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Senate

The Senate met at 9 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.

Mighty God, who observes all who live on Earth, we give our lives to You this day and trust You with our future. Our times are in Your hands, for without Your power we would not see tomorrow.

As our Senators travel on this journey called life, show them the right path, O Lord. Point out to them the road to follow. Continue to lead them by Your truth, as they place their hope in You.

Lord, thank You for Your compassion and unfailing love.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Florence Y. Pan, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I want to begin today talking about the debt limit by returning to three very frightening statistics.

The first is \$15 trillion. That is the amount of household wealth that a leading economist recently warned could be wiped out of the economy should the government default on its debt.

The second is 6 million. That is the number of jobs that the same analysis said could be lost should a default become a reality.

The third statistic is 9 percent. That is the unemployment rate our country potentially faces if we don't do our jobs to raise the debt ceiling.

Now, none of these statistics, none of these numbers need become a reality if both parties unite in the coming days to pass the continuing resolution sent to us by the House. It would keep the government open for 3 months. It would provide funding for disaster relief and Afghan refugees. And, of course, it would suspend the debt ceiling until the end of 2022 so we can pay for the debt incurred at the end of the previous administration.

Every single Member of this Chamber is going to go on record as to whether they support keeping the government open and averting a default or support shutting us down and careening our country toward a first-ever default.

Democrats will be united in supporting the passage of the CR. It is the right thing to do for the American people, and it would immediately stop

these unnecessary crises that are knocking at our doorstep.

At the end of the day, the only thing that matters in a legislative body is how you vote. That is the most important thing we do. There are many other important things, but that is the one that matters the most. It is what our constituents sent us here to do.

Now, Senate Democrats have said repeatedly that they are all for avoiding a government shutdown. They have said repeatedly that the debt ceiling must be raised.

So I want to offer a novel suggestion: If Republicans want to avoid default, then they should vote yes. If the Republicans want to keep the government open, they should vote yes.

But, incredibly, Leader MCCONNELL, spinning a tail—a web of subterfuge, deception, and outright contradictions—has said that he is going to vote no, and he urges Republicans to vote no.

This is “Alice in Wonderland” logic. Republicans claim to oppose a default, but they are saying they are going to vote for one anyway. They say they oppose a government shutdown, but they are going to vote for one anyway. They say they want disaster relief, but they say they are going to oppose it when the time comes.

So they can resort to all the sophistry they want, but if they vote no, the Republican Party will be solidifying itself as the party of default, and the American people, unfortunately, will be the ones footing the bill—a high cost to pay for Republican games, political games.

By voting to default, the Republicans would be telling the American people they are fine if people don't get their Social Security checks. They are saying they don't care if our veterans are denied benefits. They are saying they don't care if the markets come crashing down, hurting people's pensions and IRAs.

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



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Now, none of this is an exaggeration. Economist Mark Zandi, a former adviser to the late Senator McCain, wrote recently that a default would be “a catastrophic blow to the nascent economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

He also warned that “Americans would pay for this default for generations.” I hope my Republican colleagues heard the last part, as they are thinking of indulging in the political game put forward by Leader McCONNELL. “Americans would pay for this default for generations.”

Of course, we all know by now that the Republican justifications for opposing raising the debt ceiling are entirely bunk. They say they are opposed to new spending, but the Wall Street Journal has said: “Raising the debt limit wouldn’t facilitate future spending, and Congress would still need to raise the debt limit this fall even if no new major spending programs are enacted.”

Do you hear that, Republicans? This is the Wall Street Journal. Even if not a single new spending program were enacted, we would still have to raise the debt that was incurred by President Trump and by all of your votes.

How crass can you be? How heartless can you be? You voted to spend these moneys because of COVID—it was a valid reason—and now you don’t want to pay for it, and you come up with some lame political sophistry, trying to justify it. But everyone sees through that—everyone.

The truth is, we will be voting to pay for the debt accrued under Presidents of both parties, including the \$8 trillion added to the debt under President Trump. Both sides incurred the debt; both sides should pay.

It wasn’t long ago that threatening a default on national debt was something you only heard in the fringes of the Republican Party. About 10 years ago, the Republican Speaker at the time called the idea “insanity.”

But today, it is literally the party line—a sad commentary on just how far down the rabbit hole the Republican Party has gone.

If my Republican colleagues disagree, they have a simple option: They can vote yes to keep the government open. They can vote yes on suspending the debt limit. It is in their hands.

But if Republican votes favor a shutdown and default, the American people will see exactly who is responsible for throwing our country into crisis.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on nominations. Now, on the activity happening on the floor today, thanks to the political stunts and a handful of obstructionist Republicans, the Senate is going to spend a lot of extra time today on something that is generally a routine process: confirming uncontroversial but critical nominees to the Department of State and other important Agencies.

Of all the mandates of the government, there is one that holds impor-

tance above all others: keeping the American people safe from all threats, foreign and domestic.

To fulfill this responsibility, the President relies on a vast army of dedicated public servants across the government. They are the expert diplomats, Under Secretaries, and Assistant Secretaries whom we rarely hear of in the news, but they play an indispensable role in keeping America safe. Oftentimes they are quiet heroes.

But, today, an alarming number of posts essential for our national security remain vacant because a handful of Republicans have decided to hijack the confirmation process and put a hold on not just a few but on many critical nominees.

As a result, today, we are going to have to take the long way to move forward with seven of the nominees currently on hold. We need to get these confirmed as soon as possible. And if the irrational stonewalling by Republicans of these noncontroversial nominees continues, we may need to take this tedious exercise again in a greater magnitude.

The Republicans responsible for holding up these confirmations are deliberately making the American people less safe in a vain and futile effort to enhance their own political fortunes. Every single one of these nominees was reported out of committee with bipartisan support. There is no rational basis for their delay. The fleeting gain these Republicans receive will pale in comparison to the damage they are causing to our country.

It is not just an issue of a few nominees here and there. This is scores of diplomats and other public servants who are unable to get to work because a few Members of this body are holding everything up. It is intentional sabotage of this Chamber’s operation, and it is going to hurt our government’s ability to respond to crises around the world.

Imagine if you dial 911, but nobody has been hired to pick up the phone on the other side. That is more or less what these Republicans are doing to many of our diplomats, who are often the first line of defense when an international crisis breaks out.

Of course, this Chamber, under this leadership, is not going to tolerate a few Members who want to muck up the confirmation process to make a scene. It will just take a little longer to get them done—maybe nights, maybe weekends.

We will focus today on pushing these nominees through for the sake of our national security.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Republicans are shining a spotlight on the reckless taxing-and-spending spree that Washington Democrats are writing behind closed doors. The radical left is pushing in all their chips. They want to use this terrible but temporary pandemic as a Trojan horse for permanent socialism. And President Biden, who ran as a unifying moderate, is either powerless to stop them or does not wish to.

An avalanche—an avalanche—of crushing tax hikes that would hurt families and would help China; a government power grab over more of Americans’ healthcare decisions, childcare choices, family finances, and daily lives; trillions upon trillions more in government spending when families are already facing inflation—none of this, of course, will get a single Republican vote in either Chamber.

Democrats have not even consulted us. They haven’t tried to earn our votes. From the start, they have planned to use a party-line, fast-track process to ram through the Senate this version of their vision of America.

That is why Republicans will not help this unified Democratic government with its basic duty to raise the debt ceiling. This could not be simpler. If they want to tax, borrow, and spend historic sums of money without our input, they will have to raise the debt limit without our help.

This is the reality. I have been saying this very clearly since July, and I think our Democratic colleagues are finally getting it because now they are fumbling for bogus excuses. They remain confident they can spend trillions of dollars to remake the entire economy in a couple of weeks, but, supposedly, they just cannot clear this much smaller procedural hurdle without Republican help. Really? Give me a break.

Earlier this year, Senate Democrats specifically requested and received extra flexibility around the reconciliation process. They have every procedural tool they need to promptly advance a separate stand-alone piece of legislation addressing the debt limit without a single Republican vote. Our colleagues have plenty of time to get this done. It is laughable—laughable—to hear some Democrats claiming they simply don’t have enough time.

Last month, Democrats introduced a sweeping budget resolution on August 9 and passed it before sunrise on August 11—3 days. Our Democratic colleagues have about a month—a month—plenty of time to do their job as a unified government and protect the full faith and credit of the United States.

The Democratic chairman of the House Budget Committee admitted last weekend that Democrats could—could—tackle the debt limit alone, but they just don’t want to. Some Senate

Democrats have said similar things. This may be inconvenient for them, but it is totally possible. And this Democratic government must not manufacture an avoidable crisis for the sake of their own convenience.

Senate Democrats know what they need to do. Let me lay it out. They will need to write a short resolution amending their previous budget resolution with new debt limit instructions. You have to take that to the Budget Committee, which will probably deadlock, so they will vote to discharge it like they have done for other bills and nominations.

Then a vote to proceed on the floor, a limited vote-a-rama, and a vote on final passage. And then, once the budget has been amended, House and Senate Democrats will use the same fast-track process on a short and simple bill to actually raise the debt limit.

This won't be a multiweek process. It is probably about a week of the Senate's time or a little more. And they won't have to wait on their reckless taxing-and-spending spree either. They can move a stand-alone debt limit bill all on its own.

I understand our Democratic colleagues may feel inconvenienced by this. I understand this may slightly delay their partisan bill, but that is a complaint. That is a complaint, not an excuse.

We have a unified Democratic government that has decided to govern alone. They cannot put partisan ambitions ahead of basic duties. The party-line authors of this reckless taxing-and-spending spree will be the party-line owners of raising the debt limit.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. President, now, on a completely different matter, the free world faces many serious threats from rising authoritarians to resurgent terrorists. Even declining authoritarian powers like Russia pose significant challenges. These threats demand clear-eyed leadership of the world's greatest power.

But earlier this week, at the United Nations, President Biden didn't offer a rallying cry for the world to confront those threats. Instead, he tried to turn the page, literally. He bragged that "I stand here today for the first time in 20 years with the United States not at war. We have turned the page." He further claimed that "we have ended 20 years of conflict in Afghanistan."

Well, that is actually news to the Afghans. For them, the conflict continues and, for the terrorists as well, continues for them too. We may be turning the page, but they are not turning a new leaf. The Taliban-Haqqani government in Kabul is just getting started.

Al-Qaida and ISIS-K are not standing down in their fight against the West; neither are Iran's murdering proxy forces all across the Middle East.

Theocratic killers will not simply disarm themselves because our President offered scripted platitudes to United Nations diplomats. To the extent they care about international

norms, it is because they seek to destroy them. They will not be deterred by what our President calls "relentless diplomacy."

Strangely, but fortunately, President Biden's rhetoric does not even match the actions his own administration is taking. Indeed, the day before his speech, the United States targeted an al-Qaida operative in a drone strike in Syria. The President pretends we aren't at war with terrorism, but neither his own team nor the terrorists believe that. Our unilateral retreat from Afghanistan did not magically usher in a truce with terrorists; it just left us much less able to monitor and combat them.

The consequence of President Biden's slogan-driven policy is not that America's war is over; it is that America now has to fight with one hand tied behind our back.

Back in April, the President's own CIA Director warned this body—that, after retreating, our "ability to collect and act on threats will diminish. . . . That is simply a fact," he said.

In June, the Secretary of Defense told us that al-Qaida could reestablish a safe haven and directly threaten our homeland within 2 years. This is back when the administration still assumed we would have responsible partners in charge in Afghanistan.

Even then, the Secretary said that al-Qaida would reestablish a safe haven and threaten our homeland within 2 years. Certainly that timeline has now moved significantly up. So the question is, Where do we go from here? What is next?

The first step is to get some answers and create some accountability. As I have said before, the administration must answer some tough questions about both past failures and future plans.

Secretary Austin needs to explain why he supported a policy that by his own admission would allow al-Qaida to reestablish a safe haven. And we need an updated assessment of the threat we face now that terrorists, rather than our partners, control Afghanistan.

Oh, but that is just a start. America must reestablish the credible, relentless threat we once posed to terrorists in Afghanistan and beyond. The Taliban's shameful reclamation of Kabul has emboldened America's enemies all around the world. We cannot let them bank a propaganda victory. We must recapture the initiative. We can't retake the initiative with empty talk. This will take arrests, and it will take strikes—visible demonstrations of our resolve.

We must also repair our credibility with our allies and partners. America's resolve to lead the War on Terror fight must be undoubted. This is a collective effort that will take support and contributions from partners all around the world, deeper intelligence sharing, joint efforts to prevent extremists from traveling to safe havens in the first place, and a willingness to repatriate

and prosecute their citizens when they go abroad to conduct terrorism.

We have to get past the radical left's passion for cutting our defense budget down to the bone. President Biden already proposed to cut defense spending after inflation. I understand some House Democrats want to impose even further cuts from that number.

Just this week, to appease a vocal fringe on the far left, House Democratic leadership left defensive assistance for our ally Israel and their Iron Dome on the cutting room floor. A few far-left radicals get veto power over purely defensive assistance for Israel? This is madness. So are the left's efforts to cut back the authorities that our military and intelligence professionals use to protect our homeland. So is the continued talk about emptying Guantanamo Bay, talk about that. For goodness' sake, we just saw four of the five terrorists whom President Obama sprung from Gitmo take up senior positions in the Taliban government—formally in Gitmo; now helping to run the government in Afghanistan. What a combined legacy. The Obama-Biden administration let those terrorists out of prison, and the Biden-Harris administration let them retake an entire country.

No, global wars do not simply end because a President's speechwriter says so. Wars end when America's enemies no longer threaten us. Unfortunately, the Biden administration's decisions to date have not brought that victory any closer.

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. PETERS. 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.

VOTE ON PAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time on the nomination has expired.

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

Mr. PETERS. 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) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 68, nays 30, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 375 Ex.]

YEAS—68

Baldwin	Hassan	Portman
Bennet	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Romney
Booker	Hirono	Rosen
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Sanders
Burr	Kaine	Schatz
Cantwell	Kelly	Schumer
Capito	King	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Leahy	Sinema
Casey	Lee	Smith
Collins	Luján	Stabenow
Coons	Manchin	Tester
Cornyn	Markey	Tillis
Cortez Masto	McConnell	Toomey
Cotton	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murkowski	Warnock
Ernst	Murphy	Warren
Fischer	Murray	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Wyden
Graham	Padilla	Young
Grassley	Peters	

NAYS—30

Barrasso	Hagerty	Paul
Blackburn	Hawley	Risch
Blunt	Hoeven	Rubio
Boozman	Inhofe	Sasse
Braun	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Kennedy	Shelby
Cramer	Lankford	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Wicker

NOT VOTING—2

Feinstein Rounds

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 244, Sarah Bianchi, of Virginia, to be Deputy United States Trade Representative (Asia, Africa, Investment, Services, Textiles, and Industrial Competitiveness), with the rank of Ambassador.

Charles E. Schumer, Mazie Hirono, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jack Reed, Martin Heinrich, Michael F. Bennet, Jacky Rosen, Richard Blumenthal, Alex Padilla, John Hickenlooper, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Tina Smith, Tim Kaine, Ben Ray Lujan, Chris Van Hollen, Jeff Merkley.

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 Sarah Bianchi, of Virginia, to be Deputy United States Trade Representative (Asia, Africa, Investment, Services, Textiles, and Industrial Competitiveness), with the rank of Ambassador, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 85, nays 13, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 376 Ex.]

YEAS—85

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

NAYS—13

Boozman	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Braun	Lankford	Shelby
Cotton	McConnell	Tuberville
Cruz	Paul	
Hawley	Rubio	

NOT VOTING—2

Feinstein Rounds

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). On this vote, the yeas are 85, the nays are 13.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Sarah Bianchi, of Virginia, to be Deputy United States Trade Representative (Asia, Africa, Investment, Services, Textiles, and Industrial Competitiveness), with the rank of Ambassador.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

CANADIAN BORDER

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, early this week, the administration extended its border closure with Canada for another month. Another month that vaccinated Americans can travel into Canada, but vaccinated Canadians cannot cross our border; dealing another monthlong blow to American businesses all across our northern border.

Now, I am glad to see the Biden administration taking the pandemic seriously and delivering much-needed relief in a lot of different ways, but I am not going to stay quiet about this serious, completely unnecessary harm this

border-crossing closure is causing to small businesses and workers in Point Roberts, WA.

Now, as I have said to everybody who will listen, and some who, I am sure, are tired of hearing me, Point Roberts must at least have an exemption as we work to safely reopen the U.S.-Canadian border.

And here is why. For those of you not familiar with this particular part of Washington State, Point Roberts is right here. It is called an exclave community. People who live in Point Roberts, in order to get to the rest of our State, have to travel through Canada and back down to Washington State. If Canadians cannot come across the border, Point Roberts is really isolated. That is what is happening right now.

Now, let's paint a picture. You can take a boat right now from Canada to Point Roberts. You can fly across the border from Vancouver down to Seattle. But right now, because this border is closed, a Canadian family who lives within here can't go to Point Roberts for lunch, and they are sitting right here. This is this Canadian border, and this is Point Roberts.

Now, Point Roberts has some small businesses, and its entire economy cannot survive without that easy border cross for folks who live within this region. They can't count on people from down here to come up to their restaurants or to their businesses.

Their local economy depends on Canadian tourists, especially since, by the way, the only ferry between Point Roberts and the rest of Washington State is closed because of the pandemic. So people can't get up there right now. The only people who can help that community survive have to come across this border, and they can't because it is closed.

Now, this has been going on for 17 months and counting, and I have heard from so many small business owners there, including the owner of the only grocery store in town who is now on the brink of shutting down his doors for good—the only grocery store here for the people who live there and for the people close by.

Now, I really appreciate the administration's science-based approach to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have to follow science, and we need to follow the evidence, and I am proud we have taken COVID-19 extremely serious from the very start in my home State of Washington. But I firmly believe the evidence supports at least a narrow and tailored exception to the Canadian border closure to allow for a reopening right here for this community, Point Roberts. It is their port of entry for Canadian travel, and it needs to be open if we want those people to survive.

I have yet to be presented with a compelling reason why a border exemption for this small little community has not yet been provided.

I have spoken directly with DHS Secretary Mayorkas about this. I have talked with Jeff Zients, the White

House Coronavirus Response Coordinator, and a lot of other top officials at the State Department and White House as well. No one—not a person—can explain to me what evidence is being used to support that border restriction right there for Point Roberts.

So I am here on the Senate floor today to make sure that President Biden and his administration understand me. At the very least, we just need an emergency exemption from these restrictions for this small little Point Roberts community right here so that they can get their economy back up and running and that people there have the services that they need.

I am going to continue to press the administration on this and do whatever I can to help this community. But I want this on the record: Maintaining this ban on cross-border travel for Point Roberts is absolutely unacceptable. It should have been addressed months ago, and I will not stop until this is resolved.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

(The remarks of Mr. DURBIN pertaining to the introduction of [S. 2384] are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I am here to talk today about a subject of urgency for our Nation but a subject that many Democrats in this body don't want to talk about. I mean Afghanistan.

Thirteen American soldiers, dead; 169 civilians, dead; hundreds more American civilians left behind to the enemy; billions of dollars in military equipment abandoned to the enemy, like you see in the images right over my shoulder. Yet, nearly a month after this disastrous evacuation, the worst foreign policy disaster in this Nation's history since Vietnam, there has been no accountability. No one has been fired. No one has resigned. No one has been relieved of command.

Instead, what we have heard is the most incredible and, frankly, insulting parade of excuses and evasions from the President of the United States and the rest of his leadership team. They have said the evacuation debacle was an "extraordinary success." That is a quote. That is from the mouth of the President himself. Let that just sink in for a second.

Thirteen American soldiers, including from my State of Missouri, lost—

13—169 civilians dead; hundreds of Americans left behind enemy lines to fend for themselves, left to the Taliban, left to ISIS. Has an American President ever—ever—left behind American civilians on the field of battle—hundreds of them—and then called it an extraordinary success? I can't think of a time in American history.

It was a disgrace, what the President said. It was untrue, what the President said. Yet he goes on and on and on. And now President Biden and his team say they didn't leave any Americans behind. They said, in fact, Americans weren't abandoned to the enemy.

I mean, this is simply insultingly false. By their own estimates, hundreds of American civilians were left behind and are still there. Americans are still trapped in Afghanistan, trying to get out, trying to be rescued, left to their own devices. Yet the President of the United States insists that it never happened; it was all a success; all is well.

The President said it had to be this way. Those soldiers—what?—had to die? I mean, what does that even mean—that the military had to abandon billions of dollars of equipment to the enemy; that civilians, hundreds of them, had to die; all those Americans had to be left behind? I mean, is he serious about that? Does anyone honestly believe that? Does anyone honestly believe that this was the only possible outcome, that the death of American soldiers and the loss of civilians was the only possible outcome, the only way to withdraw?

It is absurd, and an honest leader would acknowledge it. In fact, an honest leader would never have said it. Yet President Biden and his team continue to say it day after day.

Joe Biden has blamed other people. He has pointed the finger at the people of Afghanistan. That is remarkable. These people now suffering under the rule of the Taliban—they are at fault, apparently. He has blamed and his administration has blamed the intelligence Agencies. They cast aspersions at the commanders on the ground. And remarkably—remarkably—many Democrats in Congress seem to be fine to go along with all of this, with these excuses and these evasions, this attempt to whitewash what has happened in Afghanistan and is happening as we speak, as Americans remain behind enemy lines.

The Democrat leader has stood on this floor and praised Joe Biden's handling of this crisis, applauded it. Just yesterday, he said right here on the floor that my efforts to get accountability for this crisis in Afghanistan were a waste of the Senate's time. Those were his words: waste of the Senate's time. He also said it is something that only the far right is interested in. His words: "the far right." What an insult to the American people.

All I can say to that is: Why don't you come to Missouri? Why don't you talk to the families of soldiers who are serving? Why don't you talk to the

families of those who have served in this 20-year war? Why don't you talk to veterans? Why don't you look the people in the face who are grieving and who are demoralized and who are shocked at what happened over the last few months in Afghanistan, shocked at the abandonment of American civilians? For that matter, why don't you just talk to this administration's own officials who rushed to tell reporters, off the record, that they were horrified that the President had left behind American civilians—horrified.

To brush all of that aside, to pretend that none of that really matters—that is all a distraction; there is nothing to see here—that is insulting, and it is wrong.

Until there is accountability, I will force the Senate to actually vote on Joe Biden's nominees for leadership positions in the State Department and the Department of Defense. In the face of this crisis, in the face of this debacle, the least the Senate can do is vote.

But the Senate ought to be doing a lot more than that. While grieving families are still waiting for answers, while Americans are still left behind enemy lines, we should be getting the truth. That ought to be our focus. We should be demanding accountability, not sweeping it under the rug.

So let me just pose a few—a few—of the questions that I think need answering: Why was the administration so unprepared for what transpired during its evacuation? Why didn't it plan for the potential fall of Kabul, for the potential surge of the Taliban, for the potential collapse of the Afghan Security Forces? Why weren't they prepared to withdraw while keeping Americans safe?

Joe Biden and his team didn't coordinate the drawdown so American citizens could leave the country; they ignored them. They told us the Afghan Security Forces were 300,000 strong; they were never that large. They promised the security forces were well trained; they weren't.

Has no one bothered to read the reports of the inspector general for Afghanistan? I commend them to you. They are harrowing. It is harrowing reading. The inspector general has been warning for literally years that the Afghan Security Forces were unprepared and unreliable. He has warned that our own Defense Department has, for years, concealed the true state of the Afghan Security Forces and their inability to carry out their mission. These aren't secrets. These are reports, many of them published in the Nation's leading newspapers.

Yet the administration didn't factor them into their planning, didn't seem aware of the facts on the ground, didn't seem able to prepare to deal with the realities, even as Americans were put into harm's way. It really does make you wonder: What was the Biden administration actually focused on? I mean, what was it doing with its time? What was the President doing with his

time for all of those months—or Secretary Blinken or Secretary Austin or the National Security Advisor? What were they doing while Afghanistan collapsed into chaos?

I think the facts suggest an answer. Rather than focusing on protecting Americans from the enemy, rather than focusing on getting Americans safely out of Afghanistan, they were focused on fighting a phony culture war that they invented and that appears to be their top priority.

Just consider: On June 11, when Secretary Austin was asked if he thought that the U.S. military was a fundamentally racist organization—this was at a hearing in the Armed Services Committee here in the Senate: Is the U.S. military a fundamentally racist organization?—he said: I can't give you an answer. And, instead, he talked about the military's urgent support for "equity"—his words. One week later, 21 districts in 9 Provinces had fallen under Taliban control in Afghanistan, and the Afghan Security Forces began to abandon their posts.

On June 21, Secretary Blinken announced the "Progress flag" would fly at the State Department, a special flag that celebrates, in Blinken's words, "diversity and intersectionality"—that famous catchphrase of critical race theory. The very next day, the Taliban seized the main Afghan trade gateway as the enemy's advance began to pick up pace.

On June 23, General Milley said in his testimony to the House Armed Services Committee: "I want to understand white rage." That is his quote. And he defended the administration's recent focus on White extremism in the military. The very next day, U.S. intelligence assessed that the Afghan Government would collapse within 6 months of our withdrawal.

On July 1, Secretary Blinken was busy changing U.S. passports to create new selections for nonbinary, intersex, and gender-nonconforming categories. The very next day, American troops withdrew from Bagram Air Base, what had been the hub of American power in Afghanistan, leaving it for the final time.

On July 14, Secretary Blinken invited the United Nations to formally investigate "the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia" in the United States. He invited the United Nations, that frequently corrupt body, to investigate his own country for racism, xenophobia, and racial discrimination. Meanwhile, at the very same time, even as Blinken spoke, the Taliban offensive was surging across Afghanistan.

On August 9, Secretary Austin was busy crafting a new, controversial COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all of our servicemembers. The very next day, U.S. intelligence officials warned that the Afghan Government would collapse within 90 days or sooner.

On August 17, Jake Sullivan—that is the National Security Advisor—said

that the Taliban were helping to provide "safe passage" for Americans fleeing Afghanistan. Well, one week later, the terrorist attack at Kabul left 13 American soldiers dead, at least 169 civilians wounded, and, shortly thereafter, hundreds of Americans left behind as our last transport lifted off.

Facts are facts. These are the facts, and they tell the story. Joe Biden and his team were more focused on their culture war than they were on protecting Americans. That is the long and the short of it. They were more interested in imposing a radical left social agenda than in getting Americans out of Afghanistan.

They were interested in using the military as a social experiment rather than respecting it as the warfighting institution it was built to be. Rather than making decisions that were sound in tactics and sound in strategy, Joe Biden and his team were aiming to please their radical, woke, progressive base. And the American people paid the price.

Now the American people deserve accountability for what has happened. They deserve accountability for the lives lost. They deserve accountability for the civilians killed, accountability for the Americans left behind.

And that is what this body is for. That is this body's responsibility. It may be an inconvenience to the Democrat leader; it may be an unwanted responsibility for supporters of the President; but it is our job nonetheless.

Americans have died. Americans have been abandoned. The Nation deserves an accounting, and it is not too much to ask the Senate to do its job. It is not too much to ask the Senate to get the truth, and it is not too much to ask the Senate to force accountability for this terrible crisis that this President has disgracefully led us into.

I can say, for my part, I will do everything I can to get that accountability, to get that truth, and to give the American people the answers that they deserve.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, with North Korea test firing ballistic missiles last week, you might ask: Where is the United Nations?

There are a series of international sanctions aimed at North Korea's nuclear program. These sanctions are in accordance with the U.N. Security Council's regulations passed in the wake of previous North Korea nuclear tests and ballistic missile tests. There is a U.N. Security Council Sanctions Committee on North Korea that is charged with monitoring these sanctions on North Korea.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that an expert panel working on a report for this U.N. committee has faced roadblocks from Chinese representatives, supported by Russia in some circumstances.

China and Russia supported these sanctions, but now they appear to be running interference for North Korea so North Korea can continue to violate the reason these sanctions were put on.

The expert panel is supposed to report the facts. And then by reporting the facts, they aren't representing national governments and shouldn't be representing national governments.

It is blatantly clear that the Chinese representative is doing the bidding for the Chinese Communist Party. The footnotes with dissenting comments are anonymous, but there is no doubt where they came from. In other words, China.

In one case, it is as petty as insisting that a reference to a company with "Taiwan" in its name should include an assertion that Taiwan is a province of China. That is something you hear from China all the time. Everyone knows China is obsessed with making others pretend that Taiwan is not an independent country.

That leaves no doubt where these objections are coming from. You can draw a very straight line back to General Secretary Xi. The bigger problem is that other objections seem designed to minimize and paper over the violations of these sanctions by North Korea. That is as good as confirmed by suspicions that China has been helping North Korea evade the sanctions that China supported in the first place and still claims to support.

General Secretary Xi probably thinks that letting North Korea run wild with its nuclear weapons program would cause problems for the West. And we all know that the West is very concerned about North Korea's developing of nuclear weapons and the ability to deliver.

General Secretary Xi is very shortsighted when he takes that view that he wants to cause problems for the West by helping North Korea, because it can't be in China's interest to have a nuclear-armed and unstable regime as a next-door neighbor, which North Korea is a nuclear-armed and a non-stable regime.

General Secretary Xi's strategy of sowing chaos is playing with fire. That is why all of this activity going on in the U.N. and China trying to cover up the violations of the sanctions is dangerous not just for the U.S. interests, but it is very dangerous for China and the world.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I spent those several weeks that we were away from Washington, DC, around Labor Day in Kansas, and, unfortunately, it is clearly evident that inflation has returned. Gas prices are up, prices at the grocery store are up, and further price hikes are on the horizon.

Unfortunately, price increases at the grocery store and at the gas pump and, really, everywhere else put the greatest

burden on low- and middle-income families who are already feeling the strains caused by COVID-19 in their pocketbook.

It is apparent, I think, that our spending here in the Nation's Capital over a long period of time is part of the cause for that inflation and, in fact, a significant part of the cause for that inflation. But it doesn't seem to me that my Democratic colleagues are aware of the consequences of pouring a massive amount of more money, more government spending on already this inflationary circumstance that our citizens are now encountering.

The Democratic tax-and-spend spree will exacerbate our inflationary circumstances, meaning that the prices will continue to rise as we borrow more money to pay for these things. It means that interest rates will rise and, at some point in time, those who lend us money will no longer be willing to do so.

While I am sure that many of my Democratic colleagues would tell me the good things that would happen from the spending that is included in this bill, we cannot discount the people who they indicate they are trying to help would be the ones who suffer the greatest burden from increasing costs of everything that they buy.

Given the historic levels of spending that has occurred over the last year and a half, now is not the time to spend even greater amounts of taxpayer dollars.

My view is that we were too slow in turning the spigot in regard to spending that preceded the election of President Biden and a Democratic majority in the U.S. Senate and House. And that, then, resulted in—even though we had already spent so much money—an additional nearly \$2 trillion being spent back in January, and now a \$3.5 trillion, which I think ultimately ends up costing a lot more than \$3.5 trillion.

In order for the \$3.5 trillion package to be paid for—if it ultimately is paid for—the Democratic majority is pursuing tax hikes that will have significant consequence on small businesses and farm families, both of which are so essential to the economic well-being of Kansas and many other States across the country, especially in middle America.

Tax increases on working Americans should be, if at all, a last resort, not a funding opportunity for sweeping—sweeping—massive government expansion. This government expansion includes funding of a radical climate agenda, like the Green New Deal, installing new entitlement programs, and increasing government intrusion into the lives of Americans to levels we have never seen before.

While businesses are struggling to recoup lost revenue from the COVID-19 pandemic—the consequences of that pandemic—the Democrats' plan would slap more taxes on businesses and drive up the costs for everyone.

We should not jeopardize our Nation's economic well-being so that

Democrats can make good on their campaign promises. Voters certainly did not have that in mind when they elected such a slim majority here in the Senate: 50 Democrats, 50 Republicans. That wasn't a mandate for the kind of spending and taxing that is now being considered here on the Senate floor.

This proposed massive influx of government spending is irresponsible. Americans generally know how to live within their means, and it is time that government show some fiscal restraint as well.

For a long time, as I did the townhall meetings across Kansas, it was often the topic of conversation. One of the first things Kansans would raise with me is all this spending—all this deficit spending. And for a while that conversation kind of went away. Today, it is back. It is the topic of conversation at every townhall meeting I had for those several weeks in Kansas. It is what I heard at Rotary and Kiwanis and Lions Clubs. Americans, Kansans in particular, are asking for us to show some responsibility here, and this legislation now pending shows no responsibility.

To make matters worse, as the Democrats have spent valuable time testing the limits of their power to pursue this tax-and-spend spree, they have shirked their basic duties of governing.

The debt limit and government funding, the appropriations process, are clearly the province of the party in power. I am anxiously awaiting for our Appropriations Committee to be able to do its work. The appropriations work is to be completed by September 30, which, once again, will not be the case. We await an agreement on topline spending numbers and a balance of prioritization between domestic and defense spending. While the air—the oxygen—is being sucked out of the Senate for purposes of a reconciliation bill and a \$3.5 trillion-plus spending bill, we need to be focused on the basics of making sure that government doesn't shut down and that we do our work in appropriating the necessary amounts for government to function.

We have known that the suspension of the debt limit would expire this summer—that has never been in question—but Democrats, with control of the White House and both bodies of Congress, have neglected to address either the debt limit or the regular appropriations process, the funding. They are now combining the issue of debt limit with the annual funding for government operations. This is what we call a CR, a continuing resolution, in which we fund the government at its current level into the future because we haven't gotten our work done. Now that CR and the debt limit increase are tied together. This is another example of not owning their governing obligations, not acting as honest brokers, and not, certainly, seeking bipartisanship. They only seek bipartisanship when it suits their political interests.

What you won't hear from the majority leader and my Democratic colleagues is that there is a clean, short-term continuing resolution that has been proposed by Vice Chairman SHELBY of the Appropriations Committee and the minority leader, Leader MCCONNELL. In addition to avoiding an unnecessary lapse in government funding, the Shelby-McConnell CR includes funding for our ally Israel, relief for hurricane-stricken States, and support for Afghan refugees. This is an act of good faith, and it deserves bipartisan support.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

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

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, the United States of America has always paid its bills on time—always. It is an unbroken record that dates back to our founding—a 232-year streak—and that unbroken record has helped the United States become the anchor of the global financial system and the many benefits that it brings to every American in our country. But now, as we have heard on this floor over the last 2 days and more, Senate Republicans are threatening to end that unbroken record.

