 days before Christmas.

There is absolutely no reason for the government to shut down. The Senate and House Appropriations Committees have been negotiating for weeks. I commend those Senators on both sides of the aisle. They have worked with us and certainly our staffs in conducting these negotiations.

We have a seven-bill minibus that would fully fund the Federal Government through the remainder of the fiscal year. We are very close to a deal. Six of the seven bills are nearly complete. Most of the funding issues are resolved. Only a few policy issues remain. A few hours of debate, and they would be all done.

Because we are the United States of America and we have to care about all

parts of the country, we are working on a disaster package for the victims of Hurricanes Florence and Michael, the California wildfires, the Hawaii volcano, the earthquake in Alaska, and other disasters from this year that have devastated the homes, communities, and lives of so many of our fellow Americans. These bills could be finished in short order, they could be put before the Congress for a vote—I suspect they would pass virtually unanimously—and then sent to the President for his signature into law.

So Republicans and Democrats have worked together. The appropriators have worked together. There is only one thing standing between fully funding our government and a shutdown; that is, President Trump. For months now, he has repeatedly called for a government shutdown unless we provide \$5 billion for his boondoggle border wall. Last month alone, President Trump publicly threatened to shut down the government over his wall at least five times, saying things in his Presidential statements, as we are pointing out here, such as: “This would be a very good time to do a shutdown,” as though any American believes it is a good time, with disaster funding and everything else pending, for a shutdown.

Those reckless and damaging threats are not new for President Trump. He set a destructive and uncompromising tone for our negotiations earlier in the year saying: “I would shut it down over this issue.” Then, something I never thought I would hear from the President of the United States of either party, he said: “I’d love to see a shutdown,” during a February press conference. This from a man who is supposed to have an obligation to all Americans.

Time and again, though, instead of showing his obligation to Americans, President Trump has used the government and the American people as a bargaining chip for his fabricated solution to his manufactured crisis. Now, just days before the CR is set to expire, the President appears ready to make good on his threat. He wants to score a made-for-reality-TV moment, and he doesn’t care how many thousands of hard-working American men and women are going to suffer for it.

We have been negotiating the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill for weeks, but as we get closer to the December 21 deadline, the President is digging in. His position is: Fund the wall—his wall—or he will shut down the government.

The President likes to stir up drama, but a government shutdown is not the backdrop for one of his reality TV shows. A government shutdown is a dreadful thing to do to so many loyal Americans. This is the real world. It has real-world consequences.

I will give some examples. If the government shuts down on December 22, an estimated 380,000 Federal employees will be furloughed without pay just

days before Christmas, never knowing if they will be paid. Nearly 430,000 Federal employees, including FBI agents, U.S. marshals, the Coast Guard, Border Patrol, and TSA employees will be forced to work without pay. The Secret Service, which will protect the President if he goes to one of his golf courses over the holidays, will be working without pay, but this is even worse: Millions of Americans—farmers, small businesses, homeowners, veterans, the disabled, and the elderly—will go without the government services on which they rely and for which they paid their taxes. There is no reason for this. In fact, it is unconscionable to put the country through this.

I oppose the President’s plan for a 30-foot-high wall along the southern border, especially—aside from the fact that it will do no good, this is a wall the President gave his solemn promise to the American people that Mexico, not American taxpayers, would pay for. He gave his word over and over and over again at rallies throughout the country, saying Mexico will pay for it. I haven’t seen one cent coming from Mexico, but the President is going to punish the American taxpayers if they don’t pay the money he promised Mexico would pay.

The United States is a country founded by immigrants. Walling ourselves off from our neighbors to the south is not only an expensive waste of American taxpayer dollars, it is immoral, it is ineffective, and it is an affront to everything this country stands for. We are better than this.

