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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, October 8, 2021, at 10 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2021

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we trust in You and look to You for protection. Lead our lawmakers in Your life-giving light. May they find in Your precepts a lamp for their feet and a light for their paths, saving them from life's pitfalls.

Lord, we praise You that Your unfailing love is higher than the heavens. Send Your help from Heaven to keep our Nation strong.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 6, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. LUJÁN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Jersey.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 4

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4) to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to revise the criteria for determining which States and political subdivisions are subject to section 4 of the Act, and for other purposes.

Mr. BOOKER. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Sarah A.L. Merriam, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I would ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the following nomination: Calendar No. 265, Shalanda H. Baker, of Texas, to be Director of the Office of Minority Economic Impact, Department of Energy; that the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, that no further motions be in order to the nomination, and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

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The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object. One hundred years ago, not many people could have imagined, certainly not predicted within a degree of accuracy, the kinds of technological advances that we have seen over the last century that have allowed us all to have lights in our own homes; to have televisions, cell phones, all manner of conveniences; and that these things would be widely available to rich and poor alike, urban and rural alike.

These are conveniences that are now so common that they are easy to take for granted. But they don't come about automatically. They didn't just happen. They have been brought to us as a result of labor and innovation and dedication of individuals who took chances and created something new.

Today, I stand opposed to the nomination of Shalanda Baker because she openly opposes the economic system that has brought so much fortune to our country. Regarding capitalism, free markets, Ms. Baker stated the following:

> As we move into this new future, we must also remember that a just transformation of our energy system requires a careful interrogation of the racist, capitalist politics that currently drive it. We must expose, and then eradicate, these underpinnings.

Ms. Baker, in addition to having made statements like that one, advocates for a cap-and-floor model for electric utility pricing, one in which high-income individuals would pay a minimum—not a maximum, but a minimum of 6 percent of their entire household income on electricity; and then other households who are less wealthy—the least wealthy would pay no more than 3 or 4 percent of household income.

Look, I, too, want to make sure that our poorest citizens and our poorest communities have access to resources and are able to be lifted out of poverty, but placing obstacles in the way of competitive markets and denigrating the very concept of the competitive markets that have made electricity and so many other developments so available to so many people, rich and poor alike, would I fear; would I firmly believe; would I, am certain, end up preventing technological advances that benefit everyone in our society.

For these reasons, I oppose Ms. Baker's nomination, and I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The objection is heard.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I appreciate being recognized, and I am grateful that this conversation is being held between myself and the Senator from Utah, who is one of the more principled friends I have made in the U.S. Senate.

He has been a friend and a colleague, and we have worked and partnered on numerous things together. He is someone that, even though I think I am an inch or two taller than him, I look up to, in all sincerity.

I worry about our Nation right now, that we are taking statements that people have made and whipping around them a lot of presumptions. There is a difference between saying I am against capitalism and I am against racist, capitalistic policies. That is a big difference.

We are a nation that exploded forth to be the dominating economy on the planet through the capitalist system. But the capitalist system was not fair and equal all the time. In fact, it did not reflect what Adam Smith himself, in his essay on moral sentiments, talked about.

Capitalism is an ideal that the best way to distribute goods and opportunity is through this idea of a free market, where everyone has access. Clearly, that has not been the case in this Nation when African Americans were originally, in a capitalist system, slaves. Even after the period of our greatest national sin, Blacks were still held out of equal opportunity to be competitive.

If you look at, perhaps, some of the greatest ideas of capitalism—this idea of working the land with your sweat and labor to produce products to sell into the market—well, look at something like the Homestead Act, where in many ways that land belonged to Native Americans who did not have that same free and equal opportunity. Think about the Homestead Act and how waves of incredible, hard-working European immigrants got that land, but Blacks were excluded.

No one in this body would deny that that is patently racist.

And this continues. In a lot of our biggest businesses, up until the sixties and seventies, women weren't allowed equal opportunity. That is a capitalist, sexist system that denied equal opportunity.

We know this from African Americans. I know this from my own family story about my father, here in this area, coming after college and being the first Black person hired by a small tech company the President may have heard of called IBM—the first Black salesman in the entire Virginia area, as walls were broken.

My father told me the story of why he left the company that he was working with. Because one of his managers said: You should get out of here because no nigger is ever going to be allowed to be a manager at this company.

That is racism.

So here is a nominee who—in the context literally that my colleague read, racist, capitalist policies—no one can deny that these policies existed in our country and that the free-market system hasn't been free.

People on both sides of the aisle, I have heard, speaking to the corporate concentration that is going on, the monopolistic practices we are seeing everywhere from the pharmaceutical industry to pharmacies, from farms to tech, that is working against the free-market, capitalist ideas of great philosophers, like Adam Smith. So to object to someone for that reason, to me, is patently unfair.

And my colleague also objected because of a policy. He described one policy. Well, Shalanda Baker is not going to be in a position where she is making policy. She is going to be charged with ensuring that there is equal access and opportunity in a wide range of the Department of Energy's programs, opportunities, and resources; that we are a more inclusive and more equitable Nation. That is her charge.

And this work is vital because nearly, in America, one in three households are energy insecure, meaning that they have difficulty paying their energy bills; and research has, unfortunately, shown that low-income households, disproportionately Black and Brown households, are more likely to be energy insecure.

I love this Nation more than any other country on the planet Earth. Yet we still have injustices that show that African Americans are disproportionately subject to inequalities.

The crazy thing about this is a spiritual law that Martin Luther King embodied so well. He said:

> Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

It is a truth.

In America, poverty is not just a problem of the poor; it costs this country more than a trillion dollars every year. So dealing with the fact that Blacks are disproportionately poor brings resources to us all. Every dollar raising one child above a poverty level returns $8 to our economy. So addressing inequality, addressing disparities, helps everyone.

Energy justice isn't something we talk nearly enough about, and that is why Ms. Baker's role is so important. So I am disappointed today.

I voted against a lot of Trump nominees, but I voted for a lot whom I disagreed with on policy. There is an urgency right now on this issue in America. There is an urgency right now to be a more just and inclusive society. There is an urgency right now to create deeper community in this country and to ensure that everyone has the fruits of liberty and opportunity. It is what we swear an oath to. It is what Ms. Baker's job is all about—making real the words of our united pledge that we will be a nation with liberty and justice for all.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for 2½ months, the Republicans have provided a clear and consistent roadmap for Democratic government to raise the debt ceiling. Democrats have had

2½ months' notice to use the fast-track, party-line reconciliation process, which they have already used happily this year and already intend to use once again. But the Democrats who run Washington have done nothing. They have squandered week after week after week. The Senate has been voting on midlevel nominations. And 2½ months later, our colleagues complain that time is running out to do their job. They are frantically asking our side for shortcuts.

Now, in the past 2 days, I have had the surreal experience of watching both the President of the United States and the Senate majority leader be asked about the future of the U.S. economy. Their respective responses were ''That's up to MITCH MCCONNELL'' or ''Ask MITCH MCCONNELL.'' Well, what about the third Democratic leader, the Speaker of the House? Well, she has headed to Europe—headed off to Europe. I can only presume she hopes the full faith and credit of the United States will get sorted out without her.

That is the level of leadership and accountability the country is getting from the Washington Democrats who run the country. These are the leadership skills of people who spent 2½ months doing nothing and then complain they are short on time. That is the attitude that has gotten Democrats a self-created inflation crisis, border crisis, Afghanistan crisis, and free-falling favorability with the American people.

Now, it is not clear whether the Democratic leaders have wasted 2½ months because they simply cannot govern or whether they are intentionally playing Russian roulette with the economy to try to bully—bully—their own Members into going back on their word and wrecking the Senate. Either way, it is exactly the kind of recklessness that has this unified Democratic government's public approval in total free fall—free fall.

Even now, while the Democratic leader complains that he is short on time, he continues to waste time with partisan stunts that are dead on arrival. He has scheduled yet another vote this afternoon which he knows will fail. The majority has known for 3 months that show votes like this would go nowhere.

This year, Democrats requested and won new powers—new powers—to repeatedly reuse the reconciliation process. In the past few days, Democrats in both the House and Senate have publicly admitted their party could handle—could handle—the debt limit that way. Our colleagues have plenty of time to get it done before the earliest projected deadline. There would be potential for time agreements to wrap it up well before any danger. But the Democratic leaders haven't wanted solutions; they have wanted to turn their failure into everybody else's crisis. Playing risky games with our economy; using manufactured drama to bully their own Members; indulging petty politics instead of governing—their entire failed approach to governing in a nutshell, on full display for the country to see.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, now on a related matter, President Biden makes two claims about the reckless taxing-and-spending spree the Democrats are writing behind closed doors. Listen to this: He is saying it costs zero dollars—zero dollars—but he needs massive tax hikes to pay for it. Talk about magical Washington math. If they embark on a Washington spending binge, as long as they send the bill to the American people and not themselves, they consider the whole thing free of charge—free of charge.

Of course Democrats' plans wouldn't pay for themselves. That is why their reckless spending spree needs to come paired with a historic redistribution of wealth from the American people over to the Federal Government. With trillions of dollars in new spending comes the largest peacetime tax hike on record.

Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree isn't even fully developed, and it already contains more than 40 different tax increases that would hurt families and help China. Some of the tax hikes take aim at workers and families directly. Others target small businesses, passthroughs, and family farms with extra burdens. Still others would make it harder to invest, create, and sustain jobs here in America instead of overseas.

Ivy League economists say the Democrats' tax hikes would increase the incentive for American companies to move investments and profits overseas. Under Democrats' proposed expansion of the global minimum tax, more than a dozen of our most developed peers would have tax structures more favorable to U.S. companies than our own. If President Biden got his way on corporate taxes, even China would become more hospitable to job creators by comparison.

So let me say that again: Democrats are planning to send America's top tax rate for job creators higher—higher—than communist China's.

Needless to say, the biggest losers when Democrats make it harder to do business in America are, of course, American workers. Based on data from the Joint Committee on Taxation, two-thirds of the burden of the corporate tax hike Democrats are trying to ram through would end up falling on lower and middle-income Americans; 98.4 percent of it would hit Americans with incomes under $500,000. It turns out that President Biden's promise that taxes wouldn't go up for the vast majority of American families wasn't worth all that much.

Not only are their taxes set to go up, so is the budget of the IRS. Democrats want to spend $80 billion so the Federal tax authorities can expand their reach into financial habits of average Americans, snooping on transactions as small as $600. They want to finance their spending spree by effectively treating every ordinary American as if they were under IRS audit—every ordinary American as if they were under IRS audit.

I must have forgotten when the President campaigned on giving everybody their own audit. I don't remember him saying that last year. It isn't ordinary middle-class Americans who need a careful audit; it is the Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree, with these historic tax hikes that would hurt families and help China.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ELIZABETH MERRILL BROWN

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to call for the confirmation of a highly qualified nominee to the Department of Education.

Over the past year and a half, we all know that this pandemic has made life harder for so many Americans but especially students across the country, disrupting their classrooms and their learning, challenging their mental health, and deepening inequities.

And while we have made significant progress, our work to get everyone through this pandemic is far from over, to say nothing of the challenges in our education system that predate the pandemic. For example, rooting out systemic racism at every level, ensuring students have safe modern schools and infrastructure, addressing the student debt crisis and high cost of higher education, and ending the epidemic of campus sexual violence, just to name a few.

In light of all of these challenges, we need a fully staffed education department to help see our schools through this pandemic and to help us build back stronger and fairer, which is why I have come to the floor today to call for the Senate to confirm Lisa Brown, the nominee to be general counsel for the Department of Education.

I won't recite her significant experience, but suffice it to say she has great public service credentials in the executive branch of our government over many years. Lisa Brown proved herself well—I should say, proved herself well prepared for the work ahead when we had our Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing with her and she was passed out of the committee on a bipartisan voice vote. I will say that again—a bipartisan voice vote.

She is a highly qualified nominee and should not be a controversial one. Students, parents, and educators deserve to have her confirmed so she can get to work for our communities. I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting her.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, at this time, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the following nominations en bloc: Calendar No. 188, 255, and 256; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nominations of Gwen Graham, of Florida, to be Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Affairs, Department of Education; Roberto Josue Rodriguez, of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Department of Education; and Elizabeth Merrill Brown, of Maryland, to be General Counsel, Department of Education?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

Mr. CASEY. Thank you, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, on September 25, President Biden tweeted:

> My Build Back Better Agenda costs zero dollars.

That is right. According to the President, a series of new, permanent entitlements and a massive expansion of government, the biggest expansion of government, at least, since the New Deal, is going to cost zero dollars—that from the President of the United States.

And the President has now been doubling down on that claim. On Monday, he once again tweeted:

> The fact of the matter is my Build Back Better agenda costs zero dollars.

Well, no, Mr. President, the fact of the matter is your Build Back Better agenda costs $3.5 trillion, at least. That is the minimum number. The Committee for Responsible Federal Budget, where the President's Treasury Secretary served on the board before joining the administration, estimates the cost at $5 trillion or more.

Leaving that aside, even if the President has been merely trying to claim that his plan is fully paid for by tax hikes and other measures, to say that it would cost zero dollars is beyond ridiculous.

I mean, think about it. Let's say your college education was completely paid for by your parents. Did it then cost zero dollars? Of course not. It costs a lot of money—money that your parents likely were able to pay only because of a lot of hard work and sacrifices.

What if you saved up for a couple of years for your dream vacation, and now you have all the money that you need, down to the cost of your Ubers and your hotel breakfasts, does that mean that your vacation is going to cost zero dollars? Of course, it doesn't.

The same thing applies when it comes to the Democrats' legislation. Even if Democrats add all the money they need to pay for every dollar of their massive spending spree, the pricetag still wouldn't be zero dollars. I mean, it just absolutely doesn't pass the sanity test for Americans.

The pricetag for this proposal is, at least minimum, $3.5 trillion and likely much, much more. Presumably, what the President has been referring to when he makes the absurd claim that his spending bill will cost zero dollars is his assertion the bill won't add to the debt.