Senate Republican Leader MCCONNELL has not only said that he and Senate Republicans will vote against increasing the debt ceiling to allow us to pay bills that are already due and owing but that they will block a vote on the measure altogether. That would destroy our economy; it would throw our country into a recession; it could cause the loss of millions of jobs all over the Nation, and trillions of dollars of wealth would collapse.

What makes this threat by Senate Republicans so especially outrageous is that they know exactly what devastation will be caused by their actions. In fact, in 2019, Senator MCCONNELL himself stressed the importance of raising the debt limit so we could avoid an unnecessary economic meltdown.

Here is what he said then:

We need to address the debt limit. It secures our Nation's full faith and credit and ensures that Congress will not throw this kind of unnecessary wrench into the gears of our job growth and thriving economy.

He knew, plain and simple, that refusing to increase our debt limit would throw a wrench into the gears of our job growth.

In fact, after voting to raise the debt limit that year, he said:

We raised the debt ceiling because America can't default. . . . That would be a disaster.

“That would be a disaster.” That is what the Senate Republican said about what happens if you don't raise the debt ceiling—the exact thing that he and Senate Republicans are threatening to do right now.

The Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, was not alone in expressing those sentiments. When President

Trump was in charge, Senate Republicans voted to raise the debt limit three times, and the Democrats joined them in doing that when President Trump was in office because we, too, understood the consequences of failing to pay our bills on time. And let's not kid ourselves. There are lots of things that President Trump and Senate Republicans did over those 4 years that we disagreed with—policies that we thought were irresponsible, not good for the country—including the 2017 Trump tax plan that provided huge tax breaks to the biggest corporations in the country, tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans, with over \$2 trillion added to our national debt. They didn't pay for a dime. Not a penny of that was paid for—it was all on the credit card—but when it came time to pay the bills that were due and owing for our country, the Democrats joined the Republicans in lifting the debt ceiling because we knew the devastating consequences of the alternative.

Let's also be very clear that the monies that we currently owe, that are currently due and owing, are largely made up of the debt incurred when President Trump was in office. The national debt increased by a total of \$7.8 trillion during that 4-year period. In fact, over one-quarter of our entire national debt comes from those 4 years of the Trump administration, and our Republican Senate colleagues spent those 4 years voting here in the U.S. Senate for policies that they now say they don't want to pay for. They voted to put expenses on the credit card, and now, when it is time to pay the bill on that credit card, they are like: Sorry. We are out of here. The country is on your own.

So this is, obviously, rank hypocrisy, plain and simple. If that were all, it would be unsurprising—in fact, sadly, expected—but while the hypocrisy is shameful, what is downright dangerous are the consequences of that hypocrisy.

A recent study was done by Mark Zandi—he is the chief economist at Moody's Analytics—who estimates that a prolonged default would cost the U.S. economy up to 6 million jobs, wipe out as much as \$15 trillion in household wealth, and send the unemployment rate surging to, roughly, 9 percent, just as we are working to again stabilize our economy and pull out of the downturn that we have been in.

Now, those predictions are frightening, but they shouldn't be surprising to anybody. You know, our constituents—none of us—can just decide one morning, as they get up, to say, "Do you know what? We are not going to make a mortgage payment. We are not going to make a rental payment. We are not going to make a payment for our cars," without expecting to suffer some financial consequences ourselves.

So imagine, one morning, that the Senators here—in this case, Republican Senators—get up and say: The United States of America is not going to pay its bills today. That sends shock waves

throughout the entire country and system, and that is why you get the cataclysmic results that Mark Zandi at Moody's Analytics is predicting, and that is why we are hearing from every responsible adult that we can't allow this to happen.

Six former Secretaries of the Treasury, having served under Presidents of both parties, have urged the congressional leadership to make sure we raise the debt ceiling and pay our bills that are currently due and owing. They made clear "postponing action to raise the debt limit until too close to the deadline undermines confidence in our political system at home and abroad."

In other words, what they are saying is, when you go over the waterfall, you are in deep trouble, but even if you get close to it and can begin to hear the rumbling waters of that waterfall, so can the rest of the world and the financial system, and that, in itself, ends up causing economic damage.

As Secretary Yellen said, it would be "unthinkable" for the United States to do what Senate Republicans are proposing to do, and the chief policy officer at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said that the United States of America defaulting on its obligations is not an option.

They are all right. We should be listening to them and to the American people because, if Republicans continue on the path they are, it is going to cause job loss, and that loss in household wealth, as well, will be hitting families throughout this country.

So, if the necessity of raising the debt ceiling is so clear, why are we here?

Well, I have been listening to our Republican colleagues over the last couple days, and they say, well, they don't want to raise the debt ceiling because they don't like the Democratic plans to beat COVID-19, and they don't like the Build Back Better agenda. There are two fundamental misunderstandings with this argument.

The first, as I mentioned, is that these are bills that are already due and owing, and Republicans voted for a lot of these policies. In fact, I have seen them back home in their States telling their constituents how they helped deliver relief for small businesses and how they helped expand broadband. Well, that is part of the bill that is coming due right now that we have to lift the debt ceiling to pay for.

But they also fundamentally misunderstand what President Biden is talking about in his Build Back Better agenda. I know, these days, it is an alien idea to many of our Republican colleagues, but President Biden and Democrats are planning to pay for the Build Back Better agenda. We are putting out proposals to do that, to reform our Tax Code, to reform our Tax Code in a way that we should do anyway, regardless of the important investments that we need to make, and to reform our Tax Code so that major multinational corporations cannot continue

to park millions and billions of dollars of profits in overseas tax havens, like the Cayman Islands and other places, and shirk their obligations to this country and to the American people.

We should shut down those loopholes. Some of those loopholes also encourage those companies to move their plants and workers overseas. We should shut down those loopholes. We should make sure that the IRS has the capability to enforce the current law and taxes that are already due and owing under current law. The current IRS Commissioner, appointed by the former President, has said that we lose hundreds of billions of dollars to people who are cheating on their taxes. That hurts all the rest of us in this country, and most of those people are higher income people. We need to make sure that the very wealthiest people in the country—the billionaires—pay some taxes. We have seen some years when they pay zero in taxes, some of them.

I keep hearing from our Republican colleagues that they don't want to vote for this because of some future plan, even though what we are talking about now is to pay for other things that have been previously incurred which Senate Republicans voted for, and they are criticizing a plan which we intend to pay for.

And, yes, we have planned to make some important investments with that revenue. We intend to extend the tax cuts for middle- and lower-income families with kids. They are going to expire at the end of this year, December 31. The up to \$300 a month tax cut for families for each child, that goes away if we don't enact the Build Back Better agenda.

We intend to reduce the cost of prescription drugs—something that is hitting every American really hard in their pocketbook.

We intend to increase the availability and affordability of high-quality childcare. A lot of parents aren't reentering the workforce because, like every parent, they want to make sure their child is in a safe and secure place during the day, and it doesn't make economic sense if they have to pay as much for that childcare as they make on the job. So we need to address that issue.

We want to expand Medicare to cover vision, dental, and hearing services. That is a big gap in the program.

So I hear Republicans down here railing against the Build Back Better agenda even though every survey shows that the American people of all parties support that agenda. And then I hear them say they are not going to vote to lift this debt ceiling because of that proposal even though we are planning to pay for that proposal.

I just heard one of our colleagues talking about inflation. The reality is, if you pay as you go, then that is not a problem. The problem is when people put everything on the credit card and then decide not to pay for it. That is what the Republicans did during the 2017 Trump tax plan.

So I would just say to my colleagues: You yourself are on record here in the U.S. Senate talking about what kind of economic devastation would be caused if the United States defaults on its debts if we don't lift the debt ceiling. You know what that action would mean for American families because you have said it here on the Senate floor and around the country. So don't threaten the American people and our entire economy with something that you know to be so irresponsible.

I will end with this: You should do the right thing and join with Democrats in lifting the debt ceiling to pay for bills that are already due and owing and that you voted for. But, for goodness' sake, if you don't want to do the right thing, at least get out of the way. At least don't use the filibuster to prevent Democrats from doing the right thing for the country. That is a cynical ploy. I don't know what the political calculus is.

I have heard the Republican leader say that he didn't want the Biden agenda to succeed, but, for God's sake, let's put country first, and let's make sure that we do the right thing for the American people. Let's lift the debt ceiling. Let's pay our bills on time, as we have done every year throughout our history.

I urge my colleagues to either do the right thing on the vote or get out of the way and help the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATION OF SARAH BIANCHI

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate confirmed the nomination of Jayme White to serve as a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative. Today, the Senate has an opportunity to fill another important position following a debate on President Biden's nomination, Sarah Bianchi, for that role.

I am just going to speak briefly and outline a few key reasons why Ms. Bianchi is the right person for this important job and why the Senate should confirm her nomination today.

She is a longtime, accomplished member of the Biden economic team. She has worked in a host of settings during her time in public service: the Office of the Vice President, the Domestic Policy Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and as a staff member here in the Senate. She brings valuable experience in the private sector to her nomination as well. She has helped build a strong Biden economic agenda that is focused on making sure that all Americans have the opportunity to get ahead.

With respect to the key issue of trade, which is under the jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee, that means fighting for American workers and American businesses and cracking down on the trade cheats that will flagrantly try to rip off jobs and economic growth.

The variety and the depth of Ms. Bianchi's experience in public service

will be a big asset to Ambassador Tai and the team at USTR.

When the Finance Committee voted on Ms. Bianchi's nomination, she was approved by a vote of 27 to 1. I often say that it is a struggle to get a bipartisan group of 27 Senators to even agree on buying a TUP, but supporting the Bianchi nomination is clearly a bipartisan proposition on a vital economic position.

In fact, all of President Biden's USTR nominees that have come before the Finance Committee, I am pleased to say, have gotten strong support from both sides of the aisle; for example, a longtime staffer of mine, Jayme White—80 votes yesterday, 80 votes, with strong support, I might add, from business and labor. It is because these individuals are focused on getting beyond some of the old theories about trade—free trade, fair trade, and the like. What really brings Democrats and Republicans together is trade done right.

That is what Ms. Bianchi is all about. When she is confirmed, she will take on a challenging portfolio at USTR, which includes Asia, Africa, investment, services, textiles, and industrial competitiveness.

The headline in that list, of course, is taking on China. The Finance Committee has worked hard on policies designed to take on China's many trade rip-offs. There is China's use of forced labor, for example, massive unfair subsidies that destroy any semblance of a level playing field, theft of intellectual property, and the Great Firewall and censorship of the internet extending beyond China's borders. These abuses, these rip-offs, directly threaten American jobs, innovations, and values from sea to shining sea.

For the U.S. Senate, part of how Members must address these issues is confirming highly qualified and experienced nominees like Sarah Bianchi, whose job will include confronting China directly. The Senate simply can't afford to leave this important Deputy USTR role open any longer. Now the Senate has a top-notch nominee before us.

I support Sarah Bianchi fully. Twenty-seven members of the Finance Committee supported her earlier this year during our committee's markup. I urge Senators to vote yes on the Bianchi nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SPECIAL COUNSEL DURHAM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, last week, Special Counsel Durham indicted Michael Sussman, an attorney for the Hillary Clinton Presidential campaign. He was indicted for lying to the FBI.

The indictment gives example after example of the Democratic Party's bag of dirty tricks.

In September 2016, Sussman met with the FBI's general counsel, James Baker. At that meeting he provided information and data files that allegedly contained evidence of a secret communication between the Trump organization and the Russian bank Alfa Bank.

The evidence, however, was fabricated. The allegations about the Trump organization being linked with a Russian bank—these were false. The email server at issue was neither owned nor operated by the Trump organization.

But the lie in the indictment occurred when Sussman allegedly told the FBI general counsel that he wasn't providing the information on any client's behalf. He repeated the same to another government agency. Those assertions were apparently false. He was working for the Hillary Clinton Presidential campaign.

Now, interestingly, the indictment states that although Baker was allegedly unaware of the political affiliation of the information starting in April 2016, Sussman represented the Democratic National Committee and regularly met with the FBI. According to the indictment, the FBI failed to connect the dots. What Special Counsel Durham's indictment shows in significant detail, by the way, are the steps that the Clinton campaign and her Democratic allies took to dirty up Trump—and did so—with known false information.

Time and again, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have cast false information against Trump to tie him to a foolish conspiracy that he is an agent of the Russian Government. Time and again, when the evidence is made public, the Democratic Party is shown to be the master of the disinformation universe, and much of the so-called mainstream press fell for and peddled the falsehoods.

What's wrong with our journalists being journalists and investigating everything to the bottom rather than trying to not do their work and letting people get away with this sort of action?

Now I am going to take a few examples from the indictment. Notably, Sussman was working with an unnamed executive at a technology firm that had been offered a position in the Clinton administration, should she have won that election in 2016.

The information compiled and analyzed the false Alfa Bank information and, according to the indictment, "exploited access to non-public data at multiple internet companies to conduct opposition research concerning Trump."

To accomplish those ends, the executive enlisted "the assistance of researchers at a U.S.-based university who were receiving and analyzing Internet data in connection with a pending federal government cybersecurity research contract."

Now, amazingly, the indictment later says that the university accessed data of an unnamed executive branch agency through an unnamed internet company. That unnamed internet company possessed that data because it was a subcontract “in a sensitive relationship between the U.S. government and another company.”

Apparently, taxpayers unwittingly assisted the false-information campaign used against Trump by the Democrats.

I'd like to say that you can't make this stuff up, but that is exactly what they did. A researcher that worked to falsely connect Trump to Alfa Bank said, “We cannot technically make any claims that would fly public scrutiny.”

They also discussed faking email addresses to try and beef up some bogus false connection between Trump and Alfa Bank. Even the unnamed tech executive essentially said the Alfa Bank data was a “red herring.”

One email in the indictment even says in part:

The only thing that drives us at this point is that we just do not like [Trump]. This will not fly in the eyes of public scrutiny. Folks, I am afraid that we have tunnel vision.

They recognized that what they were doing lacked any factual support, yet Sussmann, the Democrats, and the Clinton campaign proceeded ahead anyway.

Even more than that, Christopher Steele reportedly got his information about Alfa Bank from Sussmann and included it in the Steele dossier. The indictment clearly shows the depth to which the Clinton campaign went to smear Trump—smear—with false evidence and plant it with the liberal media, who then willingly ran with it—and probably smiled as they ran with it. And here we are, years later, with a country that has been almost torn apart because of the Democratic Party's fake evidence against Trump.

Special Counsel Durham stated on December 9, 2019, in part, relating to the Justice Department inspector general's report on Crossfire Hurricane, “last month we advised the Inspector General that we do not agree with some of the report's conclusions as to the predication and how the FBI case was opened.”

Special Counsel Durham has had several years to investigate and bring a case forward. We have seen two instances where folks have been charged with a crime, one already pleading guilty.

One must not forget the Obama-Biden Justice Department's and the FBI's blatant misrepresentations to the FISA court during the Crossfire Hurricane and other serious wrongdoing, much of which was uncovered by Congress and the inspector general.

On June 29 of this year, Senator JOHNSON and I asked Attorney General Garland if he agrees with then-Attorney General Barr's statement that any Durham report be submitted in the form that will permit public dissemination.

On July 13 of this year, Attorney General Garland said that he agrees.

Special Counsel Durham, let's see what you have got, and we will be able to see it when the report comes out.

PRIVATE DEBT COLLECTION PROGRAM

Mr. President, on one other matter, shorter than I just had, news accounts continue to mention plans to increase IRS enforcement funding and to impose onerous reporting requirements on sensitive banking information to the IRS.

These proposals raise many concerns, particularly in light of questions regarding the ability of the IRS to protect taxpayers' information. Even this year, we had a whole bunch of stuff go public of private taxpayer information that, by so doing, violated the code to protect the privacy of taxpayers.

However, I want to now discuss an existing IRS program that's already collecting hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid taxes and doing it annually. I am referring to the program called the Private Debt Collection Program that uses private contractors pursuing tax debts that the IRS would otherwise not pursue. This program was enacted as part of the infrastructure legislation signed into law 2015.

Each year since then, annual updates on the program's finances document very well the growing success of this program that is done by private debt collectors. As of the end of the fiscal year 2020, the program had collected nearly \$1 billion in unpaid taxes. After accounting for the program's cost, it has returned more than \$678 million in net revenue to the Treasury. Of that \$678 million, more than \$458 million was from the fiscal year 2020 alone.

Every year the program is allowed to function, it brings more and more money into the Treasury. At the same time, it generates resources the IRS uses to hire additional tax collection personnel. To date, the program has enabled IRS to hire many new employees.

The recent IRS update for the current fiscal year 2021 continues this trend. Through June, the Private Debt Collection Program has provided more than \$700 million in net revenue to the Treasury. In other words, in the first 9 months of fiscal year 2021, the program has more than doubled the revenue it has returned to the Treasury. The longer this program is allowed to work, the more successful it becomes.

The proposals being put forward by my colleagues across the aisle are based on the premise that by spending more money, the IRS will collect more money. The Private Debt Collection Program brings in money without spending taxpayers' money.

Despite the obvious benefits of this program, I am very concerned that the IRS has suspended providing additional cases to the program until the end of September. Commissioner Rettig assured me in responses to written questions that the additional cases would be provided on September 27.

I am going to hold Commissioner Rettig to that statement and, in the

upcoming days, expect to see him keep his word to me.

All the handwringing over spending more money to increase IRS enforcement and information reporting shows the serious issues involved in those proposals.

The IRS Private Debt Collection Program is proven to collect taxes already owed, allows the IRS to hire more personnel, and costs nothing up front. Anyone serious about closing the tax gap should support and encourage the full use of this program, the Private Debt Collection Program.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. I would ask unanimous consent that, at the end of my remarks, the scheduled vote take place.

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, I want to say a few words about some of the important budgetary issues that Congress is now facing. I want to focus on the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill, but before I do that, I want to comment on the looming debt crisis that we face.

The Republican leader, MITCH MCCONNELL, this morning once again reiterated that the Republican Party will not vote to lift the debt ceiling; and in an extraordinarily irresponsible manner, Republicans have indicated that they will not pay the debts incurred under the Trump administration.

In his statement, as he has done time and time again, Senator MCCONNELL implies that this debt ceiling has something to do with future spending. It does not.

In his statement, as he has done time and time again, Senator MCCONNELL implies that this debt ceiling has something to do with future spending. It does not. Like anyone who owns a credit card, the payments that are made are for past spending—in this case, spending incurred under the Trump administration.

Let us be clear. If the United States, the largest economy in the world, defaults on its debt, it will plunge not only our country but the entire global economy into what could become a severe economic depression. That means massive unemployment, higher interest rates, severe reduction in government services, and possible cuts in such programs as Social Security and Medicare.

The irresponsibility of the Republican leadership is not just something that I worry about. According to press reports, former Republican Secretaries of Treasury Hank Paulson, who worked under George W. Bush, and Steven Mnuchin, who worked under Donald Trump—Republican Secretaries of the Treasury—both of them visited with Senator MCCONNELL to make the case about the need to extend the debt ceiling. They understand, as I think all of

us do, how important it is that the United States of America does not default on its debt, and it is about time that my Republican colleagues listen to them.

Now, let me say a word about the \$3½ trillion reconciliation bill. There has been a lot of talk lately about the need to compromise. Well, let me be clear. To a very significant degree, that has already taken place. Of the 11 Democratic members of the Senate Budget Committee, 9 understood the need for a \$6 trillion bill, which would finally address the unmet needs—the long-ignored needs—of the working families of our country, as well as begin the process of tackling the existential threat of climate change. My guess is that at least 40 out of the 50 Members of the Democratic caucus supported the \$6 trillion proposal. We compromised big time. We cut that proposal—agreed to cut that proposal—almost in half, down to \$3½ trillion. That, to my mind, is a major, major compromise.

As we go forward in this debate, let me be as clear as I can be as to why every penny of that \$3½ trillion is absolutely needed, and let me also make clear that this bill, despite some of the rhetoric coming from my Republican colleagues, will not add—should not add and will not add one nickel to the deficit.

It will be paid for. It will be paid for by finally demanding that some of the wealthiest people in this country, who in any given year—we are talking about multibillionaires who in a given year do not pay a nickel in Federal income tax or dozens of large, profitable corporations that in a given year do not pay a nickel in Federal income tax. Well, we are going to demand that these people start paying their fair share of taxes, and that is more than enough money to cover the \$3½ trillion that is in this proposal. So anyone who suggests to you that this bill is not going to be paid for and that it is going to add to the deficit is simply not telling the truth. It should and will be fully paid for.

Now, the media is very worried about process. When are we going to do this? What about that person? What about that Senator? But they have forgotten to a large degree to talk about what is in the bill. I am not quite sure that the average American is staying up nights, worrying about whether it is completed on a Wednesday or a Friday or what this Senator thinks or what that Senator thinks; they would like to know what is in the bill.

The reality is that for many, many decades, while Congress has paid rapt attention to the needs of the wealthy and large campaign contributors, it has significantly ignored the needs of working families, the middle-class, and low-income people. I think the reason that many of my Republican colleagues are so upset about this legislation is that we are changing the dynamic. We are now beginning to pay attention to the needs of working families and not just the wealthy and the powerful.

So what is in this bill? First, as a result of the extraordinarily successful American Rescue Plan, which went a long way to pull this country out of the severe economic decline that we experienced as a result of the COVID pandemic, as a result of the American Rescue Plan, we cut childhood poverty in the United States of America by over 50 percent, and for Black and Brown families, that cut was even higher.

Year after year, the United States has the highest rate of childhood poverty of any major country on Earth. We took a major step forward in cutting childhood poverty. Now it is clear to me and I think to people all across this country that we must extend the \$300-a-month-per-child direct payment that working-class and middle-class families now receive.

Let me be very clear. If we do not pass the reconciliation bill and not continue those payments, we would once again plunge the children of this country, millions of them, back into poverty, and that is morally unacceptable.

Furthermore, in the United States of America, every person should be outraged by the dysfunctionality of our childcare system. I don't think there is anybody who disagrees with that. We have millions of people who cannot find childcare. We have families in Vermont and Maine paying 20, 30, 40 percent of their limited incomes for childcare, which is pretty crazy. We have childcare workers who are employed at starvation wages. The system is not working. It is broken. It is dysfunctional.

It is not a radical idea to say that every family in America, when mom goes to work and dad goes to work, should be entitled to high-quality and affordable childcare. There are a lot of studies out there that say that the best investment we can make of Federal dollars is to our children, and that is why we have got to expand what we are doing in childcare. Under this legislation, no working family in this country will be paying more than 7 percent of their income for childcare. So if you are paying 20 percent now or you are paying 30 percent, we will reduce that to no more than 7 percent.

On top of that and of extraordinary significance, we are going to make pre-K education for 3- and 4-year-olds universal and free, and we are going to do, bottom line, what almost every other industrialized country on Earth does and understand that the most important investment we can make is in our children.

By the way, importantly, when we do that, we are going to allow well over a million women to go back into the workforce because they no longer will have to stay home because of a lack of affordable childcare. So if you are worried about labor shortages all over this country, you must support significantly expanding our childcare capabilities.

Further, what is in this legislation is, at a time when the pharmaceutical

industry charges us the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, we are going to demand that Medicare start negotiating prescription drugs with the pharmaceutical industry.

I know that Americans now have seen a lot of the ads—the completely dishonest ads from the pharmaceutical industry, and let's be clear. Over the last 20 years, the pharmaceutical industry has spent well over \$4 billion on lobbying and hundreds and hundreds of millions more on campaign contributions. Guess what. They own the U.S. Congress. And that is why—when you walk into a pharmacy and you find that the price of your medicine has doubled, it is because they can do anything they want to do. They write the laws. They, right now, have 1,400 lobbyists running all over Capitol Hill, trying to make sure that we do not lower the cost of prescription drugs. And that is what this struggle is about.

These guys, year after year, make outrageous profits. Their CEOs get extraordinary compensation benefits, and they do that by charging us by far the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. Well, those days are coming to an end if Members of the Congress finally have the guts to stand up to them.

Now, I understand that the pharmaceutical industry owns the Republican Party. I got that. And I understand that there will not be one Republican in the Senate who has the guts to stand up for his or her constituents and lower the cost of prescription drugs. Well, there should not be any Democrat who is in that position. There should be no Democrats who are not prepared to stand up to the pharmaceutical industry.

When we have Medicare negotiate prescription drug prices, we can save over \$500 billion. One of the things we are going to do with that \$500 billion is do what the American people desperately want us to do, and that is to expand Medicare to cover dental, vision, and hearing aids. This is the United States. Elderly people should not walk around without any teeth in their mouths. They should be able to afford to go to a dentist. It is not a very radical idea. Grandparents should be able to communicate with their grandchildren because they have a hearing aid that they need in their ears that today they cannot afford. Older people should be able to read their daily newspaper because they can get a pair of glasses that works for them.

The need to expand Medicare to cover dental, hearing aids, and eyeglasses is absolutely critical. Nobody in the year 2021 denies that oral health, hearing, and vision are essential parts of healthcare. Medicare is supposed to cover the healthcare needs of seniors. Well, oral health, hearing, and vision are parts of healthcare.

Not surprisingly, out of all of the provisions in President Biden's Build Back Better plan, expanding Medicare to provide dental, vision, and hearing

aids is by far the most popular. According to a June 30 Morning Consult poll, adding dental, vision, and hearing benefits to Medicare is supported by 84 percent of the American people. It is not often you get 84 percent of the American people supporting anything. And yet that includes 89 percent of Democrats, 79 percent of Republicans. This is what the American people want, and this is what we must deliver for them.

Given that, it is just hard for me to imagine that any Member of the House or Senate would oppose this very popular and important provision.

It is a bit embarrassing that our Nation, the richest on Earth, is the only major country not to guarantee paid family and medical leave. I have been all over this country, and I have met with women—low-income women—who are forced to go back to work 1 week after having their baby because they need the income. We are the only major country on Earth not to guarantee paid family and medical leave, not to make sure that a mom can stay home with her sick kid or a dad can spend time with his dying father or mother.

This legislation finally does what should have been done a long, long time ago and guarantees paid family and medical leave.

And what this legislation does is address the reality that many of our younger people are unable to obtain the good-paying jobs that are out there because they lack the ability to get a higher education.

Now, my own view is we should make public colleges and universities tuition free. My own view is we should cancel all student debt in this country. That is not in this bill. But what is in this bill is the reality that every American will have the right to get at least 2 years of community college tuition free. And they can use that to get the training they need for jobs. They can use that to accumulate credits that can be transferred to a 4-year college, if that is what they desire.

A few blocks away from here and in every major city in America, there are Americans sleeping out on the streets. They are veterans. They are people with all kinds of issues. They are working people who simply cannot afford the housing in their community. Two blocks away from the U.S. Capitol there is an encampment of homeless people. Six hundred thousand Americans are homeless today, and on top of that, we have some 18 million households that spend 50 percent of their limited incomes on housing.

In other words, we have a major housing crisis. This legislation addresses that, and, in an unprecedented manner, invests in low-income and affordable housing. And when we do that, by the way, we create a whole lot of good-paying jobs.

We are an aging society. And whether people have severe disabilities or whether they are just getting old, peo-

ple would rather stay at home in many cases rather than be forced into nursing homes. What our legislation will do is to significantly improve home healthcare in this country and make sure that those people who provide that important service, that difficult service, are adequately compensated, because today they are not. We need more of those workers, and we need to pay them decent wages.

I am sadly aware that many of my Republican colleagues do not believe that climate change is real or, at the very least, don't believe that we should do anything about it. But they are dead wrong. In my view, we cannot go home and look our children and grandchildren in the eye knowing what we know and knowing that the scientists are telling us that we have a very, very few years to address the climate crisis or else there will be irreparable harm done in our country and around the world.

We have turned on the TV this past summer, and we saw the unbelievable fires in Oregon and California and learned that in Siberia their fires were larger than all the other fires combined; smoke went thousands of miles. We learned that July was the hottest month ever and that climate is exacerbating extreme weather disturbances like Hurricane Ida, which brought havoc to Louisiana.

This legislation that we are proposing does not go as far as I think it should on climate. But make no mistake about it. It is a major, major step forward in transforming our energy system away from fossil fuel to energy efficiency and sustainable energy.

So that is where we are right now. We are at a moment where millions and millions of Americans have lost faith in their government. They think that we are incapable of addressing their needs, that all we do is listen to wealthy campaign contributors and the lobbyists and the billionaire class.

The question we face right now is, At this moment, do we have the courage to keep faith with the American people and show them that their democracy in fact can work for them and not just powerful special interests?

So let us go forward. Let us do the right thing. Let us pass this \$3½ trillion reconciliation package.

With that, I yield the floor.

VOTE ON BIANCHI NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

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

Mr. SANDERS. I would 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) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 377 Ex.]

YEAS—85

Baldwin	Hagerty	Portman
Barrasso	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Risch
Blackburn	Hickenlooper	Romney
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Blunt	Hoeven	Sanders
Booker	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Brown	Inhofe	Schatz
Burr	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Capito	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Sinema
Carper	Leahy	Smith
Casey	Lee	Stabenow
Cassidy	Lujan	Sullivan
Collins	Lummis	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Thune
Cornyn	Markey	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Marshall	Toomay
Cramer	McConnell	Van Hollen
Crapo	Menendez	Warner
Daines	Merkley	Warnock
Duckworth	Moran	Warren
Durbin	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murphy	Wicker
Fischer	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Young
Graham	Padilla	
Grassley	Peters	

NAYS—11

Boozman	Hawley	Scott (FL)
Braun	Lankford	Shelby
Cotton	Paul	Tuberville
Cruz	Rubio	

NOT VOTING—4

Feinstein	Kennedy
Johnson	Rounds

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN).

Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 241, Daniel J. Krittenbrink, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

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 Daniel J. Kritenbrink, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Assistant Secretary of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 77, nays 18, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 378 Ex.]

YEAS—77

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Barrasso	Heinrich	Risch
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Romney
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Blunt	Hoeven	Sanders
Booker	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Brown	Inhofe	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Capito	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Shelby
Carper	Klobuchar	Sinema
Casey	Leahy	Smith
Collins	Lujan	Stabenow
Coons	Lummis	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Tillis
Cramer	Menendez	Toomey
Crapo	Merkley	Van Hollen
Daines	Moran	Warner
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warnock
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Fischer	Murray	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Wicker
Graham	Padilla	Wyden
Grassley	Peters	
Hagerty	Portman	

NAYS—18

Blackburn	Ernst	Paul
Boozman	Hawley	Rubio
Braun	Lankford	Sasse
Cassidy	Lee	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Marshall	Thune
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville

NOT VOTING—5

Burr	Johnson	Rounds
Feinstein	Kennedy	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 77, the nays are 18.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Daniel J. Kritenbrink, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

NORD STREAM 2

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I want to talk today about Russia. I want to talk

about Vladimir Putin. I want to describe to this Chamber a bipartisan victory that together we won, and then I want to describe, tragically, how President Joe Biden is giving that victory away to Putin and Russia.

To understand this issue, we need to go back to the summer of 2019. In the summer of 2019, Russia was in the process of constructing a pipeline called the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.

Behind me is a map demonstrating where the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline runs. It is a pipeline that was to run from Russia to Germany, going underneath the Baltic Sea.

In the summer of 2019, the pipeline was nearly complete. At various periods in time, it was 70 percent complete, 80 percent complete. There was widespread consensus that if this pipeline were completed, it would have devastating consequences. In a few minutes, I will discuss those consequences in greater detail. But in an effort to stop the devastating consequences, I worked on bipartisan legislation, along with Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN, Democrat from New Hampshire, and we introduced bipartisan sanctions legislation designed to stop the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.

That legislation, when we introduced it, was almost immediately subject to a Russian disinformation campaign. In Europe, the Russians were saying to anyone who would listen that the Cruz-Shaheen sanction legislation could never pass; that there was no way Congress would come together in a bipartisan manner to stop the Nord Stream 2; that it was hopeless; that no one needed to be concerned that this legislation could pass. They also made the argument as part of their disinformation campaign that the pipeline was nearly complete so that U.S. sanctions could not stop it. There was nothing that could be done to stop it.

Well, to the surprise of nobody who follows these issues, that Russian disinformation was precisely that—it was disinformation. It was lies.

In the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator SHAHEEN and I worked with our colleagues, and our legislation was initially voted out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 20 to 2—overwhelming bipartisan support.

At that point, Senator SHAHEEN and I began working to get it passed on the floor of the Senate. While we were doing so, the Russian disinformation continued: This cannot pass.

We endeavored to have our sanctions legislation attached to the National Defense Authorization Act, which was moving in the fall and winter of 2019. To do so was not easy. To do so, we needed to get the explicit signoff of the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We needed the explicit signoff of the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. We needed the explicit signoff

of the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Banking Committee. Then we needed the explicit signoff of Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER, the Republican and Democratic leader respectively. All eight of those Senators needed to agree with our legislation for this to proceed on the NDAA.

And then we had to do the exact same thing in the House of Representatives and get the chairman and ranking member on Foreign Relations, on Armed Services and on Banking, and we had to get the signoff of NANCY PELOSI and KEVIN MCCARTHY.

To get the explicit support of all 16 of those congressional leaders—8 Republicans and 8 Democrats—in any world is not easy.

And I will say on my part and Senator SHAHEEN's part, we invested dozens, if not hundreds, of hours in terms of talking to our colleagues to build that bipartisan consensus, and we ended up getting that overwhelming support. In many ways, that support was miraculous.

Why is that?

Well, one of the reasons why Nord Stream 2 is particularly problematic is that Russia is building Nord Stream 2 in order to cut off Ukraine. There is currently a pipeline running through Ukraine and, through Nord Stream 2, Russia has the power to starve Ukraine.

Why is it miraculous in December of 2019 that we were able to pass this legislation?

Well, if you will recall what was happening in the House of Representatives in December of 2019, the House of Representatives was in the middle of impeaching President Donald Trump for alleged high crimes and misdemeanors concerning Ukraine.