In fact, if we do what the President wants to do, we would have to seize land from ranchers and farmers in Texas and other border States—seize land from them that has been in their families for generations. It would require building walls through wildlife refuges and natural preserves. Incidentally, we would end up cutting ourselves off from the Rio Grande in the process because we can’t build a wall down the center of it. Basically, we are saying to Mexico: By the way, we are going to pay for the wall President Trump promised us you would pay for, and to help you out, we are going to give you the Rio Grande. You can have our half too. This is a cockamamie idea.

After all that and billions of wasted taxpayer dollars, what would be accomplished? Would it stop people from fleeing violence in their home countries and seeking sanctuary? Of course not. Would it stop drug smugglers and human traffickers from engaging in illegal activity? Definitely not. In fact, as one of my Republican friends said, show me a 30-foot wall, and I will show you a 31-foot ladder or a tunnel.

These are complex issues. We need real solutions, not bumper sticker slogans or angry tweets.

We had such a solution in 2013. The Senate passed bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform. In a 2-to-1 vote, Republicans and Democrats

joined in on comprehensive immigration reform. The Republican leadership in the House would not bring it up because they were afraid it might violate the sacred Dennis Hastert rule, as they said to us.

Everyone agrees we need to keep our border safe and secure. That is not a Republican or a Democratic idea. We all believe our borders should be safe and secure. President Trump is not the first person to say that. We have all said that. In fact, over the last 2 years, we in Congress have invested more than \$3 billion for that purpose. It is the largest infusion of border security funding in recent history.

I am on the Appropriations Committee that gave that money. We have directed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to acquire new technologies that are proven to work on the border and at our ports of entry, purchase new air and marine assets, and hire additional personnel. This approach has resulted in the acquisition of integrated fixed towers on the border, remote video surveillance systems, enforcement helicopters and other aircraft, and upgrades to existing unmanned aerial systems. I have visited the border and seen some of those. For the ports of entry, where the large majority of illicit narcotics and other contraband enter, we have significantly increased funding for nonintrusive inspection equipment, and we have hired over 360 new Customs officers.

These are successes. These are things that work. These are things that do better than we have ever done before, but does the President tweet about this? No. He is fixated on building his wall not because it is good policy, but he hopes it will fire up his base.

This is not about border security, it is about politics, pure and simple.

Over the last 2 years, Congress has provided nearly \$1.7 billion to build or replace fencing on the southern border, but the administration has hardly spent any of that money, and the projects it has undertaken have ballooned in cost. In fact, of the money we gave them, they have only spent 6 percent of the funds—6 percent. This is such an amazing need to only spend 6 percent.

We have recently learned that one project in the Rio Grande Valley that was supposed to cost, according to the administration, \$445 million, will now cost the taxpayers nearly \$787 million, a 77-percent cost overrun, at a pricetag of \$31.5 million each mile. This is not for roads. This is for barriers. The President doesn’t talk about that, nor does he talk about the fact that the American taxpayers will have to pay it, not Mexico.

The administration is not responsible with the money we have already provided. Why trust him to spend responsibly the additional money they demand? The President wants the hard-working American taxpayers, not Mexico—even though he promised American taxpayers, gave his word, that

American taxpayers wouldn't have to pay for this, that Mexico would. Now he says: Forget what I said before. Give me a check for \$5 billion more or I am going to waste hundreds of millions of dollars by shutting down the government. That is a cynical, political stunt.

The President's own budget request to Congress for fiscal year 2019 was \$1.6 billion for his wall, not \$5 billion. I opposed this request when he made it in the spring, and I still do. I don't want to appropriate another dime to advance a nebulous and ineffective agenda that I fundamentally oppose, knowing the President will not keep his word and have Mexico pay for it. Our system of divided government requires compromise, so we came up with a bipartisan compromise to meet the President's \$1.6 billion request, with restrictions on where the money could be used and what type of barriers could be built, such as bollard fencing but not a 30-foot concrete wall. Instead of taking "yes" and declaring victory, the President repeatedly moved the goalpost and redefined the fine print. So much for the "Art of the Deal," more the "Art of the Steal."