The problem is that isn't true either. Because the pay-fors in the Democrats' bill won't actually pay for the bill in its entirety. The tax hikes in the Democrats' legislation will actually only pay for about two-thirds of the bill's ostensible $3.5 trillion pricetag.

The other revenue-raising components in the bill won't make up the difference. What are those other revenue-raising components? Well, a substantial part is increased IRS enforcement. Democrats claim they can get $700 billion in more revenue by closing the tax gap, the difference between taxes owed and taxes paid.

There is no question that individuals shouldn't get away with cheating on their taxes. And there are, undoubtedly, reasonable measures we can take to strengthen enforcement and narrow the gap. Unfortunately, Democrats haven't proposed any reasonable measures.

Instead, the Democrats are proposing to, A, double the size of the IRS and, B, have the IRS snoop on Americans' bank accounts. That is right. Democrats want to double the size of the IRS and force banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions to provide details of individuals' spending to the Federal Government. Under the administration's proposal, once your withdrawals or deposits for the year exceed a certain amount—and that amount, by the way, if the President has his way, is $600—your bank or credit union would be forced to report the details of your activity to the Federal Government.

So the Federal Government could end up with a record of every time you eat dinner out or pay your rent or buy a new jacket or a toaster oven. The invasion of privacy being talked about here is absolutely staggering.

We already have a mechanism in place to allow the IRS to view large transactions that might indicate potential criminal activity. We do not need the Federal Government monitoring every purchase that law-abiding Americans make from the App Store or how many times Americans buy a cup of coffee, not to mention the incredible demands this reporting requirement would place on community banks and credit unions. Banks and credit unions around the country are worried about how they would manage to comply with the bill's reporting requirements.

Let's not forget that the Agency that would be receiving all of this information has a reputation for mishandling private data. In fact, the IRS was subject to a massive leak, or hack, of private taxpayer information mere months ago—information that somehow ended up in the hands of advocates at ProPublica—and neither Treasury nor the IRS has provided meaningful followup about that data breach, much less any accountability. Giving an already troubled Agency access to reams of additional private taxpayer information is a very bad idea.

Even if we granted that this massive invasion of privacy were worth it, the truth is that all of this additional enforcement still wouldn't provide the money that Democrats are claiming it would provide. Democrats claim that they can get $700 billion from the bill's increased tax enforcement measures. The reality is more likely to be about $200 billion lower, according to an analysis from the Wharton School of business. So Democrats would be doubling the size of an Agency with clear management issues and implementing a staggering invasion of taxpayer privacy to pay for a tiny fraction of their spending spree.

As I said, no taxpayer at any income level should be able to avoid paying the taxes he or she owes. I have actually signed on to cosponsor legislation that would look at responsible ways to strengthen IRS enforcement efforts. But Democrats' proposal to double the size of the IRS and track taxpayer spending should never—never—have seen the light of day. Even former IRS Commissioner John Koskinen, who served under Presidents Obama and Trump, said he thought that $80 billion for the Agency was too much.

Taken together, the IRS enforcement on steroids and Democrats' massive tax hikes will still not be enough to pay for their multitrillion-dollar legislation, partly because the tax hikes may not bring in as much as the Democrats claim but also because Democrats have used a lot of budget gimmickry to disguise the true costs of their bill.

The standard method for analyzing the cost of a bill is a 10-year—10-year—budget window. So you look at what your bill would cost over 10 years, and that is how you get the cost of your bill. That is normally the way that it works around here.

Well, that is not exactly what the Democrats are doing. That child allowance in the Democrats' bill? Democrats have only counted the cost of that allowance through the year 2025. That allows Democrats to claim that the cost of that provision is around $500 billion instead of the $1.1 trillion the measure would actually cost over a decade.

All of those tax hikes are, of course, just for covering the costs of the bill over a 10-year or shorter window, but in reality, the new government benefits the Democrats are putting in place are not going to expire in 10 years. This bill is effectively instituting multiple permanent—permanent—entitlement programs. The long-term cost of those programs is not going to be covered by the tax hikes Democrats are currently proposing, as massive as those tax hikes are.

I have talked a lot about the dollar costs of this bill, which are massive—the biggest expanse of government in, literally, my generation in history. I could spend just as long talking about the bill's other costs, like the fact that the bill is likely to cost workers jobs and opportunities by increasing the tax burden on American businesses and depressing economic growth, or the cost to American families, who are going to be facing higher energy bills and higher prices as a result of this legislation, but I am going to stop here for today.

One thing is for sure: Democrats' massive spending spree is going to cost a lot more than zero dollars. And American taxpayers? Well, the American taxpayers are going to be paying a heavy price for this legislation for a very long time to come.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I agree with what my colleague from South Dakota and my neighbor has had to say about the issues of the spending bill.

I would also add that people all around the country are paying the price right now with rising prices. They are getting hammered at the grocery store and hammered at the gas station, and every month since Joe Biden took the oath of office, prices have risen faster than wages. People are feeling the pain and the bite taken out of their wallets. Even without the specific raised taxes that the Democrats are proposing, the American people have already taken a pay cut.

I note that the majority leader has arrived on the floor, so I am going to delay the remainder of my remarks so he can continue with his leader time at this point.

I thank the Acting President pro tempore.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Wyoming, and I ask unanimous consent that he be able to resume as soon as I finish my remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, in America, Mr. President, we have always kept a basic promise: We pay our debts on time without exception. It has been a key to our economic success and our standing in the global markets across the world. Today, it is time for us in this Chamber to do our jobs and make sure those promises remain unbroken.

In order to preserve the full faith and credit of the United States, the Senate must act and, by the end of this week, send a bill to President Biden's desk suspending the debt ceiling and allowing our government to keep paying its bills and meeting our outstanding obligations.

Later this afternoon, the Senate will vote on cloture on the House-passed message that would suspend the debt ceiling through December 2022. If cloture is invoked, the Senate will then vote to pass this bill on a simple majority basis.

Democrats have been clear from the start: We are going to do the responsible thing and vote to allow the United States to keep paying its bills. Every single one of us is going to vote for cloture this afternoon.

For months, Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans have insisted they want a solution to the debt ceiling but only if Democrats do all the work by themselves. We have already presented Republicans with numerous opportunities to do what they say they want, including offering a simple majority vote so Democrats can suspend the debt ceiling on our own, as Republicans have asked, but each time, Republicans have chosen obstruction and have kept us, unfortunately, on a path to default. Republican obstruction on the debt ceiling over the last few weeks has been reckless; it has been irresponsible.

Nonetheless, today, Republicans will have an opportunity to get exactly what they have kept asking for. The first and easiest option is this: Republicans can simply get out of the way, and we can agree to skip the filibuster vote so we can proceed to final passage of this bill.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to complete my remarks and then the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. TOOMEY, be allowed to complete his remarks prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about what people in Wyoming are seeing every day, and that is rising prices when they go to the gas station, when they go to the grocery store. They are paying more and more.

Every month since Joe Biden took the oath of office, prices have been rising faster than wages. People are feeling the bite in their wallets of these higher prices. In effect, people all across the country and certainly in my home State of Wyoming have suffered a paycheck cut because the money just doesn't go as far. President Biden told us this wouldn't happen. He actually said inflation was transitory. Well, President Biden may still believe that. Yet, after 7 months in a row, it doesn't look transitory to most Americans.

Now, economists have actually revised their expectations of inflation, and they have revised them in ways that we are going to be paying higher prices for longer periods of time. They have revised their expectations about economic growth as well, and they have revised those downward—inflation up; economic growth down.

Well, on Friday, the Commerce Department said one measure of inflation has actually hit the highest that it has been in 30 years. The company Salesforce now estimates that costs for Christmas shopping will go up by 20 cents for every dollar you would spend on Christmas presents. The store Dollar Tree has announced that it will start selling items that cost more than a dollar. We have 10 Dollar Tree stores in Wyoming. They are a very important part of our communities. Many people in rural areas rely on dollar stores for their everyday needs. In Joe Biden's economy, these people are getting hurt the most.

So why is it happening? Well, it is because the money supply hasn't increased this fast in 75 years.

Last year, Congress spent trillions of dollars to respond to the worst pandemic in our Nation's history—actually, in a century. With a Republican majority in the Senate, we passed five relief bills, and they were all done in a bipartisan, overwhelmingly majority vote. Much of the money still hasn't been spent.

Then, this January, Democrats took over the White House as well as the Senate. They got their hands on the Nation's credit card, and they started swiping it.

In March, the President signed a $2 trillion spending bill that was supposed to be about coronavirus. Yet only 9 percent of the money actually went to public health. They cut Republicans out of the negotiations completely. So much of the new spending went to the Democrats' favorite groups—to labor unions, to union bosses, to bankrupted blue States. They put the bill for all of that spending entirely on the American credit card. The Federal Reserve started printing money, and prices started going up.

Yet Democrats haven't learned their lesson. They want to keep spending. Now they want to spend more than twice as much money as they just spent in March, and they are also asking for the largest tax increase in 50 years. Tax increases also raise prices.

Last week, the White House Press Secretary made a statement, and, to me, it was one of the most irrational statements that some business owners have ever heard. She said: It is ''unfair and absurd'' for companies to raise prices in response to higher taxes. She

said it is absurd and unfair for companies to raise prices in response to higher taxes. Well, it may be unfair, but it certainly is not absurd; it is basic arithmetic. When the government raises taxes, the cost of doing business goes up. Companies either have to cut costs or increase their revenue. When Democrats raise taxes, it means higher prices, fewer jobs, and in many cases, both.

It is why it is alarming that President Biden wants to raise taxes on American energy. Energy prices have already gone up. Oil, yesterday, was at a 7- or an 8-year high. Natural gas prices have doubled this year. Democrats are now proposing a new fee on natural gas production. According to one estimate, the new fee would cost our economy $9.1 billion and eliminate 90,000 good-paying American energy jobs. It would also mean higher energy prices for people trying to heat their homes and cool their homes. Higher energy prices also mean higher grocery prices. They mean higher retail prices.

It may be unfair, according to the White House Press Secretary, but it is not absurd because prices are rising for a reason. They are rising because Democrats spent trillions of dollars that we cannot afford.

Democrats need to learn their lesson before it is too late. Stop this rush to more taxes and spending and borrowing. Stop cutting into people's paychecks. American families are feeling the pain. Stop pouring more fuel on this fire of inflation that is raging across the country.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

SAULE OMAROVA

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise to address the recent announcement from President Biden that he intends to nominate Saule Omarova to be Comptroller of the Currency.

Now, Ms. Omarova, if she were, in fact, confirmed to be Comptroller of the Currency, she would head up the Agency that is responsible for chartering and regulating national financial institutions. So that is to say she would be the head of, the primary regulator for, America's national banks, of which there are very many.

I just want to provide this morning a brief introduction, a glimpse, into the mindset of this nominee. I will take more time on future occasions to delve more deeply into some of the things that she has advocated for and written about and that I find extraordinarily disturbing. I think many of my colleagues will as well. But let me start with just a few observations.

First, there is little doubt Ms. Omarova has been celebrated on the far left for promoting ideas that she herself has described as ''radical.'' That is a point we can agree on. These are very, very radical ideas. In fact, I don't think I have ever seen a more radical choice for any regulatory spot in our Federal Government. I know that is a very sweeping statement to make. I think I can stand by it.

There is a lot that is extraordinary and radical here, but maybe the heart of it is Ms. Omarova doesn't just want to tighten regulation of banks. That is not what she is advocating for. What she wants to do—these are her words—''effectively 'end banking' as we know it.'' Those are words she wrote just last year. This is not ancient history. These are the views she has articulated in writing within a year.

She clearly has an aversion to anything like free market capitalism, and that is in her writing. In an October 2020 paper called ''The People's Ledger,'' she outlined a plan for ''radically reshaping the basic architecture and dynamics of modern finance.''

And what this was all about, what she was arguing for in this paper from just last year, was really promoting the nationalization of an entire industry—retail banking; basically bringing to an end the ability of banks to compete for customers' services and instead nationalize that; a clear socialist idea that we shouldn't have a free enterprise system competing for people's business but rather have the government own it and provide that.

Specifically, she wants the Federal Reserve to allocate credit and capital. And as part of this regime, she advocates that the government, acting through the Fed, would actually cut off credit to those deemed ''socially suboptimal.''

Can you imagine? Is there something more chilling than the idea that we would abolish retail banking, make it the responsibility of the Fed, and then actively require that the Fed decides who is socially optimal and who is not, and then allocate credit accordingly?

This is unbelievable.

In a 2012 paper, she suggested a mandate that financial products could only be sold if they are approved in advance by the Federal Government.

There is no freedom to innovate there. There is no responding to customers' wants and needs. There is no competition for providing—none of that. The government will decide what can and cannot be offered.

Even she admitted that this is ''paternalistic and has command-and-control elements.'' At least she acknowledges that is what this is.

But it doesn't end there. Ms. Omarova doesn't just want to nationalize banking. She wants to do that, but that is not all. She also wants the banking regulators to run the whole economy.

Under her plan, which she, again, laid this out in writing in—this is in a 2016 paper, the Federal Reserve would set prices in large sectors of the U.S. economy, those that she deems to be ''systemically important prices,'' that would include—she helpfully tells us what would be considered systemically important prices—'' . . . widely used fuels, foodstuffs, and some other raw materials'' and ''wages or salary indices,'' among others.

So she is openly advocating that the Federal Government sets wages and prices throughout the economy.

Does this sound anything like a free enterprise economy?

It is unbelievable.

In addition to that, citing a desire to ''sidestep debilitating political battles over the Federal budget''—now, just think about that term. Let's unpack that just a bit. ''Debilitating political battles over the Federal budget.'' That sounds to me like Congress arguing over spending—arguably, the most fundamental responsibility of Congress.

But in order to sidestep that—that fundamentally democratic process that follows our Constitution—in a 2020 white paper, Omarova proposed creating a National Investment Authority to channel both public and private capital to further policies that would be set by an unelected, unaccountable board.

So the American people don't get to decide how their tax dollars get allocated by holding Members of Congress accountable through elections. Instead, there would be some board that would make all these decisions for us.

And that is not the only unaccountable body she has proposed to exert control over the private sector.