If you will recall, from the trial we held on this Senate floor, central to the allegations that were raised by Democrats against President Trump was conduct concerning Ukraine.

It remains astonishing that right in the middle of a partisan gladiatorial battle concerning Ukraine, simultaneously we were able to get Republicans and Democrats to work hand-in-hand to agree with complete consensus that we were going to come together and stop the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. We were going to stop what Vladimir Putin was doing.

In December of 2019, our legislation passed. The Cruz-Shaheen sanctions legislation passed. Now, I will remind you what the Russian disinformation did when we first introduced it. They said it will never pass; and they said, even if it does pass, it is too late for it to have any effect.

Well, if my memory serves me correctly, President Trump signed the Cruz-Shaheen sanctions legislation at 7 p.m. on a Thursday. At 6:45 p.m. on a Thursday, 15 minutes before our sanctions legislation was signed into law, the company that was laying the pipeline in the Baltic Sea announced it had immediately halted laying the pipeline

and it was lifting anchor and sailing away. It was an incredible bipartisan victory. The pipeline was stopped in its tracks.

What happened next was absolutely nothing. For a year, the pipeline lay dormant. The talking points from Vladimir Putin—and now, sadly, adopted by Joe Biden and his administration—is the pipeline is 90 percent complete or the pipeline is 95 percent complete. But it is not rocket science that a 90-percent complete pipeline is zero-percent complete. Until you build both ends of the pipeline, it ain't nothing but a hunk of metal at the bottom of the ocean. Nothing is traveling through it until the pipeline is complete and online.

For a year, the pipeline lay dormant. Then in the year 2020, Senator SHAHEEN and I joined together again in a second round of bipartisan legislation, a second round of sanctions. We had stopped the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline in its tracks. For a year, Putin was stopped altogether.

And we came together for a second piece of legislation—the second version of Cruz-Shaheen—and just like the first sanctions, we passed it through both Houses of Congress and it was signed into law with overwhelming bipartisan support—nearly unanimous support of all 535 Members of Congress.

So we now had two major pieces of sanctions legislation on the books. Those sanctions had been working for a year and the pipeline was stopped.

Then in November of 2020 was the Presidential election. And in the wake of the Presidential election, Joe Biden and his transition team almost immediately began telegraphing weakness to Russia. Members of Joe Biden's foreign policy advisory team in the German newspapers expressed openness to Nord Stream 2 being built, expressed a willingness to try to circumvent the sanctions that had been working and had worked for over a year. Within days of Joe Biden and his team expressing weakness to Putin, Russia and Putin heard and they began the process of getting ready to return to building the pipeline.

(Thereupon, Ms. STABENOW assumed the Chair.)

Russia did return to building the pipeline. Do you know what day? January 24, 2021. Four days after Joe Biden was sworn into office, Putin said: We are safe. We are free. Our man Joe is in the White House.

And we know that the administration is not going to follow U.S. law anymore. And so on January 24, the Russians returned to building the pipeline.

Now, for 2 years, this body had been united, Republicans and Democrats, that we were going to stop this pipeline; but Joe Biden and his administration decided instead to waive the sanctions, decided instead to give Vladimir Putin what amounts to a multibillion-dollar gift—and not just a gift one time. If this pipeline is allowed to go

online, it will put billions of dollars in Putin's pockets every year, year after year after year.

What are the consequences of Nord Stream 2?

No. 1, Russia gets richer; Russia gets stronger; Russia gets billions of dollars that it can use to build its military, to threaten its neighbors, to threaten our allies, to endanger the lives of Americans and our friends.

No. 2, Europe is hurt. Our friends and allies in Europe are made even more dependent on Russian energy.

Our former colleague in this body, Senator John McCain—may he rest in peace—had a phrase for Russia that was memorable, that I have used many times. He referred to Russia as “a gas station with a country attached.”

That is Putin's plan. It is very simple. Putin is a petrol tyrant. He is a tyrant, he is a bully, he is a KGB thug, and all his aggression is funded by selling oil and gas.

Together, Republicans and Democrats in Congress had taken billions out of Putin's pockets; and, sadly, Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS decided the world would be a better place if instead Putin had billions more not just this year or next year, but for decades to come.

When Putin is dead and buried and the next dictator is ruling over Russia, that next dictator will be reaping the benefits of this pipeline. Indeed, as a result of Joe Biden's decision, many are referring to this pipeline as the Biden-Putin pipeline for a very simple reason: It is Putin who is building it; it is Putin who is profiting by it.

And the only reason Putin is allowed to do so is because President Joe Biden has given a multibillion-dollar gift that strengthens Russia and it weakens Europe.

It makes Europe subject to energy blackmail. Putin has demonstrated a willingness and, indeed, a history of using energy blackmail, of using those who are dependent on natural gas to coerce them to do what he wants. In the dead of winter, when people are at risk of freezing to death, Putin has threatened to—and has, in fact—cut off gas to endanger the lives of innocent civilians in order to coerce governments to bend to his will.

As a result of Joe Biden's surrender to Vladimir Putin, Putin will have the continued ability to exercise economic blackmail against Europe.

But not only that. Europe has energy needs. Those energy needs could be readily satisfied by American energy. Europe has expressed a willingness and, in some instances, an eagerness to import American energy.

But Joe Biden has decided that American jobs are unimportant. On his first day in office, Biden shut down the Keystone Pipeline, killing 11,000 jobs in the United States, including 8,000 union jobs—8,000 high-paying union jobs that, with a stroke of a pen, Joe Biden eliminated.

And at the exact same time that Biden is shutting down jobs and a pipe-

line in America, he is green lighting and giving Putin a gift of a pipeline between Russia and Germany, producing jobs in Russia, producing billions of dollars in Russia, and taking away jobs in America.

This pipeline is a disaster. As the afternoon goes on, I will elaborate on different aspects on which it is harmful and on the steps we can and should be taking to stop it.

But at this point, Senator BARRASSO is here and has some thoughts he wishes to express, and so I will yield the floor to Senator BARRASSO for his remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to add my voice to that of Mr. CRUZ, the Senator from Texas, about Joe Biden's surrender to Vladimir Putin.

Energy is called the master resource for a reason. It powers our country, powers our military, powers this Nation, powers the economy. And yet Joe Biden, on his first day in office, seemed to take us from a nation of energy dominance to energy dependence, canceling the Keystone Pipeline and now approving this pipeline, Nord Stream 2.

I come to add my voice to all of those, and there are many who have spoken out against the President in expressing our deep concerns about this administration's unwillingness to fully sanction the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline and to allow it to move ahead.

I am sure Senator CRUZ, as part of his discussion this afternoon, will talk about the confirmation hearing of Tony Blinken to be Secretary of State. We asked him specifically about the pipeline, and he said he would stop it, no matter what. Even though it was down to the last—I think he may have said—100 yards, they would stop it.

That is not what happened. We saw Joe Biden surrender.

For years, we have been sounding the alarm about this Russian trap.

This pipeline, who built it?

Gazprom.

Who are they?

They are the Russian state-owned natural gas monopoly.

We have all quoted and, in the past, have heard Senator McCain talk about Russia, a country acting as a gas station or a gas station acting as a country. I think one time he went on to say that Russia was a Mafia-run gas company disguised as a country.

This dangerous pipeline is going to double the amount of Russian natural gas going to Germany via the Baltic Sea. Completion of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline is going to further tighten its grip on European gas supplies and extend the threatening influence because, as I said before, energy is the master resource.

We know Russia uses energy to coerce and to manipulate. They use it as a geopolitical weapon. They coerce and manipulate our allies and our partners

in Europe. Many of our NATO allies—Germany, in particular—are becoming dependent upon and addicted to Russian gas. Europe already gets 40 to 45 percent of its gas imports from Russia. The new export pipeline helps Russia undermine Europe's efforts to diversify energy sources, suppliers, as well as the routes.

Nord Stream 2 makes Europe more energy dependent on Russia and, of course, more prone to Russian influence. At the same time, it is going to further fuel Russian aggression, Russian intimidation, and Russian instability across Europe.

Putin is a powerful foe who aims to divide Europe and to destroy the NATO alliance. He has been broadcasting those plans. This is not a surprise. The Nord Stream 2 Pipeline would mean a massive money transfer from our NATO allies straight into the Kremlin's coffers. This means more resources to put toward Russia's destabilizing activities.

And we continue to see an increase in these destabilizing activities. Russia occupies territory in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Russia launched a military buildup on Ukraine's border. Russia poisoned and then imprisoned a political opposition leader. Russian hackers are creating economic chaos by disrupting American supply chains.

Russia could use these cash reserves in what way? Well, a way to fund aggression in Europe and around the world. And it is interesting that Putin even funds environmental activists in Europe to shut down energy where they would be exploring for natural gas and oil. He wants environmental activists to protest any efforts for the European countries to develop their own gas resources so he can hold them hostage in this way as well.

Well, President Biden's weakness on Putin's pipeline is going to have serious consequences, not just the financial ones for Russia and not just those in Europe but worldwide. And for our security and for the security of our allies, I believe we must stop this Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.

That is why Congress has overwhelmingly, this body, passed several pieces of bipartisan legislation. You know, people say to me: Can't you do anything in a bipartisan way in Congress anymore?

I would say: Well, we certainly did when it came to the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. We passed bipartisan legislation imposing sanctions on this very project.

Yet, this administration, the Biden administration—the surrendering Biden administration—is unwilling to implement the laws that are on the books. President Biden waived congressionally mandated sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG, which is the company overseeing the pipeline construction. By using a national interest waiver, this administration gave Russia the green light to speed ahead to completion of this pipeline.

Look, there is strong opposition to President Biden's deliberate failure to follow the law when it comes to this pipeline and the supply of energy from Russia to Europe.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter dated March 3 of this year in which I led a group of 40 Senators in outlining our concerns.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MARCH 3, 2021.

HON. JOSEPH BIDEN,
President of the United States,
The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT BIDEN: We write to express our deep concern about the refusal of the Administration to impose sanctions on entities involved in the Nord Stream II pipeline. With construction on the project currently taking place, there is publicly available information on vessels and companies engaging in sanctionable activities. The failure of the Administration to identify and impose new sanctions signals its willingness to allow President Putin to gain a stranglehold over Europe's gas supplies and increase its geopolitical leverage. We call on the Administration to correct its misguided actions by quickly and fully implementing the sanctions mandated by U.S. law.

The Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act (PEESA), as amended by the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Clarification Act (PEESCA), mandates sanctions on the companies and individuals involved in the Nord Stream II pipeline. The law requires sanctions against entities installing pipes, engaging in pipelaying activities, or insuring or certifying that installation, those activities, and other activities associated with the pipeline. As construction is under way, time is of the essence. The United States must act now to prevent the pipeline from being completed.

For years, it has been the policy of the United States to oppose the Nord Stream II pipeline, which would carry natural gas from Russia across the Baltic Sea to Germany. The intent of Congress is crystal clear. Congress overwhelmingly passed several pieces of bipartisan legislation imposing sanctions on this project including the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), PEESA, and PEESCA. The Administration cannot turn a blind eye to those who violate our laws. We request the Administration utilize all of the tools at its disposal to implement additional sanctions immediately, especially the most recent round of sanctions in PEESCA that both houses of Congress urgently and repeatedly passed last year.

On February 19, 2021, the Administration submitted a congressionally mandated report on entities actively supporting, assisting, and working with those involved in the Nord Stream II pipeline. The Administration made the troubling decision to identify only the Russian pipelaying vessel Fortuna and its owner KVT-RUS, both of which were already sanctioned under the Trump Administration in January. The report also listed 18 entities which have ended their involvement in the project, due to the extensive diplomatic efforts of the Trump Administration to wind down their activities. This completely inadequate report undermines the bipartisan efforts of Congress and previous Administrations by not listing the other vessels involved in pipelaying and pipelaying activities as well as companies providing insurance and certification services.

We call on you to fix this error by immediately identifying and sanctioning the addi-

tional entities without delay. While sanctions are being quickly processed on individuals and companies, we ask you to formally notify these entities of the forthcoming sanctions and call on them to stop their work on the Nord Stream II pipeline. In addition, PEESCA also mandates consultation with our allies, which must be conducted and concluded expeditiously.

As you have previously stated, the Nord Stream II pipeline is a "bad deal for Europe." This point has been clearly demonstrated by Europe's growing opposition to the project. On January 21, 2021, the European Parliament overwhelmingly passed, by a vote of 581-50, a resolution calling on the European Union to immediately stop the completion of the Nord Stream II pipeline. Previously, on December 12, 2018, the European Parliament passed a resolution describing the Nord Stream II pipeline as a "political project that poses a threat to European energy security" that should be cancelled. It passed by a vote of 433-105.

The Nord Stream II pipeline makes American allies and partners in Europe more susceptible to Moscow's coercion and malign influence. It would reinforce Russia's near-monopoly and control of natural gas in the region. In addition, the project would weaken efforts to diversify Europe's energy sources, suppliers and routes. The Nord Stream II pipeline would also provide Russia an opportunity to damage the economy of Ukraine and to further its aggressive actions in the region.

We appreciate your statements as well as those made by members of the Administration publicly opposing the Nord Stream II pipeline. It is now time to act. It is critical that the United States enforce our laws and hold those entities accountable for assisting Russia in building this dangerous pipeline.

Sincerely,

John Barrasso, James E. Risch, Ron Johnson, Ted Cruz, Cynthia Lummis, James M. Inhofe, Steve Daines, Joni Ernst, Kevin Cramer, Marco Rubio, John Hoeven, Tom Cotton, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Cindy Hyde-Smith, John Thune, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, Lindsey Graham, Josh Hawley, Rick Scott, John Kennedy, Ben Sasse, Thom Tillis, Roger Marshall, M.D., Charles E. Grassley, Susan M. Collins, Bill Hagerty, Mike Braun, Mike Crapo, M. Michael Rounds, Jerry Moran, Bill Cassidy, M.D., Tim Scott, John Cornyn, Dan Sullivan, Mitt Romney, Deb Fischer, Todd Young, Rob Portman, United States Senators.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, in this letter, signed by 40 Senators, we called out the Biden administration for refusing to impose sanctions on entities involved in the construction of this very pipeline.

It is a lengthy letter, and I am not going to read the whole thing, but let me point out, the letter says this:

The failure of [this] Administration to identify and impose new sanctions signals its willingness to allow President Putin to gain a stranglehold over Europe's gas [supply] and increase its geopolitical leverage. We call on the Administration to correct its misguided actions by quickly and fully implementing the sanctions mandated by U.S. law.

It has been over 6 months, and President Biden still refuses to follow the law. Through his inaction, President Biden is gifting Russia a new geopolitical weapon.

And one of the things I found most astonishing, in terms of this administration taking us from energy dominance to energy dependence, is what happened just last month. The Biden administration, seeing the impact of rising energy costs and rising gasoline costs—people in Wyoming paying more than \$25 extra every time they fill their tank compared to the day that President Biden came into office—he said: We need to do something.

His National Security Advisor actually went to say: We need to ask OPEC Plus to produce more oil and to produce more energy.

Well, who is OPEC Plus? Well, it is Saudi Arabia, and it is Russia. In our Energy Committee, of which I am the ranking member, Senator MURKOWSKI, the Senator from Alaska, came to the committee and told members of the committee that currently the United States is using more energy produced from Russia than it is from her home State of Alaska. What does that tell you about this administration and the commitment of this administration to energy needs in this country—in our own country?

It is very disturbing to see the President act in such a reckless way regarding our Nation, our economy, and our energy security, and continuing to give gifts like this to our enemies. It is much better to sell energy to our friends than have to buy energy from our enemies, but that is what appeared on the White House website, put there by the National Security Advisor to the President just last month, asking Saudi Arabia and OPEC Plus to produce more energy to help lower the cost at the pump for people in the United States here at home.

Well, why do you think we have it, Mr. President? You killed the Keystone XL Pipeline and put a longstanding moratorium now on gas production on Federal lands, which continues. There still has not been a lease sale since the day you signed that Executive order and the day you came into office.

We need to force the President to act on this critical issue of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. Yesterday—just yesterday—the U.S. House of Representatives—the body down the hall, with NANCY PELOSI as the Speaker of the House, the House of Representatives—passed an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act imposing new mandatory sanctions on Nord Stream 2. It would repeal the national interest waiver for sanctions under existing law. Look, this is an incredibly important step, and I would look forward to it quickly becoming law.

Protecting this Russian trap that they have laid for the Germans and for Europe—the noose around the neck, the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline—it is in our national security interest to block that, but yet this administration is not doing it, and I believe it is a grave mistake on the part of this administration.

While President Biden has failed to do the right thing, there is still time.

The administration can reverse course and fully sanction the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. And if President Biden refuses, Congress is prepared to take strong actions to protect the energy security of our Nation and our allies.

And with that, I thank Senator CRUZ for allowing me to join in support of the comments that he is making. We have been wonderful partners, and other Members on the floor, in a bipartisan way, with a specific focus on what is happening with Russia and its efforts to undermine the United States, to undermine NATO, and to try to go back to, as they have said, put the band back together—reestablish the former Soviet Union, which Vladimir Putin has stated is his goal all along.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Wyoming for his powerful remarks, and I thank each of the Senators who have worked with me, both Republicans and Democrats, in our successful effort for over a year to stop the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline—successful, right until Joe Biden became President.

I want to talk now about the precise dangers that are posed by the completion of Nord Stream 2. Many agree it would be a catastrophe for the security of the United States and for our European allies.

Nord Stream 2, if it goes online, would double the gas flowing from Russia to Germany while circumventing American allies that Putin targets militarily, diplomatically, and commercially. As a result, if Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will expose Ukraine and Poland to deep, long-term dangers, and it will leave them vulnerable the next time Russia targets them for aggression.

Right now, one-third of Russian gas exports to Europe travel through Ukraine. That provides Ukraine a curious kind of protection because Putin knows that he can't endanger that energy infrastructure without endangering his economic line to the world.

With Nord Stream 2, Putin and Russia are given, by Joe Biden and by KAMALA HARRIS, effectively open season on Ukraine. And when a year from now we see Russian tanks in Ukraine, we will remember this moment that it was Joe Biden's surrender to Putin on Nord Stream 2 that enabled Russia to carry out that aggression.

If Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will enrich Putin with billions of dollars to direct toward his malign activities. And, by the way, if you don't want to take my word for it, here is what the Polish Prime Minister said about Nord Stream 2; that Nord Stream 2 “strengthens Russia's power, helps President Putin to build a military power, [and] helps to intimidate other nations.”

In addition, if Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will solidify Russian energy dominance at the expense of European

energy diversification. If Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will deepen the corruption that tragically is endemic across Russia's energy sector, and it will export more of that corruption to Europe.

But I want to talk a bit more about the crushing, overarching danger of Russia using Nord Stream 2 for blackmail and for coercion. Putin uses energy as a weapon. We have seen that pattern over and over again. He uses energy for blackmail and coercion. He turns it off or on to punish resistance to his expansionism.

This is a real, acute, and proven threat. Russia turned off the gas to Europe in the winter months of 2006 and again in 2009 because of political disputes. The Kremlin company that owns and would run Nord Stream 2, Gazprom, has repeatedly cut off gas to Ukraine during political crises. It is open blackmail, and because of Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS, Putin will have more power to blackmail our friends in Europe.

And it is not only me; it is not only Republicans; and, indeed, it is not only Republicans and Democrats in Congress who understand the magnitude of this threat. Our European allies understand fully just how disastrous Nord Stream 2 would be.

Ukrainian President Zelensky has said that it is flatout “wrong” “not to notice that” Nord Stream 2 “is a dangerous weapon” not only for Europe, “not only for Ukraine but for the whole of Europe.”

I want you to pause and reflect. President Zelensky of Ukraine said this pipeline is a dangerous weapon directed at Ukraine and the whole of Europe. Why is it being built? Because Joe Biden decided to give it as a gift to Vladimir Putin.

In a meeting with the Biden administration, the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister said:

Poland considers this project to be detrimental to the security of not only Ukraine, not only Central Europe, but also to the security of the whole of Europe, making the EU dependent on Russian gas.

If we give a damn about our friends in Poland, if we give a damn about our friends in Ukraine, if we give a damn about our friends in Europe, don't allow Joe Biden to allow Vladimir Putin to point this weapon at the heart of Europe.

In a joint statement signed by representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, here is what the Estonian Foreign Affairs Committee stated: “Countering malign Russian aggression is in the vital national security interest of the whole of NATO, the EU and our partners in Central and Eastern Europe,” and that “Nord Stream 2 is a geopolitical project geared towards expanding Russia's influence on Europe, through energy dominance.”

A question for every Member of this Senate to decide: Do we care about endangering the national security, about threatening, about making our European friends subject to blackmail? Do we care about what Estonia has told us, about what Latvia has told us, about what Lithuania has told us? Do we care about the Czech Republic? Do we care about Ireland? Do we care about Poland? Do we care about Ukraine? Do we care about the United Kingdom?

Well, our actions can decide that. Unfortunately, Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS have decided that our European allies, their security is not of sufficient concern to them. And, instead, they have actively given this pipeline to Vladimir Putin.

My Democratic colleagues and, indeed, the vast majority of American lawmakers, also understand the precise danger of blackmail and coercion posed by Nord Stream 2.

In 2018, Senator COONS, my Democratic colleague from Delaware, said quite plainly that “we have to work with Europe to reduce its dependence on Russian energy exports and in particular to convince it to discontinue the Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia to Germany.” Senator COONS continued: “As long as Russia dominates the provision of energy to Europe it will continue to hold a veto over many European policies and [it] will be in a position to weaken and marginalize countries like Poland and Ukraine.”

Senator COONS was right in 2018, and what he said is right today.

Joe Biden is committing a generational political blunder, a catastrophic mistake that hurts American national security and that hurts European security.

Congress has repeatedly passed sanctions targeting Nord Stream 2, targeting Russia’s corrupt energy market more broadly. Those sanctions, especially CAATSA and PEEESA—and I am going to discuss in greater detail, later today, the specific sanctions legislation that is on U.S. books that Joe Biden is ignoring, that he is flouting, that he is disregarding, that he is refusing to enforce. Those sanctions impose mandatory sanctions. This body, Congress as a whole, Democrats and Republicans, past administrations—everyone has worked together not just to counter Russia but, specifically, to prevent Putin from being able to leverage energy as a geopolitical weapon.

The Biden administration, however, tells us they have a better solution, a better solution than both Houses of Congress, a better solution than following U.S. law. Instead of imposing sanctions to stop the pipeline, they tell us they have worked out a deal with Germany that they promise will prevent Putin from being able to use energy as a weapon. It is the best of both worlds, they say. They don’t have to use sanctions, and they still solve the problem of Russian energy blackmail.

President Biden said: “Chancellor Merkel and I are absolutely united in

our conviction that Russia must not be allowed to use energy as a weapon to coerce or threaten its neighbors.”

Those are nice sentiments, if they weren’t accompanied with Joe Biden giving a multibillion-dollar generational gift to Putin to do exactly what President Biden just said he didn’t want Putin to do.

Here is how an official from the Biden State Department described the deal: “There’s a clear commitment on the part of the United States and Germany in this statement that should Russia attempt to use energy as a weapon”—and, as an aside, they have done so over and over and over and over again in the past—“should Russia attempt to use energy as a weapon . . . Germany will take action at the national level and press for effective measures at the European level, including sanctions to limit Russian export capabilities to Europe in the energy sector, and that includes gas and/or other economically relevant sectors.”

So understand what they are saying. If and when Russia does what they have done in the past over and over again, if they do—one of the reasons they want Nord Stream 2 is to exercise economic blackmail. If and when they do that, Germany is going to send a really stern letter to the European Union.

One of my favorite movies that Heidi and I have watched many times is a movie called “Team America.” It is a comedy. It is done by the creators of the movie “South Park.” It is a movie that involves puppets. I will give a warning: It is a movie with an enormous amount of profanity in it. It is also one of the most sidesplittingly funny movies ever made.

In “Team America,” they talk about Hans Blix and the tool of sending a stern letter to the United Nations. The movie “Team America,” understandably ridicules that as being utterly ineffective. In the case of that movie, it was North Korea. But in the case of Putin, I assure you, Vladimir Putin has not lost 1 minute of sleep worrying about Germany’s letter to the European Union.

Once Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will become a dominant source of energy for Europe. Putin knows this. Merkel knows this. Biden knows this.

Turning off Nord Stream 2, which Germany has suggested: Oh, once we are addicted to the crack, we will just turn it off when we don’t want it anymore—that would be suicidal, which Putin knows, and he is counting on it.

It is as empty and hollow a threat as has ever been uttered on the international stage. And, even worse, we already know that it is a hollow threat because Putin has already, in just the last few days, crossed the line into using energy as a weapon.

So we don’t have to go back to 2006. We don’t have to go back to 2009. Let’s go back to last week.

In just the last week, it has become clear that Putin has been turning down

gas exports to Europe to coerce our allies into dropping opposition to Nord Stream 2.

The blackmail is open, and it is brazen. Russian and Gazprom officials have said: If Germany and the EU approve Nord Stream 2 coming online, then the Russians will turn exports back up.

On Friday, more than 40 Members of the European Parliament called for an investigation of the coercion, saying Gazprom was driving up prices to “pressure” the European Union into speeding Nord Stream 2 activation.

So I want you to pause and reflect. The Biden administration’s claim to prevent Nord Stream 2 being used as a weapon for energy blackmail is, if Russia ever does it, Germany will stand up to them.

Russia is doing it right now—not in 2006—well, yes, they did in 2006. Not in 2009—well, yes, they did in 2009. Today, last week—and they are not hiding it. They are saying: We are going to cut off your energy until you approve Nord Stream 2.

How exactly is the Biden administration claiming they are going to prevent the malign use of this pipeline? They are literally surrendering to blackmail right now for no reason.

You know, sadly, the reason—over the past 9 months, I have had conversations with just about every senior Biden State Department nominee, in my office, over and over and over again, about Nord Stream 2. Almost to a person, the nominees agree: Nord Stream 2 would be terrible. It would be disastrous. It would be bad for America. It would be bad for Europe. It would be good for Russia.

They all agree with that. By the way, Tony Blinken, the Secretary of State, said so vociferously in his confirmation hearing, and he said so even more vociferously sitting on the couch in my office. They all admit this.

So why, then, would Biden have committed this disastrous mistake? Sadly, I think there are two reasons. One, the Biden team entered office with an almost pathological revulsion to anything the previous administration did. If the Trump administration did it, it must be wrong and must be reversed.

Now, listen. None of us in this Chamber are naive. We understand politics. We understand that when one party takes over from the other party, they often reverse policy decisions. That is not unusual.

Obama reversed decisions of the Bush administration. Trump reversed decisions of the Obama administration. And there are a whole lot of decisions of the Trump administration that, sadly, from my perspective, Biden is reversing. As a general matter, that is why we have elections, and there are differences between the policy positions between the two parties.

But the Biden team is further than that. It is almost a pathological “if Trump did it, it must be bad.” Never mind that the Trump administration

did this only after the Congress came together in an extraordinary moment of bipartisan unity and passed this as mandatory legislation.

In my office, over and over again, with just about every senior Biden State Department nominee, I asked them: Please don't turn one of the biggest foreign policy victories of the last several years into one of the biggest foreign policy defeats of the last several years.

The reports came out, actually, that State tried to honor its commitment; that State—the Department of State—in the interagency process, argued for “let's follow the law; let's impose the sanctions.” And what public reports have suggested is that the Biden White House—the political operatives in the Biden White House—overruled State.

So even though State knew that the right policy was “shut down the Putin pipeline” and the wrong policy was “turn it into the Biden-Putin pipeline,” the Biden White House desperately wanted to stamp their imprimatur on this, because if it was done under President Trump, they were going to reverse it.

The second reason is that the Biden foreign policy team, for whatever reason, has a deep and abiding interest in giving to Germany whatever it is they want.

Now, look, Germany is an important friend and ally. We work together closely with Germany on economic matters, on diplomatic matters. We have long and positive relationships with our friend and ally Germany. It doesn't mean we agree with everything the Germans do, any more than we agree with everything any other ally of ours does.

Indeed, I will point out, in the past week, the Biden administration precipitated the French withdrawing their Ambassador from America—an extraordinary moment, which, I will point out, at least illustrates that we have a history of having disagreements, and sometimes serious disagreements, with our friends and allies.

But one friend of mine has a phrase—he puts it—that the Biden foreign policy establishment, they sleep with votive candles of Angela Merkel under their beds; that they view Chancellor Merkel as someone who must be surrendered to, acquiesced to no matter what. Never mind that Chancellor Merkel has an extremely limited tenure in office. She is on her way out. Never mind that the next successor government in Germany may well decide that they don't even want Nord Stream 2. This Biden foreign policy team, perhaps as a farewell gift to Angela Merkel, has decided that President Biden should surrender to Putin. That makes no sense. That is dangerous. It is harmful to Europe, it is harmful to Germany, it is harmful to America, and it helps Russia.

We are going to have an extended period of time to continue to discuss these matters, but at this point, I see

that Senator SHAHEEN is preparing to speak, so I yield the floor to Senator SHAHEEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). The Senator from New Hampshire.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I appreciate my colleague from Texas being willing to turn over the floor so that I can give my remarks.

Mr. President, I am here today to discuss my concerns about the ongoing partisan obstruction in the Senate. First, as everyone here knows, September 30 is the end of the current fiscal year, and without action by the Senate on a continuing resolution—the mechanism to continue to fund the government—our government is going to shut down at midnight on the 1st.

So what happens if we don't pass that continuing resolution and the government shuts down? Well, critical operations will shutter. We have seen this picture before. Our national parks will close. We can tell our government researchers, including Nobel Prize-winning scientists, to leave their labs, and we would be doing this in the middle of the greatest health crisis of our lifetime.

A government shutdown also means that we ask essential Federal workers to work without pay. FBI agents, Border Patrol agents, TSA workers, weather forecasters, and others would be forced to continue their essential work, and they would be doing it for IOUs. We would promise them we would pay them, but there is no guarantee.

Now, it is puzzling to me because other countries don't do this to themselves. Government shutdowns put America behind. Look at the government shutdown that we had that went from December 2018 to January 2019, the longest government shutdown in our history. While our space scientists were at home, China landed the first rover on the dark side of the Moon—something that we had not done.

The continuing resolution before us also includes resources that will help Americans whose homes were flooded, homes were destroyed by raging wildfires or by hurricanes, including Hurricane Irma. They deserve our help, not more political infighting or partisan bickering.

We also owe it to our Afghan allies, who put their lives on the line to assist U.S. soldiers, to pass this bill. It contains critical assistance to help them resettle after facing imminent danger from the Taliban.

So from emergency housing assistance to resources for health screenings, job training, and other essential services, we can't let our allies down. We have already let some of them down because we weren't able to get everyone out of Afghanistan, and we are still working on that. But to then say “You are on your own” despite years of helping the United States? That is just patently unfair.

Secondly, as we are discussing the continuing resolution and keeping the government open, one of the things that our colleagues, our Republican colleagues, have said is that they are not going to increase the debt limit. I think we in Congress have a solemn obligation to protect the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government.

Treasury Secretary Yellen has told Congress that the Treasury will exhaust extraordinary measures that they have been using to pay our Nation's bills sometime next month. And let's be clear. The prospect of the first-ever default on our Nation's debt obligations would be disastrous for our economy at a time when we can least afford it.

Raising the debt ceiling is not about whether or not we should spend more money or incur more debt; raising the debt ceiling is about paying the bills we already owe, the bills that come due from the previous administration.

Minority Leader MCCONNELL himself has voted to increase or suspend the debt limit 32 times. And when President Trump was in office, Democrats in this Chamber—and I was one of them—supported raising the debt ceiling three times because we understand that it is grossly irresponsible for us to renege on obligations that our government has already incurred.

As a former Governor, one of the worst fears I had as New Hampshire went through challenging times during a recession, during a court-ordered change in how we funded our schools, was that the State would have its bond rating lowered. That would mean we would have to pay more on money owed. It would have an impact on everyone in New Hampshire. This is sort of the equivalent of having the bond rating lowered for New Hampshire, only 100 times, 1,000 times over. No; this is that on steroids.

Now, because we have a Democratic President, Republicans are saying they won't lift a finger to prevent this catastrophic outcome for our economy, for our currency, for the full faith and credit of the United States of America. This is not a game. The stability of our economy and the financial security of working Americans are at stake, and we have an obligation to pass legislation that has been sent to us by the House to keep our government open and to raise the debt limit. This isn't just about the United States; this has implications for our entire global financial system.

Sadly, Mr. President, the partisan brinkmanship and obstruction doesn't end with domestic and economic matters. I am also very concerned about the dangerously slow confirmation process of our State Department nominees and Ambassadors. What we have seen is a few Members of this body who are threatening our national security by slowing the process to schedule nomination hearings for qualified nominees, preventing votes on those State Department nominees who have

been approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Today, only two Ambassadors have been confirmed by the Senate. This administration has had to wait over 200 days for its first Ambassador to be confirmed, compared to only 62 days for the previous administration. For the first 300 days of the previous administration, 55 State Department nominees were confirmed by the Senate, and now, as we approach the first 300 days of the Biden Presidency, this Senate has only confirmed 14 appointees.

Now, I agree with my colleague from Texas about the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. I think we need to sanction it. But I am not willing to shut down the government, to allow the actions of this government to grind to a halt because I am concerned about that issue.

If Senators are concerned about our national security, they would match deeds with words and confirm career State Department nominees who have been waiting for months. When we look at the increasing global threats to the United States, operating with a depleted diplomatic corps jeopardizes our national security, U.S. interests, and the safety of Americans at home and abroad.

These political games are really risking serious consequences. It must stop. I know we can work together in a rational, bipartisan way to address the country's needs. I have seen it. I believe my colleagues who are holding things up love this country, but I am concerned that their actions don't show that they love the country.

There is no excuse for delaying or hindering the basic functions this legislative body is constituted to perform, and I urge all of our colleagues to join us, to get to work. Let's get this done. Maybe, if we do that, we can address some of the other concerns that we have that we ought to be able to work together and compromise to get done. That is what I am going to continue to try to do, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, George Washington, in his farewell address to the Nation, warned us against foreign entanglements and costly wars. He and the other Founders knew firsthand the danger that enduring engagement abroad posed to our Republic and to the cause of freedom.