By manufacturing a crisis over his wall, President Trump appears willing to shutter the doors of the Justice Department, Farm Service Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, the Small Business Administration, the National Park Service, the Department of Transportation, among others—that is just a few—grinding vital services for the American people to a halt, services the American people have paid for with their taxes, all to protect his ego and satisfy his base.

Actions have real-world consequences for hundreds of thousands of Federal employees and their families and millions of Americans who pay taxes and depend on their government to function properly.

Taxpayers don't send their hard-earned money to Washington so the President can shut down their government. Our job is to be good stewards of taxpayer money, not bend to the whim of the President's tweets. Congress controls the power of the purse, not the President. It is our job to make responsible, thoughtful decisions.

There is a bipartisan path forward. We can pass a seven-bill minibus comprised of bipartisan bills that meet the needs of the country or we can pass a six-bill minibus with a continuing resolution for Homeland Security.

Republicans do control the House, the Senate, and the Presidency, and they are in the driver's seat. The only reason the government shuts down on December 22, 3 days before Christmas, is if the President wants it to and the Republican leadership lets the President close the government. Let's hope that doesn't happen.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order and pursuant to rule

XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Justin George Muzinich, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

Mitch McConnell, Chuck Grassley, Jerry Moran, Lisa Murkowski, John Barrasso, David Perdue, Ron Johnson, Shelley Moore Capito, John Cornyn, Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, Steve Daines, Michael B. Enzi, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Lamar Alexander, John Kennedy, Deb Fischer.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Justin George Muzinich, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 256 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Alexander	Flake	Murkowski
Barrasso	Gardner	Nelson
Blumenthal	Graham	Paul
Blunt	Grassley	Perdue
Boozman	Hatch	Portman
Burr	Heller	Risch
Capito	Hoeven	Roberts
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Collins	Inhofe	Rubio
Cooms	Isakson	Sasse
Corker	Johnson	Scott
Cornyn	Jones	Shelby
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	King	Thune
Cruz	Kyl	Toomey
Daines	Lankford	Wicker
Enzi	Lee	Young
Ernst	McConnell	
Fischer	Moran	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Hassan	Sanders
Bennet	Heinrich	Schatz
Booker	Heitkamp	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kaine	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Manchin	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	Menendez	Warner
Duckworth	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Peters	
Harris	Reed	

NOT VOTING—2

McCaskill Tillis

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 55, the nays are 43.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from New York.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 299

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, reserving the right to object and to take a couple minutes to give the Members the facts they need to make a decision tonight, I want to say a couple things.

I am chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. There are many Members in this Chamber who know their responsibility to that committee is greater than any other. I come down tonight to speak on an issue that has been bothering me and has been festering for years, but nobody has ever done anything about it. Nobody has ever done the hard work of saying this is what we need to do, and this is why we need to do it this way.

Well, the House has finally done it this year, and we have done it.

Granted, this is a UC motion and not a debate on the floor. It is because we finally addressed all the issues everybody said about the blue water bill that they didn't like, except that some people would like to say it differently.

Some people want another study even though we have studied it enough to do it. Some people want to wait until the VA says they need to do this, that, or the other. Some people say the VA could call and will tell you the other. Somebody said we don't even have the right numbers of how many people this might affect. Nobody has the right number about how many people will get sick in the future from a disease we don't know exists until the time they contract it.

What happened in this case is very simple. The Veterans' Administration, years ago, decided if someone contracted one of the cancers of which a contributing factor was napalm and Agent Orange, they qualified for benefits, except if they served on the blue water, which is not the rivers, and didn't serve on the ground, then they didn't. So in other words, we have ground troops who fought in Vietnam. We have river fighters in Vietnam who get the benefit. If you served on a Navy ship carrying napalm, but you never touched the ground and only stayed on the blue water, you are not eligible. So we have two classes of victims who are veterans of the United States of America who fought and risked their lives who have been trying for years to get an equal treatment with their other brothers.