In a 2012 paper, Ms. Omarova also proposed creating a Public Interest Council—a Public Interest Council. And their purpose would be to use pressure and propaganda tactics to manipulate public opinion against banks and regulators, and to ''generate mass political support for the actions it considers necessary,'' and ''build its independent power base.''

I am almost speechless. It is absolutely—so you could ask yourself: Where would a person even come up with these ideas? How does it even happen that it occurs to someone to think up these things?

Well, maybe a contributing factor could be if a person grew up in the former Soviet Union and went to Moscow State University and attended there on a Vladimir Lenin Academic Scholarship.

Now, let me by very, very clear about something. There are lots of wonderful American citizens who were born and raised behind the Iron Curtain—I totally get that—including in the former Soviet Union, who have come to this country, and they love America as much as anyone I have ever met. I know some of them personally. So I am not suggesting in any way that growing up behind the Iron Curtain and attending university in Moscow is in any way disqualifying. But the attitude a person has about the Soviet regime, now, that is another matter.

So in the case of Ms. Omarova, in 2019, she tweeted: ''Say what you will about the old USSR, there was no gender pay gap there. Market doesn't always 'know best.' ''

Say what you will about the old USSR. Really? There is a lot to say. I will have a lot to say on another occasion about the old USSR.

She followed up with a tweet. She decided to clarify that, and here is the tweet she issued afterward. She said: ''I never claimed women and men were treated absolutely equally in every facet of Soviet life. But people's salaries were set (by the state) in a gender-blind manner. And all women got very generous maternity benefits. Both things are still a pipe dream in our society!''

Can you imagine?

Ms. Omarova clearly knows her views are far outside of the mainstream. How do we know? Well, why else would her most recent resume have been scrubbed of one particular item that was on her resume as recently as 2017?

And that item is the thesis that she wrote when she was a student in Moscow on her Vladimir Lenin personal academic scholarship. The title we know. The title of the thesis was ''Karl Marx's Economic Analysis and the Theory of Revolution in The Capital.''

Unfortunately, that is all I know about this thesis.

Now, this morning, I released a letter that I sent to Ms. Omarova requesting that she provide a copy of this paper in the original Russian to the committee in time for us to translate it so that we can fully consider her nomination.

Like most committees, the Banking Committee requires nominees provide copies of any articles or papers they have written, and that is a very important tool that we use to evaluate a person's thoughts and fitness and temperament, and judge and where they are coming from.

I am looking forward to receiving that paper from her.

I will conclude with this: You know, in a country as big as ours, where we have 330-some million people, I have no doubt that there are some individuals that we can find here and there who would think of the Soviet Union—that brutal, oppressive, totalitarian, freedom-suppressing, soul-sucking, murderous regime that was the Soviet Union—there must be some people somewhere in America who somehow would compare it favorably to the United States, as shocking as that is.

What has never occurred to me is that a person who thinks that way could possibly be considered to an important, powerful, and prominent position in the Federal Government.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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. 340, Sarah A.L. Merriam, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

Charles E. Schumer, Brian Schatz, Benjamin L. Cardin, Robert Menendez, Tammy Duckworth, Christopher A. Coons, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Jacky Rosen, Patrick J. Leahy, Mazie K. Hirono, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jack Reed, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tammy Baldwin, Richard J. Durbin, Chris Van Hollen, Tina Smith.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 A.L. Merriam, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut, 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.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 408 Ex.]

YEAS—53

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

NAYS—47

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 47.

The motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

INFLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, from gas stations to grocery stores, to utility bills and restaurant checks, the American people are being pummeled by inflation. The cost of everything is going up.

Last week, the Commerce Department reported that a key indicator of inflation had reached the highest level in three decades—30 years.

The Chairman of the Federal Reserve has said that we are unlikely to turn a corner on this until sometime next year. How he knows that, I don't know. Previously, he said, well, this inflation would be merely transitory, a passing thing. But it is beginning to look like that is not the case. And, clearly, he is mainly guessing.

With this as a backdrop, our Democratic colleagues are apparently trying to figure out how to inflict even more economic pain on the American people. They spent months negotiating solely among themselves in order to bring about a radical transformation in our country by spending money on programs we don't need or want—things like permanent welfare for no work requirements; things like tax increases that, contrary to President Biden's promise, will hit Americans earning less than $400,000 a year; subsidies for millionaires; buying electric vehicles that most average wage earners can't afford; taxes that will hurt American businesses and help our major nation-state competitor, China; as well as provide a range of so-called free—they like that word ''free''—social safety-net programs that really aren't free at all.

Now, this isn't critical funding necessary to lead America out of the pandemic like we did last year on a bipartisan basis. This isn't even designed to revive our struggling economy. I would argue that it would do just the opposite. It would suppress the recovery from the recession that was caused by the pandemic. This is merely a reckless, partisan spending spree designed to grow the size of government's role in our daily lives.

In recent weeks, I have heard from more than 50,000 of my constituents—that is a lot—about one absurd example of government overreach proposed by the administration and which is part of the reconciliation bill that is now sitting in front of the House of Representatives. The IRS already knows how much money you make, but now the Biden administration wants to know how you spend it too. This isn't a safeguard to stop illicit activity like money laundering or tax fraud. That already exists. Any taxpayer who receives a transfer of $10,000 or more in a single transaction has to report that to the IRS. But what our Democratic colleagues want to do is to invade the privacy of everyday Americans who rarely make five-digit transactions. So tucked in the President's budget is a new IRS reporting requirement with a much lower threshold, $600.

If you use your bank accounts to spend or receive more than $600 in a year's time, our Democratic colleagues think that should be reported to the IRS. So if you are writing a check for your mortgage or your rent or maybe you are buying a new washer or dryer or refrigerator, the IRS wants to know that you are spending that money.

This is an Agency that has already been plagued by scandals and has hardly been a responsible steward of personal financial data.

Earlier this year, an unknown source within the IRS leaked more than 15 years' worth of taxpayer information to journalists. And we all remember the IRS targeting conservative-leaning groups during the Obama administration. But the IRS has given even more

personal financial data, literally conducting surveillance on the American people. The trove of information that could be abused gets a lot bigger.

Democrats want to give the IRS more manpower to sift through all of this by doubling the size of the Agency, adding to an army of Internal Revenue agents out searching for more revenue with which to grow the government. So instead of a chicken in every pot, every household will get an audit.

This is, I submit, a fundamental attack on the privacy and financial freedom of everyday Americans and puts all Americans' data at risk of being hacked or leaked.

It also places a huge new burden on our community banks and credit unions. Having to organize and transmit all this additional data to the IRS in a secure way is no easy task. Does the administration plan to help local banks, credit unions do this? I doubt it. It is just going to add to their overhead and to their administrative burdens.

Our Democratic colleagues also want to reinstate the so-called SALT deduction, which allows wealthy individuals in blue States—it is no coincidence—to pay less in taxes. According to the liberal Tax Policy Center, 93 percent of those making a million dollars or more would get a tax break.

So much for our Democratic colleagues' rhetoric about millionaires and billionaires getting a tax break. They want to make sure that each one of them gets about a $48,000 tax cut under their proposal. This isn't an attempt to support those who are struggling to make ends meet; it is a financial lifeline for millionaires and billionaires.

This type of legislation our colleagues are trying to pass includes a massive, ill-conceived tax plan; government overreach; irresponsible spending; and radical policies that put unnecessary burden on beleaguered American workers and families.

Earlier this year, our Democratic friends charged nearly $2 trillion to the taxpayer credit card in a party-line vote. Unlike the COVID–19 relief bills we passed last year virtually unanimously, one after the other, when the Biden administration came into office, the first thing they did was spend $2 trillion in borrowed money, only 10 percent of which was related to COVID–19.

So they did that without any Republican help. Now they are trying to figure out how to go on an even bigger spending blowout—once again, all alone. But they think upping the credit limit should be a bipartisan task. Our friends across the aisle have talked about how, historically, lifting the debt ceiling has been a bipartisan endeavor, but they failed to mention that so has spending.

There has never been a time in our country's history when one party has spent trillions of dollars and aspires to spend trillions of dollars more without the support of a single person on the other side of the aisle.

Why would Republicans vote to increase the debt limit and sign off on this reckless spending? If someone stole your credit card and ran up the bill, would you up your own credit limit so they could continue shopping? No way. But that is exactly what Democrats are asking Republicans to do by upping the debt limit.

They have the votes. They have a process by which they can raise the debt limit, and they need to do it before we risk a default, according to the timeline given to us by Secretary Yellen.

So our Democratic colleagues have chosen to light taxpayer dollars on fire, but we are not going to hand them another match. We have been clear on that point since at least July. Unsurprisingly, our friends on the other side don't like this plan. They see the dangers in continuing to drive up the debt without any action to address the root causes, and they want to have Republicans to share the blame.

But what needs to happen is some accountability because accountability will bring with it some fiscal responsibility. But as long as our Democratic colleagues can continue to spend trillions of dollars in borrowed money on their reckless tax-and-spending spree and have us join them in raising the debt limit, then no one—no voter, no taxpayer—can actually know who is to blame.

Well, if Democrats want to spend alone, they have to up the debt ceiling alone, too, and we know they have the tools and the votes to do it. But rather than addressing this problem in July or August or September, our Democratic colleagues have waited until the last minute and march us closer and closer to a debt crisis. They have had the time to up the debt limit on their own, and they have had the means to do it. So they need to stop playing chicken with an economic crisis and do what they know needs to be done.

So far, Democrats have not been held back by their razor-thin majority. It didn't stop them from spending $2 trillion in borrowed money at the beginning of this year. It hasn't slowed their plans to try to spend trillions more this fall. And now it shouldn't stop them from increasing the debt limit on their own so the American people can see who is responsible and hold those elected officials accountable in the 2022 election.

The Democratic majority of the Senate has embraced a go-it-alone attitude on legislating all year, and these are just some of the examples of what that has produced: tax increases on the middle class; car subsidies for millionaires; taxes that hurt American businesses and American jobs but actually help China; providing so-called free, taxpayer-funded social safety net programs to try to turn the United States into a European welfare state; increased IRS surveillance of the everyday finances of average Americans; and I mentioned, finally, tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires.

So now is the time to reap what our Democratic colleagues have sown, and I hope they will act sooner rather than later.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, shortly, I will be making a unanimous consent request to confirm the nomination of Ms. Karen Hedlund to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board.

Ms. Hedlund served as Deputy Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, and before that, as Chief Counsel at the Federal Highway Administration. She has spent most of her career in the development and financing of infrastructure projects across the United States, including improvements to the national freight rail system.

She is well qualified to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board, which we know is so critical to the movement of freight; and her appointment comes at a time when there are many important issues and decisions before the Board.

Ms. Hedlund was nominated by the President in April. She received bipartisan approval in the Commerce Committee now over 2 months ago, and it is time for the full Senate to do the same.

So I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the following nomination: Calendar No. 315, Karen Jean Hedlund, to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board for a term expiring December 31, 2025. I further ask unanimous consent that the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, article II of the Constitution gives this body some important responsibilities, including the responsibility to provide advice and consent on Officers of the United States. We have to confirm people after they have been nominated by the President.

As a Member of the Senate, I take this responsibility seriously, and I do my due diligence once a nominee has been submitted by the President and consideration by the Senate. I have done that here.

And in the process of that due diligence process with this nominee, I submitted a number of written questions to Ms. Hedlund in order to develop a better understanding of how she would respond to certain issues that are directly relevant to the position for which she is seeking confirmation from the Surface Transportation Board.

Specifically, I asked her how she would approach: 1, cost-benefit analysis in proposed regulations; 2, the

scope of the SBT's rulemaking authority; 3, how she would approach consideration of rate regulation, rate caps, or price controls; 4, her definition of the public interest, which is a key term that comes up as used in STB proceedings; 5, how she would balance Amtrak access to the freight rail network with reliable freight service; and, 6, how she would approach the carrying out of the NEPA process, including the definitions behind the key regulatory terms at issue.

These are all issues that are really relevant to the STB, and these are the kinds of questions that deal with the kinds of things she would do if confirmed as a member of the STB.

Needless to say, I was disappointed with my responses. Some of the answers avoided answering my questions; some answers appeared to be purposely vague; and some refused even directly to answer the question.

So for these reasons, I voted against Ms. Hedlund's nomination before the Commerce Committee, and my position has not changed since that vote took place. I am not comfortable granting my consent today, and I will not be, until I have the information and more thorough, responsive answers to my reasonable questions. And so for these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Ms. BALDWIN. 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.

Ms. ERNST. 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

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, tomorrow marks the 20th anniversary of the launch of the U.S. military offensive in Afghanistan against the Taliban and al-Qaida in response to their ruthless attack on America. As a result of our Nation's resolve and the sacrifice and service of our brave men and women over the past two decades, Osama bin Laden is dead, and our homeland has been guarded against additional large-scale terror attacks.

Up until President Joe Biden's sloppy and poorly planned exit from Afghanistan, al-Qaida and the Taliban were on the run, but today, due to the decisions of President Biden, the radical extremists who sponsored Osama bin Laden and partnered with al-Qaida, who are responsible for the deadliest terror attack in history, are back in power.

How did we get here?

It became apparent at last week's Armed Services hearing, after I questioned our top military leaders, that President Biden made a completely unconditional withdrawal. The President simply looked at the calendar and saw what he thought would be an easy political victory and decided we would be out of Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of 9/11.

Another fact that became clear after the hearing last week is that President Biden casually dismissed the sound advice of his own military leaders. He discounted the tactical and strategic value of keeping a small force in place to defeat the terrorists. Then, to cover for those mistakes, President Biden misled the public about the advice that he was given and refused to take.

So let's be clear about what happened as a result of the President's ignoring his own generals' recommendations. He abandoned American citizens behind enemy lines, left strong allies and partners to fend for themselves against the Taliban, tarnished America's reputation, and created the conditions that led to the devastating loss of 13 brave American servicemembers. He stubbornly led our country into the most disastrous diplomatic and military debacle in modern history.