Despite those warnings, we, the United States, have been embroiled in a directionless, trillion-dollar war in Afghanistan for the past 20 years.

And after all that investment—the American blood and treasure poured into that cause—Americans watched in

horror as any semblance of the so-called progress and investment in a democratic Afghanistan crumbled in a matter of weeks. Haunting images demonstrating this failure tragically played out before us. Americans hadn't seen tragedy of this type since the Fall of Saigon.

The Costs of War project at Brown University estimates that the total monetary cost of our war in Afghanistan amounts to \$2.3 trillion, counting U.S. military spending, both on and off budget. U.S. manpower, resources, and expertise were dedicated for decades to the war in Afghanistan.

So we must ask ourselves: What went wrong?

I rise today to explain how the erosion of Congress's constitutional war-making role permitted and, in fact, enabled these failures.

In the early years of the war, Congress shrugged as the President transformed the mission in Afghanistan. President Bush addressed the Nation and the servicemembers going to war in October of 2001, promising "To all the men and women in our military—every sailor, every soldier, every airman, every coastguardsman, every Marine—I say this: Your mission is defined; your objectives are clear; your goal is just."

At the time, the mission was clear. The goals were to capture the terrorists responsible for the September 11 attacks, neutralize the threat posed by al-Qaida in Afghanistan, and ensure the Taliban was not strong enough to provide a safe harbor to al-Qaida.

In 2003, we had substantively accomplished each of those goals. Though killing Osama bin Laden would take until May of 2011, the Taliban had fallen and the leaders of al-Qaida went into hiding outside of Afghanistan. And yet, despite this reality, the Bush administration shifted the mission to physically rebuilding Afghanistan and reshaping the country's government and culture as if to mirror our own.

Even as the mission in Afghanistan was changed dramatically and unrealistically, Congress did not repeal or replace or amend the 2001 authorization for the use of military force in Afghanistan.

The Constitution charges the legislative branch to not only fund but also declare and oversee wars, and yet Congress seemed unaffected by the rather dramatic change in mission and strategy.

As a result, the war continued for longer than it should have—much longer—and the United States continued to lose tax dollars, lives, and any attachment to the original goals all at the same time.

As building a democratic Afghanistan became the new mission, Presidents of both parties and the interagency apparatus ignored explicit evidence of failure and, in fact, doubled down on American investment and involvement.

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction—created by

Congress to oversee and audit funds used for nation-building in Afghanistan—has delivered 427 audits and more than 250 reports to Congress since 2008, detailing the risks, the waste, and the mismanagement in the U.S. mission. Many of these reports pointed out contradictions of our aims and explained the waste, fraud, and abuse plaguing the funds Congress appropriated for the reconstruction projects of all sorts.

Now, thanks to the investigative journalism of Craig Whitlock of the Washington Post, "The Afghanistan Papers" added another layer to the inspector general's reports, revealing evidence that high-ranking officials in the Department of Defense, in the State Department, and the White House knew that the U.S. mission had no focus, no metrics, no clear coordination, and no defined enemy.

Douglas Lute, a three-star Army General who served as the Afghanistan war czar under President Bush and President Obama, is quoted in the published interview saying "We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan—we didn't know what we were doing."

While I share the view with the majority of Americans that withdrawing forces from Afghanistan was the right choice and was, by all accounts, inevitable at some point, the Biden administration's disastrous withdrawal was the culmination of American failure in Afghanistan.

Kabul fell to lawlessness and mass panic. Afghan security forces laid down arms to the Taliban. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled his nation. And the evacuation was so poorly directed that potential terrorists and men with child brides secured seats on U.S. evacuation flights while American citizens were left behind enemy lines. Our Nation lost 13 servicemembers, with many more seriously wounded, to a terrorist attack, and the administration ineptly responded by killing 10 innocent civilians, including 7 children.

President Biden's closing of the war in Afghanistan has been riddled with avoidable mistakes, resulting in both tragedy and embarrassment of historic magnitude. The President and other high-ranking officials must be held accountable for this failure. Anyone else engaging in such mismanagement of our actions in a theater of war would surely be held accountable, and they must too.

Throughout 20 years of engagement, Congress itself has shamefully failed to respond to an executive branch plundering powers that constitutionally belong to Congress. It is time for Congress to do its job. It is time to ensure that such a grave mistake that cost us so much in American taxpayer resources, but most importantly in American blood, will never, ever happen again.

Some of my colleagues and I may disagree on when and exactly how to use military force, but we should debate those matters in the light of day for

the American people to view and, even more importantly, for the American people to influence. U.S. engagement in Afghanistan over the last decade and the recent blundered withdrawal demand that we prioritize such a debate. It is long, long overdue.

That is why I, along with my colleagues across the aisle, Senator CHRIS MURPHY and Senator BERNIE SANDERS, introduced the National Security Powers Act, which would restore Congress's role in national security decision-making. This is an opportunity to protect our constitutional order. American citizens and especially those who serve in our military deserve nothing less.

Despite our political differences, as members of the branch of government most accountable to the people, we feel the weight of American blood and treasure sacrificed in our Nation's wars. We may not have all the answers—I certainly don't claim to have them, but we put forth a really thorough, well-reasoned, much-needed set of reforms to ensure that America is not thrown into another endless war without continual congressional input—congressional input that is not just helpful; it is not just a good idea, but congressional input that is actually required by the Constitution itself.

It is that kind of input that has been neglected. And, sadly, it has been neglected not just by the executive branch, but it has been neglected by the Congress, by the very people who are supposed to wield it.

See, there is a big difference when it comes to war-making power between our system of government and the one we left behind—the one that was based in London. As Alexander Hamilton explained in *Federalist* No. 69, this was one of the key design features of the Constitution, one of the things that differentiates it from our former London-based system of government.

There, the Chief Executive—that is the monarch; in those days, King George III—would take the country to war unilaterally. It was up to Parliament then to figure out how to fund it. Our Founding Fathers decided to make a break from that practice. They did not give this power to declare war to the Chief Executive, no. They gave that power only to the branch of government that would stand accountable to the people at the most regular intervals, the legislative branch.

When we denigrate this role, when we minimize this responsibility, when we shirk this duty, we do so to our own everlasting shame and in violation of the oath that each and every one of us has taken to support the Constitution of the United States.

In this Republic, Congress can no longer sit idle while the Executive alone decides the fate of our Nation's wars and those who fight in them. While we can't change history, we can live up to the ideals of our Constitution. I pray that we will. And I know that together we can, we must, and we will.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, there have been a lot of discussions on the floor today—and I fully support them—about an important, important role of the U.S. Senate that we need to take on with regard to our oversight responsibility of what the entire country has recently observed as a fiasco, debacle, with regard to foreign policy in Afghanistan that is going to have consequences for years.

Like all of us, I was home over August when all of these images on TV were unfolding. And I will tell you, I don't think I have ever seen my constituents madder about a single issue than this. It wasn't just Republicans. It was across-the-board Alaskans.

Why?

Because they saw our great country humiliated. They witnessed time and time again the President of the United States, the Commander in Chief, telling them blatant falsehoods that they knew were falsehoods, and there is yet to be any accountability on this.

Now, the hearings have begun. We have had two hearings on the Armed Services Committee, but they continue to insist on keeping them classified. No reason to do that. We need to have these hearings out in the open. The American people want to see them.

We had hearings on the Foreign Relations Committee this past week, and we started to see the beginnings of the Biden administration's strategy as it relates to explaining this fiasco, this debacle.

What is it?

Remarkably, it is to blame Donald Trump—if you watch the Secretary of State testify in front of the Foreign Relations Committee—and then blame the Generals, and then continue to quote the President of the United States that this withdrawal in Afghanistan was “an extraordinary success.” Let me repeat that: An “extraordinary success.”

That is what the President of the United States has called this. And, unfortunately, his Secretary of State, his Under Secretary of Defense—who testified in front of the Armed Services Committee just a couple of days ago in a hearing that was the height of deniability on any responsibility—all of them continue to cling to this blatant falsehood that every American knows is not the case.

This wasn't an extraordinary success, what we witnessed in Afghanistan. The whole country knows that. In fact, the whole world knows that.

This is the cover from a few weeks ago of *The Economist* magazine—pretty honest, well-respected magazine. Much of the world reads it.

And that is what *The Economist* called it: “Biden's debacle.” If you look in the magazine, it goes into several articles about the implications of Biden's debacle. Here are some of the names, titles of the articles in this magazine: “The fiasco in Afghanistan

is a huge and unnecessary blow to America's standing” in the world. That is not an extraordinary success. How about this one from another article in *The Economist*: “Joe Biden blames everyone else.” That is not accountability. And then perhaps most importantly: “The big win for China in Afghanistan is seeing America humbled.”

These are articles in an international magazine—a well-respected international magazine—that the whole world is reading, and this is what happened in Afghanistan. It wasn't an extraordinary success; to the contrary, it was a debacle. It was a debacle.

Now, some things are becoming increasingly clear. The administration tries to defend this, tries to explain it. As *The Economist* magazine mentions, this is President Biden's fiasco. Despite attempts by the civilian leadership in the Biden administration to explain this away with regard to blame on Donald Trump or the generals, this was 100 percent President Biden's decision and debacle.

It is becoming increasingly clear even in the classified hearings that we have had on the Armed Services Committee that the President's senior military advisers said to the President: Do not do this, sir. Do not go to zero with our troops. Instead, you should keep a small force there.

Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly clear that the President's military advisers then said to the President: If you do go to zero, if you do get rid of all our troops—especially if they are pulled out before others leave—you are going to see many bad things happen tactically, operationally, strategically for our country.

In essence, what Americans witnessed and saw on TV in August—this was predicted. The President was told this. He ignored this advice, so he owns this debacle. What he needs to do now is tell the truth about it. He and his administration need to tell the truth about it.

There are many things that are disturbing about what has happened over the last several weeks in Afghanistan, but what has been so disturbing is not only how the President has been blaming everyone but himself; it is that when he talks to the American people about this issue, he has clearly not been telling the truth, and the American people know it.

Let's start with the issue I just mentioned: the advice that the President received from his military advisers.

President Biden was on a media interview show on August 18 as this whole fiasco was unfolding. He was asked:

Your top military advisors warned against withdrawing on this timeline. They wanted you to keep about 2,500 troops.

That was the question from George Stephanopoulos.

The President of the United States said:

No, they didn't.

Later, Stephanopoulos pressed: Your military advisers told you not to do

this, that “we should keep 2,500 troops” in Afghanistan.

The President of the United States:

No. No one said that to me that I can recall.

That is not true. That is not true.

During that same interview, George Stephanopoulos said:

We’ve got, like, 10,000 to 15,000 Americans in the country. . . . Are you committed to making sure that [American] troops stay until every American who wants to [leave gets] out?

That was the question.

The President said:

Yes.

I am quoting him:

If there’s American citizens left, we’re gonna stay—

The military is going to stay—

[until we] get them all out.

That is a quote from the President of the United States. That wasn’t true.

In a later interview, the President mentioned that al-Qaida is all gone from Afghanistan. That isn’t true. We know that.

The President also said that our NATO allies:

Every one of them knew and agreed with the decision I made to end, jointly end, our involvement in Afghanistan.

That is not true. That is not true.

Then the President and his advisers—the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy most recently—have been highlighting this incredible, over-the-horizon capability to go after terrorists whom we still have in Afghanistan. That, we know, has been greatly diminished. We have heard that from the military leaders who know these issues. So even on that issue, they are not leveling with the American people.

These are not small, marginal misstatements I am talking about; these are dramatic, obvious falsehoods that go to the very heart of the foreign policy fiasco we have all witnessed. These are life-and-death deceptions that the President of the United States told the American people and he told the world.

Here is the thing: The American people, the people in Britain, the people in our NATO ally countries, the leaders in countries that are adversaries—everybody knows that these statements were false.

One of the many things that are so harmful to come out of this, because of these kinds of statements—when they come from the Commander in Chief, this undermines the credibility and honor of the United States of America in front of the rest of the world. That is one of the major reasons why so many of my fellow Alaskans and our fellow Americans are so upset by this Biden debacle.

There are going to be more hearings next week in the Armed Services Committee. We are finally going to have open hearings. What we will need are straight, truthful answers from the witnesses, particularly those in uniform, who are not obligated to cover

for the Commander in Chief’s unwise decisions or blatant falsehoods. To the contrary, these witnesses will need to tell the truth—will need to tell the truth.

Speaking of the truth, Mr. President, here is one truth that, to me, has been clear for months, and I have been talking about it for months, and it is even more relevant and urgent today in light of this foreign policy fiasco in Afghanistan. The Biden administration’s budget is dangerous to America.

Take a look at it, America. This is a \$6 trillion budget—\$6 trillion budget—where almost every Federal Agency in the U.S. Government gets a big increase in its budget; some 40 percent, 20 percent; all this green; double digits for most. Two Agencies—two Agencies—in this Biden budget blowout actually get cuts. Adjusted for inflation, they are cuts. Which are they? The Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security.

If you are looking at the border right now, you know that Homeland Security doesn’t need a budget cut, and we certainly, in this time of increasing danger globally, don’t need the Department of Defense cut, but that is what this administration is doing right now.

Like the President’s actions and statements on Afghanistan, this budget is divorced from reality because here is the reality: We have a growing threat from international terrorism once again as Afghanistan once again has become a safe haven for some of the most dangerous, violent, extremist organizations on the planet. We know it. We see it. The Taliban, the Haqqani network, ISIS-K, al-Qaida—they are all celebrating, and they are all coming back to Afghanistan, and guess what they are doing. They are plotting against this great country. It didn’t have to be this way, but that is the reality.

Here is another reality: After watching this administration’s chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, our adversaries are going to test Joe Biden’s will in other areas of the world. It is going to happen—Russia with regard to Ukraine or the Baltics or Poland; Iran with regard to Israel, which the terrorist leaders in that country continue to say they want to wipe off the face of the Earth; and, of course, communist China, with Taiwan. As some of you may have seen, during the Biden Afghanistan debacle, China started rattling its saber as it relates to Taiwan for this very reason.

Let me underscore this again. The weakness and lack of resolve demonstrated by the Biden administration in Afghanistan and this very weak military budget is likely, I think—very likely, unfortunately—to invite aggression by our adversaries in other parts of the world.

Here is my message to the President and his team: You better be ready for this. You better be strong. And being strong starts with supporting a Department of Defense budget that is not cut-

ting our readiness, as this one clearly does, and actually matches the realities of the more dangerous world we now find ourselves in because of this President’s foreign policy incompetence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, 8 months into the humanitarian crisis at the southern border, our Democratic colleagues are finally, finally paying attention. This is after 1.2 million migrants have arrived since President Biden took office, which apparently did not raise any particular alarms. Neither did the countless numbers of migrants who endured abuse at the hands of criminal organizations and human smugglers.

Our colleagues didn’t spring into action either when the processing center in Donna, TX, reached 1,600 percent capacity earlier this year, and they didn’t show much concern about the fact that the surge had left huge security gaps along our border, making it easier for the drug cartels to move heaven knows what into our country. Actually, we do know what they moved into the country because more than 90,000 Americans died of drug overdoses last year, principally from illegal drugs imported across the U.S.-Mexico border.

Finally, our Democratic colleagues seem to be paying some attention.

Over the last several days, more than 15,000 migrants, primarily Haitians, have arrived at Del Rio, TX, a town of about 35,000 people—15,000 migrants in a town of 35,000. You can imagine what sort of reaction they have had. These migrants have set up camp under the International Bridge, and Border Patrol, State, and local officials have been working around the clock to ease the humanitarian crisis. Of course, the first concern in 100-degree temperatures is to try to help protect these migrants, making sure they have food and water and that people don’t die of heat stroke.

I want to thank the Border Patrol, which does a lot of good work, and a lot of the good work it does is to save the lives of migrants who are suffering from exposure or injury and have been left behind by the coyotes, but it is also the law enforcement arm of the Federal Government to secure the border.

So the Border Patrol, local, and State law enforcement and everyone seem to come together to meet the surge of migrants in Del Rio, but like the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, these men and women have been operating in crisis mode for months and are expected to carry the weight of a crisis that everybody knew was coming.

As the Biden administration races to respond to the crisis now, finally, I am left wondering: Why didn’t they see this coming? After all, 1.2 million migrants have crossed our border just

since Joe Biden put his hand on the Bible and took the oath of office on January 20. The President campaigned, actually, on the promises of policies that were certain to lead to a surge of migrants at the border, and that is just what we have seen.

When the President and Director Mayorkas and Vice President HARRIS say, “Don’t come,” the migrants see people pouring across the border in the hundreds of thousands and successfully making their way into the interior of the United States. The human smugglers—the criminal organizations that move migrants from their homes across the border—are getting rich. They are whispering in the ear of the migrants and saying: These people made it. You can make it too. Just give me my money.

Earlier this year, a woman who crossed the Rio Grande on a smuggler’s raft said the Biden administration was the reason that she and her 1-year-old son attempted the dangerous journey at all.

She said: “That gave us the opportunity to come.”

Some of the closest followers of the President’s words and the administration’s actions are the cartels and criminal organizations that get rich off of the backs of these migrants. Actually, it is pretty good money. Let’s say, on average, these migrants and their families pay \$5,000. It varies depending upon where you want to come from. If you want to come from a little farther away, it is a little more expensive. If you are a little closer to the border, it is a little cheaper. But let’s say, on average, it is \$5,000. If you multiply 1.2 million migrants times \$5,000, that is a huge windfall to these criminal organizations. It is good business. It is a great business model.

But migrants suffer at the hands of these cartels and human smugglers. They often arrive malnourished and are suffering from exposure. Many young women and girls have been sexually assaulted. Some of these young girls even arrive pregnant. There are hundreds of young women who are in Del Rio, under the bridge, who are now pregnant. And some of them don’t make it at all.

In Brooks County, TX, which is where Falfurrias is—it is an interior checkpoint by the Border Patrol—the practice of the smugglers, the coyotes, is to get people across the river, put them in a stash house, which you have probably seen some pictures of, and then, when the coast is clear, put them in a truck or some vehicle and drive them up the road, past the checkpoint. Before they get to the checkpoint, they say to the migrants: Get out of the car. Here is a gallon milk jug we have filled full of water. Here are some protein bars. We will meet you on the other side of the checkpoint.

Now, some of the land around Falfurrias, where these checkpoints are located, is some of the most difficult territory you can possibly imagine, es-

pecially during the summer. Actually, the Vice President, when she was in the Senate—KAMALA HARRIS—and I sponsored a bill to reimburse Brooks County, TX, for burying the bodies of unidentified migrants who died while trying to make that trip around the checkpoint in Falfurrias. They certainly couldn’t afford it as they have a very modest tax base.

The cartels are always looking for a business opportunity and an opportunity to make a sales pitch to very receptive ears. When they see the Biden administration releasing migrants into the interior, they use that information to convince others to spend the money it takes to make the dangerous journey north and, certainly, when the Biden administration releases people and tells them: “Come back later for a court hearing” or “Here is a Notice to Report. When you get to where you are going, turn yourself in to ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement.” Of course, it should be no surprise that many, many, many do not show up; they do not report; and they are never heard from again unless they commit a serious crime. Then it is discovered that they have illegally entered the United States and have failed to show up for their court hearings.

The point is, once these people make it into the United States, you had better believe they are on the phone—with text messages, emails—talking to their relatives back in their home countries. And what do they tell them? They say: I made it. I made it, and you can too. So they keep coming.

Well, as I said, this is big business for the cartels. They get rich off of the migrants, of course.

Second, when they flood the border with all of these migrants—these huge numbers—it overwhelms the Border Patrol just with unaccompanied children alone. In the Rio Grande Valley Sector, the Border Patrol Chief said he has had to take as many as 40 percent of the Border Patrol off of the border just to take care of and to process these unaccompanied children.

And what do the cartels do? Well, they are not stupid. They are actually pretty smart, and they know, when the Border Patrol is not guarding the border, that this is a tremendous opportunity to move their illegal drugs across the border into the United States. This isn’t just some conspiracy theory; this is a tried and true tactic of the narcos.

Earlier this week, the administration admitted to congressional staff that this was a coordinated effort by the cartels to direct Haitian migrants to a single location and overwhelm the Customs and Border Protection. In other words, this entire surge was orchestrated by a bunch of criminals. They intentionally flooded one section of the border so that personnel from others would be moved. In fact, there were 400, I believe, that Chief Ortiz said he moved from other sectors of the Border Patrol to come to Del Rio to deal with

this humanitarian crisis. You had better believe the cartels took advantage of the fact that they left holes in our security along the border in order to apply their poison and move more migrants across the border.

Even though we are familiar with the tactic and we have seen it time and again, the administration still removed agents from checkpoints in the Del Rio sector to respond to the migrant surge, playing right into the hands of the cartels when they took agents off the frontline. The cartels are simply playing a game. Well, actually, they are playing three-dimensional chess while the Biden administration is playing checkers, and the cartels are continuing to get rich off of this trafficking in human beings and drugs. It is no surprise this shifting of resources is simply not sustainable. The administration continues to play Whac-A-Mole on the southern border. Every time progress is made on one crisis, another one pops up.

The administration says they are trying to control the crisis in Del Rio, and there were early statements that they would make use of title 42—a public health title—that gives the Border Patrol the authority to expel migrants based on concerns about spreading COVID-19 because these migrants are not tested; they are not vaccinated. Yet they are put on buses and sent off into the interior of the United States to contribute to the ongoing pandemic.

The administration does have tools. Title 42 would have given them the authority to turn back the migrants, at least the adults, but now, with reports that the administration continues to release migrants into the United States, this backsliding will cause this situation to repeat itself. Maybe the next surge won’t be in Del Rio. Maybe it will be in the Rio Grande Valley or El Paso or any other sector along the U.S.-Mexico border.

My State has 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico. There are 2,000 miles of common border with the United States and Mexico. So my State is feeling the disproportionate negative impact on our border communities, and they need help. Without a clear, consistent, and effective approach across the entire border, Del Rio will become the new normal.

There are a lot of questions we need to ask the administration, and I am glad that Chairman DURBIN announced that we will have an oversight hearing of the Department of Homeland Security in the coming weeks. In particular, I want to know what the administration is doing with these 15,000 individuals once they are processed by Border Patrol.

When Mr. Mayorkas says the process is working, does that mean he is taking these migrants and placing them into the interior of the United States, contrary to the earlier statements that they were going to transport these migrants by airplane back to Haiti?

I would like to know how many of these migrants are being returned

under title 42. How many of them are family units? How many have been released with a Notice to Report—this “turn yourself in to ICE” idea? How many of these individuals never report to ICE to commence their immigration court proceedings?

Most importantly, is the DHS following through on their stated intent to expel or remove these individuals? That would be real deterrence. That would discourage more people from coming.

But, if we find out that the administration and the Secretary have been lying to us—that instead of expelling these individuals they have been placing them into the interior of the United States, using this flawed catch-and-release approach—that is a serious problem. Transparency is key, and I hope we will have an opportunity to ask these questions under oath in the coming weeks.

I would also like to know if the administration plans to appeal Judge Sullivan’s ruling on the use of title 42. There is only about another week left before Judge Sullivan’s order saying that title 42 is no longer available kicks in.

It is important, especially while the pandemic is still upon us, that public health officials have this authority of title 42, because if title 42 isn’t available, the Border Patrol tells me they fear they will lose control entirely.

Title 42 has been important during the pandemic, and, as we know, the pandemic is not over.

Unless Judge Sullivan’s order is appealed and reversed, the U.S. Government will not be able to use this to expel most of the migrants, and there is no reason to believe that many people—particularly the cartels and others that benefit from illegal immigration—won’t try to ride off of Judge Sullivan’s most recent decision and obtain an injunction against the use of title 42.

Without title 42, we will once again face overcrowded processing centers and even greater humanitarian crises.

Unfortunately, the migrant surge is only a piece of the crisis in Del Rio. Those who depend on the ports of entry and the bridges at our U.S. international border are dying for lack of economic lifeline that that represents.

And so the Biden administration has been closing these ports of entry without regard for the impact on these border communities. President Biden can’t put the “Open the Border” sign out for illegal immigration, yet close the border for legitimate trade and travel. It defies common sense, and it is fundamentally unfair.

Well, there is so much more we could say, but the Biden administration can’t continue to enable these cartels or send signals to migrants encouraging them to come. This growing crisis isn’t fair to law enforcement and it isn’t fair to our border communities and it is not fair to the migrants.

We need a clear strategy from the administration that leads to results and

stops the humanitarian crisis on our own border.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to make a statement prior to the vote that is pending and that my full statement be allowed to be made prior to that.

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, you know, we are here at this—normally, Thursday night we wouldn’t be here under normal circumstances, but we are here because one Member of the Senate has determined to impede the entire national security infrastructure as it relates to the foreign policy of the United States.

What we do in the State Department and that which comes through the Committee on Foreign Relations has to do with the essential security of the United States. It is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that has jurisdiction over global arms sales. It is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that has jurisdiction over the use of force. It is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that deals with treaties across the globe. It is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that deals with the question of nuclear arms and proliferation and so much more.

And it is the State Department that perpetuates the national interests and security of the United States in its positions across the globe, both at home, in the first place, but across the globe.

Now, I have had plenty, over the course of 30 years of doing foreign policy work between the House and the Senate, and 16 years in the Senate—plenty of moments where I had a fundamental disagreement, a very strong one, with an administration about their policy, but I did not hold up the entire national security infrastructure of the State Department that puts at risk the Nation.

I hear all these speeches about security. You are putting at risk the Nation. Wouldn’t it be nice if we had some of the critical people—I just heard my colleague from Texas—in a position, beyond the Department of Homeland Security, to deal with the hemispheric challenges that we have on immigration in Central America, in Latin America?

The Haitians who are at the border today didn’t just come from the earthquake and disasters and assassination and hurricanes that have taken place. They have been in Latin America for quite some time. They have just made their way to the border. Wouldn’t it be nice if we had the people in place to deal—Ambassadors and others—to deal in those countries to find a way forward on how we humanely deal with that challenge?

Wouldn’t it be nice if we had the person in charge of East Asia and the Pacific to deal with our challenges with

China? This Senate came together a few months ago and said China is the single most significant national security challenge, the most significant strategic challenge we have in the world. And yet we have vacancies galore to deal with that very challenge.

I have Members who come to me and say: This company from my State is having problems with XYZ. Well, wouldn’t it be nice to be able to have an ambassador in that country to deal with the challenges of that American company or people who come to me and talk to me about their challenges in getting a loved one, somebody from their State, to be able to come? Our consular officers. Wouldn’t it be nice to have somebody in the position to deal with that?

Wouldn’t it be critical, as we deal with the questions of law enforcement and drug trafficking, to have the head of that, the Assistant Secretary, in position so that we could deal with those challenges?

So whatever view our colleague from Texas has about Nord Stream, and I happen to believe that on the substance he is right, but this procedure is wretchedly wrong because it puts us at risk in so, so many dimensions. And something will happen—something will happen somewhere in the world where we are not present because one Senator decided to hold up that nominee that would have made a difference.

We already saw it. We already saw it as we were trying to deal with challenges in our hemisphere and those that related to Afghanistan. Ridiculous.

So our colleague who is holding this all up—because these nominees overwhelmingly passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee either unanimously—hear me—unanimously or with strong bipartisan votes. We just saw the cloture vote before—77.

We are leaving these positions unfilled. The position is untenable to continue to be able to meet the challenges the State Department has in fulfilling whose interest? The interests of the American people across the globe.

So it is time to get over that. We have only passed in this body two—two—of President Biden’s ambassadorial appointments—two. This administration has been in office 9 months.

If I were to look at the same time period with President Trump, we did far better. I didn’t agree with President Trump on a whole host of foreign policy decisions, but I understood that having people in place was critical, even when I disagreed with them philosophically. It was critical to promote the national interests and security of the United States.

So it is time to get over this. These positions would normally pass by voice, much less taking hours—hours, of which, by the way, the debate is not even about the nominees or their positions. It is about immigration and this and that and the other. The debate is not even about these critical national security positions.

I don't want to hear about people coming to the floor and talking about national security when they are leaving all these positions vacant.

Now, let me specifically address the nominees that we are voting on. I want to express my support for the nominations of Daniel Kritenbrink to be the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific. Whoa. China.

Karen Donfried to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs. Oh, we are trying to have a strong transatlantic alliance. We are talking about Ukraine, Belarus.

Monica Medina to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs—Scientific Affairs. Yeah, COVID.

Mary Catherine Phee to be the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. We are having a huge challenge. I have been privileged to meet two of the African Presidents here in the last couple of days since they are here for U.N. Week. China is all over Africa. We need an Assistant Secretary who is engaged in the continent of Africa to be promoting the views of America's democracy, human rights, rule of law, investment, trade, and opportunity. We are nowhere there.

Todd Robinson to be the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. You know, I hear speeches about fentanyl; I agree. Wouldn't it be nice to have the Assistant Secretary of State to work hemispherically and beyond to make sure that we don't get more fentanyl into our country?

And Jessica Lewis to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs. If ever we needed someone who is engaged on the conduct of political and military affairs and how that faces national security challenges, it is now.

These are the people we are voting on. These are the people who overwhelmingly came out of the committee on either unanimous or bipartisan votes. These are superbly qualified nominees, and I have, if it is not obvious, a very deep frustration about them languishing on the floor for weeks—weeks—due to Republican holds. And I have a frustration that we have not been able to more precipitously move people to the committee to bring them to the floor.

We have close to 100 nominations for the State Department and USAID that are pending. That is a crisis number. These nominations include positions and ambassadorships to countries throughout Latin America and Africa: places where competition with China and Russia is real, where we need Ambassadors in place to project U.S. power, to assist and protect U.S. citizens, and to promote our companies.

We are less safe when our national security Agencies are so underwhelmed. We owe it to the Senate and the American people to fix this problem.

I am pleased to be supporting the nomination of Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink to be Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs. In recent years, and on a bipartisan basis, the United States has reassessed and rebalanced our approach to the Indo-Pacific to take into account the reality of our competitive relationship with China. So this is a region rich with pressing challenges from North Korea's nuclear and missile programs to a rollback in human rights and democracy across the region.

Ambassador Kritenbrink will be able to draw from decades of experience in the region to lead our efforts in this area.

Also pleased to be supporting Dr. Karen Donfried's nomination, which is a testament to the Biden administration's effort to rebuild the transatlantic relationship, which was significantly damaged by the last administration.

I know that Dr. Donfried's knowledge and experience—including previously as the Senior Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council—will serve the country well as we seek to renew that transatlantic relationship.

These are issues dealing with Russia, Turkey, Belarus, our support for Ukraine. I hear all the time in speeches about support for these countries. Wouldn't it be nice to have the person—forget about nice. Isn't it critical to have the person that can be promoting that view?

There is Monica Medina to be the Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. I am convinced that she is eminently qualified, including the time she spent as Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Oceans and Atmosphere at the Department of Commerce and in a broad variety of leadership roles focused on ocean conservation, environmental policy, and science.

Likewise, I am pleased to support Ambassador Mary Catherine Phee to be the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. As I said, we have an enormous challenge on the African continent.

I support Todd Robinson to be a leader as the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. If we want to deal with the coyotes whom my colleague was talking about, let's put somebody in a position to go after them. I know this work is critical to our international efforts to combat narcotics, to deal with fentanyl, and to deal with the trafficking routes that extend through Mexico and all the way back to China.

Then there is Jessica Lewis, finally. It is with a mixture of deep pride and some sorrow that this body will consider the nomination of Ms. Lewis to be the next Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs.

Almost 20 years ago, I hired Jessica for her first job on Capitol Hill as my

foreign policy adviser and staff director of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, of which I was ranking member. After moving to the Senate and working for Senator Harry Reid for nearly a decade, she took up the staff director position of the Foreign Relations Committee. Throughout her tenure in all of these positions, Members, Senators, and staff on both sides of the aisle benefited from her deep knowledge of foreign policy, her leadership, and indeed her love for Congress itself, with all its nuanced rules and procedures.

Jessica is recognized across party lines as one of the most effective and trusted leaders on Capitol Hill. She is a trailblazer for women in national security. When approved by the Senate—and I have no doubt she will be—she will be the first woman confirmed to hold this position.

It would be impossible to catalogue all of her accomplishments, from getting countless bills passed through the committee and into law, supporting efforts to conduct serious oversight of the executive branch regardless of which party is in power, to striving to build a truly diverse staff of the Foreign Relations Committee. I have no doubt she will bring her commitment to mentorship, integrity, and public service to the State Department as well.

So we expect to see her, after she gets confirmed, back here answering questions and being part of this incredibly important job that she will be doing in bringing political and military affairs together.

I hope that we do not have to go through these 100 nominees, through 2-hour sessions of each nominee, in order to get them to start working for U.S. national security. That is what is at stake here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

COLLIERVILLE SHOOTING

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, as I come to the floor today, I want to acknowledge that we have an active shooter situation in Collierville, TN, right outside of Memphis. We have spoken with authorities. We have worked with State and Federal authorities. We are aware that there are 13 individuals who have been shot. The shooter is dead. But we are very grateful for law enforcement that have stepped up in this situation and prayerful for those who have been adversely impacted and have been victims of this shooting situation.

Mr. President, I ask that I have permission to complete my remarks before the scheduled vote.

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

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, this week, we have heard from many of my Democratic colleagues about the various ways that Republicans have

supposedly dragged this country to the brink of collapse. But what they have ignored in their manufactured hysteria and disgust in some part is the fact that it is, indeed, Democrats who have control of the entire U.S. Government at this point. It was the Democrats who chose to govern alone starting on day one of the Biden administration.

Over the past 8 months, Joe Biden and his Democratic friends have indulged their worst instincts and taken unprecedented steps to bring every single aspect of American life under the control of the Federal Government.

They are the ones who are now threatening the American people with shutdowns and default rather than using the tools at their disposal to raise the debt ceiling and fund the government.

They are the ones who chose to squander the trust of the American people on a spending spree that would waste trillions of dollars on liberal pet projects and a rapidly expanding welfare state. The Democrats have repeatedly claimed that these programs will make us happier, healthier, wealthier, freer, but in reality, their agenda has done nothing but make things worse.