Those now in control of Afghanistan are a who's who of international terrorists. Nearly half of the members of the new Afghan Government are on the U.N. Security Council's terrorism blacklist—that is the U.N., folks, their terrorism blacklist—including the Acting Prime Minister and both of his Deputies. At least two principal members of the Haqqani network, which is a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization, are in the highest positions of the Taliban's new government. The Minister of the Interior is on the FBI's ''Most Wanted'' list. His uncle, the Minister of Refugees, is designated a terrorist by our government. Together, the U.S. Government values the reward for their arrests at $15 million.

The Biden doctrine put America's most wanted back in charge of a terrorist training ground and increased the risk of attacks against our homeland. And we didn't leave the terrorists emptyhanded either. In our rush for the exits, we left tens of billions of dollars' worth of military weapons and gear behind, which is now in the hands of the enemy. We can expect to encounter this tactical equipment again on the battlefield—but our own equipment being used against us. Here are just a few numbers: 600,000 weapons, 22,000 humvees, and more than 200 aircraft. Folks, we left America's most wanted with America's best weapons.

But it is not just weapons and military capabilities; President Joe Biden left behind our own citizens, stranded in a foreign country governed by known terrorists. As much as the administration wants to act like this is all in the past and we have closed the book on Afghanistan, it is just not reality. Right now, we have American citizens stranded in Afghanistan. Let that sink in for just a moment, folks. Americans and our Afghan partners, who worked with us over the past two decades—interpreters and translators—are all sitting ducks for the Taliban. When we ask for an accurate accounting of who and how many are still left, the Pentagon points the finger at the State Department, which then goes radio silent.

The administration is downplaying the evils of the Taliban, and its refusal to state hard facts is stunning.

The chorus of praise from the State Department and the White House in calling the Taliban ''businesslike'' and ''professional'' would be comical if it weren't so horrifying. If using Kabul's soccer stadiums to publicly execute dissidents, overseeing the legal rape of young girls through child marriage, and settling disputes by chopping off hands and feet is how the Taliban does business, then President Biden is right—they are truly pros.

GEN Mark Milley admitted the exit was a ''strategic failure'' in his testimony last week. Folks, that is an understatement. President Biden and his top foreign policy adviser, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, have serially failed to own up to this fiasco. Someone must take responsibility for this colossal failure.

As we uncovered again last week, President Biden's decisions led us here, right back where we began. Both General McKenzie and General Milley testified last week that ''al-Qaida is still at war with us'' and that within the year, they ''could be reconstituted with aspirations to attack the U.S.'' During Joe Biden's campaign, he promised a return to normalcy. Little did we know that meant a return to vulnerability and an America that is less safe from terrorists who attacked our homeland 20 years ago.

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.

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

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

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, on August 16, as everything was collapsing in Afghanistan, President Biden said:

> We have developed counterterrorism over-the-horizon capability that will allow us to keep our eyes firmly fixed on any direct threats to the United States in the region and to act quickly and decisively if needed.

He was stating that we don't have to have an on-the-ground presence in Afghanistan to keep Americans safe and that we can rely instead on over-the-horizon strikes, where we use drones and other assets to take out terrorists from hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

Since then, we have learned that the President wasn't being truthful.

At the Senate Armed Services Committee's open hearing on Afghanistan's disaster, CENTCOM Commander General Kenneth McKenzie testified on the immense challenges we face in preventing terrorist groups, like al-Qaida and ISIS, from using Afghanistan as a launching pad to attack us here at home.

What President Biden seems to conveniently ignore is that a successful over-the-horizon counterterrorism strategy requires more than just the ability to hit targets across long distances. We also have to be able to identify targets; we have to be able to locate targets; and we have to be able to reach those targets.

To do this effectively, we first need a U.S. presence in the region or at least a reliable on-the-ground partner there. Without that, our ability to gather the intelligence necessary to pick the right targets is severely degraded.

We saw the tragic consequences of acting on incomplete intelligence on August 29, when a drone strike mistakenly killed 10 innocent Afghans, including 7 children and an aid worker with ties to the United States.

Second, we need a reliable way to actually get to the target.

President Biden likes comparing Afghanistan to countries like Yemen and Syria, but there is a huge difference between these countries. Afghanistan is landlocked, and our drones can't just fly over the ocean to get there, like they can to Syria and to Yemen.

When it comes to Afghanistan, our drones have to cross over other countries on the way, and those countries are not obligated to allow us to use their airspace.

General McKenzie confirmed to me during our hearing that, because we have withdrawn from Afghanistan, we need to rely on Pakistan's airspace if we want to reach targets like ISIS-K or al-Qaida, and that should concern every American.

Pakistan, historically, is the Taliban's fiercest international supporter, and they could revoke our access at any point. And if they do, we would need to ask China, Iran, or Central Asian nations with close ties to Russia for permission to use their airspace or even their bases in order to conduct counterterrorism operations.

When I asked about this during the SASC hearing, Secretary Austin confirmed recent reports that the U.S. military—the finest fighting force in the world—has had conversations with Russia about using their bases in Central Asian nations on Afghanistan's northern border.

Secretary Austin insisted that we haven't asked for Russia's permission to use these bases; we are simply considering an offer that they made. But if we have to consider an offer from the Kremlin just to keep al-Qaida from surging back in Afghanistan, President Biden hasn't put America on a very strong footing.

The bottom line is that our chaotic exit from Afghanistan has made it much harder for the U.S. military to keep the American people safe from terrorists.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Milley said during last week's hearing that Presidents are elected to make strategic decisions. He also told us that the Afghanistan withdrawal was a strategic failure.

And he was right. The way things stand today, we are at risk of recreating the same conditions that existed before 9/11. The Taliban is running things in Kabul, and given their longstanding partnership with al-Qaida, it is naive to expect that they would prevent these terrorists from operating freely.

Anyone who says that we are safer today than we were 20 years ago is getting ahead of themselves, and that goes for President Biden too. He needs to be more honest about what his decision to leave Afghanistan, no matter the cost, means for our Nation's security.

Real leaders take responsibility for their mistakes; they do not make excuses for them. And, unfortunately, that is all we have heard from the President so far.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, over the past—first of all, let me just agree with the Senator from Nebraska. She is exactly on target here. This is a problem that we are in a—I have said several times, I cannot remember a time that we have not been—that we have been in a greater threat than we are today.

Over the past 2 weeks, just to kind of let you know where we are now, the Armed Services Committee held two classified sessions and two open hearings on Afghanistan. That is the committee that actually had these in their schedule. These are really eye-openers, and I think we have a lot of time to uncover what happened and where we go from here.

First, we heard from General Milley, the commander on the ground in Afghanistan through July. He went up to the July period of time. Then we heard from the Pentagon's top policy official, Colin Kahl. In open testimony, we heard from Secretary of Defense Austin, the President's top military adviser; General Milley; and General McKenzie, who is in charge of the combatant command that oversees the Middle East. We also heard from two outside experts with decades of experience following Afghanistan and the region. Here is what we learned. Now, I am going to list these things. There are actually seven things we learned, and it is very significant.

No. 1, we learned that top military leaders advised President Biden to keep at least 2,500 troops. Now, the President came out and said that wasn't true. Yet every military person who offered testimony has said, yes, that is exactly true. They all recommended to President Biden to keep at least 2,500 troops in Afghanistan. If not, then, you know the results that are coming from that. You know what we are living with today.

This advice goes counter to what President Biden told the American people back in August. He said his generals did not advise him to leave troops there. Now we know that is not true, and we know that he said that and he misled the American people. This is a very significant point.

The second thing: As I said, we learned that al-Qaida was never gone from Afghanistan. As Biden says, they were there all along, and they were a big part of the Taliban's victory. Now they are focused on external operations. Al-Qaida and ISIS could be able to strike America's soil as soon as a year from now; that is, striking us on our soil here in America. Even worse, the withdrawal from Afghanistan was a shot of adrenaline in the arm of the radical Islamic terrorists everywhere. They now have a victory to point to.

The third thing: We learned that by completely withdrawing from Afghanistan, we nearly zeroed out our capabilities to strike those same terrorist organizations. We understand this. Not many people would disagree with this. General McKenzie said he was not confident that the United States would be able to prevent al-Qaida or ISIS from using Afghanistan as a launching pad for terrorist activity, and here is why—and this is important. The administration isn't talking about this. Afghanistan poses a unique set of challenges. It is landlocked. We don't have any bases nearby. This was driven home by our Senator—a few minutes ago—from Nebraska. Our generals confirmed that it is extremely difficult and costly to get the intelligence and conduct the types of operations the President said he would do. This came from all of the military leaders.

Let's not forget—we still have not killed the terrorists directly responsible for the attack that killed 13 U.S. servicemembers. Just imagine—they are still out there.

President Biden decided to put the Taliban in charge, hoping they changed. The first thing they did was broadcast a video on Afghan national TV saying the United States deserved the 9/11 attack. It turns out that the Taliban is the old Taliban. They haven't really changed a bit. What this means is that Afghanistan is now the safest place in the world for radical Islamic terrorism. We are at greater risk, and we are less safe.

The fourth thing out of seven: We learned—and I quote General McKenzie directly—''The war on terror is not over, and the war in Afghanistan is not over either.'' But President Biden told the American people and told the whole world that the war is over. We know better than that. Evidently, the terrorists didn't get the memo. As General Milley put it, ''Al-Qaida is still at war with us, and never has not been.''

No. 5: We learned without a shadow of a doubt that our allies and partners and our adversaries, too, are questioning our credibility and resolve. In fact, General Milley said that our credibility has been ''damaged.'' At last week's hearing, our experts confirmed that President Biden's botched withdrawal has caused our allies to question our ability to stick to our strategies and policies.

No. 6: We learned that our military leaders would not call President Biden's evacuation operation an ''extraordinary success'' like he did. General Milley called it a ''strategic failure.''

Now, I want to be clear. This wasn't a failure on the part of our troops. Our troops served admirably. They rescued 120,000 people. They did what they were told to do. Their Commander in Chief led them astray.

As Dr. Vali Nasr said just the other day—he told our committee last Thursday that the end game in Afghanistan was not our ''finest moment.'' That is an understatement, and that is someone trying to figure out some way to justify what went on.

The last thing, No. 7: We learned that President Biden simply ignored the conditions-based approach.

Now, one thing I will say about the previous approach. People are confused sometimes about what our previous President said. He had a conditions-based approach, and the hallmark of it or the center of that conditions-based approach was that we would leave troops there to protect our Americans. We don't even know right now how many Americans are there.

So we learned that President Biden simply ignored the conditions-based approach. President Biden could have easily said: The Taliban has not met our conditions. We are going to stay in Afghanistan and ensure that no terrorists are able to hit us.

That is what his military advisers recommended that he say, and he didn't do that. In fact, President Biden ignored the conditions on the ground and instead decided to accept a significant amount of strategic risk. That means the United States is less safe today, and our credibility for the future is shot through, and that is what his decision means.

We lost credibility because we left Americans and our Afghan allies behind. No one will believe what America says after this, and I am not sure why they should. I can't think of a time in history that this has happened. This is simply just something that is brand new.

One thing we didn't get clear answers on despite the repeated bipartisan requests is exactly how many Americans and Afghan partners did we leave behind and what is going to happen to them. DOD pointed to the State Department and vice versa. That is just unacceptable.

We don't know how many people we left behind. You know, we heard the Secretary actually made a statement approximating at one time between 3- and 4- and 500, and the next approximation was closer to 10,000. So we don't really know that. It is bad enough that we leave them behind, but we don't even know how many people we left.

This is why I am going to continue calling for more hearings until we get—we have to get the answers. This isn't going to go away.

Why does all this matter? America is less safe than we were before because of President Biden's decisions. Six years ago, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said:

> I think [President Biden] has been wrong on . . . every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades.

America is now more vulnerable to terrorist attacks. We all understand that, and the whole world understands that. We have no plan to meet that threat.

We also have to think about what this means for our biggest challenge, and that is, of course, our challengers of China, Russia, North Korea, Iran. They are all celebrating now. China is engaged in a historic nuclear buildup—one that we have never seen anything like before. Russia just conducted its largest military exercise in four decades. They are watching this debacle and thinking how weak America looks. Now, if President Biden can't get counterterrorism right, how can his administration put together a strategy to confront China and Russia?

Unfortunately, this strategic failure of our Afghanistan exit is encouraging our adversaries to test us—the exact opposite of deterrence. That is what I am worried about now. I am more worried about it after last week. That is why I am going to keep fighting for more open hearings so the American people and our adversaries and our enemies and our friends will understand what it is all about. And this will be the real America, not what they experienced recently.

That is why I continue to push for adequate defense funding, to make sure that we prioritize nuclear modernization, and to pass this year's NDAA as soon as we can get it to the floor.

By the way, this is the one bill that I have every expectation we will get. The NDAA, the National Defense Authorization Act, is one that we have passed for 61 consecutive years. I have every expectation that we will do it now. I don't like the idea that the Democrats are putting this off as if there is no threat out there. I don't think that is going to happen.

That is why we have to keep getting to the bottom of this. We have taken some big hits—big hits—out there, and we have got to recover. OK.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CRAMER. Madam President, I am here today to join my colleagues and first associate myself with all of the words from the ranking Republican from the Armed Services Committee, Senator INHOFE.

Very well said, Senator, and I agree wholeheartedly.

I express my profound disappointment in President Biden's handling of the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan. The American people and certainly my constituents in North Dakota are upset, and they have every right to be.

For weeks, we were inundated with horrifying stories of Americans and our allies fleeing for their lives, paired with the constant stream of disturbing images and videos out of Afghanistan as it was taken over by the Taliban. Yet, somehow—somehow—President Biden has the audacity to call the withdrawal an ''extraordinary success.'' Well, President Biden is wrong. It was not an extraordinary success. The withdrawal was an abject failure, and President Biden bears all of the responsibility for it, and that is to say that he is the reason it was an abject failure, because our heroes in uniform did an incredible job against very difficult odds and, frankly, with very poor leadership coming from the Oval Office.

The reality is, the President misled the American people to justify his decisions and to downplay his failures. Now, terrorists are emboldened, our allies are questioning the resolve of the United States, and the United States is less safe because of it.