Historic spending has given rise to historic inflation that is on track to stay with us until the end of Joe Biden's Presidency. In Tennessee, it is one of the things that I hear about most. Groceries are more expensive than ever. Gas prices are at a 7-year high. Rent has skyrocketed, along with natural gas prices, which are set to break a decade-old record just in time for colder weather to set in. It is bad for hard-working taxpayers. They are tired of it.

According to the Wall Street Journal, not even a well-earned hourly raise will be enough to pull these workers out of the hole. Inflation is so bad, it has negated the budget padding these people should be enjoying from bigger paychecks. Pay adjusted for inflation actually fell. It fell half a percent in August. These aren't luxuries. The policies advocated by the Democrats have made life itself too expensive to afford. From the second they wake up in the morning to the moment their head hits their pillow at night, the American people are bleeding cash, paying higher taxes, and some are beginning to lose hope.

Still, the Democrats insist that if we surrender even more control, all will be well. Well, that talking point might work when you are talking to the camera, but it is not going to work on the people. It is not working on Tennesseans because they understand that ceding control means surrendering freedom, and freedom is about all that we have left.

When I talk to Tennesseans, they are not holding back how they feel about this so-called transformative agenda. For them, this isn't just a battle of ideas. They are fighting a war against the onslaught of radical socialism. They are afraid of Joe Biden's runaway

White House because they have seen how destructive the administration's unilateral decisions can be. They have watched thousands of jobs evaporate and the southern border turned into a lawless war zone because the President wanted it this way.

So here is what Tennesseans want to know. If they can't trust the Democrats to do the bare minimum, why should they trust that even more spending and more centralized control and more big government will work out in their favor? They have had 8 months' worth of proof that the exact opposite is true.

This country might be hanging on by a thread. For my part, I will listen to my fellow Tennesseans and will play no role in facilitating the erosion of freedom and the dignity of American life.

I implore my colleagues in the majority: Listen to the people. They have the right to live their lives on their own terms, not with lockdowns and mandates—on their terms. They don't want have to depend on a government check to feed themselves or get their children back to school.

There is a reason that our Constitution is one of the enumerated Federal powers. It is not the place of Congress or the Executive to flip this concept on its head and force the American people to justify their right to live free from this destructive cycle of debt and dependency. Our rights come from God, and I assure you, no government body could ever improve upon them.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON KRITENBRINK NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kritenbrink nomination?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 379 Ex.]

YEAS—72

Baldwin	Grassley	Ossoff
Barrasso	Hagerty	Padilla
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blackburn	Heinrich	Portman
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blunt	Hirono	Romney
Booker	Hoeven	Rosen
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Capito	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cardin	King	Shaheen
Carper	Klobuchar	Shelby
Casey	Lankford	Sinema
Collins	Leahy	Smith
Coons	Lujan	Stabenow
Cornyn	Lummis	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Tester
Cramer	Markey	Warner
Crapo	McConnell	Warnock
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Fischer	Murkowski	Wicker
Gillibrand	Murphy	Wyden
Graham	Murray	Young

NAYS—14

Boozman	Ernst	Rubio
Braun	Hawley	Sasse
Cassidy	Lee	Thune
Cotton	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	Paul	

NOT VOTING—14

Burr	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Daines	Moran	Tillis
Feinstein	Risch	Toomey
Inhofe	Rounds	Van Hollen
Johnson	Sanders	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 333, Karen Erika Donfried, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European Affairs and Eurasian Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

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 Karen Erika Donfried, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European Affairs and Eurasian Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 65, nays 21, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 380 Ex.]

YEAS—65

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Padilla
Barrasso	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Grassley	Portman
Blackburn	Hassan	Reed
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Romney
Blunt	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Booker	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Hoeven	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Capito	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Shelby
Carpenter	Klobuchar	Sinema
Casey	Leahy	Smith
Collins	Lujan	Stabenow
Coons	Manchin	Tester
Cornyn	Markey	Warner
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warnock
Cramer	Merkley	Warren
Crapo	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Murphy	Wyden
Durbin	Murray	Young
Fischer	Ossoff	

NAYS—21

Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Cassidy	Lankford	Sasse
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	Lummis	Thune
Ernst	Marshall	Tuberville
Hagerty	McConnell	Wicker

NOT VOTING—14

Burr	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Daines	Moran	Tillis
Feinstein	Risch	Toomey
Inhofe	Rounds	Van Hollen
Johnson	Sanders	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 65, the nays are 21.

The motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, the United States has suffered a grave humiliation in Afghanistan. President Biden's disastrous withdrawal has brought shame to a nation that fought, bled, and sacrificed for two long decades after September 11.

Defeat can be imposed by an enemy, but humiliation is self-inflicted. In this case, it was inflicted on America by the President of the United States.

To the thousands of Americans who fought bravely in Afghanistan, I share your dismay, and I want to tell you this was not your fault. This failure was not caused by our exceptional

troops, who fought with courage and skill against a determined and ruthless enemy. Our warriors lost no battles and surrendered to no enemy. They fought from the highest summits of American armed conflict and descended under the darkest pits of evil. Our men and women in uniform made us proud and filled us with awe. This loss is not their loss.

The debacle in Afghanistan was also not the fault of our people. The American people contributed hundreds of billions of dollars to a just cause and endured a prolonged conflict for almost a generation.

No, our people and our warriors did not fail. Our leaders did, and none failed more conspicuously than a Commander in Chief who could not command events.

Joe Biden has been paving the path to ruin for over a decade. Many have been wrong about the war in Afghanistan, but few have been more wrong, more consistently than this President.

During the Obama administration, Joe Biden wrongly argued that America could strike terrorists from over the horizon, wrongly set a public timeline for withdrawing our troops, and wrongly opposed a secret mission to kill Osama Bin Laden. Then he stood by when President Obama released several high-value Taliban officials from Guantanamo Bay in exchange for an American traitor, Bowe Bergdahl.

Joe Biden extended his perfect record of terrible judgment. He was wrong about evacuating Bagram Air Base, wrong about the likelihood that the Taliban would take over Afghanistan, and wrong that the Taliban cared about its international reputation.

He also believed wrongly—incredibly—that we could trust the Taliban to secure the Kabul airport and help us evacuate our people.

The President's inexhaustible ineptitude has created this fiasco. According to official estimates, over 100 Americans and thousands of green card holders are currently stranded in a country run by terrorists. The much-vaunted airlift that the President pretends is an “extraordinary success”—in his words—evacuated fewer than half of approved special immigrant visa holders. That includes thousands of Afghans who fought loyally alongside our troops and have now been abandoned to torture and execution at the hands of the Taliban.

The allies of al-Qaida now rule in Kabul; the Taliban is armed with billions of dollars of U.S. military equipment; and those Guantanamo Bay detainees released under the Obama administration now serve in the highest levels of the Afghan Government.

My office has received many firsthand reports of Taliban insurgents going house to house, hunting for American allies. Former Afghan pilots are especially high-risk targets who are being tracked down and brutally murdered; and, of course, we have all

seen the disturbing videos of desperate Afghans clinging to an American transport plane and plummeting to their deaths on the tarmac below.

I will admit I had low expectations for Joe Biden's Presidency, yet he still failed to meet them.

When I served in Afghanistan, I saw the Taliban's grim handiwork up close. I witnessed the sacrifices of brave Americans and Afghans to prevent them from regaining power. So when this disaster unfolded, I was determined to do whatever I could to get our people to safety.

Soon after the fall of Kabul, my office established an email hotline for evacuation requests, created a war room to help those in need, and established contact with assets on the ground.

Members of my team did everything from providing required forms and up-to-date information to helping orchestrate daring midnight evacuations. We facilitated the escape of high-ranking members of the Afghan Government and military, along with wounded children and pregnant mothers, several of whom were being actively hunted by Taliban death squads.

We also helped dozens of students from a Christian missionary school reach safety before they suffered the cruel treatment that Islamic terrorists reserve for so-called apostates, or followers, of the gospel.

My staff worked around the clock, volunteering their time and energy and, on several occasions, their own resources to help those in need. One aide repeatedly drove to Dulles Airport to deliver clothes to needy Afghans. Another sent school supplies to a recently returned second grader.

All of us heard harrowing stories from the ground. A member of my team was on the phone with an American citizen as the Taliban thugs attacked her and brutally assaulted her driver on their way to the airport. The same woman was on the phone with my office, outside the Kabul airport, when Taliban guards started shooting in the air, causing a stampede. Luckily, thanks to the cooperation of my staff, military personnel at the gate were able to pull her to safety before she was potentially crushed by the stampeding mob.

I would remind the Senate that Joe Biden and Tony Blinken empowered the men who beat and then almost killed an American citizen while a member of my office was literally on the phone with her.

The extraordinary efforts of my staffs in Washington and Arkansas produced exceptional results. From the beginning of the crisis to today, we have contacted more than 2,500 individuals seeking assistance, and we have helped more than 300 American citizens and legal permanent residents to safely evacuate, along with over 200 other vulnerable Afghans, many of whom were the immediate family of those Americans and permanent residents.

I want to thank my staff for their incredible and selfless work. I sincerely believe that these actions have redeemed, in some measure, the honor and trust that President Biden squandered this past month. I also want to acknowledge the many other aides—Democratic and Republican, House and Senate—who also pitched in to help our fellow citizens.

But, for every tale of sacrifice, daring, and courage that ended in a plane ride to safety, there were also tales of tragedy, heartbreak, and failure. Unfortunately, many of the wounds that we suffered during the Afghan withdrawal were, once again, self-inflicted. Those of us involved in the rescue effort had a front-row seat to the Biden administration's ineptitude. I think it is worth recounting some of those stories as well.

On one notable occasion, my office was contacted by a group of three American women who had traveled to a site that was reportedly being used to shuttle people to the airport for evacuation. When they arrived, a group of Taliban fighters pointed guns in their faces and refused to let them pass. The women called a member of my staff for help, who promptly called the State Department for guidance.

The State Department's initial response to Americans held at gunpoint was to ask whether they had filled out an online form to request evacuation. When my aide pressed the matter further, the State Department told them: "Our best advice is not to give advice."

This casual indifference to the plight of American citizens was, regrettably, not an isolated incident.

On a separate occasion, my staff learned that a State Department employee told an American citizen who refused to leave Afghanistan without her family that she was "being really annoying right now."

I suppose she was just one more inconvenient American spoiling Joe Biden's extraordinary success.

On another occasion, I received a phone call from the Ambassador of a country in the region. His government wanted to know what to do about dozens of American-trained Afghan soldiers and their families who had fled to his country in order to escape the Taliban. The only problem was the Ambassador's government couldn't get any senior official from the White House or the State Department to return their calls, not so much as a "thank you"; "please hold what you have got"; "we will be back to help you soon." It was radio silence from America while the Taliban continued to demand the return of those troops.

Thankfully, I was able to work with Senator COONS to get the message to the administration. After much confusion and delay, the State Department official finally returned the Ambassador's call. I want to thank Senator COONS for his assistance. The episode is a reminder that this body still works and bipartisanship is possible even when the stakes are high.

Even some members of the executive branch have acknowledged that the administration's policies have been a catastrophe. On more than one occasion, my staff has received calls from officials in the government asking for our help to evacuate people from Afghanistan. In other words, members of the executive branch of the most powerful Nation on Earth were going to a lone, freelancing Senate office for help instead of to their own State Department or their own White House.

President Biden has refused to lead and refused to protect those he took an oath to protect, so it fell to the rest of us to shoulder the load and get these Americans to safety. Thankfully, Americans remain a generous and courageous people. We stepped up to meet this moment.

Over the past few weeks, countless normal citizens volunteered to help people they had never met. Veterans reunited for one last mission to help their old battle buddies get to safety, and, of course, thousands of American troops risked their lives to help others in a distant land far from home. Thirteen of them made the ultimate sacrifice on the noble mission to rescue their countrymen, who will never forget their sacrifice, nor will we. They performed bravely a job that they never should have had to perform.

Joe Biden's Afghanistan crisis will live in infamy as one of the worst strategic blunders in our Nation's history, but the response of so many Americans to save their fellow citizens and their allies showed the very best of our country. I am proud that my office was able to play some small part in that redemptive story.

Poor leadership comes and goes, but our national character endures. Americans have shown that we are still capable of noble and heroic deeds even—and maybe especially—when politicians in Washington fail in their duty. Our Nation is still exceptional even if our President is a mediocrity.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, we have been in session now for about 11 hours, and we have taken up a handful of non-controversial nominees.

The reason?

The abuse by the Republicans of the rules of the Senate—filibuster after filibuster that require cloture votes—so we spend several hours on each of these nominations.

Even worse, the Republicans have abused the rules of the Senate to deny us in the Senate the ability to consider critical legislation that we should be taking up and acting on. There are many, many examples. I will just cite a few.

Justice in Policing: We are all committed to reforming our criminal justice system and our police system in order to deal with the values of our Nation. I know that Senator BOOKER has

worked tirelessly on this issue. We should be able to debate that bill on the floor of the U.S. Senate, but, no, the Republicans will require a cloture vote and will not give us the votes even to consider that legislation.

Or consider gun safety, which we have been debating in the public now for decades, and the Republicans are continuing to use the rules of the Senate to deny the Senate the opportunity to take up issues and debate issues and see whether we can come together.

Or take immigration reform, where we see the tragedies that are occurring where we need to take action as a Senate, but, no, the Republicans won't give us the votes so we can get on a bill and debate issues and take up amendments and see whether we can't get something done on immigration.

And now they are threatening to use the filibuster on the legislation that would extend the debt ceiling so that we don't default on our debt in regard to moneys that have been spent with the initiation and support of our Republican colleagues. They are threatening to deny us the opportunity to take up that bill and vote on it by the use of the filibuster, even though they were the ones who created the spending and debt.

Or take the continuation of our government.

But top on my list is safeguarding our election system, the bedrock of our democracy. On two occasions, Senate Democrats voted unanimously to simply begin debate on protecting the right to vote in our democracy, which has come under sustained assault in the aftermath of the 2020 elections. Both times, all Senate Republicans blocked even beginning the debate on this critical legislation. Senate Republicans put gridlock and partisanship before the rights of voters.

The Senate is being blocked from having the chance to consider options and amendments and do what the Founding Fathers intended us to do—legislate.

So my Senate Republican colleagues will have another chance to do the right thing, thanks to Leader SCHUMER and Senator KLOBUCHAR. Over the August recess, they worked diligently to come up with compromise legislation that still preserves the essential elements of S. 1, the For the People Act, that has already passed the House of Representatives.

President Biden was absolutely correct that we need to enact voting rights legislation to repair the damage done by the Supreme Court to the Voting Rights Act. President Biden rightly called efforts to limit ballot access across the country as the 21st century Jim Crow assault. He warned Americans that the Republicans' efforts to restrict voting rights as a result of their selfish challenge of the 2020 election results were the most significant tests of our democracy since the Civil War.

Indeed, my colleagues witnessed firsthand the violent insurrection at

the Capitol when the mob attacked, injured, and killed our brave Capitol Police officers, who put their lives on the line to preserve our very democracy and Union.

In many States, legislatures and Governors have responded to the falsehoods of the 2020 elections by restricting voting accessibility. The Big Lie, repeated by President Trump, has directly led to the disenfranchisement and suppression of the right to vote for millions of Americans.

I urge my colleagues and my fellow American citizens to reflect on the state of our democracy and the rights we hold dear. A blatant attempt to falsify an election and a persistent effort to deny the American people access to the ballot box has undermined the freedom and liberty that so many Americans have fought to defend and advance.

Voting rights is a fundamental issue of importance to a democratic country. After elections are over and we win, we celebrate. We celebrate the fact that we have gotten the support of the majority of voters, and that is what democracy is all about. If we don't win—and I think many of us have been involved in campaigns where our candidates were not successful—we go to work to try to attract more voters in the next election so we can celebrate a victory.

That is what participation in a free society is all about. That is what democracies are about. In repressive, autocratic regimes, they never accept the will of the people, so they look at ways in which they can undermine the voting record—what the voters want to do and the voters' will.

In the 2020 elections, we should all celebrate the record number of people who cast their ballot. It was a record and the most ever Americans casting their votes for the Presidency of the United States.

There were repeated reviews done by both Democrats and Republicans at the Federal, State, and local level. It all verified the simple fact that there was no widespread corruption or election fraud. The will of the people prevailed, and Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were duly elected.

Congress and Vice President Pence counted the electoral votes for President and Vice President and did their duty under the Constitution on January 6, notwithstanding the armed insurrection in the Capitol.

But that did not stop former President Trump from promoting the Big Lie. As a result of that, several States have now taken action to make it harder for people to cast their votes. The Brennan Center has pointed out that we have seen the worst assault on voting rights since Jim Crow.

So what have these laws done? Made it more difficult for voters to vote by mail, recognizing that for many voters they prefer to vote by mail. We have States that have had 100 percent voting by mail. There have been no indica-

tions of fraud in voting by mail. States have shortened the time for requesting mail-in ballots for voting, making it more difficult for individuals to be able to vote by mail, requiring certain requirements to vote by mail, making it more difficult to deliver their mail ballots, limiting the availability of ballot drop boxes.

Why did States take these actions? Because it makes it more difficult for people who are likely to vote for their political opponents to vote. That is what these State legislatures were doing. Stricter signature requirements, making in-person voting more difficult, purging voter rolls simply because a person did not vote, and, again, making it more difficult for people to vote. That should have no place in a democracy.

And it goes on and on in terms of the types of legislation that have already passed or is currently being considered by many State legislatures around our country. Making it more difficult to register to vote, making it more difficult to vote, targeting potential voters more likely to vote for their opponents, targeting minorities, young voters, and older minority voters is a disturbing trend we see across this country and has no place in our democracy.

The Freedom to Vote Act provides a basic Federal floor on protection of the right to vote. This legislation includes commonsense items such as automatic and online voter registration, uniform early voting, same-day voter registration, vote-by-mail and drop box standards and uniform national standards for voter identification.

These are simple voter protection measures against the actions being taken by State legislatures that are aimed at certain demographic groups and set a Federal floor.

The Freedom to Vote Act ends political gerrymandering. I don't know how many of my colleagues can defend the way that legislative and congressional lines are drawn today. Congressional districts should represent the communities' interests, not an individual Congressman's interests.

The Freedom to Vote Act takes a major step forward in ending political gerrymandering by creating non-partisan redistricting reform and banning partisan gerrymandering and allowing States to choose how to develop redistricting plans, including having an independent redistricting commission.

In terms of election integrity, the Freedom to Vote Act requires voter-verified paper ballots, reliable audits, and voting system upgrades. I think we all would agree that we want to be able to verify votes. The only way we can is if there is a paper trail, and it provides for that paper trail.

The measure takes steps to prevent State election subversion to better insulate State and local officials who administer Federal elections, after the attempts by both domestic and foreign interference in the 2020 election results.

This legislation reduces the dominance of Big Money in the political system. It does this in a couple ways. One, disclosure. How can anyone be against the disclosure of who is putting money into our political system? And, secondly, by providing a way in which we can weaken the dependence on large special interest dollars.

The legislation requires super PACs, 501(c)(4) groups, and other organizations spending money on elections to disclose donors and shuts down the use of transfers between organizations to cloak the identity of contributors.

It ensures that political ads sold online have the same transparency and disclosure requirements as ads sold on TV, radio, and satellite.

S. 2747 includes two provisions I authored. First, it includes the Democracy Restoration Act, which deals with laws passed after the end of slavery in an effort to prevent African Americans from voting. There are States that passed laws back then that are still on the books that disqualify for a lifetime a person convicted of a felony. The definition of a felony is pretty general in many States, so we have States where one out of five African Americans have been disqualified from voting because of their conviction of a felony, even though they are fully part of our society today. They don't have the right to vote. We need to remove that disqualification on voting.

I am pleased that my Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act is included as a provision in the legislation. The spreading of false or misleading information intended to suppress voting and intimidate the electorate remains one of the most regularly employed and effective methods used to keep individuals, particularly Black Americans and other racial minorities, from voting.

Advancement in communications, including the rise of social media platforms, have made it easier for bad actors to use these strategies. For example, the targeting of Latino voters in Florida with disinformation was widely documented. This provision prohibits individuals from knowingly deceiving others about the time, place, eligibility, or procedures of participating in a Federal election.

It criminalizes efforts to intentionally hinder, interfere with, or prevent any person from voting, registering to vote, or aiding a person to vote or register to vote.

My friend and former colleague was the late John Lewis of Georgia. The two of us were elected to the House of Representatives on the same day. In an editorial published after his death, Representative Lewis called an important lesson taught—recalled an important lesson taught by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And I quote our former colleague when he said:

Each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up, and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act. And each generation must do its part.

Well, we cannot take action if we don't start. And we cannot start unless my colleagues allow us to proceed to this issue on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

I urge my colleagues not to filibuster the right of the U.S. Senate to start the debate on protecting voter integrity, where each Member will have the opportunity to debate the issue and, collectively, we can come together.

Many of my colleagues have offered suggestions about how we can further improve S. 2747, how we can make it even a broader consensus.

Let's build on the work done by Senator KLOBUCHAR and her colleagues over the August recess. But we cannot do that unless we have the right to proceed to a debate.

I urge my colleagues to support taking up the Freedom to Vote Act, which is a critical issue to the preservation of our democracy and the integrity of our right to vote.

I yield the floor.

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

NORD STREAM 2

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I would like to discuss now how Nord Stream 2 is an unprecedented example, a contemporary example, of bipartisan unity. Democrats and Republicans both know that Nord Stream 2 is a terrible idea. It is a terrible idea for Europe, and it is a terrible idea for the United States.

Here are several examples of the bipartisan agreement we have. It has been commonplace to say that bipartisanship doesn't exist, but Nord Stream 2 refutes that.

The first wave of sanctions authored by me and by Senator SHAHEEN goes back to the summer of 2019. At a July 31 hearing, several Democrats spoke out against Nord Stream 2 and its support of the Cruz-Shaheen sanctions to stop it.

Here are some of the things they said. Senator MENENDEZ said:

I think the international community must stand firm against opening more doors and creating new opportunities for further Kremlin aggression in Ukraine leading to the loss of life. The Russian Federation has repeatedly used its energy resources as a lever of power, and I believe Nord Stream 2 is no exception. Not only will it considerably strengthen the Kremlin's stranglehold on Europe, but it allows Moscow to further undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and stability.

Senator SHAHEEN said:

We have heard in our office directly from other countries in Eastern and Central Europe, and the Baltics, and many of the Nordic states, and of course especially Ukraine, who understand that this pipeline is an effort to increase reliance on Russia among Europe. And I would argue that this does nothing to strengthen the transatlantic alliance, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. In fact, it actually decreases support for the alliance.

Here is what Senator COONS from Delaware said:

I, like many of us, have been to Ukraine, remain gravely concerned about Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, and the

ways in which Russia finances its aggression through the use of its sole remaining export of any interest, which is energy.

Senator MENENDEZ was right. Senator SHAHEEN was right. Senator COONS was right. That consensus has held for over 2 years, Democrats and Republicans, even through the Biden administration's catastrophic decision to green light the pipeline and to give a multibillion-dollar gift to Vladimir Putin.

This issue was central to a June 8 meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after Biden had defied U.S. law and given a multibillion-dollar gift to Putin.

Here is what Senator MENENDEZ said after Biden acted:

I think many of us on a bipartisan basis were deeply concerned about the administration's decision to waive sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG. . . . I would have thought that one of the most significant ways to show strength is to ensure that the pipeline is killed.

Senator MENENDEZ was right.

Senator MERKLEY even condemned the pipeline for issues he said were directly related to climate change, which is something Biden officials claim is utterly sacrosanct in this administration.

The consensus, even after the Biden administration formally announced that it had struck a deal surrendering entirely to Russia on the pipeline—nonetheless, we saw the bipartisan consensus remain.

On July 21, Senator KAINE said:

I'm not happy about it. . . . I'm not happy about it in terms of Russian politics, and I'm not happy about it in terms of climate change.

Senator KAINE was right.

Senator SHAHEEN said she was "skeptical that [the agreement] will be sufficient when the key player at the table—Russia—refuses to play by the rules."

Senator SHAHEEN was right. She was right to be skeptical that the agreement from the Biden administration, mind you, will be sufficient when the key player at the table—Russia—refuses to play by the rules.

And I would note that the consensus wasn't limited to the Senate. On the other side of the Capitol in the U.S. House of Representatives, that same sentiment was broadly echoed both during the previous administration and during the current administration.

At the beginning of my push for the Cruz-Shaheen sanctions in 2019, Democratic Representative ENGEL said:

Russia has weaponized its energy resources, expanding into European markets and creating greater and greater dependency, particularly with projects such as the Nord Stream 2.

Representative ENGEL was right.

Several years later, after the announcement of President Biden's complete surrender to Russia on Nord Stream 2, Representative KAPTUR told a Polish newspaper that she and much of the House of Representatives were disappointed with the deal. She said:

I am very disappointed by the Biden administration's willingness to allow Russian gas to reach the heart of Europe via Nord Stream 2, endangering energy security. . . . We consider this a dangerous project from a security point of view.

Representative KAPTUR was right.

Supporters of the Biden administration will say: Well, of course, everybody opposes Nord Stream 2, but there is no way to stop it.

That excuse is disingenuous. That excuse is laughable on its face. Now, why is that? Because it is the identical excuse that was central to the Russian disinformation 2 years ago. In the summer of 2019, when I first authored the bipartisan sanctions to stop Nord Stream 2, the Russian disinformation campaign in Europe was predicated on the proposition that the pipeline was 95 percent complete, and they said: Gosh, you can't stop it. There is nothing you can do to stop it.

They halted construction of the pipeline 15 minutes before our bipartisan sanctions were signed into law, and for over a year, the pipeline lay dormant as a hunk of metal at the bottom of the sea.

So every time the Biden administration says "It was too far along; we couldn't stop it," you know what—it was just as far along in December of 2019, and we stopped it then. It was just as far along in January of 2020, and we stopped it then. We stopped it in February. We stopped it in March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December. And it wasn't until January, January 24—4 days after Joe Biden took the oath of office—that Russia resumed building the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.

The only reason they couldn't stop it is because Joe Biden wanted to surrender to Putin, because the answer is, Republicans and Democrats in this Chamber had stopped it for over a year, until Joe Biden came in and turned victory into defeat; until Joe Biden came in and offered complete capitulation—and might I note, in exchange for nothing.

Let me ask you, what did the Biden administration get in exchange for a multibillion-dollar gift—and not a one-time gift; a gift every year for decades in perpetuity? What did the Biden administration get? Not a damn thing. Nothing. It was simply a complete capitulation. Surrender.

Now, defenders of the Biden administration will say: Well, maybe we could have stopped it a few months ago, before the pipeline was complete. But in between January and this month, the Russian efforts built the pipeline, and they just announced it is complete. So now we should surrender, right? There is nothing that can be done about it.

Well, that, in fact, is not true. That is a second wave of disinformation. Now, why is that true? That is not true because before the pipeline can go online, there are a series of certifications that are required. Nord Stream 2 AG, the company that is responsible for

planning, construction, and eventual operation of Nord Stream 2, needs to be granted formal permission as a gas transmitter. There are many regulatory hurdles in their way—hurdles that have not yet been cleared. The process at a minimum should take many months, and the process could be derailed at any time.

First, there has to be an inspection process. Each of Nord Stream 2's strings has to be inspected to make sure there are no leaks, and part of that requires confirming that the pipelines were installed correctly. Part of that has already begun with air. Nobody knows how it has been going.

Then, there has to be an additional technical certification. This will be extremely difficult for Nord Stream 2 AG because the bipartisan sanctions legislation that I wrote and passed with Senator SHAHEEN and that Congress passed imposes mandatory sanctions on anyone who certifies the pipeline for operation.

Now, pause and think about that for a second. The pipeline can't go into effect unless it is certified. U.S. law passed overwhelmingly by Democrats and Republicans in this Congress, signed into law in the U.S. Code, says anyone who certifies it faces mandatory, crushing sanctions from the United States. The company that was originally going to certify it withdrew after the sanctions became law. The only way that a different company would dare to certify is if they believed the Biden administration would look the other way, would bless their certification in outright defiance of U.S. law.

Then, apart from the technical issues, Nord Stream 2 AG still has to be certified as a gas transmission operator as a matter of regulation and law. That should take at a minimum many months and require delicate negotiations between the company and the regulators.

You know, what is striking is, everything that I am saying has been said by the Biden administration. So right now, their talking points are "There is nothing we can do. It is a done deal. We have surrendered. We have given up. There is nothing we can do," but when they were in the process of surrendering, they said everything I just told you.

Until recently, even the top officials of the Biden administration acknowledged that physical completion of Nord Stream 2 didn't make its activation a fait accompli.

On June 8, Secretary of State Blinken testified that "even when the pipeline is physically complete, for it to go into operation, it still requires insurance, it still requires various permits, and we are looking very carefully at all of that." Secretary Blinken said that "it was too late to stop the joining of those pipes. Its operation is another matter."

Secretary Blinken was wrong when he said it was too late to stop the join-

ing of the pipes because we stopped them for over a year, until Biden surrendered to Putin, but he wasn't wrong when he said we could still stop the operation of it.

Given these requirements and this time line, the path for America is obvious: We should sanction Nord Stream 2 AG, the parent company of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. That will automatically isolate the company, and it will signal our readiness to follow the law, to impose more sanctions, and to ensure that everyone knows that involvement with Putin's pipeline brings with it crippling, company-ending sanctions. Indeed, that is exactly why Congress has repeatedly passed legislation—bipartisan legislation—to stop this pipeline. But instead of obeying the law, President Biden decided brazenly and willfully to defy Federal law—to defy Congress's mandate.

In May, President Biden transmitted a communication to Congress that acknowledged, yes, he was obliged to impose sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG for violating the sanctions that Congress had passed and passed overwhelmingly, but instead of imposing those mandatory sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG, given the clear and unequivocal intent of Congress, the Biden administration chose instead to waive them. It was a disastrous decision. It was a decision based on weakness and capitulation to Russia. It hurt our friends and allies in Europe, and it hurt the United States of America.

It is a decision that can be reversed. Right now, the pipeline, if this pipeline goes into effect, will be the Biden-Putin pipeline. It doesn't have to be. This was designed at the outset to be the Putin pipeline, and when it was the Putin pipeline, we stopped it. Republicans stopped it. Democrats stopped it. We came together at a time of partisan division and we said together: Giving billions of dollars to Putin, to Russia, for aggressive military hostility, subjecting Europe to energy blackmail, making Europe dependent on Putin's gas, and destroying American jobs is bad all around.

Congress succeeded. It was the Putin pipeline until January 24, 2021. Joe Biden had just been sworn into office, and Putin, after a year of dormancy, began building the pipeline again because Biden had already signaled he intended to capitulate.

When we convene next week, I am going to discuss in greater detail the compromise that I have offered to the Biden administration and Senate Democrats to move forward on more of their nominees if they accept a compromise solution on Nord Stream 2. The Biden administration has had this compromise offer for 2 months, and they have done nothing with it.

But I would suggest something right now. In the course of my remarks, I have read quote after quote after quote from Senate Democrats. Senate Democrats know this pipeline is a disaster for America. Senate Democrats know

that surrendering to Putin is bad for America. But Senate Democrats are scared to stand up to a Democratic President.

I can tell you, when we had a Republican President, President Trump, there were some in the Trump administration who resisted these bipartisan sanctions, and as a Republican, I was perfectly willing to stand up to a Republican administration for those who were resisting these sanctions and to press them hard.

So my request to my Democratic colleagues is, show that you actually believe what you said in 2019 and 2020 and 2021. Show that you care about U.S. national security. Let's stand together, and let's reclaim that bipartisan consensus we have had for 2 years that Nord Stream 2 is bad for America and bad for our allies.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked, the clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Karen Erika Donfried, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European Affairs and Eurasian Affairs).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

NOMINATION OF MONICA P. MEDINA

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I would like to speak in support of Ms. Monica Medina's nomination to be Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

I have known Monica for more than 30 years and can say without a shred of doubt that she is the most qualified and competent candidate to fill this position. She has worked for decades across multiple administrations on issues of environmental law and policy. She understands well the interconnected world we live in and knows that 21st-century U.S. foreign policy goes not simply beyond the water's edge but to the seas and the skies and the sands of the world, where universal threats and their solutions lie.

Monica is a proven public servant through and through. Over the years, she has fought for what matters most. For example, during her time at the Defense Department, she worked to end discriminatory practices against women in the military, to provide them with opportunities that were previously closed to them simply because of their gender.

After her time at DOD, she continued the track record of fighting for what is most important by calling out the connection between illegal wildlife trafficking and organized criminal networks, confronting illegal fishing that is too often tied to global piracy and human rights violations.

Her expertise in globe-spanning threats to our national security is exactly why former Secretary of Defense

Leon Panetta and the Center for Strategic and International Studies have turned to her as an expert and adviser, because she knows that we can't protect ourselves at home without a robust strategy abroad.

Throughout her career, she has proven to be a pragmatic and solutions-focused public servant by working across the aisle and with stakeholders from different States and industries in the United States to find ways to protect our oceans and our ocean economy.

After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Monica collaborated with five Republican Governors of affected States to get \$1 billion in restoration funds from oil company BP so that States could quickly stop rebounding from the disaster.

Her work at NOAA was praised by groups like the Seafood Harvesters of America, who support her experience and legacy of protecting our oceans and the workers and communities that depend upon them.

Louis Pasteur once said:

Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world. Science is the highest personification of the nation because that nation will remain the first which carries the furthest the works of thought and intelligence.

Monica Medina has dedicated her career to promoting America's excellence in these two realms—the tools of science and the values of humanity—because it is there where America's promise to the world can be found.

I want to reiterate very strongly that she has served every mission, she has fulfilled every goal that she has been given, and every discussion that she has ever had has always resulted in people holding us in the highest regard by the key stakeholders in every issue she has touched. I want to reiterate my strong support for her nomination and hope my colleagues will join me in confirming her for this important position.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, notwithstanding rule XXII, that upon the use or yielding back of time on the Donfried nomination, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the Medina, Phee, Robinson, and Lewis nominations; that if closure is invoked on any of the nominations listed, all postcloture time be considered expired and the vote on confirmation of those nominations occur at a time and in an order to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Republican leader, with 1 hour for debate equally divided prior to each vote, and the Republican debate be controlled by Senator CRUZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. For the information of the Senate, we expect four rollcall

votes beginning at around 8 p.m. Those votes will be cloture on the Medina, Phee, Robinson, and Lewis nominations.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am glad that we are coming to some conclusion this evening with respect to a handful of the long list of pending nominations for the State Department and the Department of Defense, but it is a small portion of a list that is growing bigger and bigger.

Never before has a first-term President had this few national security nominees in place by the fall of his first year. And this is a growing national security crisis imposed on the country by Republicans who have decided to put their hatred of Democrats and this President ahead of the security of this country—above the security of this Nation.

And it just takes a lot of hutzpah for my colleagues to stand here on the floor and criticize the President's conduct of foreign policy at the same time that they are refusing to allow the President to have staff to conduct foreign policy. Let me say that again. We have all sorts of Republicans coming down here and savaging the President's policy on Afghanistan or on China or on Russia, but then, at the exact same time, taking extraordinary steps to prevent the President from having anybody actually implement policies toward Afghanistan or Russia or China. It is akin to standing up in a restaurant and complaining about how slow the service is right after you went and barricaded the doors in and out of the kitchen.

My colleagues can't have it both ways. If you want to complain about the President's policies toward China, then stop standing in the way of allowing him to have personnel that can execute on sound policy. Stop standing in the way of the Assistant Secretary who will oversee policy in the region.

You have complaints about Afghanistan. Then why are we continuing to block those who would be in charge of refugee policy and in charge of resettlement policy to get more Afghans out of the country?

You have complaints about Russia. Well, for a month Republicans have been blocking the key personnel who oversee policy toward Russia, whether it be the Assistant Secretary for Europe or our Ambassador to NATO.

Here is what voters are left to wonder: Are these sincere objections based upon policy or is this really about an intentional effort to try to undermine the security of this country in order to damage Joe Biden?

I don't know the answer to that question, but I can't figure out any plausible reason how this benefits the country. Never before—never before—has a minority gone to these lengths to try to undermine a President's national security team.

Every single Democrat had massive objections, moral and practical, to

President Trump's foreign policy, but not a single one of us contemplated doing what our Republican colleagues are doing right now—holding up every single one of Donald Trump's Ambassadors and nominees—because we knew that that would undermine the security of the country, because there are differences that we have, but there are far more points of agreement where midlevel civil servants and Ambassadors are carrying out policies on behalf of America that Republicans and Democrats agree on.

Here is the list of nominees that are stuck. What does the Chief of Protocol have to do with Nord Stream 2? What does the Ambassador to Vietnam have to do with the objections of the Senator from Texas over an oil pipeline? Why are we blocking the Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development?

Nothing that is happening here has anything to do with the security of this country.

So I am glad we are unlocking a handful of nominees, but we are going to be here on Thursdays and Fridays and Saturdays and Sundays. I am going to advocate that we stay as long as it takes in order to protect this country, in order to stop this unprecedented blockade of the people who do the work of standing up for the security of this Nation every single day.

One of the critiques that has been lodged here today is about the President's proposal and his execution of his proposal to wind down the 20-year war in Afghanistan. In fact, one of my colleagues said that until the Secretary of State resigns, he will continue to block all Department of Defense and State Department nominees, knowing that that is not going to happen.

So I do want to spend a few minutes this evening talking about the real story behind President Biden's decision to bring a 20-year war that has cost this country \$2 trillion, has cost this Nation thousands of lives, and has ended up in hundreds of thousands of Afghans being killed—let's just be very clear at the outset. President Biden's decision to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan is wildly popular—supported by three out of four Americans. And I want to talk about the danger of what has happened over the course of the last 2 months with this critique of the President's withdrawal plan. Some of it is legitimate, but some of it is really dangerous.

So, in 2009, President Obama planned to send a whole bunch of additional troops into Afghanistan. It was Obama's surge—the idea that we would plus-up our troops there. We would partner with diplomats and aid administrators. It was a means to try to conquer and then hold territory in Afghanistan that had been taken by the Taliban.

It was a really good plan. It had all kinds of counterinsurgency buzz words. The PowerPoint looked really sharp. And it was endorsed by a lot of smart

foreign policy thinkers. But then it was a total flop. It didn't work. I saw it in person.

In 2011, I went out to a small town in western Afghanistan, where the surge was taking place, where a group of U.S. soldiers had taken back territory that had been previously controlled by the Taliban. We got a tour of this small town called Parmakan, and the elders in that town told us that the Taliban forced them to grow poppy. Poppy, then, was given or sold to the Taliban and used to fuel and fund the Taliban's insurgency against the United States.

And now that the U.S. troops were there, poppy was still being grown in the fields. It was still being sold to the Taliban. The difference was that now the Taliban wasn't stealing it. The Taliban was paying a fairer price for the poppy, but we were still protecting the fields, a crop that was being sold to our enemy to finance the insurgency against us. It was a very clear, concrete example of how a plan that looked really good on paper wasn't playing out to our national security benefit in reality.

Afghanistan wasn't a failure of execution. It was a failure of hubris. We came to believe that we could do something in Afghanistan that was, in reality, unachievable, though, on paper, achievable. This idea that we could build an American-style democracy and an American-style military on the other side of the world amidst a culture we did not understand turned out to be an impossibility.

But general after general, administration after administration, we refused to accept that reality. We believed that America could accomplish this feat, despite the fact that year after year, especially in the last decade, the Taliban got stronger and the amount of territory they conquered was bigger. The ability of the Afghan military and government to be able to deliver services and protect the people became less and less.

One would think that the overnight collapse of the Afghan Government security forces on the 15th of August would have finally broken the back of this American "execute better" thinking, this belief that if we just fine-tune the plan once again, we will be able to do the impossible. But it is clear that, in fact, the opposite had happened; that since the fall of the Afghan Government and military, there has been new life infused into the architects and the cheerleaders of American military hubris's arguments.

The scenes from the Kabul airport in the weeks following the Afghan Government's disintegration, they were devastating to watch. The stories of young girls and human rights activists desperately clamoring for a route out of the country, they were heart-breaking to hear. But the idea that the United States of America, a country located on the other side of the world from Kabul, could manage this unexpected collapse in a way that didn't

produce panic and confusion or that we would be able to evacuate and find a home outside of the country for every Afghan who wanted to leave—it was, unfortunately, the same kind of magical thinking that got us into this mess in the first place and that kept us there for 10 years too long. It is just as illusory as the now-proven fantasy trumpeted by war hawks that America could build and train an Afghan Government and military into a new version of their American counterparts. And we risk falling into this trap again, believing that America can do things abroad that are beyond our reach.

There are plenty of fights that are winnable. There is plenty of good that America can do. But there are limits, especially limits to our authority when we are leading with military intervention.

There are no doubts there were mistakes made throughout the period of evacuation of U.S. forces and diplomats from Afghanistan. There is no way you run a mission that complicated without going back and finding things that you would have done differently.

But in the end, we got 130,000 people out. That is the single biggest airlift of Americans and partners, certainly, in our lifetime and likely in the history of this country.

It is hard to argue with those results in the end—130,000 Americans and Afghans taken out in a period of 2 weeks, when America controlled only the airport and no territory around it because of the disintegration of the Afghan military.

But for many in Washington, many in the foreign policy consensus, many of the folks who want to stay in Afghanistan forever, they say 130,000 wasn't good enough. But what is their specific complaint?

Some of them say that the scenes at the airport of chaos was Joe Biden's fault. That is maybe the most nonsensical of the arguments because once the Afghan military and government fell apart overnight, there was nothing that a couple thousand American troops and diplomats were going to be able to do to prevent that chaos.

You can argue that the United States should have seen that collapse coming, but the Afghan people didn't have access to our intelligence. The Afghan people didn't know that that was all going to fall apart overnight. And so, of course, when they heard that the United States was running flights out of Kabul, there was going to be a mad rush to the airport. It just doesn't make any sense to suggest that a couple thousand Americans inside Afghanistan were going to be able to prevent some very chaotic scenes on the ground.

Other critics set a lower bar. They say that, well, the President couldn't have prevented the chaos, but he should have managed the evacuation better.

Again, I will concede that there are things that could have been done bet-

ter. But let's just talk about what the scene looked like on the ground. Let's talk about the reality.

The reality is that the Taliban controlled the entire city outside of the airport. And when your enemy controls 99 percent of the country that you are trying to evacuate, unfortunately, many of the decisions about how the evacuation goes and how efficient or effective it is are outside of your control.

The idea that in 2 weeks we were going to be able to manage a seamless evacuation of the country, when our enemy controlled 99 percent of it, is ludicrous.

Again, there is no doubt that things could have been done better. But in the end, we got 130,000 Americans out. We were very creative about the means and the methods by which we used to get our people home.

Another criticism is that the President didn't get everybody out. Well, let's just remember what happened in the months leading up to the evacuation. Nineteen different times, the Biden administration told Americans who were there that things were going to get bad, and they should leave. Now, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't do everything within our power to try to get those Americans out who didn't listen to those reminders. But it does mean that the President doesn't bear all of the blame for those who stayed after having reminded them over a dozen times that it was probably time to leave.

It is a little difficult to hear this righteous indignation from Republicans about the President not getting more Afghans out when it is the Republican Party that is standing in the way of these refugees coming to the United States. Many of the same critics of the President's Afghanistan policy are the exact same Republicans who are right now saying that their State isn't going to take any Afghan refugees.

You can't have it both ways. You can't criticize the President for not getting more of our partners out but then say that they shouldn't go any further than an airplane hangar in Doha, that your State isn't going to take any of these evacuees, any of these refugees.

And, lastly, the most recent argument by this "execute better" crowd—the folks who think that, just like we could have succeeded in Afghanistan if we stayed another 10 years, we could have run a perfect and beautiful-looking evacuation in the midst of a country in chaos—is that America could have stayed indefinitely because the option somehow became much less costly and much less risky in 2021. These are the folks who say we should have kept a couple thousand troops there, and everything would have been fine.

President Trump negotiated with the Taliban. The deal was that he would

draw down to 2,500 troops and then everybody else would leave in 2021. In exchange, the Taliban said: We won't attack U.S. forces, and we will not advance on provincial capitals.

So when Joe Biden came to office, that was his reality. There were only a couple thousand troops left. The Taliban had gobbled up immense amounts of territory during the Trump administration, and they stood right outside of these capitals. Had Joe Biden chosen to walk away from that deal, hostilities would have begun between the United States and the Taliban. And I have listened to generals tell us for the last 10 years that there is no way that the United States could protect its own forces and stand up an effective Afghan military operation with less than 8,500. All of a sudden—all of a sudden—2,500 was enough, when for years the military was telling us, if you get down below 10,000, you are in big trouble.

But that doesn't even speak to the new reality that greeted us in 2021. That was the Taliban now not just out in the hinterlands, not just fighting for control of rural Afghanistan but on the precipice of these cities, ready to get involved in complicated, deadly, urban warfare. That argues for the number not being 8,500 but being twice that or three times that likely would have been necessary in order to buttress and stand up and support the Afghan military when street fighting happened inside these provincial capitals. Twenty-five hundred wasn't going to be enough.

Of course, the real desire for most of these "execute better" thinkers was for America to just stay. Now, I know folks bristle at this phrase "forever war." A lot of folks say that we should have kept 2,500, 5,000 there. They say that we weren't going to stay forever. They just say we should stay until we finish the job, which is defined as establishing an American-style representative government and an American-style unified military command. But if we couldn't accomplish that in 20 years—the longest U.S. war in history—why on Earth do we think that things would have changed after another 5 or another 10? My belief is that the goal that we set out was, unfortunately, impossible, which is why that PowerPoint slide reads, we stay in Afghanistan until it is stable; while reality reads, stay forever.

It is worth reminding that Americans overwhelmingly supported this plan to withdraw because they had seen how the plans never matched up with reality on the ground, and it was ultimately their sons' and daughters' blood that was going to be spilled. It was their money that was going to be spent.

The real danger is casually coming to this collective American conclusion that, just like our occupation was possible but executed poorly, that the withdrawal was simply a failure of planning, rather than an inevitability,

given the circumstances handed to President Biden and his team.

There are some military missions that cannot be completed, no matter how smart the planners are. This lesson has got to be learned or we are destined to suffer more Iraqs and more Afghanistans.

Finally, I will end with this: It is worth noting—and I said this earlier—that just because the mission we set out to achieve in Afghanistan was not possible, that that doesn't mean that everything else is impossible. That doesn't mean that America can't be a force for good in the world.

Our experience in Afghanistan is not a reason to disappear from global engagement. Just because this big thing wasn't possible doesn't mean that every big thing is impossible.

And so my hope is that by withdrawing from Afghanistan, we allow for the Biden administration and administrations to follow to be able to pivot to contests and fights that we can win, to put more effort into contesting Chinese expansionism, or to put more effort into providing nonmilitary aid to organic local democracy movements, or being more of a force for economic empowerment in the developing world. These are goals that are difficult, but they are achievable.

So there are plenty of negative consequences to our withdrawal from Afghanistan, but there are also beneficial consequences as well.

The greatest benefit is that we now have this energy and money and manpower that has been devoted to this failing mission for 20 years that can now be directed to these more achievable and more worthwhile goals, but only if we cure ourselves of this "execute better" mentality that is often connected to our military intervention. I think that is necessary so that America never again gets distracted from achievable goals by another impossible Afghanistan-like mission.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after the first cloture vote on the Medina nomination, that the other three be 10-minute votes.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I know of no other debate before the Senate.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 324, Monica P. Medina, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

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 Monica P. Medina, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 57, nays 26, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 381 Ex.]

YEAS—57

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

NAYS—26

Barrasso	Ernst	Lankford
Boozman	Fischer	Lee
Braun	Grassley	Lummis
Cornyn	Hagerty	Marshall
Cotton	Hawley	Paul
Cramer	Hoehn	Sasse
Cruz	Hyde-Smith	

Scott (SC)
Shelby

Thune
Tuberville

Wicker
Young

NOT VOTING—17

Blackburn
Burr
Cassidy
Daines
Feinstein
Inhofe

Johnson
Kaine
Kennedy
Moran
Risch
Rounds

Rubio
Sanders
Scott (FL)
Tillis
Toomey

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On the vote, the yeas are 57, the nays are 26.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Monica P. Medina, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding we have three rollcall votes left and there is a 10-minute rule on the rollcall duration. Is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 331, Mary Catherine Phee, of Illinois, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

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 Mary Catherine Phee, of Illinois, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

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), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Vermont

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 58, nays 25, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 382 Ex.]

YEAS—58

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

NAYS—25

Barrasso	Hagerty	Paul
Boozman	Hawley	Sasse
Braun	Hoeven	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Hyde-Smith	Shelby
Cramer	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tuberville
Ernst	Lummis	Wicker
Fischer	Marshall	
Grassley	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—17

Blackburn	Johnson	Rubio
Burr	Kaine	Sanders
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Daines	Moran	Tillis
Feinstein	Risch	Toomey
Inhofe	Rounds	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 58, the nays are 25.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Mary Catherine Phee, of Illinois, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs).

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 240, Todd D. Robinson, of New Jersey, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

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 Todd D. Robinson, of New Jersey, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 29, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 383 Ex.]

YEAS—54

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

NAYS—29

Barrasso	Boozman	Cotton
Blunt	Braun	Cramer

Crapo	Hyde-Smith	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Lankford	Shelby
Ernst	Lee	Sullivan
Fischer	Lummis	Thune
Grassley	Marshall	Tuberville
Hagerty	McConnell	Wicker
Hawley	Paul	Young
Hoeven	Sasse	

NOT VOTING—17

Blackburn	Johnson	Rubio
Burr	Kaine	Sanders
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Daines	Moran	Tillis
Feinstein	Risch	Toomey
Inhofe	Rounds	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KELLY). The yeas are 54, the nays are 29.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Todd D. Robinson, of New Jersey, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs).

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 334, Jessica Lewis, of Ohio, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

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 Jessica Lewis, of Ohio, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

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), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr.

BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 62, nays 21, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 384 Ex.]

YEAS—62

Baldwin	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Hagerty	Portman
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Blunt	Heinrich	Romney
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Cantwell	Hyde-Smith	Schumer
Capito	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Sinema
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Leahy	Stabenow
Collins	Lujan	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Van Hollen
Cornyn	Markey	Warner
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warnock
Cramer	Merkley	Warren
Crapo	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Murphy	Wicker
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Fischer	Ossoff	Young
Gillibrand	Padilla	

NAYS—21

Barrasso	Hawley	Paul
Boozman	Hoeven	Sasse
Braun	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lee	Shelby
Cruz	Lummis	Sullivan
Ernst	Marshall	Thune
Grassley	McConnell	Tuberville

NOT VOTING—17

Blackburn	Johnson	Rubio
Burr	Kaine	Sanders
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Daines	Moran	Tillis
Feinstein	Risch	Toomey
Inhofe	Rounds	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 62, the nays are 21.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jessica Lewis, of Ohio, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, let me say thank you to the few remaining colleagues, but everyone else also, for staying here late into the evening as we continue to confirm these important nominees to the Biden administration.

Now, in a few moments, I will be filing cloture on the continuing resolution that was passed by the House of Representatives this week. The resolution is the answer for avoiding numerous fast-approaching crises on the horizon, including an unnecessary govern-

ment shutdown and a first-ever default on our country's sovereign debt.

Members should be advised the cloture vote will take place this coming Monday. Every single Member in this Chamber is going on record as to whether they support keeping the government open and averting a default or support shutting us down and careening our country toward a default.

At the end of the day, frankly, the only thing that matters in the legislative body is how you vote. It is what our constituents sent us here to do.

Now, our Republican colleagues say they don't want a shutdown. They say they don't want a credit default. They say they want hurricane aid. Then the answer is simple. Just vote yes on this bill, and it will all get done.

But if Republicans vote no, as many of them are saying they will, the Republican Party will solidify itself as the party of default—the party of default. They will endanger every single American in this country, including those who rely on Social Security and Medicare benefits. They will hurt small businesses, pensioners, and our veterans.

If my Republican colleagues want to help the American people avoid calamity, they can vote yes to keep the government open. They can vote yes on suspending the debt limit. It is in their hands.

But come Monday, if Republicans vote in favor of a shutdown and default, the American people will see exactly who is responsible for throwing our country in crisis. There will be the President requesting this bill, the House having passed the bill, the majority putting this bill on the floor, and then the Republicans blocking it. Who is responsible for the default?

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXTENDING GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND DELIVERING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 137, H.R. 5305.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5305) making continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for providing emergency assistance, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant 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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 137, H.R. 5305, a bill making continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for providing emergency assistance, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Ben Ray Lujan, Patrick J. Leahy, Jack Reed, Jacky Rosen, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Angus S. King, Jr., Tammy Duckworth, Tammy Baldwin, Patty Murray, Thomas R. Carper, Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Benjamin L. Cardin, Tina Smith, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Christopher Murphy.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, September 23, be waived.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 248.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jane Toshiko Nishida, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Nishida nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all without intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EXPIRING AUTHORITIES ACT OF 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 5293, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5293) to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend and modify certain authorities and requirements relating to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon table.

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

The bill (H.R. 5293) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

AUTHORIZING THE USE OF THE CAPITOL GROUNDS FOR THE NATIONAL PEACE OFFICERS MEMORIAL SERVICE AND THE NATIONAL HONOR GUARD AND PIPE BAND EXHIBITION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H. Con. Res. 41, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 41) authorizing the use of the Capitol Grounds for the National Peace Officers Memorial Service and the National Honor Guard and Pipe Band Exhibition.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 41) was agreed to.

NATIONAL CLEAN ENERGY WEEK

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 381, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 381) proclaiming the week of September 20 through September 24, 2021, to be "National Clean Energy Week".

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 381) was agreed to.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the preamble be agreed to and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed en bloc to the following Senate resolutions, which were submitted earlier today: S. Res. 382, S. Res. 383, S. Res. 384, and S. Res. 385.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleagues Senators Collins, Baldwin, Blumenthal, Brown, Casey, Hassan, Kaine, King, Klobuchar, Markey, Menendez, Rosen, Smith, Van Hollen, and Warren to recognize the week beginning September 12, 2021, as National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week. Direct support professionals are an invaluable part of our Nation's healthcare system, caring for the most vulnerable Americans, including the chronically ill, seniors, and those living with a disability. Direct support professionals include, among others, those whose titles include home caregiver, personal care assistant, home care worker, or home health aide. These varying titles speaks to the broad areas of support that are integral to the work of direct support professionals. With the assistance of direct support professionals, these individuals can perform daily activities that many people take for granted, such as eating, bathing, dressing, and leaving the house. The work of direct support professionals ensures that these individuals can be active participants in their communities.

The work of direct support professionals, like all of us, has changed due to the ongoing novel coronavirus—COVID-19—pandemic. In supporting their clients in performing activities of daily living, direct support professionals are essential and must continue to work in close proximity to their clients during the pandemic. Recognizing the work of direct support professionals is important, but all the more so as the pandemic continues, given their dedication to supporting the health and well-being of their clients.

Let me share with you the experience of Tommy Sharrow. Tommy is a direct support professional who was recognized this year for his dedicated and selfless work when he was given Maryland's Direct Support Professional of the Year Award by the American Network of Community Options and Resources, ANCOR.

I am sure there are countless examples I could share about Tommy's work, but I will describe one extraordinary example where he went above and beyond for his clients as he continued to care for them in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. During a particularly challenging period of the pandemic, Tommy's tireless dedication was on full display as he quarantined with his clients in their home to continue caring for them when others in their home were diagnosed with COVID-19. In order to maintain the care he provided for them, Tommy incredibly slept on an air mattress in their basement for 2 weeks to effectively quarantine. As day programs and other care options closed around his clients due to the pandemic, Tommy stepped in to provide creative activities like music and playing games in outdoor spaces. Throughout a challenging year for us all, Tommy was steadfast and truly considerate in his care for his clients.

Tommy's story describes a career that is fulfilling, but one that oftentimes is not easy for direct support professionals like him. The hours are often long, and the wages are low. The job can be physically laborious, as well as emotionally draining. The reward for direct support professionals, however, is that they are able to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and help fulfill the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act by making it possible for these Americans to participate in their communities to the fullest extent possible.

In our country, we are incredibly fortunate to have millions of service-oriented individuals who are willing to rise to the task of becoming a direct support professional. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment of direct support professionals is projected to grow by an average of 33 percent from 2020 to 2030, compared to an 8-percent average growth rate for all occupations during that period. The demand will only continue to increase over time; the Baby Boomer generation will result in the doubling of the population of adults ages 65 and older by 2050. The increased demand for direct support professionals has created shortages in some areas, which can place strains on patients and their

families or result in medical issues that could have been avoided.

Unfortunately, direct support professionals are often forced to leave the jobs they love due to low wages and excessive, difficult work hours. Many direct support professionals rely on public benefits, and some must work multiple jobs in order to provide for themselves and their families. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we work to ensure that these hard-working individuals have the income and emotional support they need and deserve as we all struggle with the health and economic implications of the ongoing pandemic.

I urge my colleagues to join me and Senators COLLINS, BALDWIN, BLUMENTHAL, BROWN, CASEY, HASSAN, KAINE, KING, KLOBUCHAR, MARKEY, MENENDEZ, ROSEN, SMITH, VAN HOLLEN, and WARREN in expressing our appreciation for the critically important work of our country's direct support professionals, in thanking them for their commitment and dedication, and in supporting the resolution designating the week beginning September 12, 2021, as National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, were printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

RELATIVE TO THE DEATH OF ROBERT BRITTON "BOB" DOVE, PARLIAMENTARIAN EMERITUS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 386, submitted earlier today.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 386) relative to the death of Robert Britton "Bob" Dove, Parliamentarian Emeritus of the United States Senate.

mentarian Emeritus of the United States Senate.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 386) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

BUDGET ENFORCEMENT LEVELS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, S. Con. Res. 14, the fiscal year 2022 congressional budget resolution, included an instruction to the chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget to file enforceable levels in the Senate in the event the budget was agreed to without the need to appoint a committee of conference on the measure. On Wednesday, August 11, 2021, the Senate passed the budget resolution, and the House of Representatives passed it without changes on August 24. As such, today, I submit the required filing.

Specifically, section 4006 of the fiscal year 2022 congressional budget resolution allows the chairman to file an allocation for fiscal year 2022 for the Committee on Appropriations and an allocation for fiscal years 2022, 2022 through 2026, and 2022 through 2031 for committees other than the Committee on Appropriations. The figures included in this filing are consistent with the levels included in S. Con. Res. 14.

For purposes of enforcing the Senate's pay-as-you-go rule, which is found in section 4106 of the fiscal year 2018 congressional budget resolution, I am resetting the Senate's scorecard to zero for all fiscal years.

I ask unanimous consent that the accompanying tables be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ALLOCATION OF SPENDING AUTHORITY TO SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022

(Pursuant to Section 302 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and S. Con. Res. 14)
(\$ in billions)

	Budget Authority	Outlays ¹
Appropriations:		
General Purpose Discretionary	1,498.483	1,676.447
Memo:		
On-budget	1,492.319	1,670.256
Off-budget	6.164	6.191
Mandatory	1,369.430	1,366.287

¹ The outlay figures included in this table reflect enactment of the Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 117-31), which generated \$1.139 billion in outlays from appropriations that were designated as emergencies pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985. Budgetary changes related to program integrity initiatives and other adjustments pursuant to section 4004 of S. Con. Res. 14 will be held in reserve until consideration of such legislation.

ALLOCATION OF SPENDING AUTHORITY TO SENATE
COMMITTEE OTHER THAN APPROPRIATIONS
(Pursuant to Section 302 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and S.
Con. Res. 14)
(\$ in billions)

	2022	2022–2026	2026–2031
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry: Budget Authority	169.301	739.376	1,502.313
Outlays	156.545	681.230	1,370.549
Armed Services: Budget Authority	204.681	1,081.825	1,709.208
Outlays	209.330	1,080.912	1,707.478
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: Budget Authority	22.106	123.886	245.422
Outlays	16.131	59.645	65.228
Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Budget Authority	18.161	91.223	183.890
Outlays	32.945	95.536	165.865
Energy and Natural Re- sources: Budget Authority	7.410	36.704	65.681
Outlays	7.124	35.751	69.719
Environment and Public Works: Budget Authority	48.743	243.930	492.473

ALLOCATION OF SPENDING AUTHORITY TO SENATE
COMMITTEE OTHER THAN APPROPRIATIONS—Continued
(Pursuant to Section 302 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and S.
Con. Res. 14)
(\$ in billions)

	2022	2022–2026	2026–2031
Outlays	14.326	39.006	63.219
Finance: Budget Authority	2,929.972	15,675.717	37,803.344
Outlays	3,025.410	15,761.012	37,875.037
Foreign Relations: Budget Authority	46.608	221.288	440.253
Outlays	44.533	224.346	443.323
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Budget Authority	57.526	165.934	308.763
Outlays	128.790	359.168	496.052
Homeland Security and Governmental Af- fairs: Budget Authority	163.094	858.603	1,822.637
Outlays	162.131	867.724	1,839.039
Indian Affairs: Budget Authority	0.563	2.438	4.498
Outlays	4.362	7.681	9.805
Judiciary: Budget Authority	19.326	90.419	183.057
Outlays	18.598	92.358	183.989

ALLOCATION OF SPENDING AUTHORITY TO SENATE
COMMITTEE OTHER THAN APPROPRIATIONS—Continued
(Pursuant to Section 302 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and S.
Con. Res. 14)
(\$ in billions)

	2022	2022–2026	2026–2031
Rules and Administra- tion: Budget Authority	0.045	0.237	0.490
Outlays	0.022	0.127	0.290
Intelligence: Budget Authority	0.514	2.570	5.140
Outlays	0.514	2.570	5.140
Veterans' Affairs: Budget Authority	142.864	772.411	1,684.628
Outlays	165.360	787.407	1,700.009
Small Business: Budget Authority	0.000	0.000	0.000
Outlays	18.047	27.976	27.976
Unassigned to Com- mittee: Budget Authority	–1,185.418	–6,265.460	–13,859.921
Outlays	–1,177.322	–6,215.819	–13,733.049

Memorandum: Includes entitlements funded in annual appropriations acts. Budgetary changes related to allowable adjustments including for reconciliation legislation pursuant to section 3002 of S. Con. Res. 14 will be held in reserve until consideration of such legislation.

BUDGET AGGREGATES

(Pursuant to Section 311 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and S. Con. Res. 14)
(\$ in billions)

	2022	2022–2026	2026–2031
Spending: Budget Authority	4,137.815	N.A.	N.A.
Outlays	4,497.102	N.A.	N.A.
Revenue	3,401.380	17,795.670	38,957.374
Social Security: Outlays	1,073.387	6,158.887	14,493.995
Revenue	989.019	5,580.634	12,351.082

N.A. = Not Applicable.
Memorandum: Aggregate figures include budgetary effects of legislation that has cleared the Congress between the publication of the Congressional Budget Office's July 2021 baseline and introduction of the budget resolution. Budgetary changes related to allowable adjustments including for program integrity initiatives and other adjustments pursuant to section 4004 and for reconciliation legislation pursuant to section 3002 of S. Con. Res. 14 will be held in reserve until consideration of such legislation.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO SCORECARD FOR THE SENATE
(\$ in billions)

	Balances
Fiscal Year 2022	0
Fiscal Years 2022–2026	0
Fiscal Years 2022–2031	0

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL CARTER F.
HAM, U.S. ARMY, RETIRED

Mr. REED. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and Mr. INHOFE, as the chair and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and the co-chairs of the Senate Army Caucus, it is our honor to pay tribute to a great leader and exceptional advocate for the U.S. Army, GEN Carter F. Ham, U.S. Army, Retired, as he retires from his current position as the president and chief executive officer of the Association of the United States Army, AUSA. General Ham exemplifies a lifetime of service.

Carter enlisted as a private and ultimately joined only a small group of soldiers in the history of the Army by earning the rank of Four-Star general, leading at every level in the Army, from platoon to geographic combatant command, along the way. His Army career began as an enlisted infantry soldier in the 82nd Airborne Division and culminated as the Commander of United States Africa Command. His service took him to Italy, Germany, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Macedonia, Qatar, Iraq, and over 40 African countries, and his commands included the 1st Infantry Division, the legendary “Big Red One,” and U.S. Army Europe.

As the second commander of United States Africa Command, he led all U.S. military activities on the African continent ranging from combat operations in Libya to hostage rescue operations in Somalia, as well as training and security assistance activities across 54 complex and diverse African nations. His leadership was compassionate and inclusive and left the Army better from his service.

General Ham retired from the Army in June of 2013 after nearly 38 years, but his service continued. In the years after retirement from Active Duty, he served as the chairman of the National Commission on the Future of the Army, an eight-member panel tasked by Congress with making recommendations on the size, force structure, and capabilities of the Total Army. Since 2016, he has served admirably as the president and CEO of AUSA, carrying out its mission to support soldiers, their families, and Army civilians; provide a voice for the Army; and honor those who have served.

Established to educate, inform, and connect, General Ham guided AUSA through a period of unprecedented growth of membership, creating an environment for industry and international partners to build their relationships with the U.S. Army. With ingenuity and perseverance while navigating through the COVID-19 pandemic, he kept the professional and education-centered association operating smoothly without decreasing any staffing, all while finding new opportunities and formats to support the Army. General Ham provided steady

leadership in his advocacy with Congress supporting the Army—Regular, Guard, and Reserve—as well as Army families, civilians, retirees, and veterans. He embraced the Army’s “People First” mission while advocating for readiness and modernization with a balanced perspective; he ardently supported the Army while respecting and working with the other military services. Through his vision for the future and commitment to honor all who served in the past, General Ham and AUSA enabled the Army, its soldiers and veterans, and the American people, to realize a National Museum of the U.S. Army. He has served the United States, the Army, and the Association of the United States Army with great distinction and exceptional leadership, wisdom, and humility.

On behalf of Congress and the United States of America, we thank General Ham, his wife Christi, and their entire family for their commitment, sacrifice, and contributions to this great Nation. We join our colleagues in wishing him the long and joyful retirement he so richly deserves.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING BLUMINE HEALTH,
LLC

● Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding

Kentucky small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize BluMine Health, LLC of Louisville, KY, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Headquartered in Louisville, KY, BluMine Health began operations 6 years ago as Alternative Health Solutions. Led by Michael Dees, BluMine Health was established to meet a demand for individualized, easily accessible medical care. Through its direct primary care—DPC—model, BluMine Health provides local businesses with affordable healthcare services. As an alternative to fee-for-service insurance billing, BluMine Health's DPC charges employers a flat monthly per-employee fee. This fee covers primary care services, including clinical and laboratory services, consultative services, and comprehensive care management. DPC allows family physicians to care for the whole person, reducing the overhead and negative incentives associated with fee-for-service third-party-payer billing. Through onsite care clinics and shared on-site care centers, BluMine Health provides a practical alternative to the third-party insurance coverage system.

Today, BluMine Health has become a regional leader in direct primary care. They continue serving communities across Kentucky, with locations in Brandenburg, Lexington, Madisonville, Elizabethtown, Somerset, Richmond, Shelbyville, Shepherdsville, and Dunnville. BluMine Health provides care to dozens of clients, covering 20,000 individuals and their families. Since 2019, BluMine Health has partnered with Baptist Health, the leading healthcare provider in Kentucky and southern Indiana, to provide additional services such as hospital care and physical therapy to its clients. BluMine Health is expanding its services throughout the Ohio River Valley, establishing a clinic in Jeffersonville, IN, and announcing an expansion into Ohio in August 2021.

Like many small businesses, BluMine Health is active in its community. Locally, BluMine Health regularly supports nonprofit organizations and sponsors charity events, such as the Kentucky Harvest fifth annual golf tournament. They are actively involved with industry and business organizations, including the chamber of commerce and the Health Enterprise Network, Louisville's regional healthcare business network. As a healthcare provider, BluMine Health stepped up to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. They continued to offer in-person care and adapted to provide telemedicine service, with telehealth appointments surpassing 40 percent of their medical delivery. Through their partnership with Baptist Health, BluMine Health provided a COVID-19 workplace reopening service, enabling local businesses to create and maintain healthy workplaces as lockdowns lifted.