The reality is, his deceitful rhetoric really began several months ago. In August, he led us to believe our military leaders were united in their support of his withdrawal plans. Like many of my colleagues, I expressed concerns at the time when his plans were first announced and urged him to follow a conditions-based withdrawal. He did not.

To rationalize his choices, he worked to convince us that the most senior leaders in the Pentagon were standing behind him, agreed with him. They gave him this advice, he said. As we have heard from multiple generals, that is simply not true.

The President also misled us about the conditions on the ground in Afghanistan. In an August speech, he said the Afghan military force had ''300,000 strong, incredibly well equipped fighters.'' The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction said in a report that is not true. It said that of the 300,000 members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, only 182,000 of them were Afghan National Army members and the rest were members of the Afghan National Police.

Well, when I discuss the number of servicemembers in our Armed Forces, I don't include the number of police officers or even FBI agents. That would be inaccurate at best, and then deceitful at worst. Yet, here, the President is doing exactly that.

President Biden used that 300,000 number to claim the Afghan Government could defend itself, and he later tried to say no one could predict their forces would fall so quickly.

Was he being dishonest with the American people, or was he just not being given accurate information by his senior leadership about the conditions there?

Well, neither ignorance nor incompetence are a very good answer.

Later in the month, when it became clear the withdrawal was going to be a failure, President Biden insisted that the United States would get all Americans who wanted to leave out of Afghanistan. Well, he didn't. He failed.

And no one, including him—and least of all him—wants to take responsibility. The State Department says, you know, talk to the Defense Department. The Defense Department says talk to the State Department. But no one is taking responsibility.

And I say the buck stops in the Oval Office with the President, who let that happen and who is letting his team dodge taking responsibility, all while Americans fear for their lives in a country run by terrorists and terrorist sympathizers.

Near the end of August, after 13 brave U.S. military members were killed in an ISIS-K terrorist attack during the botched withdrawal, President Biden rushed to release a statement taking credit for this retaliatory drone strike.

He said: ''I said we would go after the group responsible for the attack on our troops and innocent civilians in Kabul, and we have.''

Well, except he hadn't. It was later revealed, as we know, that the strike did not take out any ISIS-K leaders. In fact, it took out 10 civilians, including 7 children. But, since then, the President said nothing. He didn't say anything about this horrifying revelation when it was clear that he misled the American people in the wake of the strike.

Our military leaders did not agree with the withdrawal plans. The Afghan Army was not prepared to defend itself. We did not get every American out of the country, and justice was not delivered to ISIS-K or its leaders after it killed 13 American heroes.

And what now? What do we have to show for it?

Well, America is less safe than it was when President Biden became President. As our top military leaders testified in yet another contradiction of President Biden's claims, al-Qaida is alive in Afghanistan and looks to carry out a strike right here on American soil.

How are we supposed to stop it?

Our military leaders don't have faith in the over-the-horizon strategy that President Biden repeatedly touts to give us reliable information.

Who is going to help us?

Our strongest allies and partners and longest standing friends vocally distanced themselves from us amid this botched withdrawal.

All of this is what President Biden called an extraordinary success. Well, it is an extraordinary embarrassment is what it is. The American people are smart enough to not fall for such an obvious attempt to hide the truth from them.

That is why we, on the Armed Services Committee, are going to continue investigating the withdrawal and holding the Commander in Chief accountable for his poor judgment and actions, even if he won't take the responsibility. That is what our constituents expect and deserve, and I urge my colleagues to join in supporting those efforts.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, tomorrow marks the 20th anniversary of Operation Enduring Freedom, and the start—the beginning—of those combat operations in Afghanistan. It is a benchmark that makes what has happened on the ground during and since our disastrous withdrawal from Kabul all the more disgusting.

Over the past 2 months, we have listened in disbelief as mouthpieces at the State Department, the Pentagon, and the White House talked about the Taliban in the same way they would have addressed a legitimate governing body.

Last week, during a hearing before the Armed Services Committee, we saw our civilian and military leaders evade responsibility for the violence, death, and chaos that has occurred on their watch. But we also listened closely as they revealed appalling inconsistencies between the spin from the White House and the reality of the situation on the ground.

Here is the reality: Afghanistan is under the control of terrorists. These terrorists have longstanding ties with al-Qaida and the Haqqani network, and those relationships aren't going to take a back seat now that the Taliban is in charge of the entire country. This was no ordinary transfer of power. Afghanistan isn't Germany or France or the United States, and we shouldn't pretend that it is, because it is impossible to act as a legitimate government when your goal is not to govern but your goal is to manipulate through acts of terror.

This is what the Taliban is doing, and it is not happening in secret. The cameras are rolling. The world is watching. Inclusivity clearly isn't a priority, as much as the White House would like to make out that it is. The Taliban cleared out the women's affairs ministry and replaced it with ''Ministry for Preaching and Guidance and the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.''

The Taliban's desire to curry favor with China has Uyghurs living in Afghanistan running scared. Afghanistan was a haven for these people during the Cultural Revolution, and now the families of those who fled are afraid that the Taliban is going to round them up—yes, round up the Uyghur Muslims—and sell them—that is right—sell them to the Chinese Communist Party in exchange for economic aid.

Fears that the Taliban would weaponize access to the internet became reality before the last American left the country. They are well on their way to creating a tightly controlled online cesspool of dangerous anti-Western propaganda.

Meanwhile, the Afghan economy is in the gutter. The Taliban's military campaign shut down basic commerce in much of the country, making food shortages worse and putting a million children—a million children—at risk of starvation and death.

Healthcare infrastructure is collapsing. And now the Afghan people are facing the possibility of blackouts because the Taliban can't be bothered to figure out how they are going to pay the electric bill.

And what intel we do have suggests that al-Qaida will use this chaos void left by Biden's disastrous withdrawal to rebuild their operations. That is right—al-Qaida is present in Afghanistan.

I think it important to understand that all of this violence and disorder barely scratches the surface of what the Taliban is capable of instigating.

On August 20, President Biden stated with absolute certainty: ''I have seen no question of our credibility from our allies around the world.''

During last week's hearing, General Milley disagreed with that assessment. I disagree with that assessment, as do many Tennesseeans that I talk with when I am home every weekend. They understand that Operation Enduring Freedom may have come to an end, but that the world is still watching to see how the United States of America is going to respond to one of the most anti-equality, anti-peace, and anti-freedom organizations on the face of the Earth.

Our actions and our reactions will inform those from the rest of the world, and it is time for the Biden administration to recognize that and to act accordingly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator ROUNDS and I be allowed to speak for 5 minutes each before the vote.

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

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, it gives me no pleasure to stand on the Senate floor today and talk about President Biden's ill-advised and chaotic withdrawal; to talk about the consequences for the people of Afghanistan, who trusted us and who took our side for 20 years; and to talk about the tremendous harm it has done to America's reputation.

The President, I think, believes that the cost of this debacle has been only a few weeks of bad press. I think he is, sadly, wrong. Perhaps the President is banking on the American people forgetting that the disaster took place on his watch, but it turns out this is a disaster of historic proportions. We will be reeling from this debacle for years and decades to come.

The President may try to change the subject, but the cold truth is that our

Nation will be paying the price when we are dead and gone and these pages are in the position of senior leadership in this country.

Last week, my colleagues and I, on the Armed Services Committee, heard directly from our Nation's top military leaders who had been advising the President on Afghanistan. Their testimonies made clear what we had known all along, that President Biden not only ignored their advice, which he has the power to do as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, but that he then misrepresented that advice to the American people.

In a national TV interview, when asked whether top military advisers had recommended leaving a small troop presence behind to keep a lid on the situation, which would have kept all hell from breaking loose, the President insisted that no one, to his knowledge, had made that recommendation.

We know that statement by Joe Biden was not true. The President got good advice, and then incredibly pled ignorance.

He also got good advice from Democrats. And I would point out my colleague from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE, when this was first broached in an open meeting and the administration was explaining what was going to take place, Senator WHITEHOUSE said this sounds like it is going to be a lot like the fall of Saigon in April of 1974. Senator WHITEHOUSE, as the son of a Foreign Service Officer, had an all too close recollection of the disaster that occurred in Saigon back in the seventies, and he warned the administration officials that this might happen again.

And yet the President said no one, to his knowledge, made this recommendation or gave these warnings. This is a President who promised to shoot straight with the American people, who said in February: ''You can handle anything as long as you are told the truth.''

I wish the President actually believed that and subscribed to that and lived by that.

The American people can handle the truth, and they need to be told the truth. Here is one bit of hard truth from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Milley: ''Our exit from Afghanistan was a 'strategic failure.' ''

From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs: ''It has caused 'damage' to America's credibility.''

That is from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I appreciate him leveling with the committee and leveling with the American people.

That damage was on full display this past weekend, when the former Afghan Ambassador, Adela Raz, was asked by Axios: Do you still trust the United States?

Her answer was simple, bleak, and understandable: ''No. Sorry.''

That was her answer: ''No. Sorry.''

She does not trust the United States anymore.

This loss of trust extends far beyond Afghanistan. As General Milley noted, ''Our credibility with allies and partners around the world and with adversaries is being intensely reviewed by them.'' And he said, yes, ''damaged'' is the correct word.

Simply put, when we abandon our friends, our partners around the world start to wonder if they can trust us, if we will have their backs. This hurts our ability to cooperate with our allies to deter threats and to provide security for the American people, and it emboldens our adversaries to act more aggressively.

We have already seen this from China in the past week. China has been signaling to Taiwan by ramping up their air missions near Taiwan. They have been signaling to our friends in Taiwan that America is an unreliable partner. Even before our troops had fully left Kabul, Chinese media wasted no time predicting that we will also abandon friends in Taiwan if and when China invades that country—a matter of concern.

Will this embolden Iran? Terrorist groups in Pakistan who support the Taliban remain a serious concern.

But perhaps the worst breach of trust in this dark chapter was between our government and our own people. During the withdrawal, President Biden assured us on national television—and I quote the President's grammar—''If there is American citizens left in Afghanistan, we're gonna stay to get them all out.''

''If there is American citizens left in Afghanistan, we're gonna stay to get them all out.''

Days later, that promise went out the window. The President dismissed those Americans staying by saying many of them wanted to stay in Afghanistan.

This repeated pattern of broken promises and our failure to own these decisions will only further weaken our country, our alliances, and our national security.

Sadly, we must get about the business of rehabilitating our reputation with our allies and the way our enemies and adversaries look at us.

I stand with my colleagues today who are committed to holding this administration accountable.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. ROUNDS. Madam President, tomorrow marks the 20th anniversary of the day the United States entered Afghanistan—the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom.

On October 7, 2001, the U.S. military conducted its first strike on the terrorists responsible for attacking our Nation on 9/11.

As President Bush said on that day: It was not a mission we asked for but a mission that we would fulfill.

For the past two decades, brave men and women have answered the call and put on the uniform of our country to fight terrorists in the name of freedom. We were a beacon of hope in a region of chaos. Our presence made a difference.

As I travel my home State of South Dakota, I have heard from many people who were disturbed by the events that unfolded during our final days in Afghanistan. I share their frustrations.

Together, we watched the Taliban forcefully regain control of an entire country that we worked so hard to keep free from terrorist groups. We watched the credibility of the United States on the world's stage diminish as we carelessly left our friends and allies behind. We watched civilians hopelessly cling to the wings of aircraft in desperate hope of escape. And we watched 13 brave men and women in uniform lose their lives while helping others seek freedom. As we mourn the loss of their lives, we recognize and appreciate their service to our Nation.

We also remember all those who fought by our side for 20 years, many of whom remain trapped in Afghanistan.

A citizen of South Dakota, Brandy Roseland, a veteran from Belle Fourche, worked as a contractor in Afghanistan. That is where she met her interpreter. According to Brandy, her interpreter served with the highest distinction and faced great personal risk, often putting himself in harm's way to aid and protect Americans and his fellow Afghans.

On one such occasion, Brandy's interpreter discovered an American contractor who died in an accident outside of Kabul. The interpreter singlehandedly returned the contractor's body, as well as sensitive equipment and documents, to the U.S. Embassy. That took courage. Brandy returned to the United States, but she stayed in contact with her interpreter.

When Afghanistan began to fall to the Taliban, she knew that she needed to do all she could to help him get out safely. That is when Brandy called us and asked if we could help him escape the clutches of the Taliban.

For weeks, our office worked relentlessly to maneuver his application for a special immigrant visa throughout the bureaucratic process at the State Department. Our work was ultimately successful from an administrative standpoint, but the overall mission was a failure.

While we had done all we could to help the interpreter receive his visa, our forces had exited before he could get on a plane to safety because of the President's date certain which he set for withdrawal.

Today, this interpreter remains in hiding in Afghanistan. If he is found by the Taliban, his fate will certainly be sealed.

We all know that there are no easy answers when it comes to Afghanistan, but there was clearly a wrong one.

For months, we had warned of the perils of making an arbitrary decision based on the calendar as opposed to an assessment of the conditions on the ground. And we weren't alone.

As the only Republican member of both the Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees, I have had the opportunity these past few weeks to hear from the senior military officers who advised President Biden: General Milley, Secretary Austin, and General McKenzie. Their message to the President was clear: a withdrawal on a date certain, without conditions, would lead to the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban.

Despite receiving the best military advice in the world, President Biden decided to use his own judgment, and he made the wrong decision. His directive to withdraw on a date certain, without regard for the conditions on the ground, needlessly put American soldiers in harm's way and forced our military to undertake an assignment which they simply could not totally complete.

Our military simply ran out of time. They could not get all of our Americans out, and they could not get all of our Afghan allies out, including Brandy's interpreter.

But it didn't have to end this way. Our military leaders offered the President the correct path forward. Their Commander in Chief failed them.

Lately, the President has blamed a lot of people for his failure. This includes the Afghan security forces and his own generals, who he falsely claimed advised him to make this decision. But this does not fall on any of them.

President Biden owns this debacle, and history will not judge him kindly. Because of his error, al-Qaida now has a breeding ground. America is less safe. The world is less safe.

I will close with a message for our veterans. While I was Governor, I attended 31 funerals in South Dakota for South Dakotans who died fighting the War on Terror. We will not forget their sacrifice nor their family's loss.

While freedom may not endure in Afghanistan today, for 20 years, you—you veterans—you protected our Nation and kept the fight away from our doorstep. Your service was not in vain. Your sacrifice made a difference. You represent the best of our country, and your Nation is grateful.

Please always remember it is not the politician who protects our right to vote; it is not the journalist who protects our freedom of speech; and it is not the preacher who protects our freedom of religion. All of our freedoms are defended and protected, generation after generation, by the men and women who put on the uniform of the United States of America.

We are grateful to you for your sacrifice and your service. May God continue to bless all of you veterans, and may the Good Lord continue to bless these United States of America.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF SARAH A. L. MERRIAM

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, today, the Senate will consider Sarah Merriam's nomination to be a United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut. I support the nomination of this highly qualified jurist.

As a U.S. magistrate judge for over 6 years, Judge Merriam has presided over hundreds of matters, including a number of trials that proceeded to final judgment. She has proven herself to be evenhanded, impartial, and mindful of the limited role that judges play in our system of justice.

Judge Merriam also has extensive experience litigating in Federal court—both in private practice and as an assistant Federal defender for nearly 8 years.

Letters of support the Judiciary Committee received for Judge Merriam's nomination underscore the widespread respect she has earned for her skill, qualifications, temperament, and fidelity to the rule of law. The letters came from both Democrats and Republicans and from prosecutors and defense attorneys.

Two Republican attorneys who practice law in Connecticut—Ross Garber, who has worked for numerous Republican officials, and Stanley Twardy, Jr., who served as U.S. Attorney in Connecticut under President Reagan—wrote: ''We are former advisors and appointees of Republican officials and have been involved in the selection and vetting of judges. Today we write in unqualified support of the nomination of Magistrate Judge Sarah Merriam to serve as a judge on the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut.''

They added, ''As a magistrate judge, Judge Merriam has been a significant and valuable part of the life of the District Court in Connecticut. As a United States District Judge she will be a rare asset to the District and the judiciary as a whole.''

The Judiciary Committee also received a letter from 26 former Federal prosecutors who served in the District of Connecticut. Among them are three former U.S. Attorneys.

These former prosecutors praised Judge Merriam as a ''highly qualified and competent jurist'' who ''applies the law fairly and properly without regard to personal preference.''

They concluded with their assurance that Judge Merriam ''will serve with distinction and honor'' in the District of Connecticut.

Judge Merriam was unanimously rated ''Well Qualified'' by the American Bar Association.

She has the strong support of her home State Senators—Senators BLUMENTHAL and MURPHY—and she received bipartisan support in the Judiciary Committee, with Senators TILLIS and GRAHAM joining the Democratic members in supporting her nomination.

I urge my colleagues to join me voting in support of Judge Merriam's nomination.

VOTE ON MERRIAM NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Merriam nomination?

Mr. TESTER. 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.

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 409 Ex.]

YEAS—54

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

NAYS—46

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

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). 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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The senior Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess subject to the call of the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 3:25 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 12:07 a.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PADILLA).

LEGISLATIVE SESSION—Continued

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, good morning.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader. Good morning.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture vote on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 1301, occur on Thursday, October 7, at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Republican leader.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we have been negotiating all afternoon and all night, just until recently. We are making good progress. We are not there yet, but I hope we can come to an agreement tomorrow morning.

MORNING BUSINESS

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, had there been a recorded vote, I would have voted no on the confirmations of Executive Calendar Nos. 392–399, Jessica D. Aber, of Virginia, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia for the term of four years; Carla B. Freedman, of New York, to be United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York for the term of four years; William J. Ihlenfeld II, of West Virginia, to be United States Attorney for the Northern District of West Virginia for the term of four years; Christopher R. Kavanaugh, of Virginia, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Virginia for the term of four years; Darcie N. McElwee, of Maine, to be United States Attorney for the District of Maine for the term of four years; Breon S. Peace, of New Jersey, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York for the term of four years; William S. Thompson, of West Virginia, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia for the term of four years; and Damian Williams, of New York, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York for the term of four years, vice Preet Bharara.

RECOGNIZING U.S. ARMY INTELLIGENCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE AND FORT HUACHUA

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. President, Senator MARK KELLY and I have the distinct privilege of honoring the outstanding men and women of the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence at Fort Huachuca, AZ. On October 6, 2021, MG Anthony G. Hale, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence and Fort Huachuca, will officially recognize the 50-year anniversary of Fort Huachuca as the ''Home of Military Intelligence.'' This is a momentous occasion, and we congratulate all members of the Fort Huachuca community on their invaluable achievements.

Military intelligence has been critical to successful combat operations since the U.S. Army's inception in 1775. Tragic events in our Nation's 246-year history have continually underscored the importance of properly trained intelligence professionals, not only for combat operations, but in times of peace as well. The U.S. Army's first centralized peacetime intelligence school was established at Fort Holabird, MD, in 1955, but moved to Fort Huachuca in 1971 to better meet intelligence requirements. Fort Huachuca subsequently received the moniker of ''Home of Military Intelligence.''

Over the next 50 years, the U.S. Army Intelligence Center and School would absorb several other intelligence training centers until it had responsibility for all military intelligence training. This includes initial military training and professional military education for all ranks and intelligence specialties, for both Active and Reserve components, civilians, and foreign students from allied countries.

The Commanding General serves as the proponent for the Military Intelligence Branch and Chief of the Military Intelligence Corps and is responsible for recruitment, accession, and retention of the Army's entire military intelligence force, while developing concepts, doctrine, organizational designs, and materiel solutions. The Intelligence Center and School have gradually morphed into today's U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence, notably becoming the place where military intelligence professionals are symbolically bound together as one unified organization. It continues to be, now more than ever, the home of military intelligence.

As the Army prepares for future contingencies, the work of the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence is paramount. The center's military and civilian personnel work tirelessly to shape the future of Army intelligence while ensuring intelligence professionals are trained and equipped to protect our Nation. Fort Huachuca is postured to combat our adversaries in the domains of spectrum and space and continues to provide key contributions to the defense of the Nation.

Senator KELLY and I are immensely proud of the men and women at the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence at Fort Huachuca. They deserve our deepest gratitude for the contributions they have made to the U.S. Army and our Nation over the past 50 years. I know we both look forward to seeing what they accomplish over the next half-century.

Again, congratulations on this proud occasion.

NIOBRARA COUNTY COURTHOUSE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of the centennial celebration for the Niobrara County Courthouse in Lusk, WY.

Niobrara County residents are blessed to live in this special place. Located on the plains and rolling hills of eastern Wyoming, the county is a gateway to the Black Hills and Central Wyoming. Its 2,400 residents center around the communities of Lusk, Manville, and Van Tassell. The county was created from eastern Converse County in 1911, and Lusk was chosen as the county seat when Niobrara County was organized in 1913. The name of the county comes from the Niobrara River, which begins its journey east of Lusk.

Niobrara County's story is a collection of the determined and persevering people that have called this place home for the past century. Its establishment was given a physical monument when the courthouse was built in 1920. The land on which the courthouse sits was originally donated by early rancher Frank Lusk, as a site to build the new town which bears his name. County business was first conducted in the Odd Fellows Hall, followed by the Harmony Lodge. A fire in 1919 destroyed the lodge, but not the records kept in a steel vault. Operations were moved to the basement of the First National Bank of Lusk until a new courthouse was completed. A white schoolhouse was built at the corner of 5th and Elm, believed to be the first in Lusk. When the courthouse was planned for this location, the schoolhouse was split up and moved to another block.

The economy of the new county experienced an unexpected boom when oil was discovered in what became the Lance Creek Field. The increase in taxable goods prompted the county commissioners to propose a bond election to fund the construction of a courthouse. On election day, November, 6, 1918, voters approved a $60,000 bond issue by only 29 votes. The commissioners chose architect George E. McDonald, designer of courthouses in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, to design the new building. The contracting bid was awarded to D.W. Woods. The building came in $22,000 over budget, and the commissioners again proposed a bond election for another $40,000. The vote passed by 30 votes this time.

The building was finished in the winter and occupied in February 1920. It was the only courthouse in Wyoming with a bronze statue of Justice placed on top of the courthouse dome. However, the statue only stayed there for 10 years. Strong Wyoming winds caused the statue to constantly vibrate and shift, which damaged the roof. In 1930, commissioners voted to remove the statue and replace the roof. The statue laid on the ground behind the courthouse, until 1 day it disappeared, only to be placed a few days later on a hill overlooking the town. It remained

there as a Lusk landmark until it vanished from that location as well. Stories say that some delinquents moved it to the bottom of an abandoned mine shaft. Rumors abounded in Lusk over the following years as to the purpose of the statue's relocation. During World War II, the statue resurfaced and was donated to a scrap metal campaign for the war effort.

The courthouse was described as, ''Built of dark red brick with white columned porticoes on the south and east entrances, and, of course, with the white dome capped by the bronze statue, the courthouse was the pride of the county's citizens.'' The Niobrara County Commissioners inscribed on the cornerstone of the building were Fred S. Runser, M.J. McCormick, and C.F. Calhoun, with E.M. Phillips as the county clerk. One of the most prominent features of the building is the motto above the door, ''A Public Office Is A Public Trust.'' This defining feature, which remains there today, is an inspiring reminder to all those who work in the county and in Wyoming. The current county commissioners tasked with upholding this ideal are Patrick H. Wade, John Midkiff, and Elaine B. Griffith, with Becky Freeman as county clerk.

On Friday, October 15, 2021, the Niobrara County Commissioners are hosting a celebration for the courthouse's centennial. A dedication ceremony will take place at this event as one was not preformed upon its original construction. The Niobrara County Historical Society purchased a sign commemorating the courthouse and providing historic information. It will be a wonderful celebration of Lusk and the Niobrara County community.

Niobrara County has a storied and colorful past. Its people stand as an example of strong character and neighborliness and its courthouse a symbol of their ideals. Bobbi joins me in celebrating the centennial of the Niobrara County Courthouse and the citizens who make this county special.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING DANIEL W. CROWLEY

• Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to Daniel W. Crowley, a remarkable patriot, war hero, role model, and public servant. Dan passed away on September 16, 2021, at the age of 99.

Dan was born in 1922 and raised in Greenwich, CT. He lived through the Great Depression and enlisted in October 1940 in the U.S. Army Air Corps. In March 1941, he was sent to the Philippines and assigned to Nichols Field, which was destroyed by Japanese forces the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In the following months, Dan fought with the U.S. Army's Provisional Air Corps Infantry Regiment to fend off three amphibious Japanese landings on the Bataan Peninsula. On April 9, 1942, the peninsula was surrendered, and Dan swam to Corregidor Island through shark-infested waters. Upon arrival, he became part of the 4th Marines, where they fought valiantly to maintain the shore, until the fortress fell on May 6, 1942.

In 1944, following several brutal work details in the Philippines, Dan was sent to Japan on a hell ship. In the many months that followed, Dan mined copper as a slave laborer. Surviving the harsh, demanding conditions, he was finally liberated on September 4, 1945.

After, in 1958, Dan joined Northwestern Mutual insurance. His acumen and quick wits earned him fast recognition as one of the company's top producers, and he even became a member of their million dollar club.

Dan has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to preserving the memory of his fellow soldiers. In 2013, he played a key role in renaming a bridge in Simsbury, CT, the ''Bataan Corregidor Memorial Bridge'' in their honor. I had the privilege of meeting Dan at the dedication for this bridge, and I can attest firsthand to what a remarkable model of public service he is.

The next year, Dan returned to Japan as part of the fifth Japanese-American POW Friendship Program. Furukawa executives refused to meet with him, but he was given the opportunity to visit one of the mines where he had previously worked. Later, in 2016, Dan attended the Veterans' Day breakfast hosted by President Obama at the White House.

I have been fortunate to visit with Dan on a number of occasions since our initial meeting. My office and I assisted him with obtaining a prisoner of war registration for his license plate in recognition of his extraordinary service to our country. I also had the honor of speaking with Dan and meeting his wife, Kelley, this year. On January 4, 2021, I attended a ceremony at Bradley Air National Guard Base, where Dan was promoted to sergeant and received an honorary Combat Infantryman Badge and the Prisoner of War Medal. It was a poignant and powerful moment.

My wife, Cynthia, and I extend our deepest sympathies to Dan's family during this difficult time. May their many wonderful memories of Dan provide them solace and comfort in the days ahead.•

TRIBUTE TO THE MARRS FAMILY

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Dave and Jenny Marrs of Bentonville, AR, on being named National Angels in Adoption honorees by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, CCAI.

The CCAI is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, and I was honored to nominate Dave and Jenny for their work to support and promote adoption and other critical services for children in Arkansas and around the world.

Since 2001, the CCAI has played a vital role in eliminating barriers standing between orphaned and foster children becoming part of a loving family. As the CCAI's signature public awareness program, Angels in Adoption annually recognizes outstanding individuals, families, and organizations that have made extraordinary contributions to adoption and child welfare.

Dave and Jenny are the parents of five children, including Sylvie whom they adopted from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They had always known they wanted to adopt and, in 2012, began the process to make Sylvie part of their family. It only took a few months for Sylvie to legally became their child, but the couple had no idea how difficult it would be to bring her home to Arkansas when international challenges brought the process to a halt. Shortly after their visit to the Congo, the Congolese Government shut down adoptions. Dave and Jenny were devasted, but the hardships only strengthened their resolve to rescue their daughter. It was during that process that my office first met the Marrs family, and I am pleased we were able to advocate for them with the U.S. State Department and Embassy officials. After more than 600 days, their Sylvie finally arrived home.

Inspired by their newest addition to the family, Dave and Jenny developed a passion for orphan care, family preservation, and adoption. The family started a nonprofit blueberry farm in northwest Arkansas as a way to help fund a program to educate orphaned and at-risk teenage boys in Marondera, Zimbabwe. They also advocate for children in need, including working closely with the philanthropic organization Help One Now to empower families in developing nations through capable local leaders.