BluMine Health, LLC is a notable example of the critical role that small, community-oriented healthcare providers play in their communities. Local medical practices like BluMine Health form the heart of towns across Kentucky, regularly stepping up to support their communities in times of crisis. Congratulations to Michael and the entire team at BluMine Health, LLC. I wish them the best of luck and look forward to watching their continued growth and success in Kentucky and beyond.●

RECOGNIZING DAN-O'S SEASONING

● Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Kentucky small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize a family-owned small business and Louisville staple, Dan-O's Seasoning of Louisville, KY, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Like many college students, Dan Oliver knew nothing about cooking. One day, while seasoning chicken, he threw together some spices and cooked the best chicken he had ever had. That spice blend planted the seeds for what would become Dan-O's Seasoning. Over the next 15 years, whenever he cooked for friends and family, Dan used his original spice recipe. After a career in the professional sector, Dan joined the restaurant industry as a cook and bartender. Dan, an aspiring entrepreneur, used his passion for cooking to develop what he called his "million-dollar idea:" selling his signature seasoning mix. Two years—and nearly 200 modifications later—Dan-O's Seasoning launched in 2017.

Today, Dan-O's Seasoning is a thriving company selling products nationwide. The business is based in Louisville, where Dan and his team prepare and package the product. Initially, Dan traveled across Kentucky selling his seasoning at trade shows and flea markets. The low-sodium, sugar-free, 100-percent natural seasoning was a hit, with sales doubling every year. Dan-O's Seasoning was soon available at Louisville-area stores and online. Like many small business owners, Dan adapted to overcome the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the trade show circuit closed, he turned to social media to keep his business afloat. After a video clip went viral on TikTok, a video creating and sharing platform, Dan-O's gained thousands of new customers and increased its sales more than tenfold. Their success was profiled in several local and national outlets, including WDRB, the Louisville Courier-Journal, Louisville Business Journal, and BuzzFeed. And in March 2021, Dan-O's exponential growth led to their products being sold at Kroger's, a regional supermarket chain located in the Midwest and South.

Like many small business owners, Dan is actively involved in his commu-

nity. Locally, Dan-O's Seasoning regularly supports community organizations, including the Louisville V.F.W. Post 6182, the Permanently Disabled Jockey Fund, and the Boone County Cancer Society. When the company hosts events, like its annual cornhole tournament, they prioritize working with local small businesses. Notably Dan-O's Seasoning sponsors several athletes, including NASCAR drivers, dirt-track racers, tournament fishers, cornhole players, and NCAA athletes. In June 2021, Dan earned the Silver Fleur-De-Lis Award from the Greater Louisville, Inc. Metro Chamber of Commerce, recognizing his company's exponential growth and innovative marketing tactics.

Dan-O's Seasoning is a remarkable example of how hard work, ingenuity, and discipline can turn a dream into reality. Small businesses like Dan-O's Seasoning form the heart of towns across Kentucky, regularly stepping up to support their communities. Congratulations to Dan and the entire team at Dan-O's Seasoning. I wish them the best of luck and look forward to watching their continued growth and success in Kentucky and beyond.●

TRIBUTE TO DAVE HUTTON

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today I have the distinct honor of recognizing Dave Hutton of Flathead County as Montanan of the Month for his dedication to serving the Kalispell community as a parking officer.

Dave brings a positive and upbeat attitude to one of the most thankless jobs in the Flathead Valley. Whether it is a sweltering July day or a snowy December morning, Patrolman Dave greets every Montanan he meets with a smile.

It is the simple things that make Dave a model Montanan. Locals have seen him stop in roadways to protect pedestrians from oncoming traffic, and he is often spotted chatting with local shop owners who are always excited to see a friendly face.

One early June morning, Dave was rounding a corner on Main Street and noticed a line of debris littering the street and blocking the sidewalk. Unbeknownst to him, the night before, a reckless drunk driver had driven off the road damaging thousands of dollars in property. Instead of ignoring the mess, Dave took the initiative to stop and clean up the area.

This silent service to the community was just one of many in his tenure. Through his kindness and positivity, Patrolman Dave has made a lasting impression on the citizens who live, work, and shop in Kalispell.

It is my honor to recognize Dave for his dedication to the Kalispell community and for doing the small, silent acts of service that are often forgotten. Keep up the great work, Dave.●

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-2054. A communication from the Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "OMB Sequestration Update Report to the President and Congress for the Current Fiscal Year"; to the Special Committee on Aging; Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Appropriations; Armed Services; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; the Budget; Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Energy and Natural Resources; Environment and Public Works; Select Committee on Ethics; Finance; Foreign Relations; Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; Indian Affairs; Select Committee on Intelligence; Joint Committee on Taxation; the Judiciary; Rules and Administration; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and Veterans' Affairs.

EC-2055. A communication from the Assistant Director of Congressional Affairs, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, the first semi-annual report of fiscal year 2020 of the Department of Justice's Office of Privacy and Civil Liberties; to the Committees on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; Select Committee on Intelligence; and the Judiciary.

EC-2056. A communication from the Chair of the Federal Acquisition Security Council, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Security Council Rule" received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 13, 2021; to the Committees on Appropriations; Armed Services; Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; Select Committee on Intelligence; the Judiciary; and 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-76. A resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Nebraska urging the United States Air Force to reestablish the United States Space Command headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, Nebraska; to the Committee on Armed Services.

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION NO. 1

Whereas, the Department of Defense recently reestablished the United States Space Command as the eleventh unified combatant command of the Armed Forces; and

Whereas, the United States Air Force requested that state and community leaders nominate military locations to host the United States Space Command headquarters; and

Whereas, the city of Bellevue, Nebraska, on behalf of community, state, and regional leaders and officials and in conjunction with support from local military leaders, nominated Offutt Air Force Base to be the location for the United States Space Command headquarters; and

Whereas, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts endorsed the application recommending Offutt Air Force Base for the honor of becoming the permanent host for the United States Space Command headquarters; and

Whereas, Offutt Air Force Base and the neighbouring Bellevue and Omaha commu-

nities received top scores on the basing criteria established by the United States Air Force including: proximity to mutually supporting space entities; an available qualified workforce; infrastructure and facility capacity; high bandwidth communications infrastructure; enhanced security; energy resilience; cost efficiencies; and community support; and

Whereas, Offutt Air Force Base is among six sites being considered by the Air Force to host the United States Space Command headquarters; and

Whereas, Offutt Air Force Base is the home for global missions of national consequence, the joint, interagency, coalition, Guard, and Reserve presence would complement the needs of the United States Space Command; and

Whereas, several Offutt Air Force Base units of interest include the 55th Wing, which provides dominant worldwide reconnaissance, real-time intelligence, command and control, and information warfare; the 595th Command and Control Group supporting strategic nuclear deterrence; the Air Force's only weather wing; and the newly formed Marine Corps Forces Space Command; and

Whereas, the largest tenant on Offutt Air Force Base is a global warfighting combatant command, the United States Strategic Command, which has a mission set that combines the United States legacy nuclear command and control mission with responsibility for space operations, global strike, and global missile defense to deter strategic attacks and employ forces, as directed, to guarantee the security of our nation and our allies; and

Whereas, the United States Strategic Command oversees and manages the Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications Enterprise Center; and the United States Space Command is a key member of the Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications Enterprise Stakeholder Council; and

Whereas, for seventeen years, from 2002 to 2019, America's military space mission headquartered at Offutt Air Force Base as part of the United States Strategic Command mission set; and

Whereas, the history of hosting the United States Strategic Command and units that mutually support joint combatant commands serves as an excellent foundation for Offutt Air Force Base to create additional synergies and efficiencies; and

Whereas, community support for military missions; the military men, women, and families living and working at Offutt Air Force Base; and veterans living in the surrounding communities began in the 1940s and support for these groups remains unsurpassed to this day; and

Whereas, creative public-private partnerships executed in the Omaha metropolitan area by economic leaders are some of the largest and most relationship with the Department of Defense's Military Community and Family Policy office in a constant effort to create laws that support the military personnel stationed at Offutt Air Force Base and their families; and

Whereas, the Bellevue and Omaha communities would welcome the additional military and civilian personnel, contractors, and families associated with the United States Space Command; and

Whereas, basing the headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base would enhance the economy of the region by adding approximately one thousand four hundred new jobs; and

Whereas, reestablishing the United States Space Command headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base would require military construction improvements, which would create construction and other support jobs, further in-

creasing the economic benefit to the region; and

Whereas, there is widespread bipartisan support for hosting the United States Space Command Headquarters from federal, state, and community leaders who recognize the importance of returning the space mission to Offutt Air Force Base; and

Whereas, the space mission is vital to our Nation's security, prosperity, and scientific advancement; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the members of the One Hundred Seventh Legislature of Nebraska, First Session:

1. That the Nebraska Legislature does hereby express enthusiastic support for the United States Air Force to reestablish the United States Space Command headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, Nebraska.

2. That the Clerk of the Legislature prepare and transmit a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States as the presiding officer of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, each member of Nebraska's congressional delegation, the Secretary of the Air Force, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense.

POM-77. A joint resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Alaska urging the federal government to adopt the SAFE Banking Act of 2019, sec. 110606 of the Heroes Act, or similar legislation relating to cannabis-related legitimate businesses' access to financial services; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 14

Whereas, on November 4, 2014, residents of the state voted to legalize cannabis, approving Ballot Measure No. 2, "An Act to tax and regulate the production, sale, and use of marijuana"; and

Whereas the state has prioritized the federal cannabis enforcement objectives identified in the August 29, 2013, memorandum from the United States Department of Justice to all United States Attorneys, including preventing the distribution of cannabis to minors, preventing revenue from the sale of cannabis from going to criminal enterprises, gangs, and cartels, preventing the diversion of cannabis from states where cannabis is legal in some form under state law to other states, preventing state-authorized cannabis activity from being used as a pretext for the trafficking of illegal drugs or other illegal activity, preventing violence and the use of firearms in the cultivation and distribution of cannabis, preventing drugged driving and the exacerbation of other adverse public health consequences associated with cannabis use, preventing the growing of cannabis on public land and the attendant public safety and environmental dangers posed by cannabis production on public land, and preventing cannabis possession or use on federal property; and

Whereas the state has implemented regulations that respect and support the federal priorities listed in the August 29, 2013, memorandum from the United States Department of Justice; and

Whereas, on January 16, 2018, Alaska Attorney General Jahnna Lindemuth and the attorneys general of 18 other states, districts, and territories sent a letter urging the United States Congress to advance legislation allowing states that have legalized medical or recreational use of cannabis to bring legal cannabis-related commerce into the banking system; and

Whereas, on January 18, 2018, United States Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan joined 14 other senators from around the country in submitting a letter to

the Director of the United States Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network expressing continuing support for 2014 Financial Crimes Enforcement Network guidance on Bank Secrecy Act expectations regarding cannabis-related businesses; and

Whereas, on March 7, 2019, after meeting with industry stakeholders in Alaska, United States Congressman Don Young, Co-Chair of the Congressional Cannabis Caucus, signed on as a cosponsor of H.R. 1595, the Secure and Fair Enforcement Banking Act of 2019, also referred to as the SAFE Banking Act of 2019; and

Whereas, on May 8, 2019, Alaska Attorney General Kevin G. Clarkson and the attorneys general of 37 other states, districts, and territories sent a letter urging the United States Congress to advance legislation allowing states that have legalized medical or adult use of cannabis to bring legal cannabis-related commerce into the banking system; and

Whereas, on September 25, 2019, United States Congressman Don Young voted with a bipartisan majority in the United States House of Representatives, passing the SAFE Banking Act of 2019 and clearing the Act for consideration in the Senate; and

Whereas the SAFE Banking Act of 2019 was inserted into sec. 110606 of H.R. 6800, referred to as the Heroes Act, which, on May 15, 2020, was passed by a bipartisan majority in the United States House of Representatives; and

Whereas sec. 1(b) of the SAFE Banking Act of 2019 and sec. 110606(a)(2) of the Heroes Act explain that the purpose of each is "to increase public safety by ensuring access to financial services to cannabis-related legitimate businesses and service providers and reducing the amount of cash at such businesses"; and

Whereas the SAFE Banking Act of 2019 and the Heroes Act provide, among other protections, a safe harbor for depository institutions for providing financial services to a cannabis-related legitimate business or service provider; and

Whereas the SAFE Banking Act of 2019 and the Heroes Act provide that "[f]or the purposes of sections 1956 and 1957 [money laundering] of title 18, United States Code, and all other provisions of Federal law, the proceeds from a transaction involving activities of a cannabis-related legitimate business or service provider shall not be considered proceeds from an unlawful activity solely because . . . the transaction involves proceeds from a cannabis-related legitimate business or service provider"; and

Whereas the SAFE Banking Act of 2019 and the Heroes Act provide that depository institutions or insurers that provide financial services to cannabis-related legitimate businesses or service providers and the officers, directors, and employees of depository institutions or insurers may not be held liable under any federal law or regulation solely for providing the financial service or for further investing any income derived from the financial services; and

Whereas the SAFE Banking Act of 2019 and the Heroes Act do not endorse any state's, district's, or territory's specific approach to the legalization of cannabis-related transactions and in no way endorse the legalization of medical or retail cannabis in jurisdictions that choose: not to legalize medical or retail cannabis; and

Whereas without federal legislation allowing states that have legalized medical or adult use of cannabis to bring legal cannabis-related commerce into the banking system, the tracking of revenue for taxation and regulatory compliance purposes is more difficult; and WHEREAS the inability to properly track the billions of dollars in legal can-

nabis-related sale proceeds compromises the safety and soundness of the nation's financial system by allowing the unmonitored entry of illicit funds into the financial system; and

Whereas the threat to public safety increases with cash-intensive businesses because cash-intensive businesses are often the targets of criminal activity; and

Whereas the cannabis industry continues to grow rapidly; with analysts estimating the current industry value at \$8,300,000,000, projected to increase to \$25,000,000,000 by 2025; and

Whereas, regardless of policy views on states' permitting the medical or adult use of cannabis, the current situation necessitates federal rules that provide for bringing legal cannabis-related commerce into the banking system;

Be it Resolved that the Alaska State Legislature urges the federal government to adopt the SAFE Banking Act of 2019, sec. 110606 of the Heroes Act, or similar legislation that would provide a safe harbor for depository institutions that provide financial products or services to legal cannabis-related businesses—service providers in states that have implemented laws and regulations legalizing cannabis for medical or adult use.

Copies of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States; the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and all other members of the 117th United States Congress.

POM-78. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Michigan memorializing its support for the people of Cuba, and urging the President of the United States and the United States government to take action to protect the basic human rights of the Cuban people; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 78

Whereas, Communist Miguel Díaz-Canel rose to power in Cuba in 2018 and continues to follow the failed policies of Fidel and Raúl Castro. President Díaz-Canel's ascension has coincided with an economic crisis that led to a heavy-handed and nonsensical shutdown of the state-run communication system and purposeful electricity outages; and

Whereas, The Cuban people lack the freedom to be in charge of their own destiny and future as a result of the systemic and continued repression they face at the hands of the Díaz-Canel regime; and

Whereas, A historic and remarkable gathering of protests is occurring in Cuba, where everyday Cubans are courageously demanding democracy, liberty, economic security, food, and basic medical necessities. Liberty in Cuba is defined as not only economic liberty, but also civil liberties. This includes the right to vote, liberty of conscience, and the right to self-determination. At the heart of these protests is the will of Cuban people to be in charge of their own destiny; and

Whereas, Without democracy and free elections, the welfare of the Cuban people will continue to be structurally burdened and protests will continue. As the Communist regime continues to deprive the people of Cuba of peaceful means to improve their lives, everyday Cubans will continue to risk their lives and well-being to protest openly to demand immediate change; and

Whereas, Michigan is a state that values our best aspirational American ideals of liberty, tolerance, and freedom. These are the ideals and values that Cubans march for today. The people of Michigan support the right of the people of Cuba to peacefully pro-

test to secure basic civil liberties, and stand with the people of Cuba in support of their quest for democracy, liberty, and freedom; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we declare support for the people of Cuba in their fight against a destructive Communist regime and urge the United States government and the Biden Administration to take action to protect the basic human rights of the Cuban people; 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 the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

POM-79. A concurrent memorial adopted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona urging the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to immediately take all necessary measures to fulfill its obligations to provide for Colorado River augmentation and conservation; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

HOUSE CONCURRENT MEMORIAL NO. 2003

Whereas, the United States Congress stated in the Colorado River Basin Project Act that the satisfaction of the requirements of the Mexican Water Treaty constitutes a national obligation; and

Whereas, under a treaty agreement entered into in 1973, the United States is required to ensure that water delivered to Mexico as part of Mexico's allocation of Colorado River water meets certain water quality standards; and

Whereas, the Colorado River system is in its twenty-first consecutive year of drought; and

Whereas, as a result of these drought conditions, the United States Department of the Interior is projecting that a shortage on the Colorado River is increasingly likely; and

Whereas, in the lower basin drought contingency plan agreement, the United States, through the Secretary of the Interior, committed to take affirmative actions to implement lower basin programs designed to create or conserve 100,000 acre-feet or more per year of Colorado River system water to contribute to the conservation of water supplies in Lake Mead or other Colorado River reservoirs in the lower basin; and

Whereas, the Central Arizona Project would bear the largest reduction of Colorado River water in times of shortage; and

Whereas, by abdicating its obligation to operate the Yuma Desalting Plant, or a suitable alternative the federal government has caused the loss of more than 1,800,000 acre-feet from Lake Mead; and

Whereas, if the federal government were to conserve 100,000 acre-feet per year, it would be equivalent to the water needed to supply more than 330,000 Arizona homes with water annually.

Wherefore your memorialist, the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona, the Senate concurring, prays:

1. That the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior immediately take all necessary measures to fulfill its obligations to provide for Colorado River water augmentation and conservation.

2. That the Secretary of State of the State of Arizona transmit copies of this Memorial to the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and each Member of Congress from the State of Arizona.

POM-80. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona

commending the agents of the United States Border Patrol; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2029

Whereas, the southern border consists of 1,993 miles of varied terrain, including deserts, rugged mountainous areas, forests and coastal areas; and

Whereas, officially established in 1924 by an act of Congress in response to increasing illegal immigration, the United States Border Patrol has primary responsibility for securing the border between ports of entry; and

Whereas, Border Patrol agents patrol international land borders and waterways to detect and prevent the illegal trafficking of people, narcotics and contraband into the United States; and

Whereas, the southern border of the United States is experiencing unprecedented numbers of individuals attempting to enter the country illegally; and

Whereas, in June 2019, over 100,000 individuals were apprehended at the southern border, which is an increase of more than 140% as compared to June 2018; and

Whereas, the Border Patrol establishes and maintains partnerships with local, state, federal, tribal and international law enforcement partners, as well as local ranchers and other private citizens who own much of the land along the southwest border; and

Whereas, Border Patrol agents work in dynamic environments with multiple and varied threats that are constantly changing and evolving; and

Whereas, Border Patrol agents responded admirably to the COVID-19 pandemic, efficiently implementing the resulting new policies and procedures to ensure the safety of the public; and

Whereas, the Border Patrol protects the United States against terrorists and instruments of terror; and

Whereas, created in 2003, the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducts transnational criminal investigations to identify and interdict myriad smuggling and cross-border illegal activity. The work of ICE is critical to enforcing immigration law against people who present a threat to national security, are a danger to public safety or undermine the integrity of the immigration system; and

Whereas, demonstrating courage and valor in protecting our nation, Border Patrol agents serve the American people with vigilance, integrity and professionalism: Now therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona, the Senate concurring:

1. That the Members of the Legislature commend the courage, dedication and sacrifice of the men and women of the United States Border Patrol and recognize the vital role they play in safeguarding our state and nation.

2. That the Secretary of State of the State of Arizona transmit copies of this Resolution to the President of the United States and each Member of Congress from the State of Arizona.

POM-81. A joint resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Alaska urging the United States Congress to exempt cruise ships from certain provisions of the Passenger Vessel Services Act and other applicable provisions of federal law for the period during which Canadian ports are closed to cruise ships carrying more than 100 people; and urging the President of the United States not to fine or take actions against cruise ships sailing to the state; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 9

Whereas, more than 2,260,000 visitors traveled to the state in 2019; and

Whereas, in 2019, approximately 1,331,600 people visited the state by cruise ship, accounting for 90 percent of the visitors to Southeast Alaska; and

Whereas, each year, the tourism industry generates more than \$214,000,000 in state and municipal revenue, more than \$1,400,000,000 in payroll, and \$2,200,000,000 of visitor spending; and

Whereas, on average, the tourism industry creates 8,394 jobs annually, generating \$271,600,000 in wages and earnings for Southeast Alaska each year; and

Whereas, in 2020, the diminished tourism season resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to an increase in statewide unemployment from 6.2 percent to 11.0 percent; Southeast Alaska, unemployment increased from 4.7 percent to 11.3 percent, which equates to a loss of 17 percent of all jobs in the region; and

Whereas, state residents are being vaccinated against COVID-19 at the highest rate per capita in the country, with 15 percent of state residents having been vaccinated; and

Whereas, on October 30, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a Framework for Conditional Sailing Order, which allows cruise ships to resume sailing with mitigation plans for crews, passengers, and people in port communities and includes requirements for increased testing, additional crew safeguards, simulated voyages, and certification of mitigation plans; and

Whereas, on February 4, 2021, Canada extended until February 22 a ban preventing cruise ships carrying more than 100 people from sailing through Canadian waters; and

Whereas, 46 U.S.C. 55103 (Passenger Vessel Services Act) requires that certain passenger vessels that sail from United States ports must visit a foreign port before returning to a port in the United States; and

Whereas, an exemption of cruise ships from the requirement of visiting a foreign port would help mitigate continued job and revenue loss and provide relief to an industry with an economic impact that spans across every region of the state and employs people from Ketchikan to Nome; and

Whereas, other federal laws may interfere with the ability of certain ships to hire and retain crews on routes to the state that do not include a stop in Canada; and

Whereas, small business owners, families, and young people in the state depend on tourism jobs for their livelihoods, and a missed cruise season could cause irreparable economic harm;

Be it resolved, that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States Congress to exempt certain cruise ships sailing to the state from provisions of the Passenger Vessel Services Act and other federal laws that require cruise ships to stop at a Canadian or other foreign port in order to operate in the state for the period during which Canadian ports are closed to cruise ships carrying more than 100 people; and be it

Further resolved, that, if the United States Congress does not exempt cruise ships from the requirements of the Passenger Vessel Services Act and any other applicable provisions of federal law, the Alaska State Legislature urges the President of the United States, to the extent allowed by law, to exercise his authority to allow cruise ships to travel directly on round-trip itineraries to and from ports in the State of Washington and this state while Canadian ports are closed to cruise ships.

Copies of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States; the Honorable Kamala D.

Harris, Vice President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and all other members of the 117th United States Congress.

POM-82. A resolution adopted by the Commission of the City of Coral Gables, Florida urging the United States Congress to enact the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act; to the Committee on Finance.

POM-83. A resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors of Wyoming County, New York memorializing its opposition to the enactment of laws that place unreasonable liability exposure on the backs of legitimate manufacturers or "gun industry members"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

POM-84. A petition from a citizen of the State of Texas relative to access to federal court documents; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Ms. STABENOW for the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

*Homer L. Wilkes, of Mississippi, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment.

By Mr. DURBIN for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Toby J. Heytens, of Virginia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit.

Patricia Tolliver Giles, of Virginia, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Michael S. Nachmanoff, of Virginia, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Sarala Vidya Nagala, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

Omar Antonio Williams, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

Hampton Y. Dellinger, of North Carolina, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

Matthew M. Graves, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Attorney for the District of Columbia for the term of four years.

Erek L. Barron, of Maryland, to be United States Attorney for the District of Maryland for the term of four years.

Nicholas W. Brown, of Washington, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Washington for the term of four years.

Clifford D. Johnson, of Indiana, to be United States Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana for the term of four years.

Zachary A. Myers, of Maryland, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana for the term of four years.

Trini E. Ross, of New York, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of New York for the term of four years.

Vanessa Waldref, of Washington, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington for the term of four years.

*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. MANCHIN (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. WARNER):

S. 2810. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure the solvency of the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund by extending the excise tax on coal; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. SINEMA (for herself and Mr. PORTMAN):

S. 2811. A bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program to pre-program suicide prevention resources into smart devices issued to members of the Armed Forces; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. ROSEN (for herself and Mr. MORAN):

S. 2812. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish a small business start-up tax credit for veterans creating businesses in underserved communities; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CASSIDY:

S. 2813. A bill to create a mandatory safety standard to require portable generators to meet certain standards relating to carbon monoxide, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. KENNEDY:

S. 2814. A bill to provide for affordable access to insulin and epinephrine; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. KENNEDY:

S. 2815. A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to provide for the continued implementation on a permanent basis of the Part D Senior Savings model; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself and Ms. LUMMIS):

S. 2816. A bill to establish a youth savings match grant program for students in grades 9 through 12; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. TILLIS:

S. 2817. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to furnish readjustment counseling and related mental health services to family members of members of the Armed Forces or veterans who died by suicide, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI:

S. 2818. A bill to permit under certain conditions the transportation of passengers between the State of Alaska and other United States ports on vessels not qualified to engage in the coastwise trade that transport more than 1,000 passengers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. KAINE):

S. 2819. A bill to provide a process for ensuring the United States does not default on its obligations; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 2820. A bill to provide rental vouchers for the homeless, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mr. COONS):

S. 2821. A bill to establish eligibility requirements for education support professionals under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. RUBIO:

S. 2822. A bill to ensure the United States maintains a competitive edge over China, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. BRAUN (for himself, Mr. BURR, Mr. INHOFE, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. BARRASSO, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. CRAPO, Ms. ERNST, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. RISCH, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. HAGERTY, Mr. HOEVEN, and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. 2823. A bill to ensure that all fast-tracked reconciliation bills are subject to a committee hearing, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Budget.

By Mr. RISCH:

S. 2824. A bill to amend the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 to promote timely exploration for geothermal resources under geothermal leases, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2825. A bill to amend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act to revise the definition of "affected area" and extend the period in which compensation may be provided, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. MARSHALL (for himself and Mr. SCOTT of Florida):

S. 2826. A bill to impose sanctions with respect to Chinese and Russian companies that sign contracts or otherwise do business with the Taliban in strategic resource sectors, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Ms. WARREN):

S. 2827. A bill to amend title 28, United States Code, to modify venue requirements relating to bankruptcy proceedings; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. PAUL):

S. 2828. A bill to authorize U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to process employment-based immigrant visa applications after September 30, 2021, and to award such visas to eligible applicants from the pool of unused employment-based immigrant visas during fiscal years 2020 and 2021; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. RUBIO:

S. 2829. A bill to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to require the Securities and Exchange Commission to require the contractual provision by large issuers of procedural privileges with respect to certain shareholder claims relating to board and management accountability for "woke" social policy actions as a condition of listing on a national securities exchange; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. HAGERTY, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 2830. A bill making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. LEE (for himself and Mr. SCOTT of Florida):

S. 2831. A bill to require the National Flood Insurance Program to accept mid-term cancellations of flood insurance coverage if the insured acquires alternative coverage; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. LEE (for himself and Mr. SCOTT of Florida):

S. 2832. A bill to prohibit the National Flood Insurance Program from providing flood insurance subsidies for single-family residences that are valued at more than \$1,000,000, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. LEE (for himself and Mr. SCOTT of Florida):

S. 2833. A bill to amend the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to address the premium rates for certain properties under the National Flood Insurance Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. CASSIDY, and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. 2834. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to preserve access to rehabilitation innovation centers under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, and Mr. OSSOFF):

S. 2835. A bill to terminate authorizations for the use of military force and declarations of war no later than 10 years after the enactment of such authorizations or declarations; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MANCHIN (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. KING, and Mr. MARSHALL):

S. 2836. A bill to improve revegetation and carbon sequestration activities in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. BRAUN:

S. 2837. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to clarify rules relating to drug discounts for covered entities; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. PORTMAN (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. PETERS, and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 2838. A bill to require the Director of the Government Publishing Office to establish and maintain an online portal accessible to the public that allows the public to obtain electronic copies of all congressionally mandated reports in one place, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 2839. A bill to provide an additional \$1,000,000,000 for the Government of Israel to procure the Iron Dome defense system to counter short-range rocket threats, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2840. A bill to permit civil actions against the United States for COVID-19 vaccination mandates; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2841. A bill to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to publicly disclose information regarding adverse effects of COVID-19 vaccines; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2842. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to prohibit the Secretary of Defense from requiring that members of the Armed Forces receive a COVID-19 vaccine, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2843. A bill to prohibit the imposition of a fine, fee, or taxation on any person for violation of a COVID-19 vaccine mandate issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration or any other executive agency, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2844. A bill to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to publish all of

its studies and findings related to COVID-19; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SULLIVAN:

S. 2845. A bill to provide support for energy infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific region, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2846. A bill to require Federal agencies to acknowledge, accept, and agree to truthfully present, natural immunity pertaining to COVID-19 pursuant to promulgating certain regulations; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2847. A bill to prohibit the Federal Government from mandating vaccination against COVID-19 for interstate travel; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2848. A bill to exempt individuals with a personal health concern from complying with a Federal COVID-19 vaccine mandate, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2849. A bill to stipulate that nothing in Federal law provides a Federal agency with the authority to mandate that an individual be inoculated by a COVID-19 vaccine; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2850. A bill to exempt individuals from complying with a Federal COVID-19 vaccine mandate on the basis of a personal belief, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2851. A bill to require an audit of COVID-19 relief funding; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. RISCH (for himself and Mr. BOOKER):

S. Res. 380. A resolution reiterating United States support for the people of the Republic of South Sudan in their quest for lasting peace, stability, and democracy after 10 years of independence and calling for a review of United States policy toward South Sudan; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. BRAUN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. GRAHAM, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. ROMNEY, Mr. COONS, Ms. ERNST, Mr. KING, Mr. BURR, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. TILLIS):

S. Res. 381. A resolution proclaiming the week of September 20 through September 24, 2021, to be "National Clean Energy Week"; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. WICKER, Mr. PETERS, and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. Res. 382. A resolution expressing support for the designation of the week of September 20 through September 26, 2021, as "Rail Safety Week" in the United States, and supporting the goals and ideals of Rail Safety Week to reduce rail-related accidents, fatalities, and injuries; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Ms. HASSAN,

Mr. KAINÉ, Mr. KING, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. ROSEN, Ms. SMITH, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Ms. WARREN):

S. Res. 383. A resolution designating the week beginning September 12, 2021, as "National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. Res. 384. A resolution designating the week of September 20 through September 24, 2021, as "Community School Coordinators Appreciation Week"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. WICKER, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. WARNER, and Mrs. HYDE-SMITH):

S. Res. 385. A resolution supporting the designation of the week of September 19 through September 25, 2021, as "Telehealth Awareness Week"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. MCCONNELL (for himself, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BARASSO, Mr. BENNETT, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BURR, Ms. CANTWELL, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CARPER, Mr. CASEY, Mr. CASSIDY, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. COONS, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. ERNST, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. FISCHER, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HAGERTY, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. HAWLEY, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. HOEVEN, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KAINÉ, Mr. KELLY, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KING, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. LEE, Mr. LUJÁN, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. MORAN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. OSSOFF, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. PAUL, Mr. PETERS, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. REED, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROMNEY, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. SASSE, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. SHELBY, Ms. SINEMA, Ms. SMITH, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. THUNE, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. TUBERVILLE, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. WARNER, Mr. WARNOCK, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. WICKER, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. YOUNG):

S. Res. 386. A resolution relative to the death of Robert Britton "Bob" Dove, Parliamentarian Emeritus of the United States Senate; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 247

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 247, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide compensatory time for employees in the private sector.

S. 544

At the request of Ms. ERNST, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 544, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to designate one week each year as "Buddy Check Week" for

the purpose of outreach and education concerning peer wellness checks for veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 864

At the request of Mr. KAINÉ, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 864, a bill to extend Federal Pell Grant eligibility of certain short-term programs.

S. 1061

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1061, a bill to encourage the normalization of relations with Israel, and for other purposes.

S. 1141

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) 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. 1265

At the request of Ms. DUCKWORTH, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1265, a bill to amend section 2702 of title 18, United States Code, to prevent law enforcement and intelligence agencies from obtaining subscriber or customer records in exchange for anything of value, to address communications and records in the possession of intermediary internet service providers, and for other purposes.

S. 1315

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1315, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage of certain lymphedema compression treatment items under the Medicare program.

S. 1385

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1385, a bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to establish additional requirements for dealers, and for other purposes.

S. 1488

At the request of Ms. DUCKWORTH, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1488, a bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to establish a basic needs allowance for low-income regular members of the Armed Forces.

S. 1588

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1588, a bill to amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to prohibit importation, exportation, transportation, sale, receipt, acquisition, and purchase in interstate or foreign commerce, or in a manner substantially affecting interstate or foreign commerce, or possession, of any live animal of any prohibited primate species.

S. 1636

At the request of Mr. MARSHALL, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1636, a bill to clarify the treatment of 2 or more employers as joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

S. 1720

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine) were added as cosponsors of S. 1720, a bill to provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

S. 1787

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1787, a bill to amend title 28 of the United States Code to prevent the transfer of actions arising under the antitrust laws in which a State is a complainant.

S. 1813

At the request of Mr. COONS, the names of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) were added as cosponsors 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. 1872

At the request of Ms. ERNST, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) were added as cosponsors of S. 1872, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the United States Army Rangers Veterans of World War II in recognition of their extraordinary service during World War II.

S. 1873

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1873, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for Medicare coverage of multi-cancer early detection screening tests.

S. 1933

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1933, a bill to clarify the location of a clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs designated by law.

S. 1986

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1986, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 to expand and expedite access to cardiac rehabilitation programs and pulmonary rehabilitation programs under the Medicare program, and for other purposes.

S. 2126

At the request of Ms. LUMMIS, the names of the Senator from Maryland

(Mr. CARDIN) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) were added as cosponsors of S. 2126, a bill to designate the Federal Office Building located at 308 W. 21st Street in Cheyenne, Wyoming, as the "Louisa Swain Federal Office Building".