The Marrs family has traveled the world to see firsthand the extreme poverty and truly dark circumstances facing parentless children around the globe. While visiting the Congo, the couple witnessed extreme starvation in the orphanage where their daughter Sylvie was living. This shocked Dave and Jenny, launching them into action. They organized an online raffle to raise money to feed the kids and their program was so successful it was able to feed three orphanages for an entire month. The Marrses have also used their platform on their hit HGTV show ''Fixer to Fabulous'' to help spread awareness about adoption and share their journey with viewers.

It was a privilege to nominate Dave and Jenny for their exemplary work that led to this well-deserved national honor, and I believe I speak for all Arkansans when I say they have made our State incredibly proud. They join influential and deserving members of this community, including Mohammed Ali and First Lady Laura Bush, as recipients of this important recognition. I am grateful for the life-changing efforts Dave and Jenny Marrs, as well as

their wonderful children Nathan, Ben, Sylvie, Charlotte, and Luke, have contributed to shine a light on this truly worthy and necessary cause.●

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION FIGHTING BLINDNESS

● Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Foundation Fighting Blindness. This Maryland-based nonprofit has become the world's leading private source of research funding to save and restore vision for individuals affected by blinding retinal diseases like macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa, and Usher syndrome. These conditions currently affect more than 10 million Americans—and millions more throughout the world.

Even though the foundation has a global reach, its origins are local. In 1971, a Maryland family learned that two of their three daughters were going blind. At the time, there was no treatment for blindness and few resources for the blind; the family was only told to teach their daughters Braille. Despite these challenging circumstances, this brave family banded together with friends and community members to organize a movement around those struggling with blindness. These early efforts paved the way for the establishment of the foundation we know today.

Since its creation, the foundation has raised over $800 million to support cutting-edge research at the vanguard of the fight to cure blindness. Their efforts have identified more than 270 genes that cause retinal diseases and led to more than 40 clinical trials for potential sight-saving and sight-restoring therapies. The first-ever FDA-approved gene therapy for inherited retinal research was made possible thanks to $10 million in funding from the foundation. This innovative treatment has enabled children and young adults born virtually blind to see the faces of their parents and even gaze at stars in the sky.

The millions of dollars raised by this organization have already helped make big strides in the area of blindness research, but the foundation's work is far from over. Today, the foundation continues to invest in new frontiers of discovery. Their funding is fueling efforts by major biotech and pharmaceutical companies to move more therapies from the lab bench to clinical trials and, hopefully, treatments. And through its unwavering commitment and persistence, the foundation raised the funds to establish the first ever interdisciplinary laboratory dedicated to research for inherited retinal diseases, which will serve as an engine of future discoveries and advancements.

The foundation's work inspires us all, and I ask my colleagues to join me in commending the founders and leaders of the Foundation Fighting Blindness on their 50 years of innovative work transforming the lives of millions around the world.●

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 4. A bill to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to revise the criteria for determining which States and political subdivisions are subject to section 4 of the Act, and for other purposes.

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–2359. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Television Broadcasting Services; Tulsa, Oklahoma'' (DA 21–1161) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2360. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Modification of the Boundaries of the Santa Lucia Highlands and Arroyo Seco Viticultural Areas'' (RIN1513–AC55) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2361. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Establishment of the Virginia Peninsula Viticultural Area'' (RIN1513–AC71) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2362. A communication from the Legal Yeoman, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Special Local Regulation; Lighthouse Musicfest, Huntington Bay, Long Island, NY'' ((RIN1625–AA08) (Docket No. USCG–2021–0653)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 23, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2363. A communication from the Deputy Director and Acting Director of Privacy and Open Government, Office of the Secretary, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act of 2017 Implementation'' (RIN0605–AA49) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 13, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2364. A communication from the Legal Tech, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone, Recurring Events in Captain of the Port Duluth - Bridgefest Regatta Fireworks'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2021–0610)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 23, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2365. A communication from the Legal Tech, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Temporary Safety Zone; Ferdon Wedding Fireworks Display, Harbor Springs, MI; Sector Sault Sainte Marie Captain of the Port Zone'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2021–0608)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 23, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2366. A communication from the Legal Tech, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone, Recurring Events in Captain of the Port Duluth - Bridgefest Regatta Fireworks'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2021–0610)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 23, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2367. A communication from the Legal Yeoman, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone, Potomac River, Prince William County, VA'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2021–0497)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 23, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2368. A communication from the Legal Yeoman, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone, Corpus Christi Bay; Corpus Christi, TX'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2021–0569)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 23, 2021; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–2369. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Pyraclostrobin; Pesticide Tolerances'' (FRL No. 8857–01–OCSPP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–2370. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fluazinam; Pesticide Tolerances'' (FRL No. 8664–01–OCSPP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–2371. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Spinetoram; Pesticide Tolerances; Corrections'' (FRL No. 8962–01–OCSPP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–2372. A communication from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a violation of the Antideficiency Act; to the Committee on Appropriations.

EC–2373. A communication from the Senior Congressional Liaison, Legislative Affairs, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''The Consumer Credit Card Market (September 2021)''; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–2374. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 13413 with respect to the Democratic Republic of the Congo; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–2375. A communication from the Congressional Affairs Director, Export-Import Bank of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a vacancy in the position of President, Export-Import Bank of the United States, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–2376. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; Maryland; Negative Declaration for the Oil and Gas Industry'' (FRL No. 8974–02–R3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2377. A communication from the Acting Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Health and Safety Data Reporting; Addition of 20 High-Priority Substances and 30 Organohalogen Flame Retardants; Extension of Submission Deadline'' ((RIN2070–AB11) (FRL No. 8204–02–OCSPP)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2378. A communication from the Acting Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; Missouri; Restriction of Particulate Matter Emissions from Fuel Burning Equipment Used for Indirect Heating'' (FRL No. 8757–02–R7) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2379. A communication from the Acting Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Approval of Air Quality Implementation Plans; New York; 2011 Periodic Emission Inventory SIP for the Ozone Nonattainment Areas'' (FRL No. 8943–02–R2) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2380. A communication from the Acting Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; Arizona; Maricopa County Air Quality Department'' (FRL No. 8996–02–R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2381. A communication from the Acting Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; Illinois; National Ambient Air Quality Standards Updates; Reference and Equivalent Methods Updates'' (FRL No. 9003–02–R5) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2021; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. CARPER, from the Committee on Environment and Public Works:

Report to accompany S. 1931, An original bill to amend title 23, United States Code, to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 117–41).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. PETERS for the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

*Rupa Ranga Puttagunta, of the District of Columbia, to be Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

*Tovah R. Calderon, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals for the term of fifteen years.

*Kenia Seoane Lopez, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

*Cathy Ann Harris, of Maryland, to be a Member of the Merit Systems Protection Board for the term of seven years expiring March 1, 2028.

*Cathy Ann Harris, of Maryland, to be Chairman of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

*Raymond A. Limon, of Nevada, to be a Member of the Merit Systems Protection Board for the term of seven years expiring March 1, 2025.

*Sean C. Staples, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

*Tristan Lynn Leavitt, of Idaho, to be a Member of the Merit Systems Protection Board for the term of seven years expiring March 1, 2023.

*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.

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 Ms. STABENOW (for herself and Mr. BURR):

S. 2940. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the 7-year recovery period for motorsports entertainment complexes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. KING, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. WICKER, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 2941. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to limit the liability of health care professionals who volunteer to provide health care services in response to a disaster; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 2942. A bill to reauthorize the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. WARREN:

S. 2943. A bill to require certain entities to disclose to the Secretary of Homeland Security ransom payments, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. PAUL:

S. 2944. A bill making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Appropriations.

By Ms. ERNST (for herself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. TILLIS, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CRAMER, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. COTTON, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. LEE, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. HOEVEN, Mrs. CAPITO, and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. 2945. A bill to include sexual assault and aggravated sexual violence in the definition of aggravated felonies under the Immigration and Nationality Act in order to expedite the removal of aliens convicted of such crimes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. WICKER):

S. 2946. A bill to require the Secretary of the Navy to notify Congress of pending action to strike from the Naval Vessel Register any naval vessel that is a viable candidate for artificial reefing, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. RUBIO:

S. 2947. A bill to require the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to provide a disclosure notice to homebuyers of properties owned by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that are located in special flood hazard areas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. CRAPO (for himself, Mr. RISCH, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. ROUNDS, and Ms. LUMMIS):

S. 2948. A bill to protect the right of individuals to bear arms at water resources development projects; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2949. A bill to amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 to describe the scope of activities subject to a presumption of the applicability of an exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. COONS, and Ms. WARREN):

S. 2950. A bill to combat illegal deforestation by prohibiting the importation of products made wholly or in part of certain commodities produced on land undergoing illegal deforestation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. LANKFORD:

S.J. Res. 27. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to limiting the number of terms that a Member of Congress may serve; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Ms. SMITH (for herself, Mr. HOEVEN, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. ERNST, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. Res. 408. A resolution designating October 2021 as ''National Co-op Month'' and commending the cooperative business model and the member-owners, businesses, employees, farmers, ranchers, and practitioners who use the cooperative business model to positively impact the economy and society; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BRAUN, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. LANKFORD, and Mr. WARNOCK):

S. Res. 409. A resolution designating the week beginning October 17, 2021, as ''National Character Counts Week''; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 172

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) and the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 172, a bill to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes.

S. 221

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 221, a bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to carry out a grant program to increase cooperation on post-traumatic stress disorder research between the United States and Israel.

S. 535

At the request of Ms. ERNST, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 535, a bill to authorize the location of a memorial on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces that served on active duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism, and for other purposes.

S. 766

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) and the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 766, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow an above-the-line deduction for attorney fees and costs in connection with consumer claim awards.

S. 780

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 780, a bill to provide for the admission of the State of Puerto Rico into the Union.

S. 809

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 809, a bill to encourage and facilitate efforts by States and other stakeholders to conserve and sustain the western population of monarch butterflies, and for other purposes.

S. 1125

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1125, a bill to recommend that the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation test the effect of a dementia care management model, and for other purposes.

S. 1183

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1183, a bill to allow veterans to use, possess, or transport medical marijuana and to discuss the use of medical marijuana with a physician of the Department of Veterans Affairs as authorized by a State or Indian Tribe, and for other purposes.

S. 1210

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1210, a bill to amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to clarify provisions enacted by the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, to further the conservation of certain wildlife species, and for other purposes.

S. 1378

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1378, a bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to allow for the retirement of certain animals used in Federal research, and for other purposes.

S. 1385

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) 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. 1396

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1396, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to establish State and Indian Tribe grants for community colleges and grants for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Minority-Serving Institutions, and for other purposes.

S. 1611

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1611, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the responses of the Department of Defense to sex-related offenses, and for other purposes.

S. 1780

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1780, a bill to remove college cost as a barrier to every student having access to a well-prepared and diverse educator workforce, and for other purposes.

S. 1785

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1785, a bill to repeal the debt ceiling, and for other purposes.

S. 1813

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1813, a bill to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to support research on, and expanded access to, investigational drugs for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and for other purposes.

S. 1904

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1904, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to foreign support for Palestinian terrorism, and for other purposes.

S. 1907

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1907, a bill to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to develop effluent limitations guidelines and standards and water quality criteria for PFAS under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, to provide Federal grants to publicly owned treatment works to implement such guidelines and standards, and for other purposes.

S. 1986

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) 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. 2011

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2011, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to honor the contributions of all those whose efforts led to the successful development of life saving vaccines to combat the novel coronavirus.

S. 2069

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the names of the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) were added as cosponsors of S. 2069, a bill to expand the Medicaid certified community behavioral health clinic demonstration program and to authorize funding for additional grants to certified community behavioral health clinics.

S. 2102

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2102, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Under Secretary for Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide mammography screening for veterans

who served in locations associated with toxic exposure.

S. 2376

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2376, a bill to ensure the parental guardianship rights of cadets and midshipmen consistent with individual and academic responsibilities, and for other purposes.

S. 2478

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2478, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for a percentage of student loan forgiveness for public service employment, and for other purposes.

S. 2511

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2511, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an investment credit for the conversion of office buildings into other uses.

S. 2580

At the request of Ms. SINEMA, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2580, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to make free National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes available to members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

S. 2660

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2660, a bill to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act to authorize grants for toxic substances remediation in schools, to reauthorize healthy high-performance schools, and for other purposes.

S. 2765

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2765, a bill to provide that Members of Congress may not receive pay after October 1 of any fiscal year in which Congress has not approved a concurrent resolution on the budget and passed the regular appropriations bills.

S. 2863

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2863, a bill to require the imposition of sanctions with respect to the Taliban and persons assisting the Taliban in Afghanistan, and for other purposes.

S. 2907

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2907, a bill to establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 25

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 25, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections.

S. RES. 183

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 183, a resolution condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

S. RES. 321

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 321, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate to reduce traffic fatalities to zero by 2050.