S. 2280

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2280, a bill to provide PreCheck to certain severely injured or disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 2300

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2300, a bill to direct the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to establish a grant program to help revitalize certain localities, and for other purposes.

S. 2315

At the request of Mr. WARNOCK, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2315, a bill to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a program to provide health care coverage to low-income adults in States that have not expanded Medicaid.

S. 2372

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the names of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) and the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) were added as cosponsors of S. 2372, a bill to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes.

S. 2443

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2443, a bill to expand the definition of H-2A nonimmigrant for purposes of the Immigration and Nationality Act to include aliens engaged in seafood processing, horticultural commodities, or the care of horses.

S. 2458

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2458, a bill to clarify that individuals engaged in aircraft flight instruction or testing, including phased testing of experimental aircraft, are not operating an aircraft carrying persons or property for compensation or hire.

S. 2493

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2493, a bill to extend the deadline for eligible health care providers to use certain funds received from the

COVID-19 Provider Relief Fund, and for other purposes.

S. 2519

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2519, a bill to repeal the multi-State plan program.

S. 2675

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2675, a bill to amend the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to increase appropriations to Restaurant Revitalization Fund, and for other purposes.

S. 2736

At the request of Mr. BURR, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) were added as cosponsors of S. 2736, a bill to exclude vehicles to be used solely for competition from certain provisions of the Clean Air Act, and for other purposes.

S. 2752

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2752, a bill to amend the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 to protect civil rights and otherwise prevent meaningful harm to third parties, and for other purposes.

S. 2760

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2760, a bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide for automatic continuing resolutions.

S. 2780

At the request of Mr. MARSHALL, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2780, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to prohibit certain adverse personnel actions taken against members of the Armed Forces based on declining the COVID-19 vaccine.

S. 2794

At the request of Mr. TUBERVILLE, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2794, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase automatic maximum coverage under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program and the Veterans' Group Life Insurance program, and for other purposes.

S. 2809

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of Florida, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2809, a bill to protect social security benefits and military pay and require that the United States Government to prioritize all obligations on the debt held by the public in the event that the debt limit is reached.

S.J. RES. 10

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 10, a joint resolution to repeal the authorizations for use of military force against Iraq, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 338

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 338, a resolution designating September 2021 as National Democracy Month as a time to reflect on the contributions of the system of government of the United States to a more free and stable world.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTION

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. CASSIDY, and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. 2834. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to preserve access to rehabilitation innovation centers under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, October 2–9 days from today—is an important date in the life of one of the bravest people I have ever met. On October 2, 2005, Army SGT Eric Edmundson was on patrol near the Iraq-Syria border when a roadside bomb exploded beneath his armored vehicle.

He survived the blast, but went into cardiac arrest while awaiting transport to an American military hospital in Germany. Doctors worked for 30 minutes to restore his pulse. They did, but Sergeant Edmundson had already suffered severe brain damage from lack of oxygen.

Doctors told his parents that Eric would spend the rest of his life in a vegetative state and that the best thing they could do for him was choose a good nursing home. But Eric's family refused to accept that fate for him. They searched for the best rehabilitation hospital in America, somewhere where Eric could receive the very best medical care and make the fullest possible recovery.

The hospital they chose was the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab in Chicago, then known by its original name: the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago.

I visited him there several times. His family was always there, right by his side. I will never forget the time Eric's dad told me, "Eric has a present for you." I couldn't imagine what it was. Then I watched as that brave soldier stood up from his wheelchair and took several halting steps. There wasn't a dry eye in the room.

Six months after he arrived, I watched Eric Edmundson, in his Army dress uniform, walk out of that amazing hospital and into the arms of his wife and their 2-year-old daughter.

I thought of Eric Edmundson and his miraculous recovery when I learned

earlier this month of the death of Dr. Joanne Smith, a medical visionary and the longtime president and CEO of Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. She died at home, with her family at her side, after battling cancer privately for 5 years. She continued to lead Shirley Ryan right up to the end.

Loretta and I offer our condolences to her husband of 33 years, Rory Repicky, their children, Claire and Michael, Joanne's 16 nieces and nephews, and her family, colleagues, and friends, who are too numerous to count.

Dr. Joanne Smith was a once-in-a-lifetime leader and a national treasure. With her brilliance, determination, and compassion, she reinvented the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation. As president and CEO of Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, she imagined—and then led the drive to create—the world's first-ever "translational" research hospital for rehabilitation medicine. She pioneered the concept of a cutting-edge research facility within a hospital, with scientists, innovators, technologists, and clinicians all working together to heal patients. Seeing her team work miracles with wounded veterans, injured police officers, or stroke survivors made you a believer.

Joanne Smith originally planned to be a nurse but changed her major to pre-med after working as a hospital orderly. A chance meeting during medical school with a young girl at a free health clinic in Detroit changed her life—and the future of rehabilitation medicine.

The young girl had had both legs amputated because of spina bifida, but she had learned to walk using her arms as legs and her hands as feet. She was happy. But her mother wanted her to have a more "normal" appearance, so doctors fitted her with a sort of harness that included two prosthetic legs and gave her a wheelchair.

Dr. Smith said it disturbed her to see how a once-happy girl became sad and less able as a result of a change in her appearance to fit society's biases and expectations. She would spend the rest of her life working to discover cures that made patients more able, not less.

She came to Shirley Ryan, then called the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, for her residency in 1988, fresh out of medical school, and thank goodness, she never left. In 2006, a few years after earning her MBA from the University of Chicago, she became president and CEO. At that point, the hospital had been ranked at the No. 1 rehabilitation hospital in America by U.S. News & World Report for nearly two decades.

If Joanne Smith had done nothing as president and CEO except more of the same, she would have been at the top of her field. But "more of the same" was not in her makeup. She resolved to create a new model for rehabilitation hospitals—the research institute within the hospital—so that new discoveries could reach patients in real time.

The reimagined hospital opened with a new name in 2017. Just recently, it

was ranked as the best rehabilitation hospital in the Nation for the 31st year in a row, a record unmatched by any hospital.

Physical and rehabilitation medicine is a relatively new field of medicine. It began after World War II, with doctors and researchers searching for ways to help injured servicemembers regain as much of their abilities as possible.

Today, advanced rehabilitation hospitals such as Shirley Ryan AbilityLab work with children and adults with severe, complex conditions—from traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, to amputations or serious birth defects, enabling them to live as fully and independently as possible. The demand for such medical innovations is large and growing.

The partnership at Shirley Ryan of brilliant doctors and researchers working with brave patients has resulted in some breathtaking discoveries. In 2006, doctors there outfitted a man with a prosthetic arm that he could move with his thoughts. With his thoughts. That surgery—the first of its kind in the world—has since helped revolutionize treatment for people who have lost limbs.

More recently, researchers at Shirley Ryan created the world's first manual standing wheelchair, that allows users to move while seated or standing.

Shirley Ryan serves more than 50,000 patients year from nearly every State and more than 70 countries. It is miraculous, but it is not alone. There are a handful of rehabilitation innovation centers like it in America. These are the best of the best, cutting-edge research labs within world-class hospitals that also prioritize training the next generation of doctors and healers.

My friend, Senator CASSIDY of Louisiana, has seen similar miracles at TIRR Memorial Hermann, a world-class rehabilitation hospital in Houston, TX, where many people from Louisiana and around the world go for advanced treatment.

The discoveries at America's best rehabilitation innovations centers are revolutionizing medicine, and they are reaching people far beyond their own walls. But making such discoveries and propelling the field of rehabilitation medicine forward costs money—more money than these nonprofit centers can afford on their own.

That is why, today, Senator CASSIDY and I are reintroducing our bipartisan proposal to recognize and support some of America's best rehabilitation innovation centers. Our bill does two things. First, it directs the Department of Health and Human Services to set criteria for such "rehabilitation innovation centers" and to share best practices and teachings from these institutions with health providers throughout the Nation and the world.

Second, our bill directs HHS to study whether Medicare's existing payment system is adequate to support the groundbreaking treatment, research, and medical education that is taking place at these hospitals.

When I first introduced this bill in 2013, I had a different Republican cosponsor, Senator Mark Kirk of Illinois. In 2012, Senator Kirk suffered a stroke that left him partly paralyzed and unable to walk. A year later, after months of grueling work at R.I.C., he was able to walk up the 42 steps to this Capitol Building.

In honor of the doctor whose brilliance and compassion helped transform the field of physical and rehabilitation medicine that led to the astonishing feat and so many others, Senator Cassidy and I have agreed to rename our bill the Dr. Joanne Smith Memorial Rehabilitation Innovation Centers Act.

I will close with this thought from another brave person who helped to revolutionize rehabilitation medicine. Christopher Reeve was America's Superman in the movies—until he was paralyzed from the shoulders down in an equestrian accident in 1995.

During the last decade of his life, he regained limited movement in his arms and legs. He also spent a great deal of time raising awareness of and money for the kinds of cutting-edge treatments that are pioneered at institutions such as Shirley Ryan.

In his last public appearance, he spoke at Shirley Ryan. He said, "It gets lonely sometimes to [urge people] 'Come on, let's take reasonable risks. Let's try and be safe—but let's be bold at the same time.'"

Christopher Reeve said, "Doctors should take the word 'impossible' out of their lexicons."

That courageous, bold optimism—be safe, but be bold at the same time—is what drove Dr. Joanne Smith and what inspires the work at America's best rehabilitation centers of innovation. Our bipartisan bill, we hope, will help advance their work.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printing in the RECORD.

S. 2834

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 "Dr. Joanne Smith Memorial Rehabilitation Innovation Centers Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. PRESERVING ACCESS TO REHABILITATION INNOVATION CENTERS UNDER MEDICARE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1886(j)(7)(E) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(j)(7)(E)) is amended—

(1) by striking "PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF DATA SUBMITTED.—The" and inserting "PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF DATA SUBMITTED.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—The"; and

(2) by inserting after clause (i), as redesignated by paragraph (1), the following new clauses:

"(ii) PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF REHABILITATION INNOVATION CENTERS.—Beginning not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this clause, the Secretary shall make publicly available on such Internet website, in addition to the information required to be reported on such website under clause (i), a list of all rehabilitation innovation centers, and shall update such list on

such website not less frequently than biennially. In carrying out the activities under this clause, the Secretary shall disseminate research, best practices, and other clinical information identified or developed by such rehabilitation innovation centers to, as appropriate, Federal agencies, hospitals, health professional organizations, and national and State accreditation bodies.

"(iii) REHABILITATION INNOVATION CENTERS DEFINED.—For purposes of clause (ii), the term 'rehabilitation innovation centers' means a rehabilitation facility that, as of the applicable date (as defined in clause (v)), is a rehabilitation facility described in clause (iv).

"(iv) REHABILITATION FACILITY DESCRIBED.—A rehabilitation facility described in this clause is a rehabilitation facility that—

"(I) is classified as a rehabilitation facility under the IRF Rate Setting File for the Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility Prospective Payment System for Federal Fiscal Year 2019 (83 Fed. Reg. 38514), or any successor regulations that contain such information;

"(II) holds, as of the applicable date at least one Federal rehabilitation research and training designation for research projects on traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research at the Department of Health and Human Services, based on such data submitted to the Secretary by a facility, in a form, manner, and time frame specified by the Secretary;

"(III) submits to the Secretary a description of the clinical research enterprise of the facility and a summary of research activities of the facility that are supported by Federal agencies;

"(IV) has a minimum Medicare estimated weight per discharge of 1.20 for the most recent fiscal year for which such information is available according to the IRF Rate Setting File described in subclause (I), or any successor regulations that contain such information; and

"(V) has a minimum teaching status of 0.075 for the most recent fiscal year for which such information is available according to the IRF Rate Setting File described in subclause (I), or any successor regulations that contain such information.

"(v) APPLICABLE DATE DEFINED.—For purposes of clauses (iii) and (iv), the term 'applicable date' means—

"(I) with respect to the initial publication of a list under clause (ii), the date of the enactment of such clause; and

"(II) with respect to the publication of an updated list under clause (ii), a date specified by the Secretary that is not more than one year prior to the date of such publication.

"(vi) IMPLEMENTATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law the Secretary may implement clauses (ii) through (v) by program instruction or otherwise.

"(vii) NONAPPLICATION OF PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT.—Chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code, shall not apply to data collected under clauses (ii) through (v)."

(b) REPORT.—Not later than March 15, 2022, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit to Congress a report containing any recommendations for such legislation or administrative action as the Secretary determines appropriate to preserve access to rehabilitation innovation centers (as defined in section 1886(j)(7)(E)(iii) of the Social Security Act, as added by subsection (a)).

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, and Mr. OSSOFF):

S. 2835. A bill to terminate authorizations for the use of military force and

declarations of war no later than 10 years after the enactment of such authorizations or declarations; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. 2835

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 "Accountability for Endless Wars Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. TERMINATION OF AUTHORIZATIONS FOR THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE AND DECLARATIONS OF WAR.

(a) FUTURE AUTHORIZATIONS FOR THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE AND DECLARATIONS OF WAR.—Any authorization for the use of military force or declaration of war enacted into law after the date of enactment of this Act shall terminate on the date that is 10 years after the date of enactment of such authorization or declaration.

(b) EXISTING AUTHORIZATIONS FOR THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE AND DECLARATIONS OF WAR.—Any authorization for the use of military force or declaration of war enacted before the date of the enactment of this Act shall terminate on the date that is 6 months after the date of such enactment.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 380—REITERATING UNITED STATES SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN IN THEIR QUEST FOR LASTING PEACE, STABILITY, AND DEMOCRACY AFTER 10 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE AND CALLING FOR A REVIEW OF UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD SOUTH SUDAN

Mr. RISCH (for himself and Mr. BOOKER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 380

Whereas the Republic of South Sudan became the newest country in the world on July 9, 2011, following the Referendum on the Self-Determination of Southern Sudan, in which 99 percent of Southern Sudanese voters voted in favor of secession from Sudan;

Whereas the 21-year civil war in Sudan, the longest-running conflict in Africa, caused approximately 2,000,000 deaths and mass population displacement of approximately 550,000 refugees and 4,000,000 internally displaced persons;

Whereas the United States played a significant role in supporting the resolution of Sudan's civil war, facilitating peace negotiations, serving as a witness to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army signed in January 2005, and providing substantial resources for the implementation of that agreement alongside other international partners;

Whereas, on December 15, 2013, just 28 months following independence, the political power struggle between President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar, both of the

Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), erupted into open conflict between ethnically allied Dinka and Nuer factions of the security services and quickly escalated into civil war;

Whereas, on August 17, 2015, after months of mediation by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan was signed by President Kiir, Riek Machar for SPLM-In Opposition (SPLM-IO), and Pagan Amum for SPLM-Former Detainees;

Whereas the parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan delayed implementation of the agreement and demonstrated a lack of political will for sustainable peace, and in July 2016, civil war returned to South Sudan as new clashes in Juba quickly spread throughout the country;

Whereas the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed on September 12, 2018, asserted the Parties' commitment to the permanent ceasefire, humanitarian access, and respect for human rights, and called for the establishment of a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity to lead South Sudan to democratic elections after 44 months;

Whereas Kiir's presidential term has been extended 3 times since South Sudan's independence, twice through amendments to the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan and most recently through an extension of the Transitional Period under the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to 2023;

Whereas, despite years of fighting, 2 peace agreements, punitive actions by the international community, and widespread suffering among civilian populations, the leaders of South Sudan show little motivation to build sustainable peace, and critical provisions of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan remain unimplemented;

Whereas the conflict in South Sudan resulted in the deaths of at least 383,000 people from December 2013 to April 2018, according to a report by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and caused one of the worst displacement crises in the world with 1,600,000 internally displaced persons and 2,200,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the region as of May 2021, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

Whereas South Sudan ranks 185th of 189 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index, performed the worst of 180 countries on the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index, is perennially one of the most dangerous countries in which aid workers operate, received the lowest ranking in the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report every year from 2015 to 2021, and has been on the Child Soldiers Prevention Act list for 10 years in a row;

Whereas the United Nations declared a "man-made" famine in parts of South Sudan in February 2017, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated in March 2021 that "South Sudan is facing its highest levels of food insecurity and malnutrition since independence ten years ago";

Whereas, in February 2021, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan "found that ten years after independence, staggering levels of violence continue and threaten to spiral out of control across several regions in the country";

Whereas the situation in South Sudan persists while its neighbors face increasingly urgent domestic and regional issues, including

the ongoing political transition in Sudan, conflict in Ethiopia, and deeply flawed electoral processes and political unrest in Uganda and Somalia;

Whereas the United States has been the largest donor to South Sudan, providing more than \$1,800,000,000 in development assistance since independence and more than \$6,000,000,000 in emergency humanitarian assistance since the start of the civil war in December 2013;

Whereas, on July 9, 2021, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan marked 10 years in existence at a total cost of more than \$10,300,000,000, and total United States contributions are estimated to exceed \$3,300,000,000 through 2021;

Whereas the leaders of South Sudan have consistently failed to uphold their responsibilities to create the conditions for peace and prosperity, have prioritized self-preservation and corruption over the needs of the people they represent, have acted in bad faith in the implementation of cease-fire and peace agreements, and have betrayed the cause of freedom, resulting in the loss of millions of innocent lives;

Whereas South Sudan has not held an election since its independence and the current leaders of South Sudan were appointed or installed through transitional arrangements based on peace agreements;

Whereas South Sudan merits consistent high-level attention given the central role the United States played in diplomatic efforts leading to the independence of South Sudan and the enormous investments in humanitarian and other assistance the United States has provided to South Sudan; and

Whereas, on July 9, 2021, South Sudan celebrated the 10th anniversary of its independence: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) reiterates the commitment of the United States to helping the people of South Sudan realize their aspirations of an independent, stable, democratic, and prosperous South Sudan;

(2) calls on the Secretary of State to lead a comprehensive interagency process to develop a revitalized United States policy toward South Sudan that—

(A) identifies a broader range of South Sudanese political and civilian stakeholders, beyond President Kiir and First Vice President Machar, with whom the United States may work for the promotion of peace, democracy, development, accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts;

(B) restores United States diplomatic leadership with regard to South Sudan alongside European and African partners;

(C) reflects the realities of the conflict and the political context in South Sudan; and

(D) increases diplomatic efforts to urge regional actors, particularly in Kenya and Uganda, to investigate assets of corrupt South Sudanese elites and ensure Kenya and Uganda are no longer havens for conflict- and corruption-related proceeds;

(3) calls on the United States Mission to the United Nations—

(A) to demonstrate renewed United States leadership with regard to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to orient the peace-keeping mission toward increased effectiveness, clarity of purpose, and eventual draw-down; and

(B) to call upon regional and international actors to cooperate in enforcing the United Nations arms embargo in South Sudan and take action against those violating the embargo;

(4) calls on the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, in coordination with the Secretary of State—

(A) to ensure that United States assistance adheres to the principle of "Do No Harm" by pausing any funding, including humanitarian aid, that is manipulated to legitimize or enrich any party to the ongoing conflict;

(B) to review United States diplomatic engagement and assistance to South Sudan, which currently amounts to more than \$1,000,000,000 in aid each year, with the goal of matching the level of United States diplomatic engagement with United States assistance; and

(C) to ensure that the comprehensive review of United States assistance programs to South Sudan, started in 2018 to "ensure our assistance does not contribute to or prolong the conflict, or facilitate predatory or corrupt behavior", is completed and its findings publicized; and

(5) urges the Secretary of the Treasury—

(A) to prioritize investigative actions into illicit financial flows fueling violence in South Sudan;

(B) to work with the Secretary of State to add to the list of individuals and entities designated under the South Sudan sanctions program, including individuals at the highest levels of leadership in South Sudan and from within the National Security Service; and

(C) to coordinate, in cooperation with the Secretary of State, with the United Kingdom and the European Union on South Sudan-related sanctions designations and enforcement.

SENATE RESOLUTION 381—PROCLAIMING THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 24, 2021, TO BE "NATIONAL CLEAN ENERGY WEEK"

Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. BRAUN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. GRAHAM, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. ROMNEY, Mr. COONS, Ms. ERNST, Mr. KING, Mr. BURR, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. TILLIS) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 381

Whereas, across the United States, clean and readily abundant forms of energy are powering more homes and businesses than ever before;

Whereas clean energy generation is readily available from zero- and low-emissions sources;

Whereas the clean energy sector is a growing part of the economy and has been a key driver of economic growth in the United States in recent years;

Whereas technological innovation can further reduce costs and increase deployment of clean energy sources;

Whereas the "2021 U.S. Energy and Employment Report" published by the Department of Energy found that, at the end of 2020, the energy and energy efficiency sectors in the United States employed approximately 7,500,000 individuals;

Whereas the scaling of clean energy is essential to reducing emissions;

Whereas clean energy jobs are inherently local, contribute to the growth of local economies, and cannot be outsourced due to the on-site nature of construction, installation, and maintenance; and

Whereas innovative clean energy solutions and clean energy jobs are part of the energy future of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) proclaims the week of September 20 through September 24, 2021, to be "National Clean Energy Week";

(2) encourages individuals and organizations across the United States to support commonsense solutions that address the economic, environmental, and energy needs of the United States in the 21st century;

(3) encourages the Federal Government, States, municipalities, and individuals to invest in clean, low-emitting energy technologies; and

(4) recognizes the role of entrepreneurs and small businesses in ensuring the energy leadership of the United States in the global marketplace and supporting low-cost, clean, and reliable energy in the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 382—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 26, 2021, AS “RAIL SAFETY WEEK” IN THE UNITED STATES, AND SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF RAIL SAFETY WEEK TO REDUCE RAIL-RELATED ACCIDENTS, FATALITIES, AND INJURIES

Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. WICKER, Mr. PETERS, and Mrs. FISCHER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 382

Whereas the first Rail Safety Week was held from September 24 through September 30, 2017, by the national education safety nonprofit Operation Lifesaver, the Department of Transportation, and other organizations;

Whereas Rail Safety Week was launched to raise awareness about the need for increased education on how to be safe around highway-rail grade crossings and railroad tracks and to highlight efforts to further reduce collisions, injuries, and fatalities;

Whereas highway-rail grade crossing and trespassing accidents constituted approximately 96 percent of all rail-related fatalities during 2020;

Whereas, since 2005—

(1) the number of public highway-rail grade crossings has decreased by 9.8 percent; and

(2) the number of gates at such crossings has increased by 38.1 percent;

Whereas, in 2020, 47 percent of all highway-rail grade crossing collisions and 69 percent of all fatal highway-rail grade crossing collisions occurred at gated highway-rail grade crossings;

Whereas preliminary Federal statistics indicate that 1,901 highway-grade crossing collisions occurred in the United States in 2020, resulting in 198 deaths and another 685 individuals injured;

Whereas many collisions between trains and motor vehicles or pedestrians could have been prevented by increased education, engineering, and enforcement;

Whereas Operation Lifesaver, the foremost public information and education program on rail safety, administers a public education program about grade-crossing safety and trespassing prevention;

Whereas, during Rail Safety Week, from September 20 through 26, and throughout the year, everyone is encouraged to take added caution as motorists or pedestrians approach tracks or trains;

Whereas the United States, Canada, and Mexico will concurrently observe Rail Safety Week; and

Whereas this important observance should lead to greater safety awareness and a reduction in highway-rail grade crossing collisions and other railroad incidents: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the designation of “Rail Safety Week”;

(2) expresses strong support for—

(A) the goals and ideals of Rail Safety Week; and

(B) efforts to reduce rail-related accidents, fatalities, and injuries; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States—

(A) to participate in Rail Safety Week events and activities; and

(B) to educate themselves and others on how to be safe around railroad tracks.

SENATE RESOLUTION 383—DESIGNATING THE WEEK BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 12, 2021, AS “NATIONAL DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS RECOGNITION WEEK”

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. KING, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. ROSEN, Ms. SMITH, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Ms. WARREN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 383

Whereas direct support professionals, including direct care workers, personal assistants, personal attendants, in-home support workers, and paraprofessionals, are key to providing publicly funded, long-term support and services for millions of individuals with disabilities;

Whereas, during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (referred to in this preamble as “COVID-19”) pandemic, many direct support professionals continue to arrive for work every day in order to ensure the health and safety of individuals with disabilities;

Whereas direct support professionals provide essential services that ensure all individuals with disabilities are—

(1) included as a valued part of the communities in which those individuals live;

(2) supported at home, at work, and in the communities of the United States; and

(3) empowered to live with the dignity that all people of the United States deserve;

Whereas, by fostering connections between individuals with disabilities and their families, friends, and communities, direct support professionals ensure that individuals with disabilities thrive, thereby avoiding more costly institutional care;

Whereas direct support professionals build close, respectful, and trusting relationships with individuals with disabilities and provide a broad range of personalized support to those individuals, including—

(1) helping individuals make person-centered choices;

(2) assisting with personal care, meal preparation, medication management, and other aspects of daily living;

(3) assisting individuals in accessing the community and securing competitive, integrated employment;

(4) providing transportation to school, work, religious, and recreational activities;

(5) helping with general daily affairs, such as assisting with financial matters, medical appointments, and personal interests;

(6) assisting individuals in the transition from isolated or congregate settings or services to living in the communities of their choice; and

(7) helping to keep individuals with disabilities safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic, including by volunteering to quar-

antine with individuals whom they care for to reduce spread of the disease;

Whereas there is a documented critical and increasing shortage of direct support professionals throughout the United States;

Whereas the majority of direct support professionals are employed in home and community-based settings, and that trend is expected to increase over the next decade;

Whereas many direct support professionals—

(1) are the primary financial providers for their families;

(2) are hardworking, taxpaying citizens who provide a critical service in the United States; and

(3) continue to earn low wages, receive inadequate benefits, and have limited opportunities for advancement, resulting in high turnover and vacancy rates that adversely affect the quality of support, safety, and health of individuals with disabilities; and

Whereas the Supreme Court of the United States, in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 (1999)—

(1) recognized the importance of the deinstitutionalization of, and community-based services for, individuals with disabilities; and

(2) held that, under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S. 12101 et seq.), a State must provide community-based services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities if—

(A) the community-based services are appropriate;

(B) the affected individual does not oppose receiving the community-based services; and

(C) the community-based services can be reasonably accommodated after the community has taken into account the resources available to the State and the needs of other individuals with disabilities in the State: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week beginning September 12, 2021, as “National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week”;

(2) recognizes the dedication and vital role of direct support professionals in enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities of all ages;

(3) appreciates the contribution of direct support professionals in supporting individuals with disabilities and their families in the United States;

(4) commends direct support professionals for being integral to the provision of long-term support and services for individuals with disabilities;

(5) encourages the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor to collect data specific to direct support professionals; and

(6) finds that the successful implementation of public policies affecting individuals with disabilities in the United States can depend on the dedication of direct support professionals.

SENATE RESOLUTION 384—DESIGNATING THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 24, 2021, AS “COMMUNITY SCHOOL COORDINATORS APPRECIATION WEEK”

Mr. BROWN (for himself, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 383

Whereas community schools marshal, align, and unite the assets, resources, and

capacity of schools and communities for the success of students, families, and communities;

Whereas community schools are an effective, evidence-based, and equity-driven strategy for school improvement included under section 4625 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7275), as added by section 4601 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95; 129 Stat. 2029);

Whereas community schools that provide integrated student supports, well-designed and expanded learning opportunities, and active family and community engagement and that use collaborative leadership and practices have positive academic and nonacademic outcomes, including improvements in student attendance, behavior, academic achievement, school readiness, mental and physical health, high school graduation rates, and school climate and reduced racial and economic achievement gaps;

Whereas community schools have the potential for closing racial and economic achievement gaps, as indicated in a 2017 report;

Whereas a 2020 study found that community schools in New York City had a positive impact on student attendance, on-time grade progression, and credit accumulation for high school students;

Whereas community schools provide a strong social return on investment, with one study citing a social return of between \$10 to \$15 for every dollar invested over a 3-year period;

Whereas community school coordinators are essential to building successful community schools and creating, strengthening, and maintaining partnerships between community schools and their communities;

Whereas community school coordinators facilitate and provide leadership for the collaborative process and development of a continuum of supports and opportunities for children, families, and others within a school's community that allow all students to learn and the community to thrive;

Whereas the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (referred to in this preamble as "COVID-19") pandemic poses additional academic, social, emotional, and health challenges for students, educators, and staff at community schools;

Whereas community school coordinators have proven to be innovative and resourceful in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including through organizing volunteers for mobile food pantries, hosting virtual parent hangouts and student lunch groups, continuing to support onsite behavioral health programs through an online platform, coordinating vaccination clinics, and mobilizing community completion of the 2020 Census;

Whereas community school coordinators, through their role, deliver a strong monetary return on investment for community schools and their communities, with one study citing a return of \$7.11 for every dollar invested in the salary of a community school coordinator; and

Whereas Community School Coordinators Appreciation Week, celebrated from September 20 through September 24, 2021, recognizes, raises awareness of, and celebrates the thousands of community school coordinators across the country and the critical role of community school coordinators in the success of students: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week of September 20 through September 24, 2021, as "Community School Coordinators Appreciation Week";

(2) thanks community school coordinators for the work they do to serve students, families, and communities, especially as commu-

nities continue to respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic; and

(3) encourages students, parents, school administrators, and public officials to participate in events that celebrate Community School Coordinators Appreciation Week.

SENATE RESOLUTION 385—SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 19 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 25, 2021, AS "TELEHEALTH AWARENESS WEEK"

Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. WICKER, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. WARNER, and Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 385

Whereas telehealth allows a health care practitioner to furnish health care services to a patient or a practitioner at a different physical location than the health care practitioner;

Whereas telehealth has played a significant role in supporting access to quality health care services for millions of patients during the COVID-19 public health emergency and will continue to be essential beyond the end of the public health emergency;

Whereas following the unprecedented use of telehealth and virtual care services in response to the public health emergency, telehealth now represents a significant percent of care delivery, confirming the need to balance in-person and virtual care in the health care system;

Whereas telehealth and virtual care services continue to provide patients and families with safe, appropriate, and high-quality care where and when they need it, and 91 percent of Medicare beneficiaries are satisfied with their telehealth experiences;

Whereas telehealth allows health care providers to securely connect with patients wherever they are when an in-person interaction is not clinically necessary or available and expands access to health care services for patients in need of specialty care, enabling the health care system to do more good for more people;

Whereas telehealth is a bipartisan issue and Members of Congress from both sides of the political aisle and both sides of Capitol Hill are dedicated to ensuring patients continue to have the choice to access telehealth once the COVID-19 public health emergency ends;

Whereas the United States must help improve broader access to telehealth services for all individuals, including members of rural and underserved communities; and

Whereas "Telehealth Awareness Week" unites the efforts of patients, caregivers, health care providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to advance the role of telehealth in health care: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate supports the designation of the week of September 19 through September 25, 2021, as "Telehealth Awareness Week".

SENATE RESOLUTION 386—RELATIVE TO THE DEATH OF ROBERT BRITTON "BOB" DOVE, PARLIAMENTARIAN EMERITUS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL (for himself, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BENNET, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOKER,

Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BURR, Ms. CANTWELL, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CARPER, Mr. CASEY, Mr. CASSIDY, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. COONS, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. ERNST, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. FISCHER, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HAGERTY, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. HAWLEY, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. HOEVEN, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KAINE, Mr. KELLY, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KING, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. LEE, Mr. LUJÁN, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. MORAN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. OSSOFF, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. PAUL, Mr. PETERS, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. REED, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROMNEY, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. SASSE, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. SHELBY, Ms. SINEMA, Ms. SMITH, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. THUNE, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. TUBERVILLE, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. WARNER, Mr. WARNOCK, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. WICKER, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. YOUNG) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 386

Whereas Robert B. Dove was born in Bellefontaine, Ohio, graduated from The Ohio State University, received Masters and PhD degrees from Duke University and a juris doctor from Georgetown University;

Whereas Robert B. Dove served the Senate with honor and distinction for 35 years, first as Assistant Senate Parliamentarian from 1966 to 1981 and then as its fourth Parliamentarian from 1981 to 1987 and again from 1995 to 2001;

Whereas Robert B. Dove was a patient teacher of Senate procedure to countless Senators and Senate staff—young and old like—whom he helped navigate the Chamber's rules and procedures;

Whereas Robert B. Dove imparted his vast knowledge of the Senate and of history to others with infectious enthusiasm and good humor;

Whereas Robert B. Dove was known for his love of music of all kinds and could readily recall, and sing, a song to fit any occasion;

Whereas Robert B. Dove followed his illustrious Senate career with an equally distinguished teaching career at Georgetown and George Washington universities, sharing his love of history, political science and the Senate with yet another generation of scholars;

Whereas Robert B. Dove's love for the Senate was exceeded only by his love for his adoring family, many of whom, inspired by him, also served the Senate;

Whereas Robert B. Dove performed his Senate duties in an impartial and professional manner, serving the Senate with distinction across four decades and for which he was honored by the Senate in 1997 with the title Parliamentarian Emeritus: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate has heard with profound sorrow and deep regret the announcement of the death of the Honorable Robert Britton "Bob" Dove, Parliamentarian Emeritus of the United States.

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate communicate these resolutions to the House

of Representatives and transmit an enrolled copy thereof to the family of the deceased.

Resolved, That when the Senate adjourns today, it stand adjourned as a further mark of respect to the memory of the Honorable Robert Britton Dove.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have 5 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 Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing on a nomination.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is au-

thorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 10:15 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Special Committee on Aging is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE THE CONSTITUTION

The Subcommittee the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 9 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m., Monday, September 27; 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 resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 137, H.R. 5305; further, that the cloture motion on the motion to proceed ripen at 5:30 p.m.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021, AT 3 P.M.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the provisions of S. Res. 386.

There being no objection, as a further mark of respect to the late Robert Britton Dove, Parliamentarian Emeritus of the U.S. Senate, the Senate, at 9:47 p.m., adjourned until Monday, September 27, 2021, at 3 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate September 23, 2021:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DANIEL J. KRITENBRINK, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS).

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

SARAH BIANCHI, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE DEPUTY UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE (ASIA, AFRICA, INVESTMENT, SERVICES, TEXTILES, AND INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS), WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

JANE TOSHIKO NISHIDA, OF MARYLAND, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY.

THE JUDICIARY

FLORENCE Y. PAN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.