S. RES. 390

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 390, a resolution expressing appreciation for the State of Qatar's efforts to assist the United States during Operation Allies Refuge.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 408—DESIGNATING OCTOBER 2021 AS ''NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH'' AND COMMENDING THE COOPERATIVE BUSINESS MODEL AND THE MEMBER-OWNERS, BUSINESSES, EMPLOYEES, FARMERS, RANCHERS, AND PRACTITIONERS WHO USE THE COOPERATIVE BUSINESS MODEL TO POSITIVELY IMPACT THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Ms. SMITH (for herself, Mr. HOEVEN, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. ERNST, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. WYDEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 408

Whereas, during the global COVID–19 pandemic, cooperatives have taken extraordinary steps to serve their member-owners and communities;

Whereas a cooperative—

(1) is a business that is owned and governed by its members, who are the individuals who use the business, create the products of the business, or manage the operation of the business; and

(2) operates under the 7 principles of—

(A) voluntary open membership;

(B) democratic control;

(C) owner economic participation;

(D) autonomy and independence;

(E) education, training, and information;

(F) cooperation among cooperatives; and

(G) concern for community;

Whereas cooperative entrepreneurs can be found in almost every economic sector of the United States, throughout all 50 States and territories, and in every congressional district of the United States;

Whereas cooperatives help farmers increase incomes and become more resilient to economic business cycles by working together to plan and prepare for the future, while contributing significantly to the economic activity in the agriculture and food markets of the United States;

Whereas the roughly 1,800 agricultural cooperatives in the United States operate more than 8,000 facilities, employ $96,000,000,000 worth of assets, and generate nearly $204,000,000,000 in business annually;

Whereas the majority of the 2,000,000 farmers in the United States belong to an agricultural cooperative;

Whereas agricultural cooperatives offer members the opportunity to access commodity value-added profits throughout the handling, processing, and distribution chains;

Whereas member-owners of agricultural cooperatives are dedicated to providing the highest quality product for consumers;

Whereas agricultural cooperatives add significant benefits to the economic well-being of rural areas of the United States by providing more than 250,000 jobs with annual wages totaling more than $8,000,000,000;

Whereas agricultural cooperatives provide resources to their member-owners, such as low-cost supplies, effective marketing, and services;

Whereas farmer members of agricultural cooperatives have the opportunity to pool resources and reinvest profits into the communities of the farmer members;

Whereas the principles of cooperation and the cooperative business model help smallholder farmers organize themselves and gain access to local and global markets, training, improved inputs, and aggregated sales and marketing;

Whereas the cooperative business model provides farmers ownership over their economic decisions, a focus on learning, and a broader understanding of environmental and social concerns;

Whereas the cooperative business model has been used throughout the history of the United States to advance civil rights and to help ensure that all individuals have equal access to economic opportunity;

Whereas the comprehensive global food security strategy established under section 5 of the Global Food Security Act of 2016 (22 U.S.C. 9304) (commonly known as ''Feed the Future'') and the Cooperative Development Program of the United States Agency for International Development use cooperative principles and the cooperative business model to advance international development, nutrition, resilience, and economic security;

Whereas the Interagency Working Group on Cooperative Development—

(1) is an interagency group that is coordinated and chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture to foster cooperative development and ensure coordination with Federal agencies and national and local cooperative organizations that have cooperative programs and interests; and

(2) as of the date of introduction of this resolution, had organized 4 meetings;

Whereas the bipartisan Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus unites Members of Congress to—

(1) create a better-informed electorate and a more educated public on the important role that cooperatives play in the economy of the United States and the world;

(2) promote the cooperative business model, because that model ensures that consumers have access to high-quality goods and services at competitive prices and costs that improve the lives of individuals, families, and their communities; and

(3) address and correct awareness challenges among the public and within the Federal Government relating to what cooperatives look like, who participates in cooperatives, where cooperatives are located, and why individuals choose cooperatives;

Whereas the Bureau of the Census, as part of the 2017 Economic Census, asked each business if the business was organized as a cooperative, and the responses of businesses yielded both quantitative and qualitative data on the effects and importance of cooperatives across the economy of the United States;

Whereas, throughout rural areas of the United States, many utility service providers operate as cooperatives and are tasked with the delivery of public services, such as electricity, water, telecommunications, and broadband, in areas where investor-owned utility companies typically do not operate;

Whereas utility cooperatives have innovated to meet the evolving needs of their member-owners and help rural individuals in the United States prosper;

Whereas, in the financial services sector, cooperatives, including credit unions, farm credit banks, and other financing organizations that lend to cooperatives, provide numerous benefits to the member-owners of those cooperatives;

Whereas member-owners of cooperatives vote in board elections, and earned profits cycle back into cost-saving programs or return as dividend payments;

Whereas purchasing and shared service cooperatives allow independent and franchise businesses to thrive;

Whereas food cooperatives range in size from small, local buying clubs to multi-store regional giants that compete with chain stores with locations across the United States;

Whereas, in the housing sector, housing cooperatives and resident-owned communities in which members own the building or land—

(1) are an alternative to conventional rental apartments, manufactured home parks, and condominiums; and

(2) empower each resident with ownership and responsibility;

Whereas housing cooperatives have roots dating to the late 1800s and are increasingly becoming a housing alternative for students at colleges throughout the United States;

Whereas shared equity housing cooperatives are a critical option for preserving long-term, affordable housing;

Whereas cooperatives allow residents of manufactured home communities to collectively purchase the land on which they live, providing stability and the opportunity to self-govern;

Whereas, as of 2019, not less than 1,000 manufactured home communities were resident-owned, accounting for approximately 2 percent of all manufactured home communities;

Whereas the growth of worker cooperatives in the United States is allowing more workers to own and have greater control over their businesses;

Whereas many small businesses convert to cooperatives when faced with closure or a buyout, ensuring the business can continue to serve its community; and

Whereas the cooperative business model allows business owners to retire and transfer business ownership to employees or consumers, protecting local ownership and supporting local communities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates October 2021 as ''National Co-op Month'';

(2) commends the cooperative business model for—

(A) its contributions to the economy;

(B) the jobs it creates; and

(C) its positive impacts on local communities;

(3) expresses confidence in, and support for, cooperatives to continue their successes; and

(4) will be mindful in crafting legislation that affects business models that are not the cooperative business model so that the legislation does not adversely affect the cooperative business model.

SENATE RESOLUTION 409—DESIGNATING THE WEEK BEGINNING OCTOBER 17, 2021, AS ''NATIONAL CHARACTER COUNTS WEEK''

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BRAUN, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. LANKFORD, and Mr. WARNOCK) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 409

Whereas the well-being of the United States requires that the young people of the United States become an involved, caring citizenry of good character;

Whereas the character education of children has become more urgent, as violence by and against youth increasingly threatens the physical and psychological well-being of the people of the United States;

Whereas, more than ever, children need strong and constructive guidance from their families and their communities, including from schools, youth organizations, religious institutions, and civic groups;

Whereas the character of a nation is only as strong as the character of its individual citizens;

Whereas the public good is advanced when young individuals are taught the importance of good character and the positive effects that good character can have in personal relationships, in school, and in the workplace;

Whereas scholars and educators agree that individuals do not automatically develop good character and that, therefore, institutions and individuals that influence youth must make conscientious efforts to help young individuals develop the essential traits and characteristics that comprise good character;

Whereas, although character development is, first and foremost, an obligation of families, the efforts of faith communities, schools, and youth, civic, and human service organizations also play an important role in fostering and promoting good character;

Whereas Congress encourages students, teachers, parents, youth, and community leaders to recognize the importance of character education in preparing young individuals to play a role in determining the future of the United States;

Whereas effective character education is based on core ethical values, which form the foundation of a democratic society;

Whereas examples of character are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, citizenship, and honesty;

Whereas elements of character transcend cultural, religious, and socioeconomic differences;

Whereas the character and conduct of youth reflect the character and conduct of society, and, therefore, every adult has the responsibility to teach and model ethical values and every social institution has the responsibility to promote the development of good character;

Whereas Congress encourages individuals and organizations, especially those that have an interest in the education and training of the young individuals in the United States, to adopt the elements of character as intrinsic to the well-being of individuals, communities, and society;

Whereas many schools in the United States recognize the need, and have taken steps, to integrate the values of their communities into teaching activities; and

Whereas the establishment of ''National Character Counts Week'', during which individuals, families, schools, youth organizations, religious institutions, civic groups, and other organizations focus on character education, is of great benefit to the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week beginning October 17, 2021, as ''National Character Counts Week''; and

(2) calls upon the people of the United States and interested groups—

(A) to embrace the elements of character identified by local schools and communities, such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship; and

(B) to observe National Character Counts Week with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3842. Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. PADILLA) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3843. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3844. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3845. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3846. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 3842. Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. PADILLA) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle D of title XXVIII, add the following:

SEC. 2836. PROHIBITION ON CLOSING OR RELOCATING MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA.

No Federal funds may be used to close or relocate the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California, or to conduct any planning or other activity related to such closure or relocation.

SA 3843. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in subtitle G of title X, insert the following:

SEC. 10___. DEFINITION OF LAND USE REVENUE UNDER WEST LOS ANGELES LEASING ACT OF 2016.

Section 2(d)(2) of the West Los Angeles Leasing Act of 2016 (Public Law 114–226) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''; and'' and inserting a semicolon;

(2) by redesignating subparagraph (B) as subparagraph (C); and

(3) by inserting after subparagraph (A) the following new subparagraph:

''(B) any funds received as compensation for an easement described in subsection (e); and''.

SA 3844. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. DECLARATION OF EMERGING THREAT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Congress declares methamphetamine an emerging drug threat, as defined in section 702 of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 1998 (21 U.S.C. 1701), in the United States.

(b) REQUIRED EMERGING THREAT RESPONSE PLAN.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy shall establish and implement an Emerging Threat Response Plan that is specific to methamphetamine in accordance with section 709(d) of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 1998 (21 U.S.C. 1708(d)).

SA 3845. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle G of title V, add the following:

SEC. 596. AUTHORITY OF STATES TO USE NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS PERFORMING ACTIVE GUARD AND RESERVE DUTY DURING STATE-DIRECTED RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC INCIDENTS.

Section 328(b) of title 32, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''A member''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2) Under regulations prescribed by the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the adjutant general of the jurisdiction concerned may authorize a member of the National Guard performing duty under subsection (a) to perform additional duties in response to a State-declared emergency or disaster provided that the adjutant general determines that members performing such additional duties will derive a benefit that satisfies or complements training requirements for the wartime mission or other training objectives of the members' unit.''.

SA 3846. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2792, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. PROTECTIONS FOR COVERED INDIVIDUALS.

Section 7211 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''The right of employees'' and inserting the following:

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The right of covered individuals''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(b) REMEDIES.—

''(1) ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—A covered individual with respect to a Federal agency (other than a covered individual described in subparagraph (B), (C), or (D)) who is aggrieved by a violation of subsection (a) may seek corrective action under sections 1214 and 1221 in the same manner as an individual who is aggrieved by a prohibited personnel practice described in section 2302(b)(8).

''(B) FBI EMPLOYEES.—A covered individual with respect to the Federal Bureau of Investigation who is aggrieved by a violation of subsection (a) may seek corrective action under section 2303.

''(C) INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY EMPLOYEES.—A covered individual with respect to a covered intelligence community element (as defined in section 1104(a) of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3234(a))) who is aggrieved by a violation of subsection (a) may seek corrective action under section 1104 of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3234) or subsection (b)(7) or (j) of section 3001 of that Act (50 U.S.C. 3341).

''(D) CONTRACTOR EMPLOYEES.—A covered individual with respect to a Federal agency who is an employee of, former employee of, or applicant for employment with, a contractor, subcontractor, grantee, subgrantee, or personal services contractor (as those terms are used in section 2409 of title 10 and section 4712 of title 41) of the agency and who is aggrieved by a violation of subsection (a) of this section may seek corrective action under section 2409 of title 10 or section 4712 of title 41.

''(E) BURDEN OF PROOF.—The burdens of proof under subsection (e) of section 1221 shall apply to an allegation of a violation of subsection (a) of this section made under subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D) of this paragraph in the same manner as those burdens of proof apply to an allegation of a prohibited personnel practice under such section 1221.

''(F) CLASS OF INDIVIDUALS ENTITLED TO SEEK CORRECTIVE ACTION.—The right to seek corrective action under subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D) shall apply to a covered individual who is an employee of, former employee of, or applicant for employment with, a Federal agency described in the applicable subparagraph or a contractor, subcontractor, grantee, subgrantee, or personal services contractor (as those terms are used in section 2409 of title 10 and section 4712 of title 41) of such a Federal agency, notwithstanding the fact that a provision of law referenced in the applicable subparagraph does not authorize one or more of those types of covered individuals to seek corrective action.

''(2) PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—If a final decision providing relief for a violation of subsection (a) alleged under subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D) of paragraph (1) of this subsection is not issued within 210 days of the date on which the covered individual seeks corrective action under the applicable subparagraph and there is no showing that the delay is due to the bad faith of the covered individual, the covered individual may bring an action at law or equity for de novo review in the appropriate district court of the United States, which shall have jurisdiction over the action without regard to the amount in controversy, for lost wages and benefits, reinstatement, costs and attorney fees, compensatory damages, equitable or injunctive relief, or any other relief that the court considers appropriate.

''(B) JURY TRIAL.—An action brought under subparagraph (A) shall, upon the request of the covered individual, be tried by the court with a jury.

''(C) BURDEN OF PROOF.—The burdens of proof under subsection (e) of section 1221 shall apply to an allegation of a violation of subsection (a) of this section in an action brought under this paragraph in the same manner as those burdens of proof apply to an allegation of a prohibited personnel practice under such section 1221.

''(c) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section—

''(1) the term 'covered individual', with respect to a Federal agency, means an employee of, former employee of, or applicant for employment with—

''(A) the agency; or

''(B) a contractor, subcontractor, grantee, subgrantee, or personal services contractor (as those terms are used in section 2409 of title 10 and section 4712 of title 41) of the agency; and

''(2) the term 'Federal agency' means an agency, office, or other establishment in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Federal Government.''.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I have 10 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 COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 10:15 a.m., to conduct a business meeting.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Indian Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 2 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 3 p.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 2 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS

The Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER

The Subcommittee on Water and Power of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Alexander LePore, an FDIC detailee with my staff, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of this Congress.

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

AMENDING THE FENTANYL SANCTIONS ACT, TO MODIFY CERTAIN DEADLINES RELATING TO THE COMMISSION ON COMBATING SYNTHETIC OPIOID TRAFFICKING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4981, 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. 4981) to amend the Fentanyl Sanctions Act, to modify certain deadlines relating to the Commission on Combating Synthetic Opioid Trafficking.

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 the table.

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

The bill (H.R. 4981) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

NATIONAL CHARACTER COUNTS WEEK

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 409, 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. 409) designating the week beginning October 17, 2021, as ''National Character Counts 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. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 409) 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.'')

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Thursday, October 7; 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; and that upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TODAY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:10 a.m., adjourned until Thursday, October 7, 2021, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate October 6, 2021:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GWEN GRAHAM, OF FLORIDA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR LEGISLATION AND CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

ROBERTO JOSUE RODRIGUEZ, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, EVALUATION, AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

ELIZABETH MERRILL BROWN, OF MARYLAND, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.